Exploring Promising Practices for Collaborative Service Delivery to Survivors of Human Trafficking

Full Report

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Introduction

Victim Services of Peel (VSOP) is implementing a collaborative service delivery model that provides immediate response to victims/survivors of human trafficking called This Way Out 􀀀. This model embeds VSOP's Anti-Human Trafficking Counsellors with the Vice Unit (Human Trafficking Unit) of Peel Regional Police. To help inform the development of this collaborative model, the current literature review will seek to determine what the best or promising practices are for collaborative service delivery to survivors of human trafficking.

Research Questions

What are the best or promising practices for collaborative service delivery models to help human trafficking survivors escape/exit their trafficker/trafficking situation?

- What strategies and factors help survivors leave/exit their trafficker/trafficking situation (crisis intervention strategy)?

- What are the integral or key components of best/promising practice models?

- How strong is the evidence to support the promising or best practice?

Methods

Search Strategy

The following databases were searched for published scholarly articles: PsychInfo, ProQuest and Google Scholar. Note that to ensure manageability of the Google Scholar search, the results were sorted for relevance and the first eleven pages (110 hits) were reviewed, after which point hits became less relevant. A convenience sample of scholarly articles provided by VSOP was also reviewed.

Variations of the following search strategy were used across the databases:

"human trafficking" OR "sex trafficking" OR "labor trafficking" OR "labour trafficking"
AND "police" OR "law enforcement" OR "investigator"
AND "victim" OR "survivor"
AND "collaboration" OR "model" OR "team" OR "partnership"
AND "service delivery" OR "strateg*" OR "intervention" OR "best practice"

Inclusion Criteria

Results were filtered to include only sources published in English, from a Canadian or United States context, and those that were published after 2013. The target service population was victims/survivors of human trafficking (all forms including labour and sex trafficking). The model characteristics of interest included collaboration between police units and social services; crisis intervention; on-site support provided by both police and social services; and victim services/social service directed interventions to support human trafficking victims in crisis.

Results were excluded if they focused on police interventions only or focused on long-term counselling support/engagement.

Overall Findings

The database searches identified 138 hits. After reviewing titles and abstracts for relevance, 68 full-text studies were reviewed. Including the convenience sample of articles from VSOP, a total of 20 studies were included in the current review.

Interagency collaboration has been an essential aspect of anti-trafficking work since its emergence in the U.S. in the 1990s (Huff-Corzine, 2017), however, there is limited research on the effectiveness of such collaborative efforts (Preble et al., 2023). While it has been noted in the literature that rigorous evaluations of human trafficking programs and interdisciplinary task forces are rare and generally not publicly available (Koegler et al., 2021; Dandurand et al., 2023), the literature provides many accounts of promising practices.

The published literature on collaborative approaches between police units and social services mainly included qualitative data gathered from law enforcement and service providers through interviews, focus groups and surveys. These field experts were solicited for their opinions and experiences with respect to what they believed works well and what should be avoided in such collaborative models.

Much of the evidence for collaborative service delivery models for human trafficking survivors relies on qualitative data gathered from practitioners working with these collaborative service delivery models. There is limited evidence from more rigorous outcome evaluation studies (e.g., randomized control trials, quasi-experimental, etc.) to draw on for this review and, as a result, the recommendations are considered promising practices rather than best practices.

Ten Promising Practices

The promising practices were identified based on their consistency across multiple studies and were categorized into ten themes.

1 **Involvement of survivors in direct response and program development**

2 **Single point of contact and warm transfers**

3 **Co-location**

4 **Trauma-informed and client-centred services**

5 **Meeting essential needs of survivors**

6 **Referral network and community asset mapping**

7 **Formalized structure and direct channels of communication**

8 **Specialized training**

9 **Proactive approach to identify survivors**

10 **Coordinating body/advisory board**

A detailed description of each of these themes is included below.

Promising Practice 1:
Involvement of Survivors in Direct Response & Program Development

One of the most frequently mentioned promising practices is the inclusion of survivors of human trafficking within collaborative service models, both for service delivery and development.

Victim Services of Toronto (2023) notes the importance of having support to survivors provided by someone who understands human trafficking to ensure that they can be attuned to red flags and provide appropriate support accordingly. Victim Services of Durham Region (HALT model; 2021) also notes the hiring of a survivor of human trafficking as part of their crisis intervention team. They indicate that survivors receiving support found it affirming to see a human trafficking counsellor that is a survivor who was able to leave their trafficking situation. The trust between the survivor and the human trafficking counsellor, in turn, helps build trust between the survivor and the investigator, leading to increased disclosures or requests for support.

it is also essential that survivors engaged in direct response also have the necessary educational background and training. In Durham Region's HALT model, survivors who are hired as crisis counsellors have a combination of lived experience and relevant clinical education. In instances where a survivor cannot be hired for this role, those with appropriate training and education can serve as an alternative (note that these individuals should receive training directly from survivors). In the HALT model, the human trafficking counsellors are employed by Victim Services and not by police; this is done to help build and maintain trust with survivors so that they can be more assured that their private information will not be directly available to police. Having a survivor-informed model is seen as one of the key principles underpinning the effectiveness of the HALT model (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

The importance of survivor involvement in the development of interventions is not understated in the literature. Nagy et al., 2023 conducted workshops with persons with lived experience and service providers in Northeastern Ontario to identify the needs of trafficked women and the gaps and barriers to service provision. The results of this workshop underscored the importance of involving people with lived experience and compensating them for their time. They also suggest that member organizations of collaborative structures pay into a collective pot as a promise to help employ a peer survivor (Nagy et al., 2023). Contreras (2022) also emphasizes the importance of involvement of survivors because "peers can provide valuable information about how to engage trafficked people, a hidden and hard to detect population".

A paper regarding Project ROSE, an arrest alternative for victims of sex trafficking and prostitution out of Phoenix, Arizona, notes the integration of survivors as case managers and program administrators to act as role models and mentors to clients, in addition to their formal job descriptions (Roe-Sepowitz, 2014). Roe-Sepowitz (2014) notes that motivation and willingness to change are key to successful exiting and that a positive mentor relationship serves as an "important anchor out of the life" and is a critical component in the exiting process (Roe-Sepowitz, 2014). Preble et al. (2023) also notes the importance of survivor advocates in collaborative community responses (CCRs), indicating that community-based outreach by a survivor decreases distress levels for survivors and increases readiness to leave abusive partners.

According to Richie-Zavaleta et al. (2021), the expertise of human trafficking survivors is key to bolstering the effectiveness of collaborative models. They emphasize that the needs and perspectives of human trafficking survivors should be at the center of all interventions and approaches to care. Thompson et al. (2022) also indicate that Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) task forces to combat human trafficking should be survivor-informed. Those with lived experience can offer victim-centered and trauma-informed insight to task force practices, including investigation practices and the development of response, protocols and coordination around cases of human trafficking (Thompson et al., 2022).

Promising Practice 2:
Single Point of Contact & Warm Transfers

Victim Services of Toronto's program evaluation indicates that having a 'consistent support person' instills confidence in clients that they have a trusted person to turn to without judgment; this results in clients becoming better connected and better supported and also supports greater continuity of the investigation (Victim Services of Toronto, 2023). This consistent support person understands the client's safety needs, helps them feel safe and minimizes the chances of them returning to their trafficker out of fear. Given the sometimes transient nature of survivors seeking support, they may drop out of the investigation process and having a consistent support person helps to mitigate this. Prior to the implementation of their decentralized model, victims found it impersonal to speak to someone and then never speak to that person again and also found it retraumatizing to have to repeat their stories (Victim Services of Toronto, 2023). This sentiment is echoed by Nagy et al. (2023) where they emphasize the importance of having a dedicated caseworker or liaison person to save women from repeatedly telling their story.

Nswonwu et al. (2018) specifically focuses on supporting survivors of sex trafficking through a collaborative single point of contact model. In this model, a social worker is the case manager for survivors and organizes the work of the interdisciplinary team that serves on the human trafficking task force. This single point of contact model offers a continuum of services, builds trust and collaborative case management. Trust is a fundamental tenet of the relationship and it is important that there is an ongoing link, the single point of contact social worker, who connects the collaborative team with the client and is able to assist in moving the case forward. Overall, this helps to facilitate feelings of trust, safety and reliability for the survivor. The collaborative community response (CCR) model proposed by Preble et al. (2023) also encourages designated communication channels with a consistent contact.

Dandurand et al. (2023)'s review of published and grey literature and consultations with service providers and survivors also touted the benefits of a single point of contact model. They note that program evaluations have shown that effective program delivery for survivors depends on the appointment of a single point of contact person to support the delivery of various forms of assistance. Survivors who benefited from a single point of contact reported having more positive experiences with inter-agency referrals. Timonshkina (2019) examined health and social service based human trafficking response models in industrialized countries (with many Canadian and U.S. based models) and also recommends that upon identification each survivor should be assigned a case manager who serves as the crucial link in the chain of supports and ensures the survivor accesses comprehensive services by guiding them through the support system while building trust and rapport. This single point of contact should be consistent throughout all stages of response. They further suggest that the terms "primary contact" or "system navigator" may be preferred to "case manager", as survivors may resent being viewed as "cases" that need to be "managed" (Timonshkina, 2019).

Dandurand et al. (2023) conducted consultations with survivors about their needs and experiences and emphasize the importance of warm transfers, where survivors were provided with hands-on navigation of various systems and connected to service providers instead of offering a pamphlet and telling the individual to contact the agency independently. This made survivors feel supported and helped them to connect to the services required to escape their trafficking situation. This was also echoed by Nagy et al. (2023), where they recommend a "walk with me approach", where case managers do not simply facilitate making appointments but also accompany survivors for added security and support.

Promising Practice 3:
Co-location

Co-location is a commonly mentioned promising practice throughout the literature. Victim Services of Toronto's model (2023), for example, embeds Victim Services staff at police divisions, which allows for warm transfers to take place between police and Neighbourhood Victim Advocates to allow clients to connect with Victim Services for social support seamlessly (Victim Services of Toronto, 2023). This also allows for enhanced communication between Victim Services staff and Toronto Police Service officers, where impromptu communication about clients can take place. This close collaboration allows police and Victim Service staff to be proactive in supporting victims and for swifter action to be taken to support clients (Victim Services of Toronto, 2023).

McCoy et al. (2022) evaluated ten Enhanced Collaboration Model (ECM) task forces to combat human trafficking programs across the United States. Task force members in co-located arrangements appreciated the value that physical closeness contributed to collaboration potential. They found that co-location facilitates collaboration and promotes relationship building among task force members. Collaboration is facilitated when task force members work together in a shared space in the same building a few days a week. The following benefits were mentioned: boosts morale amongst stakeholders; they get to know each other and can quickly solve problems that would otherwise take days to solve; and co-located task forces tend to perform better in terms of investigating and prosecuting cases (McCoy et al., 2022).

Interviews ECM task force members in the United States by Thompson et al. (2022) also encourages co-location. Similar to McCoy et al. (2022), they also indicate that co-location facilitates collaboration and cooperation, promotes relationship building among task force members, allows problems to be solved in real time and facilitates investigations and prosecutions. Similarly, Gibbs et al. (2015) evaluated three programs serving minor victims of human trafficking in the United States and found that the single most successful approach to encouraging service utilization was co-located services.

There was also support in the literature for co-location beyond task force team members to other types of services for human trafficking survivors. In a survey of 107 service providers (including social workers, counselors, law enforcement, and medical professionals) in Missouri, Koegler et al. (2021) identified the promising practice of providing services all under one roof. A single agency is not typically able to provide all of the services needed by survivors; therefore, survivors must seek these services in a variety of service settings which may or may not be trauma-informed, culturally sensitive or competent to serve trafficking survivors (Koegler et al., 2021). Without co-located services, the continuity of care may be disrupted and is counter to a victim-centered approach as it may involve sending a traumatized population across a geographic region to access much needed services where they can encounter more barriers (Koegler et al., 2021).

Promising Practice 4:
Trauma-Informed & Client-Centred Services

Client-centered practice views practice as collaboration with survivors, centers survivors' voices and places control of the situation in the hand of survivors, avoiding a one-size fits all approach (Preble et al., 2023). Client-centered care ensures the provision of individualized, trauma-informed, culturally competent services and is recognized as promising practice internationally (Timonskina, 2019). Additional principles under this umbrella include non-judgment, inclusivity, informed consent, empowerment, transparency, safety, privacy and confidentiality (Timonshkina, 2019).

Durham Region's HALT model embodies several key principles which they deem essential to its success, revolving around ensuring services are client centered and trauma informed (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021). Specifically, the HALT model adopts:

- Client-centered approach: decisions made regarding exiting are determined by the survivors themselves (note that this approach may be adapted in circumstances relevant to duty to report legislation)
- Trauma informed lens: this model places value on building trust and rapport and minimizing the risk of re-traumatization.
- Anti-oppressive lens: this model acknowledges the broader impacts such as gender discrimination, systemic racism and intersectionality
- Harm reduction lens, where they meet survivors where they are at

Durham Region's HALT model emphasized the importance of using informal, non-judgmental language including open-ended questions and asking only relevant questions. This helps to minimize the number of times a survivor's story is shared to avoid re-traumatization (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021) .

Interviews with ECM task force members in the U.S. by Thompson et al. (2022) also encouraged the implementation of trauma-informed and victim-centered practices during law enforcement interviews, investigations and prosecutions. Specifically, they recommend that law enforcement partners wear civilian clothing during interviews with survivors and use survivor's terminology when discussing their victimization experiences. They encourage ECM task forces to avoid arresting survivors, which can lead to further trauma and destabilization for survivors. They also suggest matching the gender of the interviewer with that of the survivor and using "soft rooms" for interviewing and delivering immediate services, to make the survivor more comfortable.

Through consultations with survivors of sex trafficking in British Columbia, Dandurand et al. (2023) learned that victims were able to successfully engage with services because they felt listened to, believed and given time to heal at their own pace. In addition to consultation with sex trafficking survivors, Dandurand et al. (2023) also consulted with service providers and conducted a review of the literature on the needs of survivors and promising practices in service delivery. They note that it is imperative for service providers to offer options for survivors as opposed to prescribed program components. In this way, survivors identify their own needs and decide the modality, nature, pace and intensity of the supports they receive. One of the most important program considerations identified by the service providers interviewed was that services should operate from a trauma-informed perspective. One provider specified a need for specific training in trauma-informed practices involving children and youth and specific training around trauma related to sex trafficking and involvement in the sex trade more generally. Stigma-informed support was also noted as important, as studies have shown that stigma attached to sex work is a significant challenge for individuals hoping to exit the sex economy. Service providers noted the importance of providing support without being judgmental and to listen to survivor experiences and respond with empathy.

Nagy et al. (2023) held workshops with persons with lived experience and service providers in Northeastern Ontario and identified needs of trafficked women and barriers to service. The results of the engagement were used to develop a service mapping toolkit grounded in Indigenous cultural practices. Participants emphasized the importance of having a trauma and violence-informed approach, where retraumatizing survivors is avoided while supporting their pathways to healing. They further expressed that it is important to provide culturally relevant supports for Francophone and Indigenous women. More specifically, they discussed decolonizing trauma-informed approaches which prioritize culturally relevant healing practices that may differ from Eurocentric, biomedical and psychological paradigms.

Promising Practice 5:
Meeting Essential Needs of Survivors

In line with providing client-centered services, meeting essential needs was found to be a critical element required for victims to exit their trafficking situation.

Durham Region's HALT model has a focus on providing immediate basic needs first including food, medical care and support in finding safe accommodation. They deem it fundamentally unfair for a service provider to ask a survivor to leave their trafficking situation unless they have found an alternative way to meet each of their basic needs. Notably, the HALT model has a focus on providing income support, as they note that access to regular income support is crucial in supporting survivors to leave their trafficking situation. They describe how traffickers often help survivors to obtain government financial assistance in order to take those funds from them. The HALT model includes partnership with Ontario Works (OW), where Human Trafficking Response Teams (HTRT) were created at each OW site across Durham with dedicated, trained human trafficking caseworkers (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

A paper regarding Project ROSE, an arrest alternative for victims of sex trafficking and prostitution, emphasizes that in order to successfully exit, survivors must have access to formal support services that meet their many complex needs including economic assistance, substance use treatment, basic food and shelter needs and services addressing physical and mental health needs (Roe-Sepowitz, 2014).

A survey of 107 service providers to human trafficking providers across Missouri, USA identified that the most needed services for survivors are case management, counseling, crisis services, shelter and medical assistance (Koegler et al., 2021). The two services that a few service providers indicated that all or most survivors needed were interpretation services and childcare. They found that shelter services appeared to be a critical need, with 93% of clients requiring this service (Koegler et al., 2021). This finding is consistent with the work of Preble et al. (2023), where safe and stable shelter/housing is noted as a critical component of health equity, central to many initial responses to exiting assistance.

Dandurand et al. (2023) also emphasize that in the immediate period after escaping a trafficking situation, most victims require basic survival needs, safety, healthcare, emergency accommodation and in some instances addiction treatment and recovery support. Offering adequate protection, such as availability and accessibility of safe houses, is also noted as priority if victims are to come forward. Amongst the survivors interviewed in their sample, most indicated a need for immediate financial assistance and support for accessing governmental assistance programs, consistent with the HALT model's approach of partnering with OW (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

In an evaluation of three programs serving child victims of human trafficking in the U.S., Gibbs et al. (2015) found that access to safe living situations and supportive family connections were common themes among young individuals who had exited sex trade engagement. They found that young people still engaged in their trafficking situation needed safety planning and crisis management. Runaway youth needed emergency shelter services and access to financial resources before long term needs could be addressed. Sex trafficking was often not the most critical problem in young victims' lives; they found that meeting basic needs was often prioritized over addressing trafficking amongst survivors. Creative and persistent efforts were needed in order to engage clients and sustain their involvement in trafficking-related services.

A comprehensive review of international literature with a focus on industrialized countries such as Canada and the U.S. by Timonshkina (2019) noted the importance of the immediate/crisis response period (first 72 hours to 1 week). They detail the importance of meeting immediate needs (escape and protection, emergency accommodation, basic necessities, transportation, medical and legal assistance, translation services) and that ongoing connection is imperative as victims are vulnerable of falling back into their trafficking situation at this stage (i.e., 24/7 support is often required). They recommend that service providers prepare first response bags that contain toiletries and other basic supplies. They also indicate that survivors may be in need of 2-3 days of undisturbed rest in a safe setting.
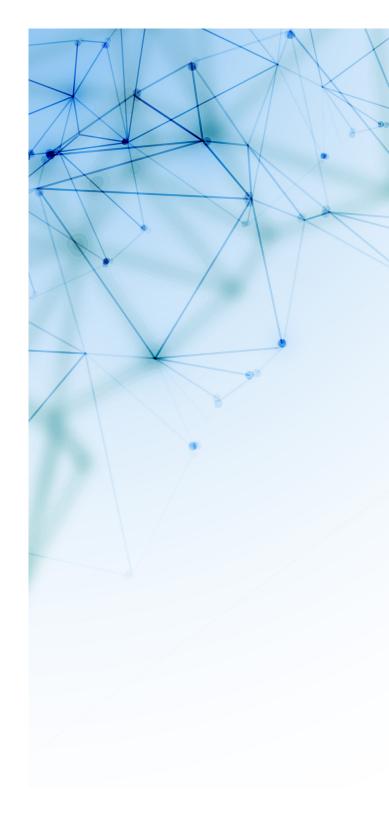
Promising Practice 6:
Referral Network & Community Asset Mapping

The development of vetted referral networks and community asset mapping were also mentioned in the literature, consistent with the importance of providing a seamless continuum of care to support survivors. Timonshkina (2019) identified the development of a Referral and Assistance Protocol (RAP) for streamlined service delivery as a main building block of a health and social service based human trafficking response model. The RAP is intended to provide infrastructure for seamless service delivery by outlining the roles and responsibilities for the response model participants. Development of the protocol requires extensive consultations, community asset mapping and formalized interagency partnership and collaboration agreements. RAP allows trafficked persons multiple points of entry (e.g., self referrals, formal referrals from police, social service organizations, healthcare, government, law firms, immigration, etc.).

Victim Services of Toronto (2021) makes efforts to understand the unique community, health and social services available in each neighbourhood they serve. This knowledge of community assets can be used to support clients (e.g., location of grocery stores, etc.).

Koegler et al. (2021) discuss that one promising practice among anti-trafficking coalitions is to develop vetted referral networks to provide an array of services for trafficking survivors.

Preble et al. (2023) developed an anti-trafficking community collaborative response tool which combines asset mapping with logic modeling in order to improve a coordinated response to human trafficking. They suggest developing a comprehensive resource guide including multiple assets in the relevant local geographic area that are most needed by trafficking survivors (e.g., shelters, legal services, translation services, drop-in centres, 24-hour hotlines including crisis lines, counseling/therapy, substance use disorder/addiction services, employment services, food pantries, etc). The development of their guide involved intensive internet searches and phone calls to relevant organizations to confirm or request related information for the resources (e.g., eligibility criteria, services offered, etc). Asking stakeholders (including survivors) to provide feedback on the asset map was also important to further understand the obstacles that survivors experience when exiting their trafficking situation. An asset map is meant to be a living document that is modified, updated and revised as new resources become available.

Promising Practice 7:
Formalized Structure & Direct Channels of Communication

Preble et al. (2023) note that previous literature exploring challenges to anti-trafficking collaborative community responses have included fragmented communication, lack of information sharing and a lack of formalized structure. They explain that there is a need for designated communication channels and specify that communication about an existing case, group or person should be consistent rather than reactive (Preble et al., 2023). Such suggestions to formalize communication channels and structure were common in the literature that was reviewed.

One aspect of importance noted in Victim Services of Toronto's model (2023) is that police and Victim Services staff have a better understanding of each other's roles. A similar sentiment was explained in Durham Region's HALT model, where they explain that for strong relationships to form, it is important that both Victim Services and police have an understanding of how each team operates. They further discuss the importance of distinction of roles, indicating that role confusion can lead to distrust causing confusion for survivors when boundaries are not maintained and roles are blurred (e.g., investigator providing ongoing support, responding to requests at odd hours, etc.). Also, tangible resources and supports should only be explained and offered by the service provider who is directly responsible for determining eligibility; when supports are offered by service providers who do not oversee said services, this can lead to misinformation for survivors and distrust (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

In Durham Region's HALT model, their Crisis Intervention team has fostered a culture where they are accepting of constructive criticism from each other and from survivors. For instance, if a survivor is not interested in engaging with a human trafficking counselor or investigator, the team reflects on what could be done differently next time (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021). Along the same vein, Timoshkina (2019) notes that response model stakeholders are advised to maintain a respectful culture where conflicting opinions are seen as a strength.

Kim et al., (2018) also found that one of the factors contributing to success of collaborative models was understanding one's own organizational role and responsibilities as a member and agreeing with the goals of the collaboration. They indicated that protocols should be developed to minimize the possibility of misunderstanding processes and individual roles and lessen inefficiencies. The protocol serves as a guideline to provide information about the process of collaboration and the roles of all involved. A flowchart can be developed to formalize how information flows through the coalition and how the services are developed. Developing direct lines of communication was also noted as being important as it will help service providers move swiftly. Similarly, McCoy et al.'s (2022) evaluation of ten ECM task forces noted the importance of creating an organizational culture where all members understand and respect each other's roles and communicate openly and work through conflicts.

Richie-Zavaleta et al. (2021) also highlights the importance of a formalized structure by providing a list of evidence-based components that are essential for the implementation of a successful collaboration model, including:
- Clear vision for the partnership
- Shared values and culture
- Communication strategies
- Specific goals and objectives
- Organization structure
- Experts of diverse fields
- Evaluation plan in place

An evaluation of collaborative model task forces by Thompson, et al. (2020) also recommends clearly defining roles and expectations for task force members and organizations to help promote collaborative relationships. They suggest establishing formal agreements between participating task force agencies, including memorandum-of-understanding agreements that define roles. Further, they encourage open communication among task force members and recommend that they establish formal communication policies that guide members in communicating about cases and service needs and working through conflicts.

Jones (2023) surveyed professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration in a Midwest state in the U.S. and the findings recommend establishing a formalized infrastructure within a strategic framework to help inform and direct efforts. At a minimum, they recommend establishing mutually agreed upon goals and outcomes and delineate roles and responsibilities. They further suggest that collaborative models seek to standardize protocols, policies and procedures for communication, data gathering, information sharing and referrals; adopt uniform mechanisms to monitor and evaluate processes and outcomes; and delineate roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, framing the problem is identified as an essential step before interagency collaborative activities take place. Deliberate efforts should be made to ascertain group members' level of knowledge of human trafficking, perspectives about its status as a social problem, and notions of what the most appropriate response should be.

In a comprehensive review of the international literature, Timonshkina (2019) emphasizes the importance of setting guiding principles, procedures and values to guide all aspects of the collaborative response and to revisit them regularly (e.g., terms of reference, mission statement, code of conduct, strategic framework, etc.). Winterdyk (2017) surveyed 53 respondents representing agencies involved in counter-trafficking response in Western Canada and also identified a need to develop a more collaborative response including protocol agreements, standard operating procedures and collaborative case consultation and management.

Promising Practice 8:
Specialized Training

Findings in the published literature speak to the importance of providing human-trafficking specific training as well as training in interagency collaborative best practice. In Durham Region's HALT model, training by a survivor is provided to police in the Human Trafficking Unit to equip them to better engage survivors. Training is provided on: understanding general experiences of survivors when engaging with investigators; ways survivors have been traumatized by investigators and how this may shape their willingness to engage; potential harms that may be caused by telling them they need to leave their situation when they do not have the means to meet their basic needs; and, distrust and danger that can occur if investigators pressure survivors for a statement or for information regarding their trafficker(s) to support a prosecution. Training is also provided for the human trafficking counsellors where they learn about identification methods used by law enforcement, the need for enhanced safety measures and limitations and legal responsibilities of investigators (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

Kim et al.'s (2018) review of service provider perspectives noted that training needs to be a multidisciplinary effort to reach a diverse group of trainees. They indicate that representation from a variety of stakeholders, prosecution, police, service providers, etc., is a necessary component of training. Interviews with ECM task force members in the U.S. by Thompson et al. (2022) also recommend providing opportunities for more targeted and specialized human trafficking training. Members of several ECM task forces suggested offering cross-training or immersion training, where members would be given opportunities to visit and observe other model task forces in action to identify promising practices.

Timonshkina (2019) suggests that stakeholders receive training in interagency collaborative best practice to counteract obstacles such as turfism, agency dominance and ineffective leadership.

Promising Practice 9:
Proactive Approach to Identify Survivors

The use of a proactive approach was cited across numerous sources, including in Durham Region's HALT model where they use pro-active safety checks through a targeted intervention called "Date Night". In this approach, online ads are sifted through to identify red flags that signal an ad is for sexual services that may involve human trafficking. They also monitor online ads for potential appearances of missing person reports for youth under 18. They then set up fake "dates'' to meet with individuals at their locations (often hotels). During engagement with a survivor, an investigator will first assess safety and next the investigator will stand outside the door while the human trafficking counsellor meets privately with the individual. The information shared is confidential and shared with investigators only when required by law or when consent has been provided by the survivor (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021). Project ROSE, described by Roe-Sepotwiz (2014) also describes a proactive approach where survivors were identified and immediately connected to services.

Miller et al. (2020) reflects on the importance of timeliness and rapport building and indicate that the period immediately following identification of a survivor is critical for providing time sensitive services and developing trust and rapport can contribute to further engagement. Further emphasizing the importance of proactive approaches, Olson-Piatwanakat and Baskin (2020) conducted interviews with service providers and Indigenous survivors in Toronto and some participants shared that it was law enforcement that played a role in their escape.

Results from in-depth interviews with enhanced collaborative model task force members in the U.S. encourage task forces to engage in proactive work in communities; members of four task forces in this evaluation reported that stings or undercover operations were their primary investigative strategies. They further suggest that task forces should examine their relationships with communities of colour and engage meaningfully with communities where trafficking is occurring (Thompson et al., 2022).

Timonshkina (2019) notes that a victim identification procedure is one of the building blocks of a health and social service based human trafficking response model. They recommend creating a clear procedure for victim identification; choosing relevant human trafficking indicators and developing appropriate tools and methods for data collection; and consider categories of human trafficking indicators (also known as "red flags" or "warning signs"; further described in Timonshkina, 2019). Response model participants are advised to build on known resources by adapting them to their needs (e.g. lists, inventories, open ended interview guides, check lists, standardized assessments, etc.). Timonshkina's (2019) chapter provides various tools to help identify trafficked persons.

Promising Practice 10:
Coordinating Body/Advisory Board

Timonshkina (2019) indicates that a coordinating body is typically the starting place in building a collaborative model where several organizations and individuals concerned about the problem of human trafficking in their community come together. Stakeholders usually include law enforcement, nonprofit social service organizations, health care providers, faith-based groups, government agencies, educational institutions, researchers and community activists. The collaborative entity that results becomes the primary body responsible for coordinating human trafficking responses in a select catchment area. Timonshkina (2019) strongly recommends having a full-time paid coordinator to facilitate networking, etc.

In another article, Carpenter (2019) also discusses involvement in the San Diego County Human and Child Sex Trafficking Advisory Council which is recognized internationally and domestically as highly effective in addressing human trafficking. They reference "forging distributed networks in a regional environment" where new ideas and practices can emerge across diverse organizations and institutions. According to Carpenter (2019), there is a large literature arguing that collaborative governance is central to the formation and performance of partnerships in which public, private and nonprofit community sectors work together. Carpenter (2019) identified factors of success such as having people at the table with subject matter expertise on group conflict; effective conflict resolution and shared interpretation; identifying translational leaders in each sector. The stakeholders with conflict expertise were academics who argued that leadership structure should be inclusive and not dominated by one stakeholder (this is consistent with sentiments from victim advocates who insisted that law enforcement should not be in "the lead"). Inviting academic researchers as stakeholders was seen as positive to making the network function for a variety of reasons, including their distance from frontline work which offers a neutrality to their perspectives.

Richi-Zavaleta et al. (2021) also recommends the creation of advisory boards comprised of local service providers, law enforcement, medical and social service providers, lawyers, public health professionals and survivors. These boards could meet on a regular basis to discuss client-centered interventions and methods for identifying individuals in most need of assistance.

Kenny et al. (2022) explored perceptions of members of a multidisciplinary community-based team working to support victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. They had multidisciplinary meetings held regularly (2 hours, biweekly) with staff at different agencies including law enforcement, state child protective services and welfare, nongovernmental agencies, juvenile justice system, school district liaison, legal advocates. They would discuss 4-6 cases per meeting. The referrals made during these meetings were an important factor in the success of serving the population.

Similarly, Gerassi et al. (2017) identified intra-agency coalitions as a beneficial forum to share experiences and offer opportunity to coordinate with multiple groups. Involvement in coalitions provides opportunities for practitioners to expand community awareness and provide training, build referral networks and coordinate services. Creating a network supports understanding of available resources and also builds rapport between service providers which makes it more likely that a service provider can find services for their client when they are needed as opposed to being put on a waiting list. It can also offer a space to learn from the experiences of others and provide helpful information about clients who are using multiple services.

Other Notable Promising Practices

Working in pairs for safety and to stay up to date on one another's clients to ensure coverage during absences (Victim Services of Toronto, 2023).

Evening coverage needed (crimes happen at all hours and oftentimes more likely to occur in evenings/nights; this would also help foster work-life balance, preventing staff from working overtime) (Victim Services of Toronto, 2023).

Staff diversity allows connection with clients on the basis of race, ethnicity and/or language and commonalities help build trust. Hiring Indigenous staff was specifically noted (Victim Services of Toronto, 2023; Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

Mirror shifts of counsellors with shifts of investigators (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

Model healthy boundaries and relationships for survivor between counsellor and investigator (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

Staff assignment specifically to collaborative/coalition work (rather than splitting time between coalition duties and home agencies) (Kim et al., 2018).

Identify administrators to facilitate day-to-day operations. Teams are more effective with administrators who take care of operations such as monitoring grant budgets, contact lists, facilitating communication, etc.) (Thompson et al., 2022).

Formalized mandates, supports and/or incentives to encourage cross-sector collaboration (Preble et al., 2023) (e.g., release time to engage in anti-human trafficking activities; resources devoted to the collaborative efforts; funding for the collaborative; incorporating interagency collaborative activities into position descriptions and performance reviews) (Jones, 2023).

Limitations

The literature on collaborative approaches between police units and social services mainly included qualitative data obtained from interviews, focus groups, and surveys with law enforcement and service providers. These field experts were solicited for their opinions and experiences with respect to what they feel works well and what should be avoided in such collaborative models. The recommendations/promising practices identified through such data tend to be subjective in that they are the opinions and perspectives of service providers as to what approaches work best with the communities they serve and are generally not based on empirical evidence.

Nearly all results are concerning sex trafficking, as there is a relative dearth of literature concerning labor trafficking. This is consistent with the literature which discusses that labour trafficking gets less attention than sex trafficking (Dandurand et al., 2023) and that less progress has been made in the investigation and prosecution of labor trafficking cases, when compared to sex trafficking (Gavin & Thompson, 2017).

A comprehensive review of the grey literature was not included in the current review. It is possible that the grey literature would have revealed more specific details on collaborative models, however, according to Dandurand et al. (2023), there is a lack of publicly available program evaluations.

Conclusion

Despite a lack of empirical evidence to guide best practice recommendations in this area, the published literature yielded many consistent themes that service providers deem as effective in their work to support survivors of human trafficking. It is recommended that VSOP consider following the promising practices in the development of their collaborative task force model wherever possible.

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