

Road to Recovery

Nine anti-trafficking organizations share pivots and emerging best practices in response to COVID-19 disruption



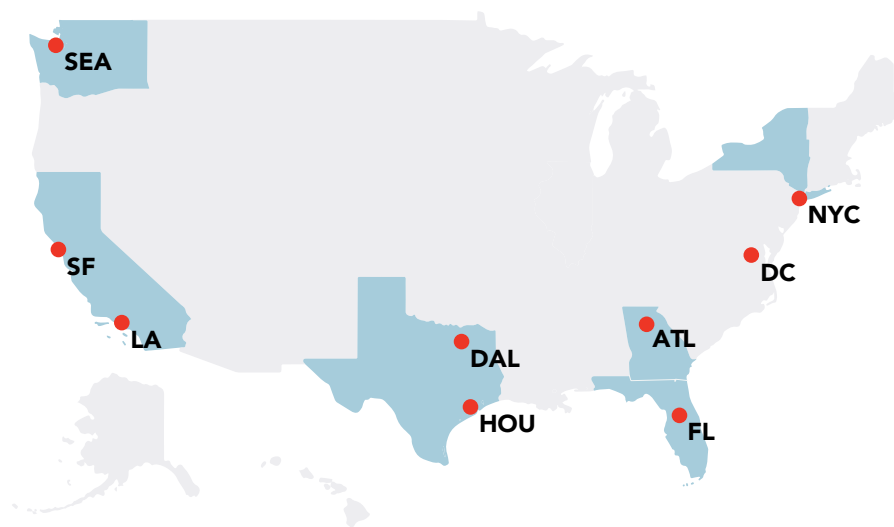
Crisis doesn't make an appointment. The crisis of a global pandemic was no exception to the rule. Anti-trafficking organizations across the world have been forced to innovate and adapt both during COVID-19 and in post-crisis. Now is the time, more than ever, to share the field's inventive and iterative approach to recovery.

Although a number of early surveys and reports have been published to document the effects of COVID-19 on various populations, including individuals who have been trafficked, few have shared what service providers are doing in response. This report outlines actionable pivots and emerging best practices from nine leading anti-trafficking service providers across urban settings in the United States where trafficking is prevalent—Atlanta, Central Florida, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington DC. **The purpose of this report is to share the ways in which service delivery and organizational strategy are being adapted in the anti-trafficking field to respond to COVID-19.**

One reason for the urgency of this report is that human trafficking is highly correlated to times of crisis. In these moments, populations without employment, housing, or other forms of financial security are most at risk. COVID-19 has had broad-reaching implications across the globe, but for victims and survivors of human trafficking, it has increased vulnerabilities for exploitation and the resurfacing of past trauma.

The Executive Directors we interviewed and the organizations they lead have responded to the crisis in differing ways depending on their programs and populations. However, there are a number of emergent themes that have evolved in the areas of pivots and programs, organizational resilience, and takeaways for the times ahead that are shared with detail and illustration in this report.

Like the road to any recovery, at the individual or societal level, the best solutions to new challenges come from sharing diverse perspectives and collaborating. In doing so, a prudent optimism about the new world emerges ahead.



Highlights from the Report

Actionable Pivots & Programs

- 8 out of 9 anti-trafficking organizations launched a COVID-19 fund to provide emergency, unrestricted cash assistance
- All organizations moved to virtual services (utilizing Zoom, Apricot Connect, Infobip) with 80-95% retention
- Organizations deprioritized non-core initiatives (e.g., expansion projects) and stepped into growth (e.g., economic empowerment models such as entrepreneurship)

Cultivating Organizational Resilience

- Benchmark themes included savings funds averaging 3-5 months, 40-90% funding from grants, and 40% referral increase
- Leaders established scenario-planning and had three best practices for building resiliency: think ahead (e.g., risk management), engage (e.g., educating communities on the racial and economic injustices tied to trafficking), and get creative (e.g., new engagement models like digital open houses)
- Team members were prioritized - focus was paid to wellbeing, healthy boundaries, and flex time

Takeaways for the Times Ahead

- As the job market continues to be greatly affected for survivors of trafficking, unrestricted cash assistance is critical and includes flexible funding for rental assistance
- Invest in technology access and supportive services
- Lean into economic empowerment such as diversifying employment opportunities, implementing job readiness services, and investing in entrepreneurship
- Continue community collaboration (e.g., formal coalitions with survivor leadership) and advocacy for government agencies to fund anti-trafficking efforts across the United States



Brook Parker-Bello PH.D

*Founder and CEO
More Too Life (Florida)*



Kay Buck

*CEO
Cast (Los Angeles)*



Dr. Amanda Eckhardt

*Executive Director
Restore NYC (New York City)*



Tina Frundt

*Executive Director
Courtney's House (Washington DC)*



Amanda Hightower

*Executive Director
REST (Seattle)*



Bianca Jackson

*Executive Director
New Friends New Life (Dallas)*



Mary Frances-Bowley

*Executive Director
Wellspring Living (Atlanta)*



Jessica Hubley

*Cofounder and CEO
AnnieCannons (San Francisco)*



Kathy McGibbon

*Founder
Twelve 11 Partners (Houston)*