

National Human Trafficking Awareness

January is National Human Trafficking Awareness Month and Jan. 11 is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

January 11, 2021, Austin, TX — In Texas, there are an estimated [300,000 people being trafficked](#), 79,000 of whom are minors being trafficked for sex. Raising awareness about the seriousness of trafficking is a critical step in putting an end to this widespread issue.

In 2018, The SAFE Alliance launched CARES, a program specifically designed to support survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation. Since the program started, CARES has provided crisis response, advocacy, counseling, case management, and other support services to more than 400 survivors of trafficking in Central Texas.

The program continues to make improvements in the ways we serve survivors, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. As a result of the financial instability created by the pandemic, more and more people face poverty—which is a precursor to trafficking as well as a direct outcome of trafficking that can potentially tether an individual to a life of commercial sex work and a lifetime of abuse.

CARES Director Allison Franklin is a leader in trafficking prevention and a survivor herself. Franklin described her story:

Traffickers prey on the weak, yet poverty is not the sole catalyst. I was gang trafficked domestically for nearly a decade, yet had lived a relatively privileged middle class life, including acquiring some formal university education, prior to my trafficking experience. I can attest to the absolute depravity that commercial sexual exploitation/sex trafficking victims experience while in captivity, and upon exiting “the life.” Every dime I made my trafficker took, and I literally escaped with the clothes on my back. Worse yet, I had acquired multiple felonies while under the oppression of my trafficker, making it extremely difficult to obtain employment, housing, and financial aid; there were also numerous other barriers that limited my economic agency. Poverty is not just a precursor to trafficking but can be a direct outcome of sex trafficking that, if not alleviated, can potentially tether an individual to a life of commercial sex work and a lifetime of abuse. Everyone deserves to live sustainably and with dignity.

“At SAFE CARES, we have an opportunity to meet our clients right where they are at,” Franklin said, “in their own humanity, often times in their darkness moments. It is an absolute honor to hold space for our clients as they heal and to walk with them toward empowerment.”

If you would like more information about sex trafficking—including signs to watch for, ways to support survivors, and resources available—please contact SAFE Communications Coordinator Antwon R. Martin at amartin@safeaustin.org or 512.772.9374. CARES Director Allison Franklin will be available for media interviews throughout the month of January.

About SAFE

At SAFE, we strive to provide safety, stability, and healing for children, adults, and families that have experienced violence and abuse. We do this by providing shelter and housing, support services, and prevention programs to stop the cycle of violence. Learn more at safeaustin.org.