



THE CHATTANOOGA HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT

BUILDING FROM THE COMMUNITY UP

REGINA MCDEVITT AND SARAH MCKINNIS

SESSION OBJECTIVES

From Systems to Community: Tennessee FJCs as the Anchor for Safe Harbor Implementation

01

How the Chattanooga Pilot Was Built

Learn how local and national partners — including the Dr. Carol B. Berz Family Justice Center, WillowBend Farms, Uplift Strategies LLC, Shared Hope International, the Children's Advocacy Center, Girls Inc., Street Grace, Her Song, Love's Arm, and Blazing Hope Ranch — came together to design and launch the Chattanooga Community-Based Response Pilot as a model for coordinated Safe Harbor implementation.

02

FJCs as Safe Harbor Anchors

Understand how Tennessee FJCs can anchor Safe Harbor implementation by shifting the default response for trafficked youth — from punishment and system involvement toward coordinated, trauma-informed, community-based care.

03

Strategies for Building the Response

Learn strategies for assessing service gaps, mapping the continuum of care, and operationalizing multidisciplinary collaboration across law enforcement, juvenile courts, DCS, advocates, and community providers.

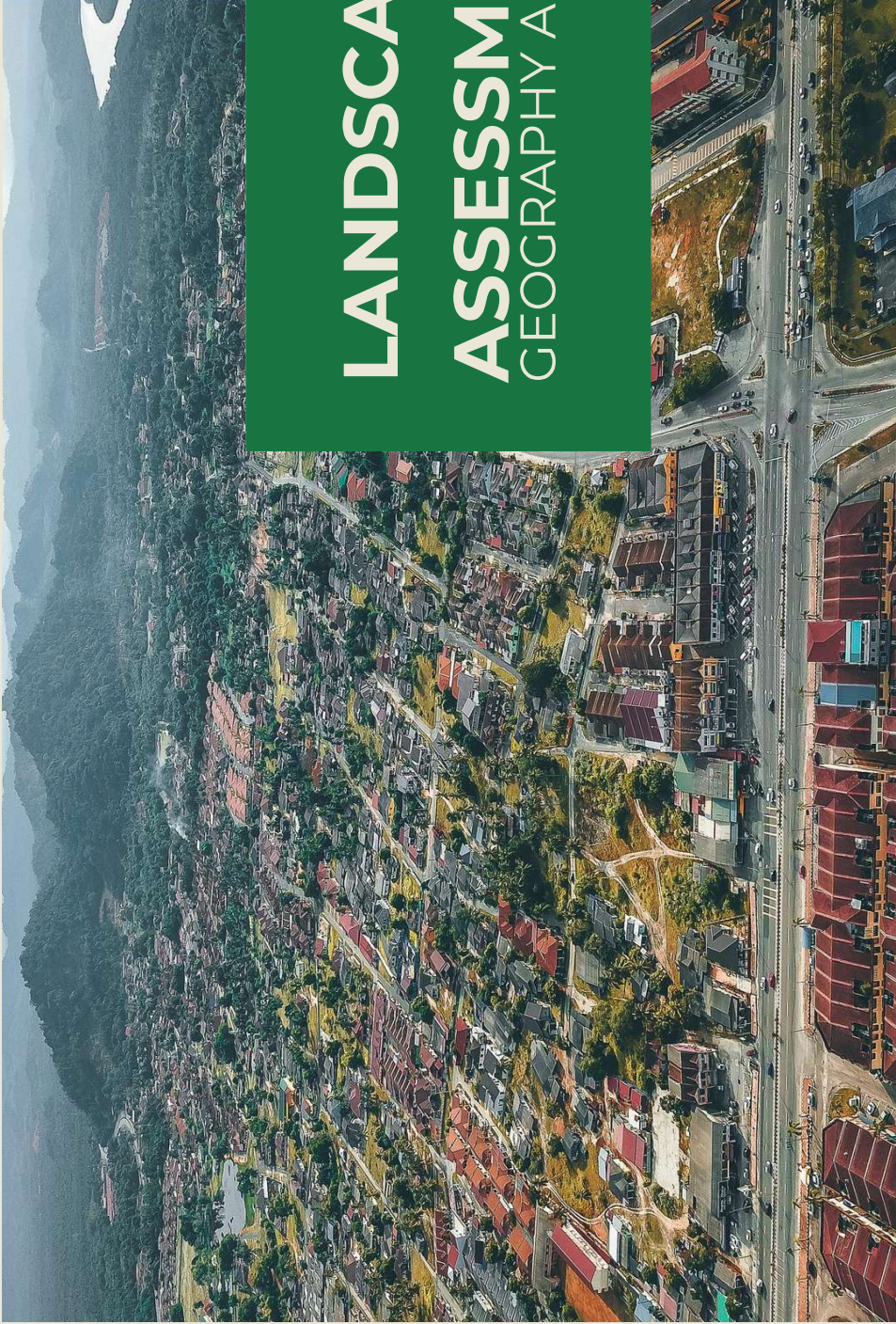
04

Tools for Your Community

Leave equipped with customizable tools and a replicable framework for building a comprehensive, community-embedded response to trafficked youth that can be adapted across Tennessee communities.

Regina McDevitt | Executive Director, Dr. Carol B. Berz Family Justice Center Sarah McKinnis | WillowBend Farms

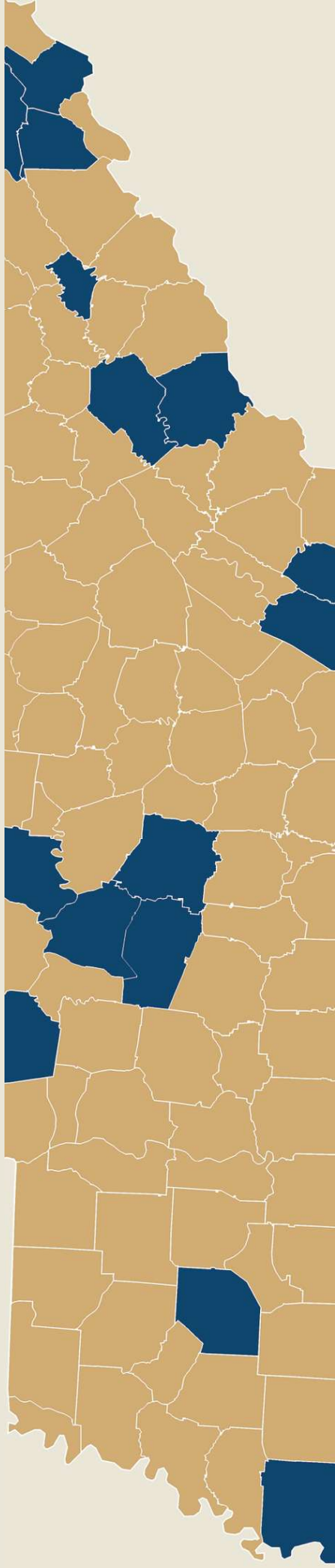
Dr. Carol B. Berz Family Justice Center • WillowBend Farms • Uplift Strategies LLC • Shared Hope International



LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

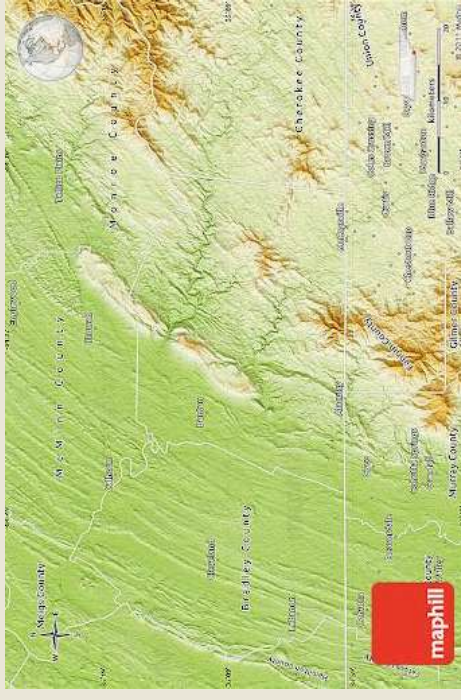
URBAN & RURAL AREAS



Urban/rural areas of Tennessee

Rural populations in urban areas due to better resources, safer access, and increased autonomy.

Urban population may also do the same for rural resources for safety and autonomy.

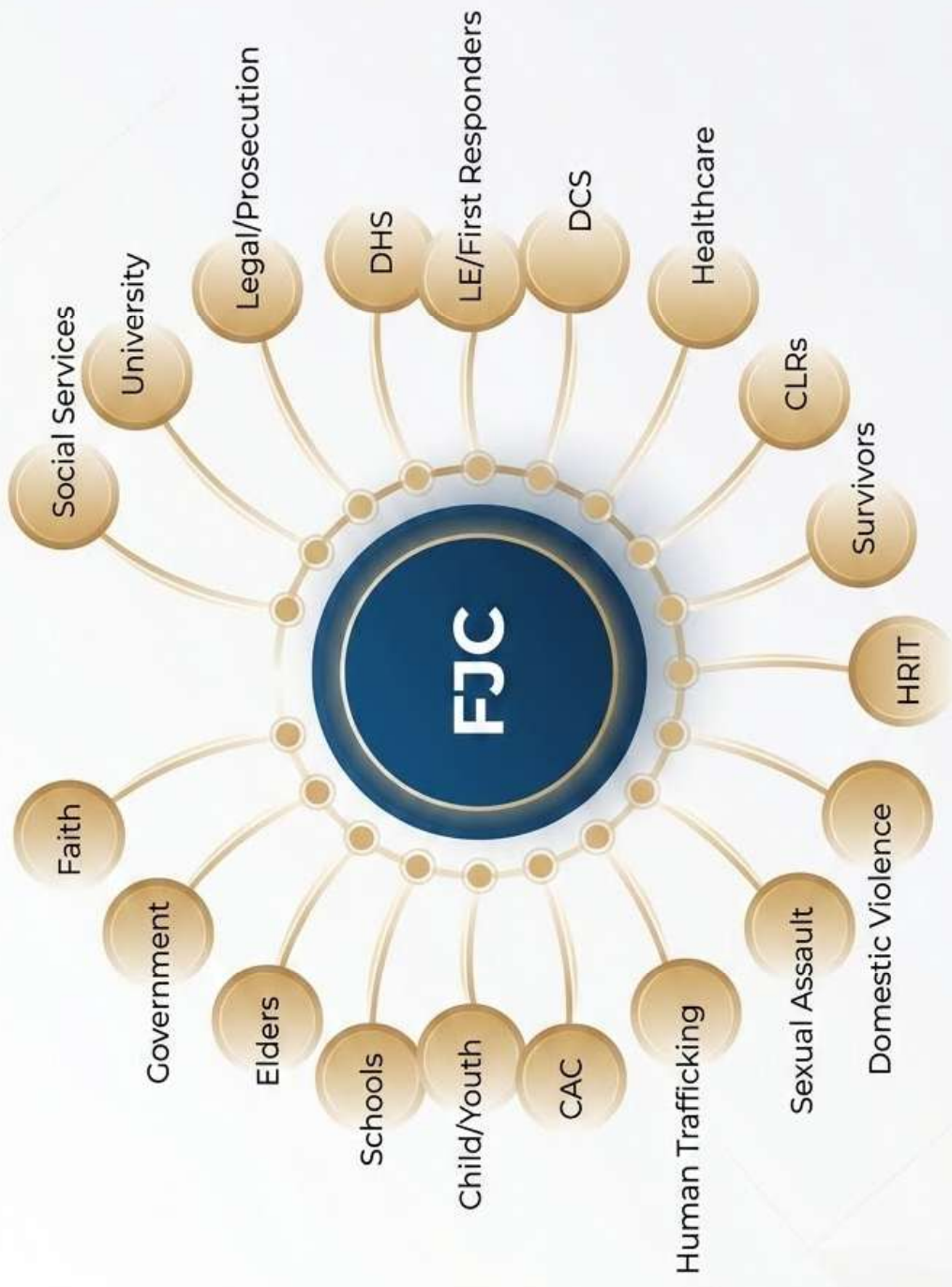


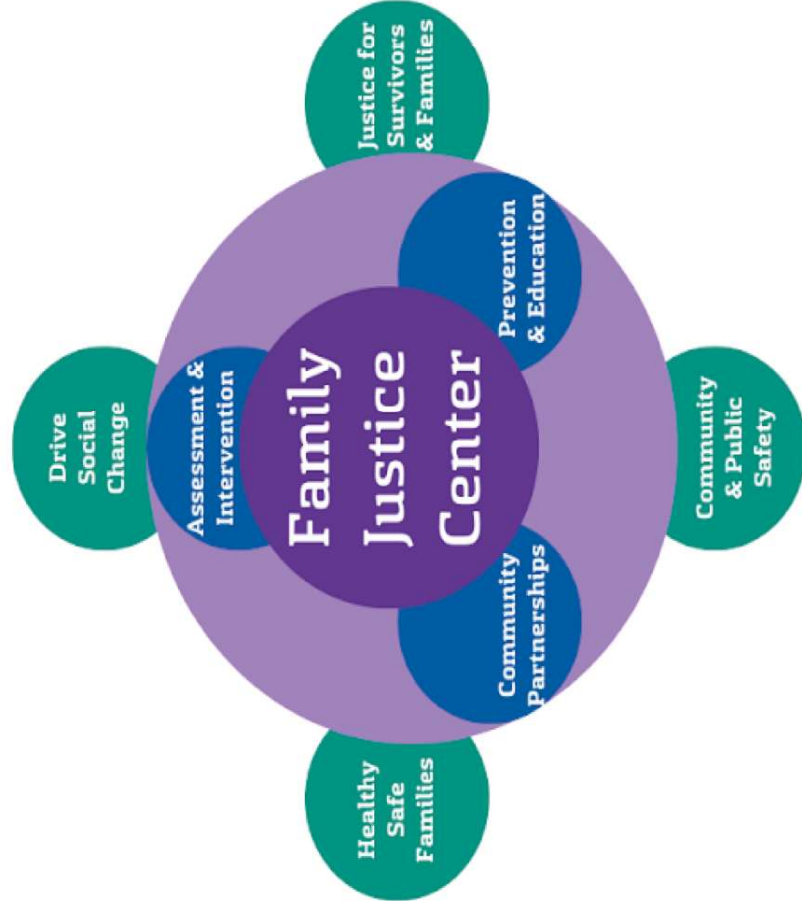
PICTURED: POLK COUNTY, TN



SOLUTION ORIENTED & COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

How do we foster trust and collaboration?





Hamilton County Family Justice Center's Approach

FJC believes that organizations that lead with vision see themselves as advocate and neighbors first and service providers second.

Strategy

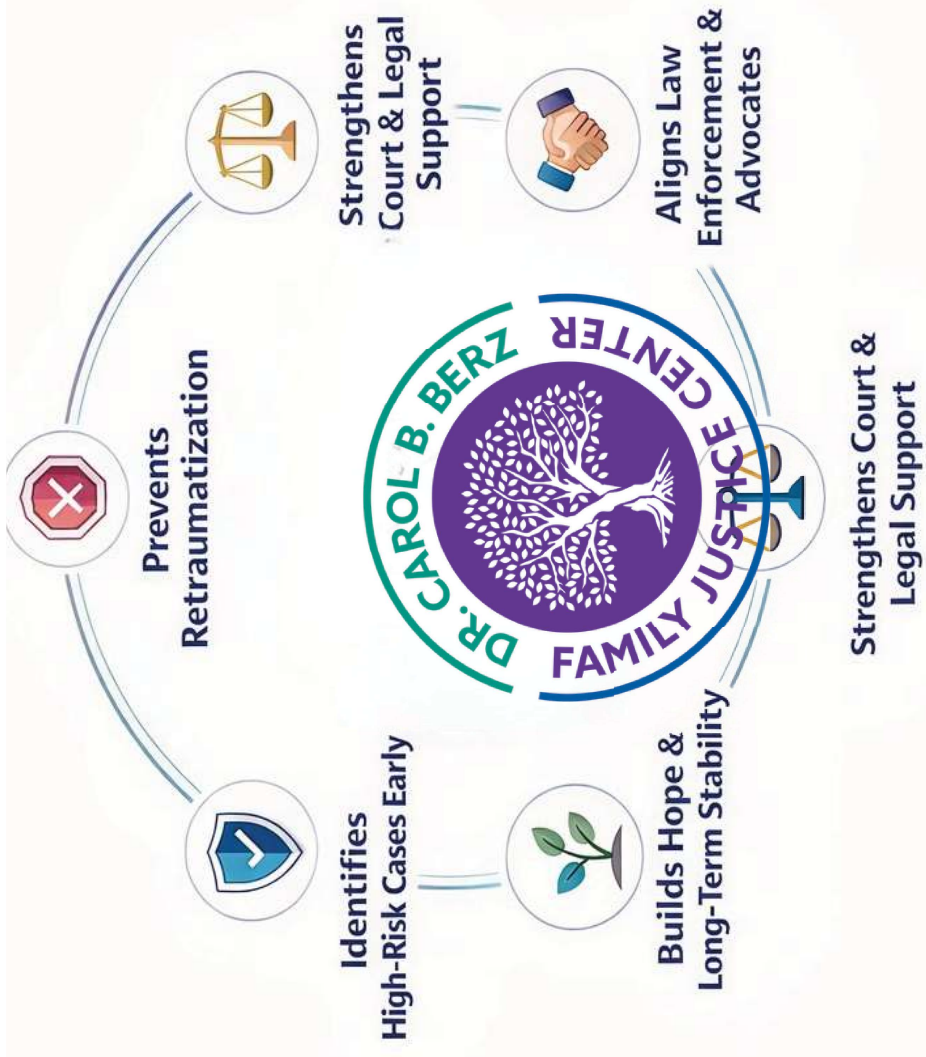
Launched the Coordinated Community Response to SADV, including trafficking.

Determined survivor's priority needs

Housing, access to justice, transportation, affordable childcare, quality mental health support.

Goals

Decrease SADV, increase trainings, increase prosecutions, increase evaluation capacity & data collection, increase evidence-supported prevention strategies, decrease risk factors & increase protective factors Victim Safety and Offender Accountability



**Domestic violence escalation is predictable.
Coordinated intervention reduces homicides.**



WILLOWBEND FARMS

Restoring human trafficking survivors

Our vision is to develop a collaborative environment of change that addresses the entire supply and demand of human trafficking through our five strategic initiatives.



Restoration of Survivors

Providing residential programs, community services, and workforce development opportunities

Prevention, Education, & Awareness

Equipping communities with strategy, training, and tactical applications

Network of Emergent Care Safehouses

Connecting survivors to safe placements across the United States

Rescue Opportunities

Partnering with local, state, and federal law enforcement as a resource for survivor services

Demand Reduction

Advocating for change within the judicial and legislative systems

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE

RESPONSES

**BRINGING PEOPLE
TOGETHER ON MISSION**
LEARNING TOGETHER



NO SILOS



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT



PARTNERSHIPS



ONE VOICE COLLECTIVE

▶ COLLABORATION - BREAKING
DOWN BARRIERS OF
COMPETITION AND HISTORY

▶ SETTING STANDARDS AND
MISSION

▶ SOLUTION-ORIENTED
APPROACH



CHATTANOOGA

PILOT

PROJECT

GOAL

Increase positive outcomes and decrease costs for impacted children & families, systems, and the community by addressing vulnerabilities to experiences of exploitation through a network of funded, coordinated, and accessible community-based services, shifting the default response from systems back into the community.

- **BACKGROUND**
- **PROJECT ELEMENTS**
- **TIMELINE & FUNDING**
- **OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS**

HOW THIS GOT STARTED...



Chattanooga Pilot Project

Uplifting, strengthening, and replicating a data-driven, community-based service response to child & youth sex trafficking.

Partners: City of Chattanooga, The One Voice Collective

Goals:

- Examine existing responses to impacted children, youth & families
- Determine funding streams & costs associated with current response
- Calculate known & forecasted cost-savings of utilizing community-based response
- Develop replicable model policies and practices for other communities & country to shift from a system-based to a community-based public health principles.





WillowBend Farms

CHATTANOOGA/HAMILTON COUNTY

TN-based direct service provider utilizing survivor-informed, research-based programming to support adult and youth survivors of trafficking in accessing comprehensive services and attaining long-term healing and success. Works on supply and demand sides of trafficking with focuses on prevention and collaboration.



Dr. Carol B. Berz Family Justice Center

CHATTANOOGA/HAMILTON COUNTY

TN-based community-based center with 8+ co-located service providers. Focused on supporting families who have experienced DV/IPV, trafficking or elder abuse. All services are free and provided in an environment premised in trauma-informed, collaborative approaches.



Uplift Strategies LLC

NATIONAL

National consulting firm focused on partnering with communities in transforming the landscape in which trafficking survivors access resources and services, to prevent vulnerabilities to and experiences of exploitation and promote holistic responses through public policy reform, coalition building and research.

SAFE HARBOR IN TENNESSEE

From punishment to protection — why community-based models are essential to making Safe Harbor real

TENNESSEE'S PROTECTIONS

- Minors in commercial sex recognized as victims
- Ability to divert youth from delinquency proceedings
- Increased emphasis on services & protection over punishment

GAPS REMAIN

- Limited specialized housing for trafficked youth
- Inconsistent identification across systems
- Varying use of diversion by jurisdiction

WHY IT MATTERS

WITHOUT SAFE HARBOR

- Youth can be arrested & detained
- Labeled as offenders — deepening trauma
- Less likely to seek help

WITH SAFE HARBOR

- Youth identified earlier
- Connected to support instead of punishment
- Systems shift toward healing, safety & prevention

THE BOTTOM LINE

Safe Harbor is not just a legal protection.

It is a philosophical and operational shift:

"What did this child do wrong?"



"What happened to this child, and how do we help?"

That shift only becomes real **when communities build the coordinated, trauma-informed response systems you are working to lead.**

THE FJC AS SAFE HARBOR ANCHOR

From fragmented systems to a coordinated hub — bridging Safe Harbor law and real-world response

WITHOUT AN ANCHOR

Trafficked youth cycle through:

▶ Juvenile justice

▶ Child welfare

▶ Emergency systems

⚠ Re-exploitation

Safe Harbor laws are only as effective as the response infrastructure behind them.

THE FJC DIFFERENCE

Single-entry, multi-agency hub

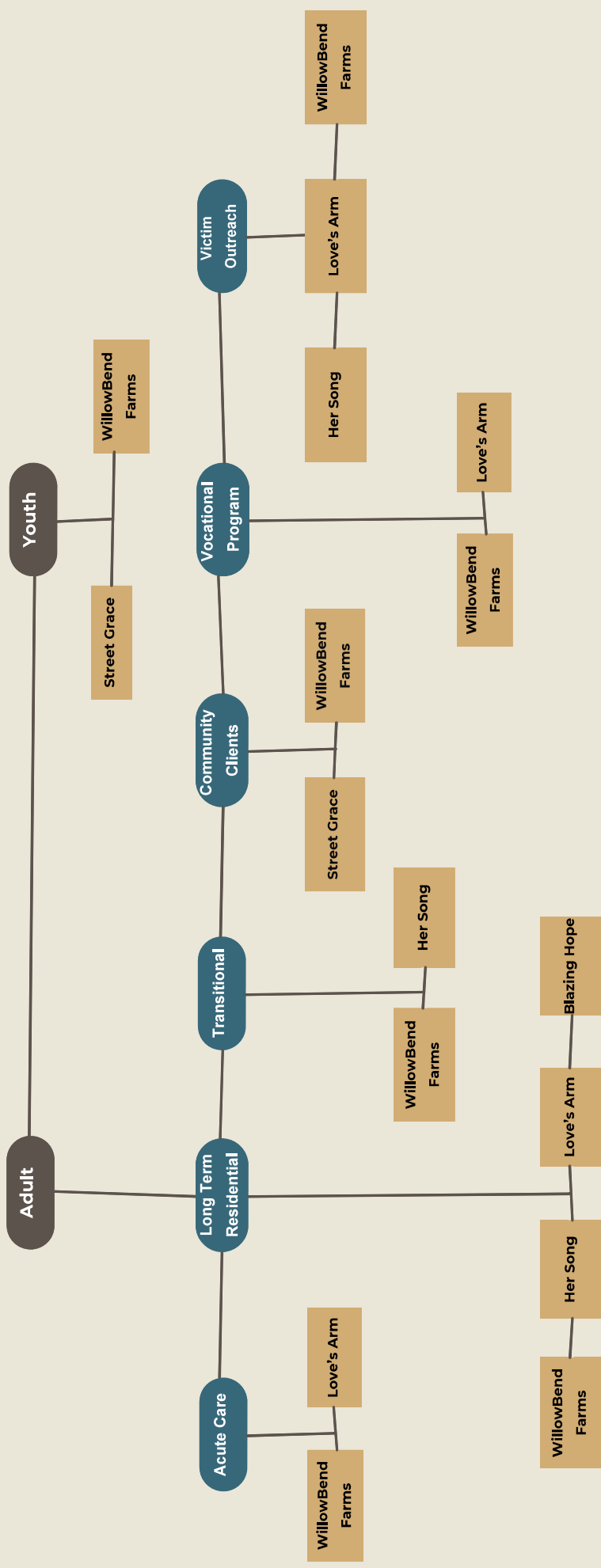
- Co-located partners & real-time referrals
- Immediate safety planning & legal services
- Trauma-informed, survivor-centered access
- HRIT integration for high-risk youth
- Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

"No silos" is not just philosophy — it is infrastructure.

WHAT FJCs COORDINATE

- **Immediate Needs** Food, clothing, ID, transportation
- **Safe Housing** Flexible & nontraditional placements
- **Legal & Advocacy** Courts, orders, survivor rights
- **Mental Health** Trauma-specific, alternative therapies
- **Family Engagement** Reunification when appropriate
- **Continuum Navigation** Acute → transitional → stabilization

MAPPING OUT CONTINUUM OF CARE



Who serves adults and youth in your area?

SWOT ANALYSIS: CHATTANOOGA HUMAN TRAFFICKING

STRENGTHS

- Trainings/education
- Trauma informed care
- Call to action
- Compassion
- Survivor leadership
- Google translate: access to translation services
- Assistance with immigration services

WEAKNESS/ OPPORTUNITY

- Labor trafficking
- Education – identification
- Trauma informed care
- Time and compassion
- Survivor leadership
- Prevention/awareness
- Hiring bilingual staff
- Affordable mental health treatment
- Assistance with immigration services
- Collaborating/coordinating services
- Compiling community resources – can we/how?
- Visibility in the community to build rapport
- Receptivity of audience/clients/first responders
- Services for family units

THREATS

- Cultural/language barriers
- Disabilities
- Assistance with immigration services
- Services for youth including housing
- Services for family units
- Legislative limits on housing/treating children

What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats do you see in your area?



RESOURCES

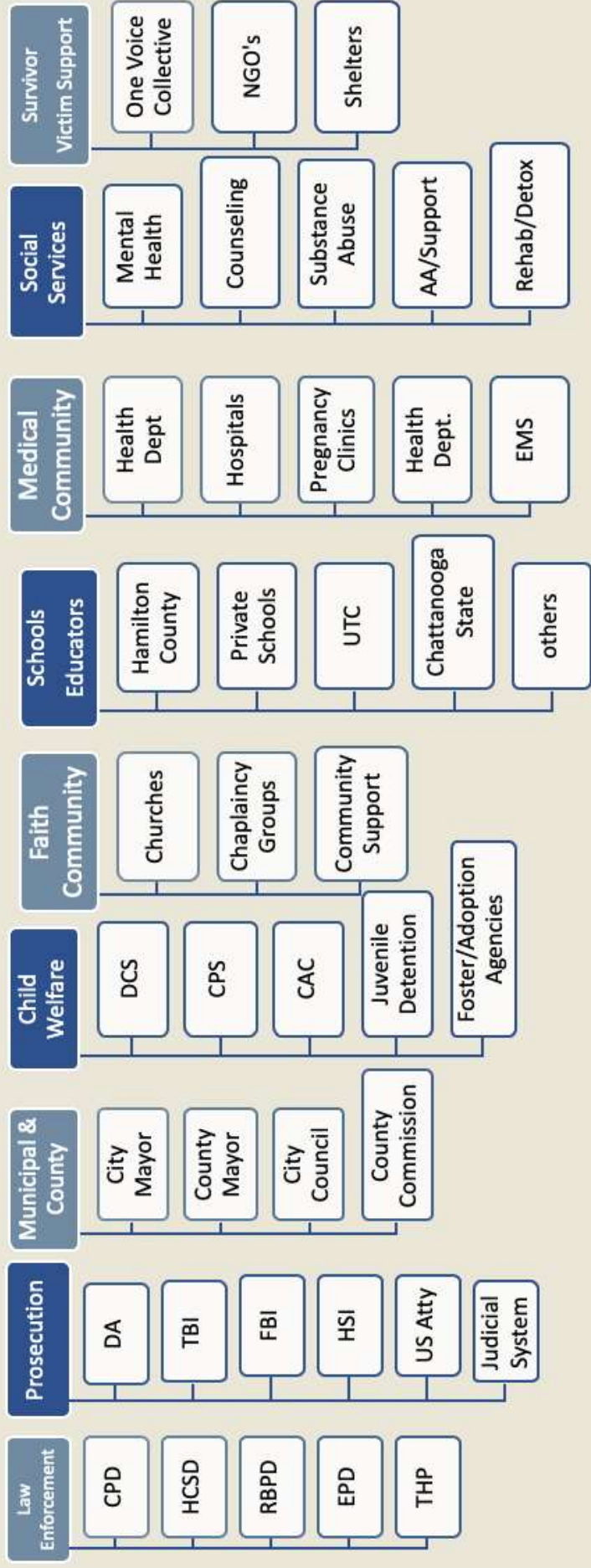
NUMBER AND TYPES OF
RESOURCES

IDENTIFICATION BEGINNING

GROWTH THROUGH SWOT
ANALYSIS

SHARED HOPE PILOT PROJECT

MOBILIZING MULTISECTOR ENGAGEMENT



Who needs to be invited to the table in your area?

FEDERAL CASE STUDY

REFERRAL - LEO INVOLVEMENT - SECURE LOCATION - INTERVIEW - BASIC NEEDS

SAFE HOUSING PLACEMENT - DV SHELTER

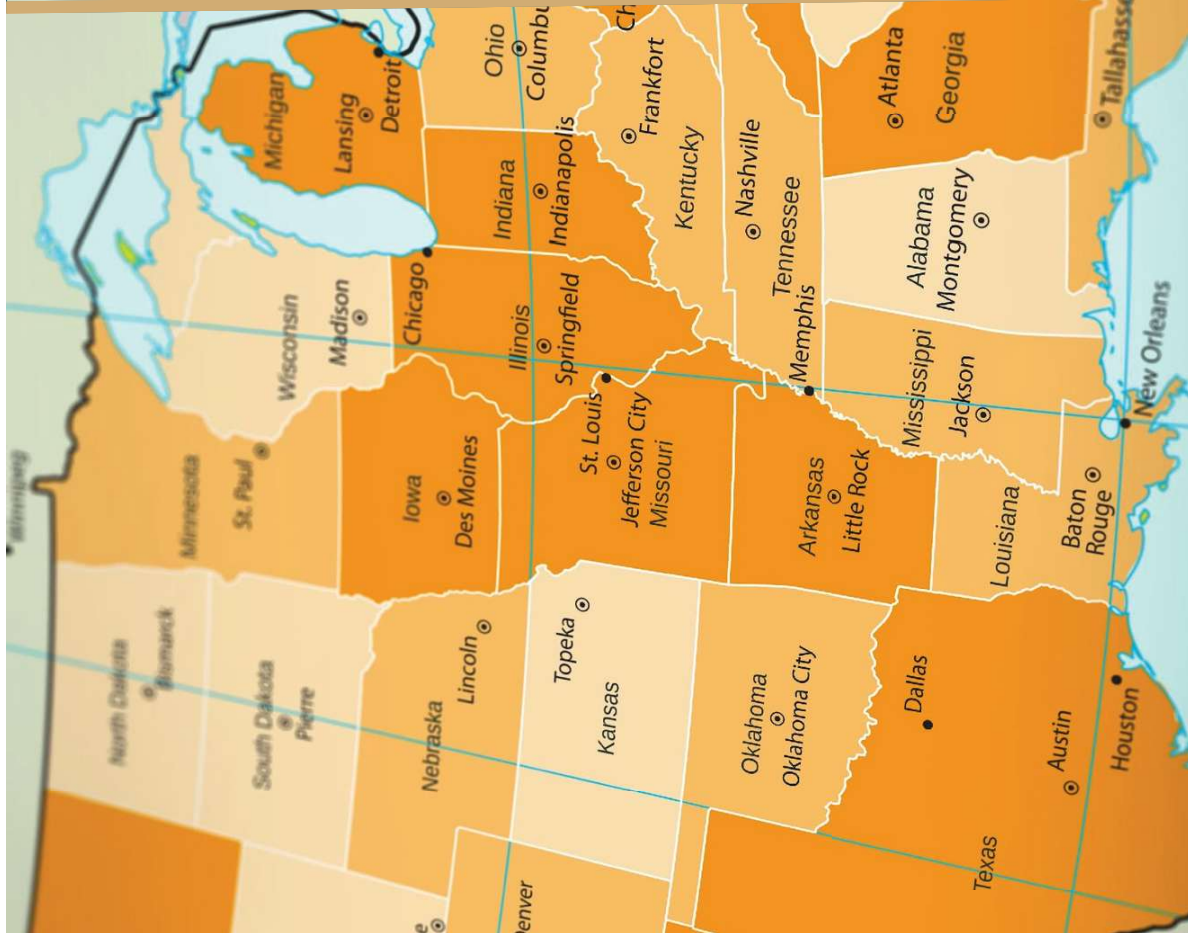
RESOURCES - TRAUMA RESPONSE - FINDING RIGHT THERAPIST

INVESTIGATION - INTERVIEWS - LENGTHY PROCESS

IDENTIFICATION - OTHER STATES - COVID - REUNIFICATION WITH FAMILY

ARREST OF DEFENDANTS - SETBACKS

TRANSPORTATION - EMPLOYMENT - SCHOOLING - HOUSING - MAJOR MEDICAL PROSECUTOR - RELATIONSHIPS WITH AGENCIES - CRIMINAL



CONTINUUM OF CARE: IDENTIFYING GAPS

▶ WORKING WITH WHAT YOU HAVE
WHILE BUILDING SOLUTIONS

▶ HOTELS, REPUTABLE PARTNERSHIPS,
AIRBNB VS SHELTER

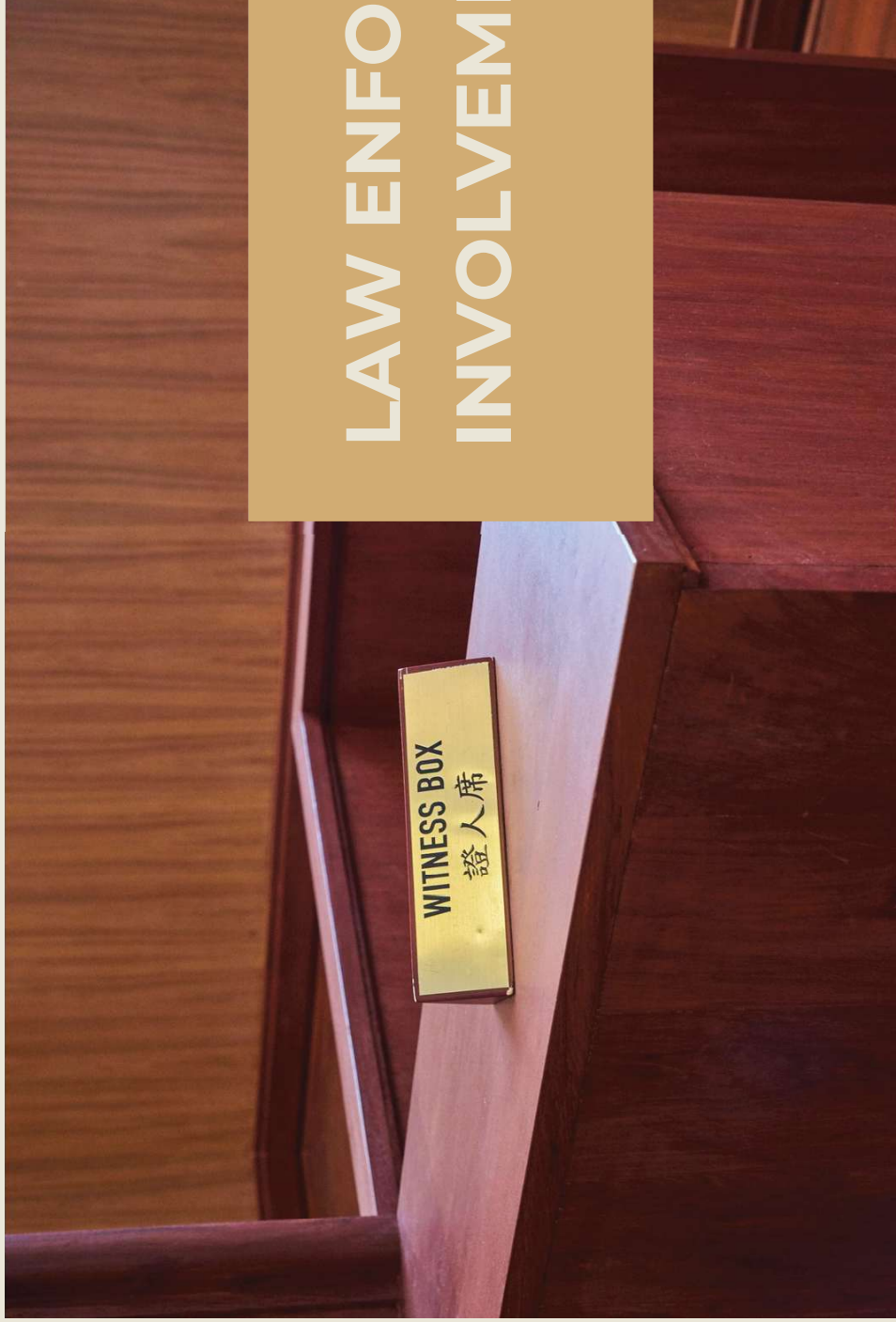
▶ UNTIL FUNDING FOR ERC

▶ IDENTIFYING HOUSING SYSTEMS IN
PLACES NOT WELL KNOWN AND
CONDUCTING TRAININGS



LAW ENFORCEMENT INVOLVEMENT?

WITNESS BOX
證人席



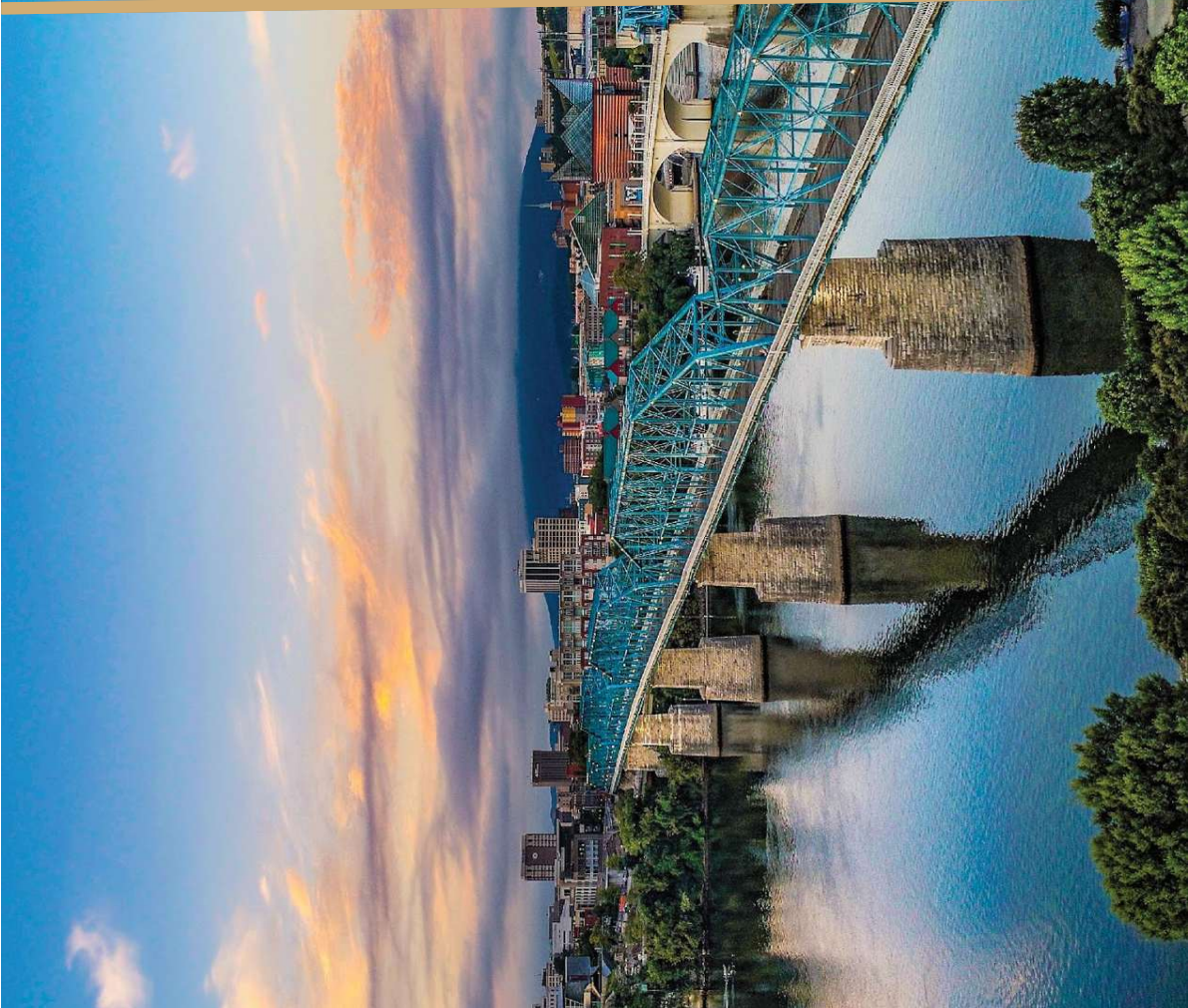


EVERYCHILDTN

▶ **FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES**

▶ **FOSTER CARE**

▶ **CHILD SERVING RESOURCES**



LOCAL CASE STUDY

- ▶ OP - REFERRAL
- ▶ FJC MEETINGS - CONNECTION TO RESOURCES
- ▶ NEEDS: FOOD, CLOTHING, IDENTIFICATION, HOUSING, TRANSPORATION
- ▶ PREGNANCY - MEDICAL CARE
- ▶ EMPLOYMENT - SCHOOLING - CERTIFICATION
- ▶ TRANSPORTATION - LEGAL NEEDS ADDRESSED



YOUTH CASE STUDY

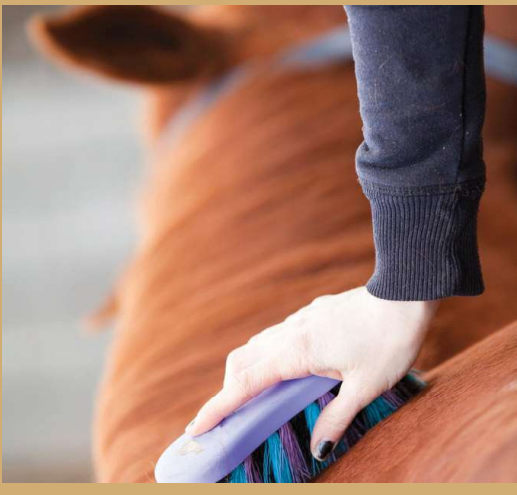
- ▶ REFERRAL JUVENILE COURT
- ▶ ASSESSMENT - FAMILY MEETINGS
- ▶ RISK BEHAVIORS - RISKY RELATIONSHIPS
- ▶ HOMELESSNESS
- ▶ FAMILY SUPPORTS
- ▶ THERAPIES (ALTERNATIVE)
- ▶ OUTCOMES



ART



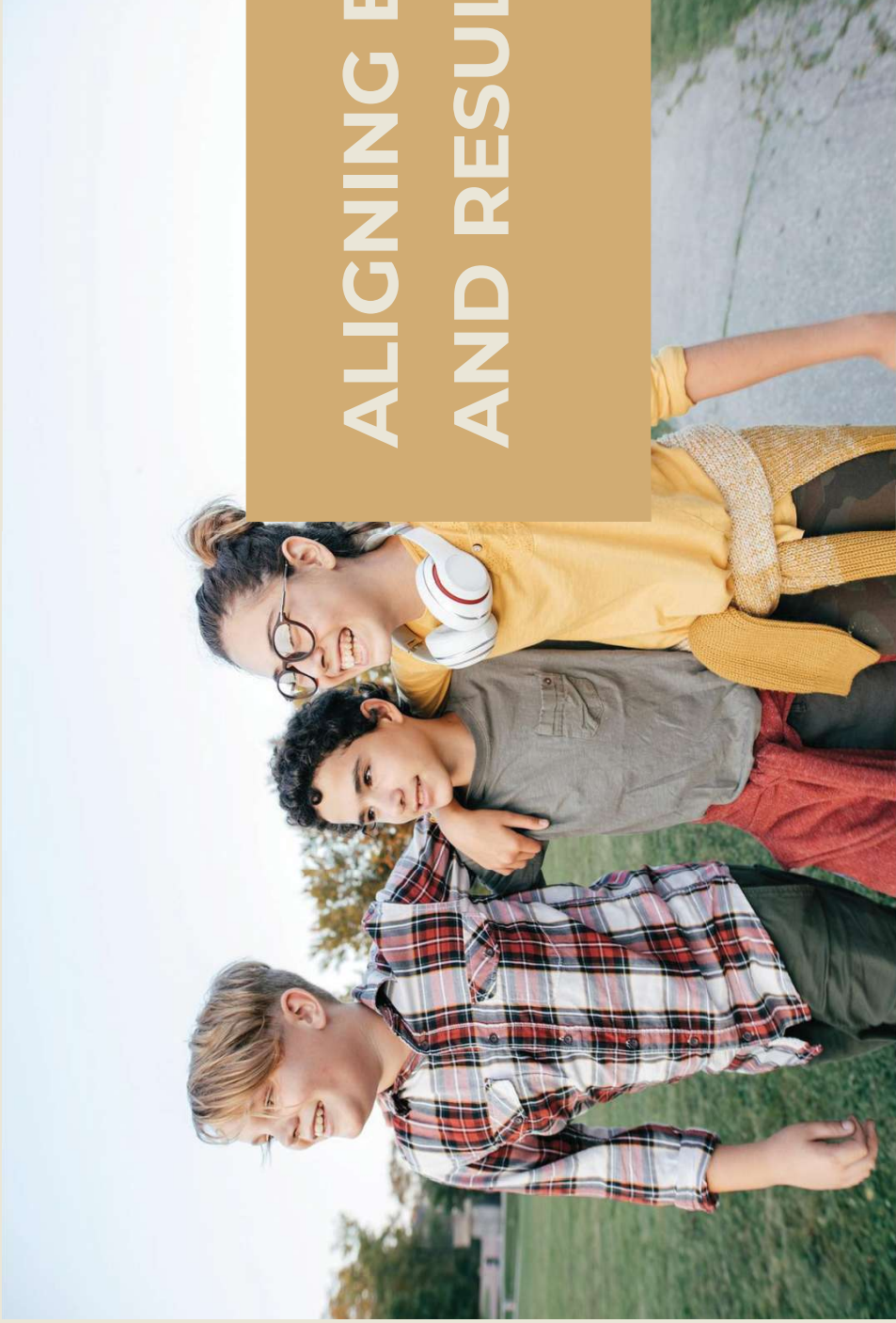
JOURNALING



EQUINE

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

ALIGNING EFFORTS AND RESULTS



2025 Roadmap Report

Community-Based Responses as the
Next Step in Anti-Trafficking Reforms



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL EXTENDS APPRECIATION TO THE MANY PEOPLE WHO gave their time and efforts to help accomplish this “2025 Roadmap Report.” Our hope is that the information compiled here elevates community-based responses as the next step in anti-trafficking reforms.

In particular, we are deeply grateful to the members of Shared Hope International’s Just Response Council for informing this report. The Just Response Council represents some of the most innovative and informed experts in the country. Their diverse areas of expertise, both lived and professional, help ensure that the policy and guidance developed by Shared Hope’s policy team are informed by diverse perspectives and experiences. Council members share the goals of preventing young people from experiencing trafficking victimization and ensuring that youth who have been trafficked have access to the tools and support necessary to heal from the trauma they have endured and the skills to create and sustain a life away from trafficking. Members include policy advocates, government officials, medical professionals, law enforcement, judges, academics, and service providers, many of whom are themselves survivors of juvenile sex trafficking, from diverse geographic areas.

We would also like to extend special appreciation and gratitude to My Life My Choice in Boston, MA, youthSpark in Atlanta, GA, and the amazing youth leaders in their programs who were instrumental in ensuring the voices of young people with lived experiences of trafficking and/or system-involvement were centered in the development of this report. We encourage anyone using this report to consider the insights of these young people and, whenever possible, seek out and incorporate the voices of young people in their own communities in building a community-based response to trafficking.

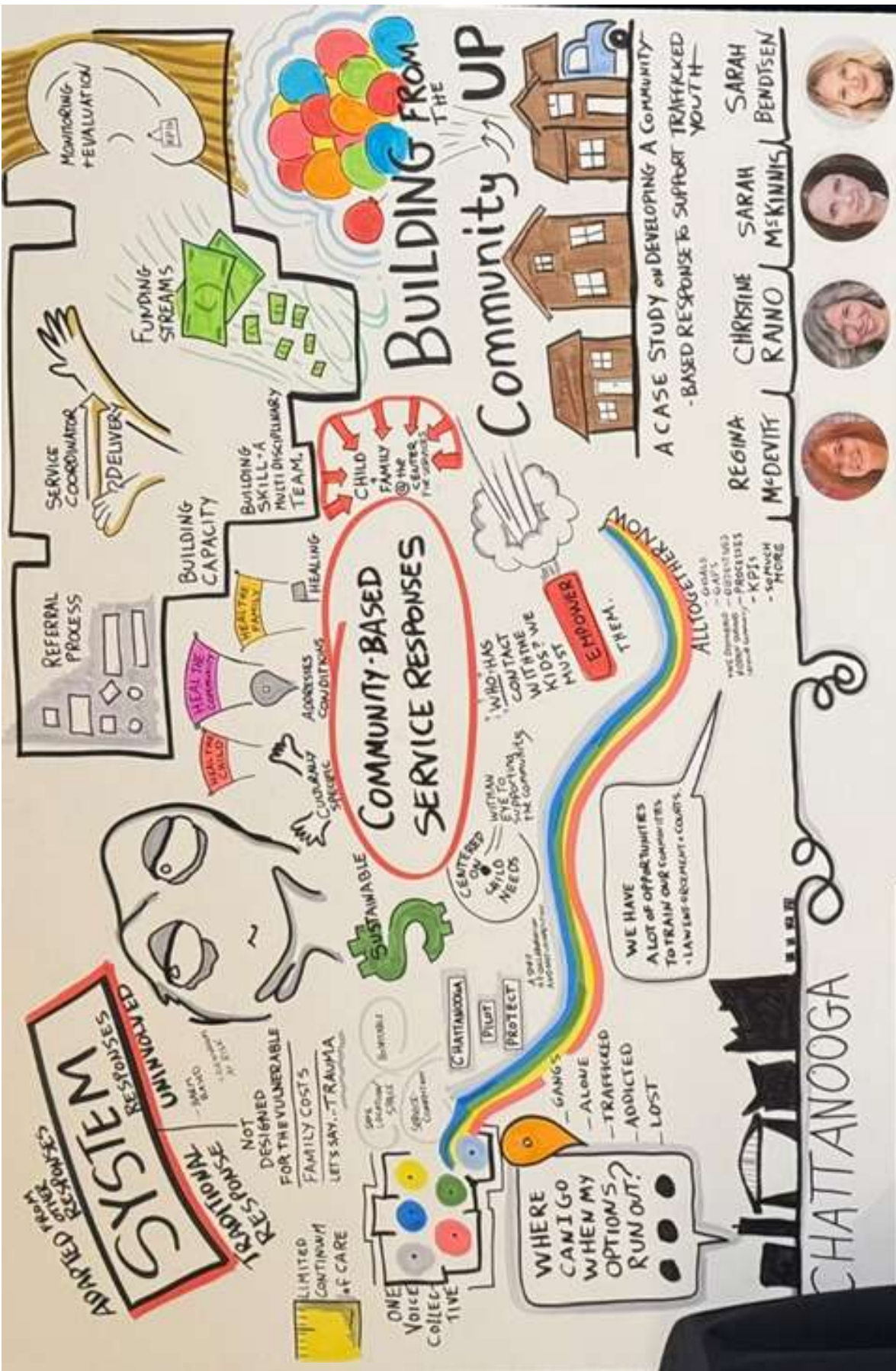
Additionally, we are grateful to have had the opportunity to collaborate with a community-based pilot project in the development of this report and extend our sincere gratitude to the amazing project leaders who helped inform this report, especially Regina McDevitt at the Chattanooga Hamilton County Family Justice Center, Sarah McKinnis at Willowbend Farms, One Voice Collective, the Chattanooga Children’s Advocacy Center, the Chattanooga Homeless Coalition and Youth Action Board, and other individuals and organizations whose advice and consultation deepened our understanding of the community. We also want to acknowledge the catalyst of this project, the late Carol Berz. We are deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to partner with her and extend our deepest sympathy to her family and the Chattanooga community for the sudden loss of her tireless and compassionate leadership. We also hope in some small way that this report will help carry on her important legacy.

We would also like to thank Mercy Gray, Anne Lafrinier-Ritchie and Cristian Eduardo for authoring the Specially Impacted Populations Fact Sheets, which are a critical component of this report. We greatly appreciate their time and expertise in informing the development of responses that are culturally responsive, youth-centered, and survivor-informed.

Finally, appreciation is due to Ashley Cunningham and Jesse Nimmons who provided key support along with the following Shared Hope Fellows and Interns: Ash Bissell, Christine Marsden, Samantha Masie, Paige Samler, Molly Smith, Shelby Whalen, and Mariah Wilson.

This report was a collaborative effort under the direction of Christine Raino, Esq. and was greatly assisted by Sarah Bendtsen Dredhiou, J.D., Sidney McCoy, Esq., and Sarah Roberts, J.D., LL.M.





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Chattanooga Anti Trafficking Alliance January 2024



PRESENTATIONS & CONFERENCES

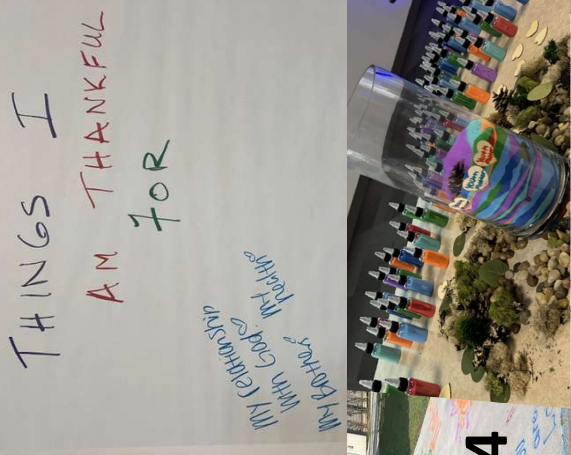
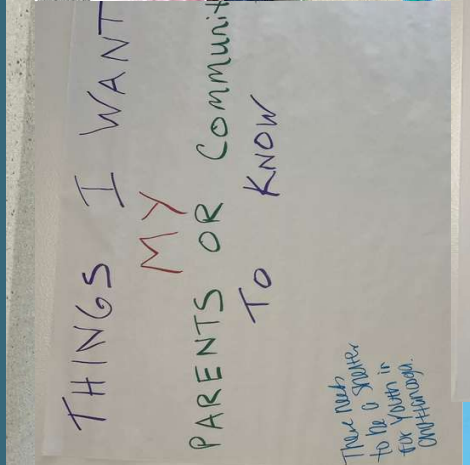
Mayors Council for Women 2025
Policy Conference February

JUST Conference October
2024



GRIT April 2025

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



YJAM Oct 2024

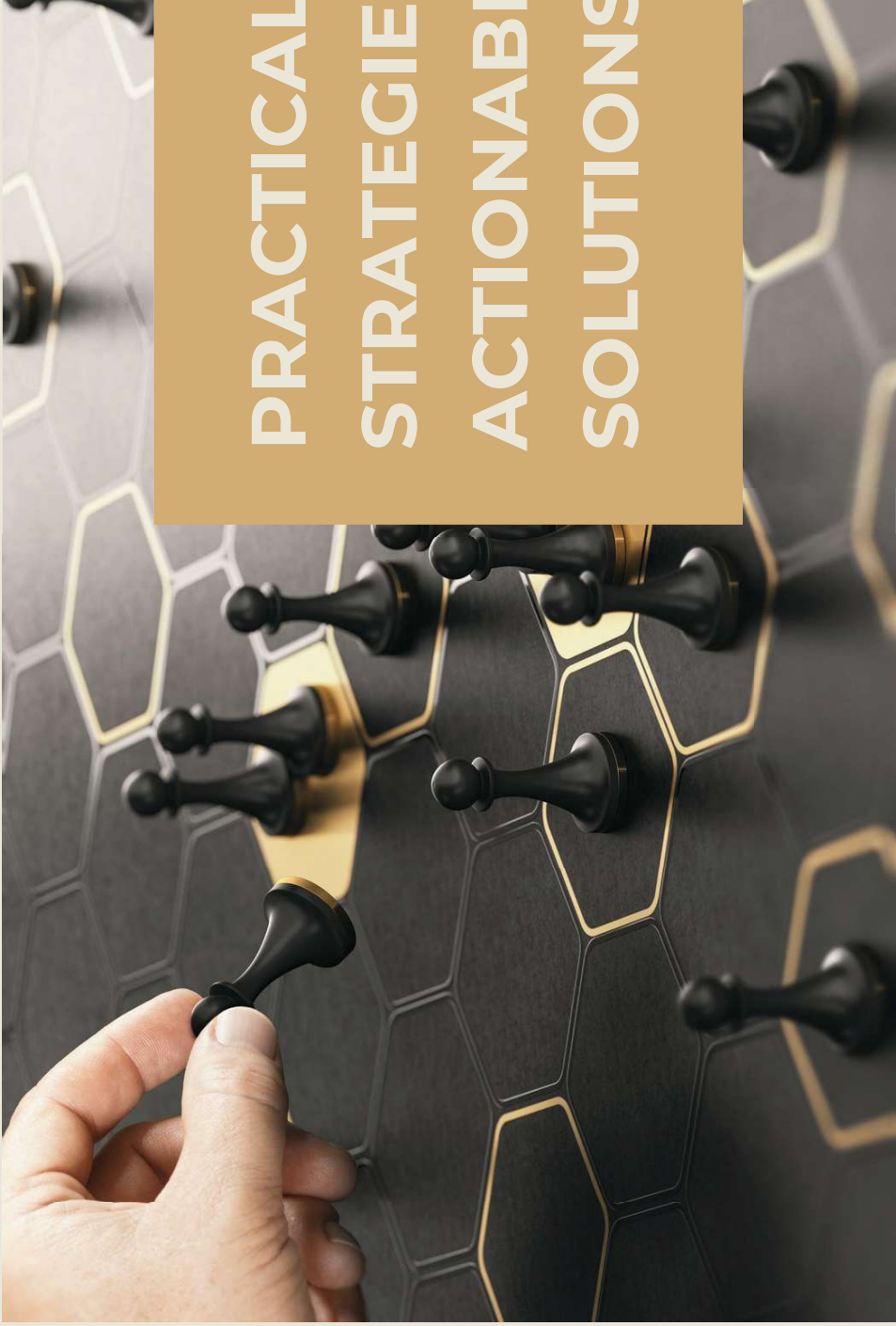
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

“Centering Youth and Families to Advance Primary Prevention”

The community outreach event seeks to capture the role delinquency prevention plays in interrupting and preventing trafficking among children and youth and ultimately inform policies and practices aimed at reducing vulnerability and risk factors. This will be achieved by:

- Providing prevention education to establish awareness and the identification of human trafficking among youth interacting with or involved in the juvenile justice system;
- Promoting opportunities for system-involved youth to share lived experiences and offer insight into challenges and barriers they have encountered within the system;
- Gathering data to develop prevention-oriented priorities and a roadmap for shifting funding and responses to impacted youth out of systems and into communities through the formation of collaboration and partnership development.





**PRACTICAL
STRATEGIES AND
ACTIONABLE
SOLUTIONS**

WHAT'S NEXT: 2026 PRIORITIES

Chattanooga Community-Based Response Pilot | Phase 2

NOW - SPRING 2026

- Reconvene Steering Committee
- Formalize Steering Committee structure
- Complete youth & caregiver listening session #2
- Launch Youth & Families Advisory Committee

SUMMER 2026

- Design & disseminate survey to youth, caregivers & providers
- Identify access points & barriers to community-based care
- Complete listening sessions #3
- Bolster community-based org capacity

FALL 2026

- Co-design coordinated community-based response protocol (Aug–Sep)
- Train service providers & partners on protocol (Oct–Nov)
- Begin protocol implementation
- Complete listening session #4

LOOKING AHEAD: 2027-2029 ROADMAP

Building toward a replicable community-based model for trafficked youth & families

Jan-Jun 2027

Protocol in Action

- Full protocol implementation
- Ongoing provider training
- Listening sessions #4 & #5
- Begin data collection

Jul 2027-Jun 2028

Expand & Evaluate

- Expand prevention strategies
- Periodic outcomes data extraction
- Adapt protocol based on feedback
- Bolster CBO capacity

Jul 2028-Jul 2029

Model & Replicate

- Final data analysis
- Document lessons learned
- Develop replication framework
- Share model nationally

Ultimate Goal: A documented, replicable community-based response model for trafficked youth that can be shared and scaled across communities nationwide.

5 WAYS FJCS ADVANCE SAFE HARBOR IN TENNESSEE

Safe Harbor requires a viable alternative pathway — Tennessee FJCs are positioned to lead

1

Shift the Default Response

Move from detention & system placement to community care — immediate basic needs, survivor-informed services, family engagement & safe housing.

2

Coordinate the Full Continuum

Navigate youth across the full arc — acute identification through long-term stabilization — bridging Tennessee's urban/rural resource gaps.

3

Operationalize MDT Collaboration

Convene law enforcement, juvenile courts, DCS, advocates & providers. Align on safety planning. Reduce duplication through CCR and anti-trafficking coalitions.

4

Center Youth & Survivor Voice

Listening sessions, youth advisory structures, and survivor-informed design build trust where traditional systems have failed. Youth help shape the response.

5

Build Data & Drive Replication

Track referrals, outcomes & gaps. Evaluate what reduces risk & re-exploitation. Move Safe Harbor from policy to evidence-based practice — and share the model.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. Collaboration Over Competition**
- 2. From Systems to Community**
- 3. Process Mapping Builds Shared Understanding**
- 4. Survivor and Youth Voice Must Guide Strategy**
- 5. Continuous Feedback and Adaptation**
- 6. Multisector Engagement and Transparency**
- 7. Scalability and Culture of Hope**

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Consulting opportunities available

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Consulting opportunities available



LESSONS LEARNED

From systems to community	Set a shared purpose early, clarify roles, and reinforce that collaboration is about community outcomes—not organizational credit. Empower local networks to lead with compassion and flexibility, ensuring that responses reflect community strengths and survivor needs.
Process mapping builds shared Understanding	everyone “see” where collaboration is working and where breakdowns occur, turning anecdotal
Strategy	Authentic survivor engagement changes the trajectory of planning—from reactive service delivery to proactive empowerment and prevention
Evaluation	Build feedback loops early—ongoing community evaluation sustains accountability and prevents collaboration from becoming performative.

LESSONS LEARNED

Adaptation in Action	Innovation often emerges from resource gaps; start where you are, use what you have, and scale with intention.
Multisector Engagement is Essential	every sector touches vulnerability in some way.
Scalability and Replication	Successful collaborations document processes and lessons so they can be shared, scaled, and replicated to expand impact beyond one community.
Culture of Hope and Advocacy	Collaboration thrives when grounded in shared humanity, compassion, and a belief that every voice matters.