

Project Harmony: Missing and Anti-Trafficking Youth Services

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Overview

Project Harmony

- Established 1996
- Served 8560 children & families last year
- 350+ child advocacy professionals co-located on the Project Harmony campus

Mission

To protect and support children, collaborate with professionals and engage the community to end child abuse and neglect.





Objectives

- 01** Explain Sex Trafficking of Minor Youth
- 02** Describe Missing & Anti-Trafficking Youth Services
- 03** Identify Signs of Trafficking & Ways to Respond to Trafficked Minors
- 04** Describe the Community-Wide Anti-Trafficking Initiative & the Progress Made Thus Far





What is Human Trafficking?



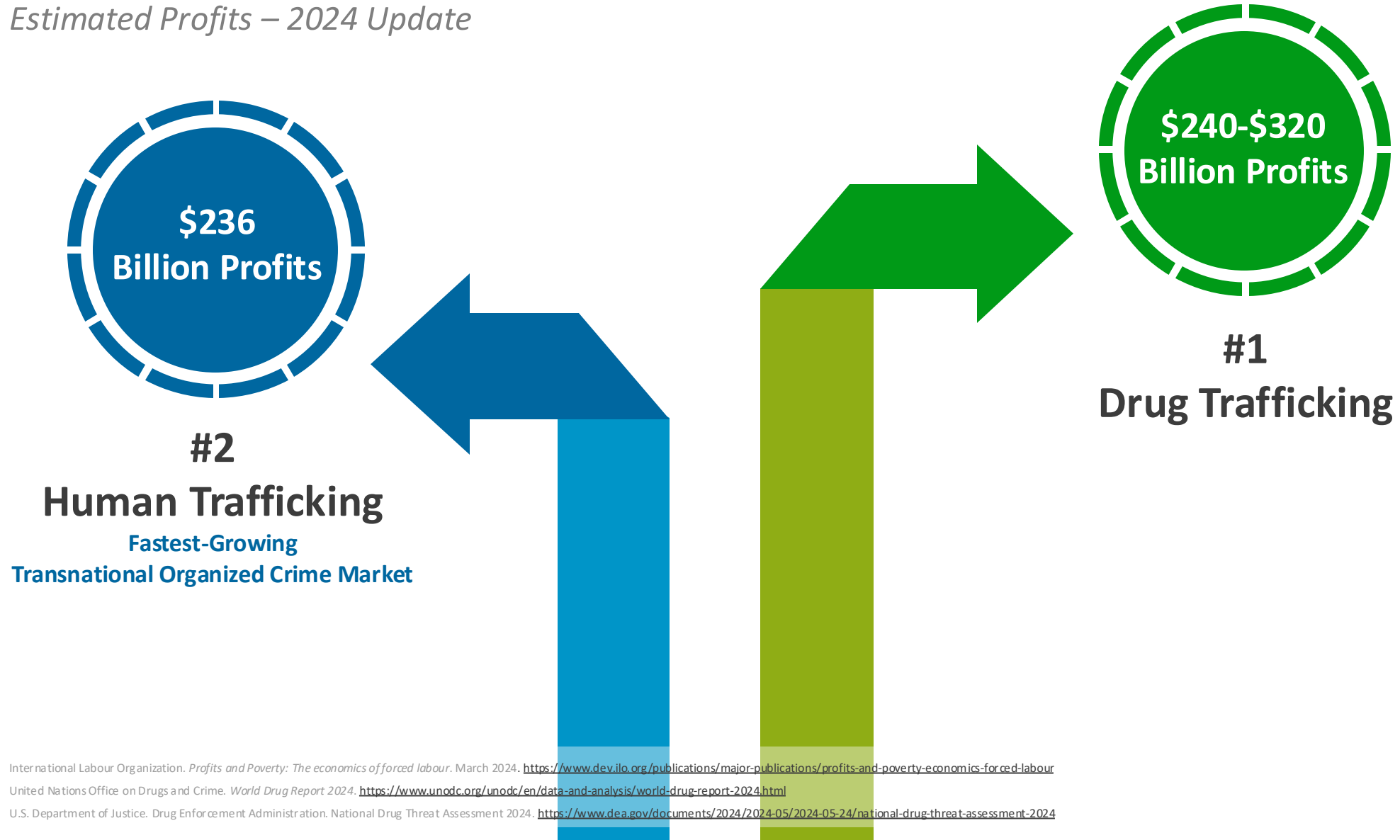
Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000

- Commercial Sex Acts or Labor
 - ✓ Force
 - ✓ Fraud
 - ✓ Coercion
 - ✓ NOT Required for Minors
- Commercial = exchange **anything** of value (e.g., food, shelter, etc)

Nebraska Revised Statute 28-830

Most Profitable Organized Crime Markets

Estimated Profits – 2024 Update



International Labour Organization. *Profits and Poverty: The economics of forced labour*. March 2024. <https://www.dev ilo.org/publications/major-publications/profits-and-poverty-economics-forced-labour>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2024*. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2024.html>

U.S. Department of Justice. Drug Enforcement Administration. National Drug Threat Assessment 2024. <https://www.dea.gov/documents/2024/2024-05/2024-05-24/national-drug-threat-assessment-2024>





Trafficking Statistics

375,000

nearly 375,000 children in the U.S. reported as missing
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, May 2024

1 in 6

experienced sex trafficking
NCMEC, 2024





Myth vs. Reality



01

MYTH:

Only females experience sex trafficking.

REALITY:

Anyone can experience sex trafficking.

02

MYTH:

Trafficking always involves transporting people across borders.

REALITY:

Human trafficking does not require any movement.

03

MYTH:

People in trafficking situations want help to escape.

REALITY:

Self-identification as a trafficking victim happens along a continuum.

04

MYTH:

Children & youth are trafficked by people they do not know.

REALITY:

Youth are often trafficked by someone they know.

Child Sex Trafficking in Omaha



What do we know about victims?



A Look At the Problem

- Important predictors of sex trafficking are running away from home and homelessness
- History of trauma – especially sexual abuse
- History of foster care
- Juvenile justice involvement



Missing Youth Cases

Omaha Police Department Statistics

2603

OPD data indicated 2603
missing juvenile reports
(2024)

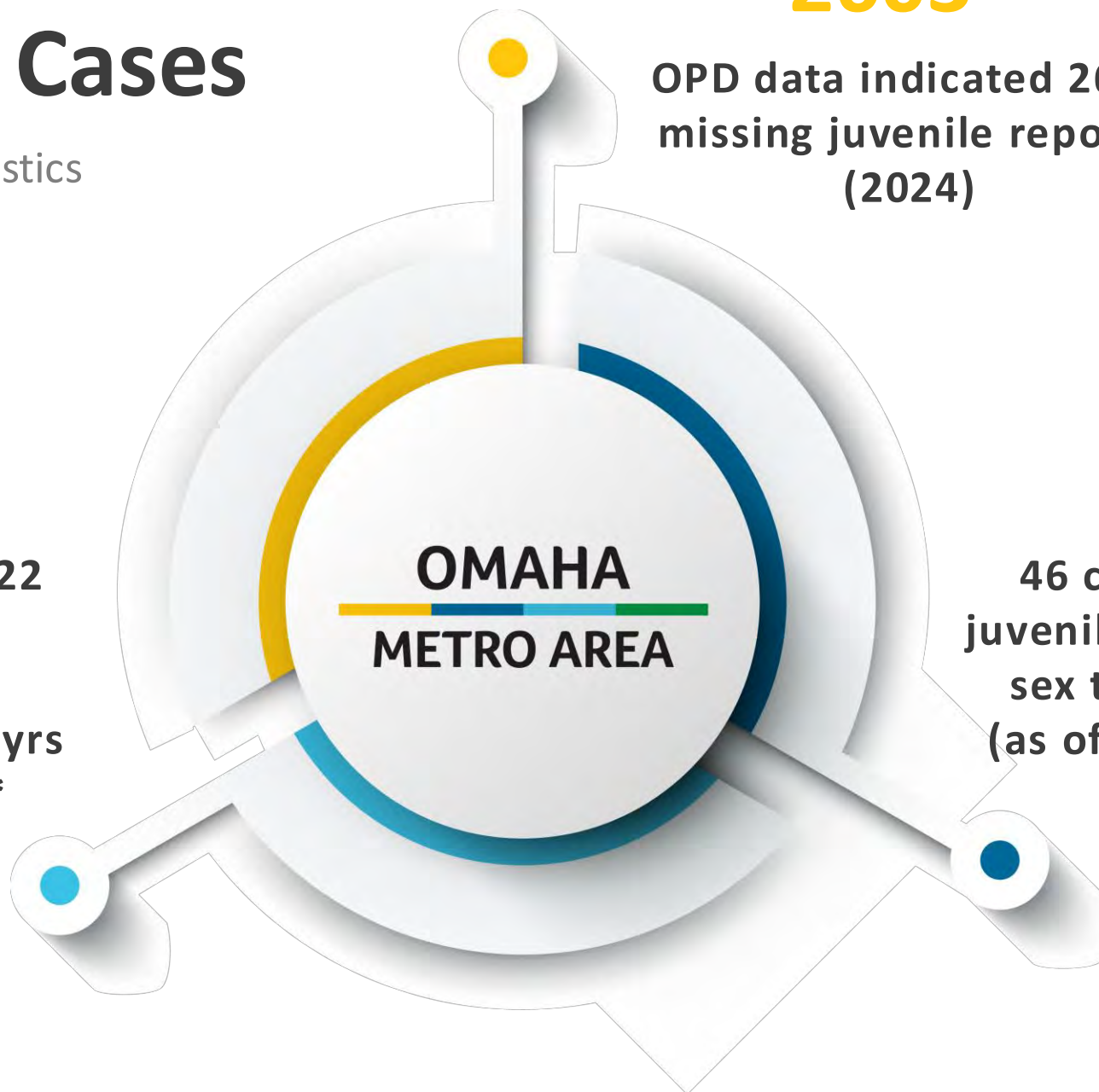
22

31 arrests made with 22
convictions to date

Average sentence – 21 yrs
* one life sentence *

46

46 confirmed
juvenile victims of
sex trafficking
(as of July 2024)





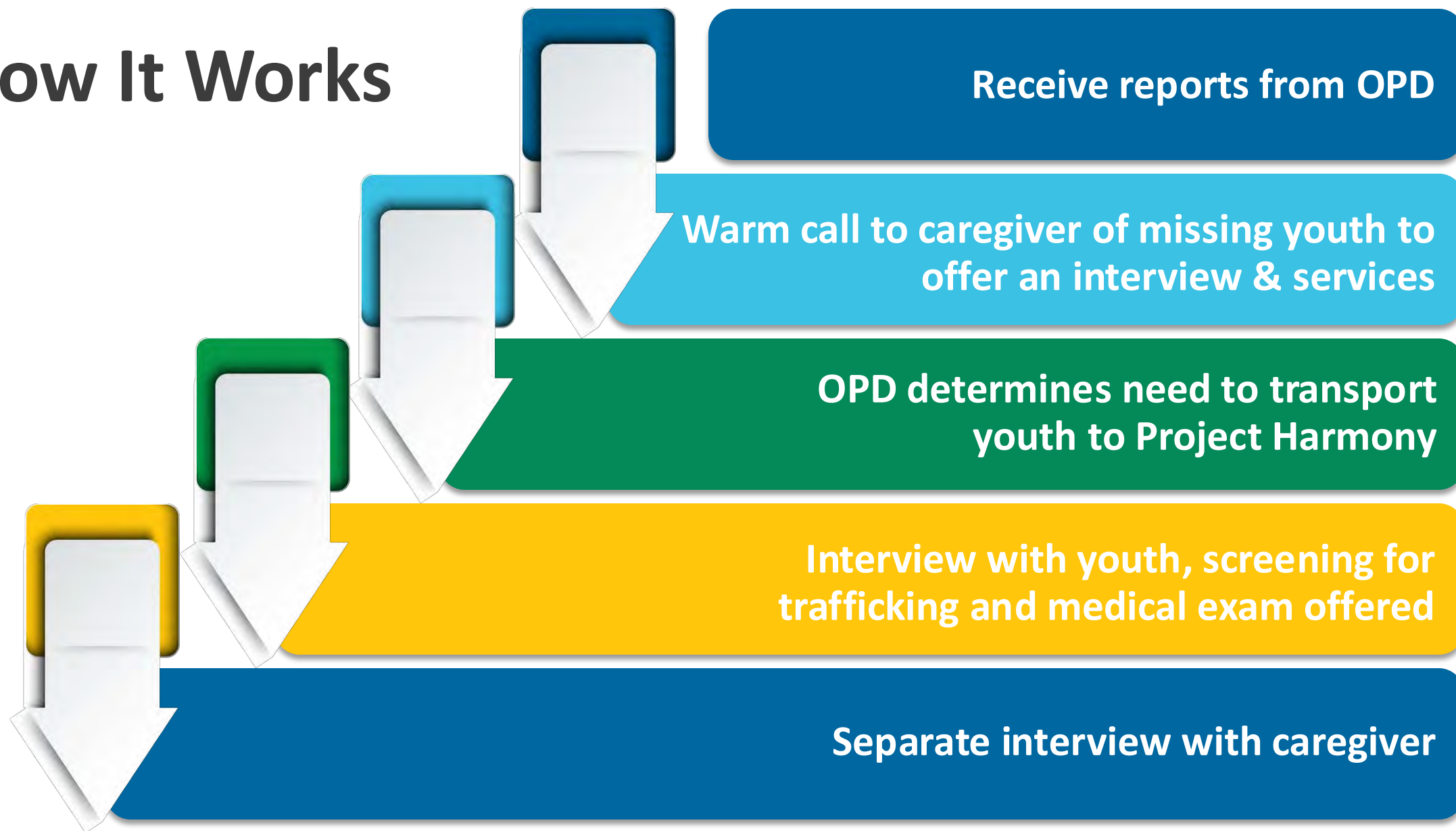
Missing Youth Services Program

- Started in September 2018
- Review hundreds of OPD missing youth reports per month
- Focus on non-system involved youth
 - No Child Welfare Involvement
 - No Juvenile Justice Involvement
- Youth Served:
 - **2019:** 3227 reports – 79 youth
 - **2024:** 2603 reports – 196 youth





How It Works





Anti-Trafficking Youth Services Program

- Started in October 2021
- OPD data revealed youth at high-risk for sex trafficking (Feb. 2019 – Aug. 2021)
- Utilized NCMEC high-risk factors for sex trafficking
- Identified 521 at-risk youth





Identifying At-Risk Youth



OPD's High-Risk Factors

- Current State Ward
- History of Child Abuse/Neglect
- History of Sexual Abuse
- History of Substance Use/Abuse
- 3 or More Missing Youth Reports

Additional Criteria

- Unexplained Cash
- Unexplained Cell Phones
- Hanging Out With Older Men
- Located in Motels
- Other Juvenile Reports



Commonality Examples



Victim 1 • State Ward

- 14 CPS intakes before 1st run
- 28 CPS intakes before 1st S/T disclosure
 - Alleged substance & child abuse
- 1st missing report at 13
- 1st sexual assault at 13
- 2nd sexual assault within 6 months
- 1st criminal charge at 15
- Discloses trafficking at 17
- 36 police entries at time of disclosure
 - 17 missing reports
 - 4 sexual assault reports
 - Substance abuse



Victim 2 • State Ward

- 10 CPS intakes before 1st run
- 34 CPS intakes before 1st S/T disclosure
 - Alleged substance & child abuse
- 1st missing report at 11
- Suicide attempt at 12
- 1st criminal charge at 12
- Discloses sex trafficking at 12, 14, & 15
- 50 police entries
 - 24 missing reports
 - 3 sexual assault reports
 - 3 sex trafficking reports



Role of ATYS Specialist

- 
- **REFERRAL:** OPD sends at-risk youth's information to Project Harmony – minor youth up to age 24 yr

MDT: Immediate MDT meeting with all related professionals prior to case acceptance

RELATIONSHIP: Establish relationship with youth and meet where they are

TRUST: Screen for trafficking using CSE-IT, set goals, connect to services



Benefits of a MATYS Program Within a CAC

Immediate investigations for youth who present with abuse/neglect allegations



Youth have access to CAC services:

- Interview
- Medical Exam
- Advocacy
- Crisis & Ongoing Therapy

Monthly Multidisciplinary Team



Complex Cases

- Vulnerable youth with extensive, unaddressed trauma history, drug abuse and long-term treatment needs
- Lengthy law enforcement investigations with limited resources and challenging barriers to overcome with prosecution
- Limited services and substantial gaps in resources, housing and other continuum of care needs
- Inadequate penalties for sex buyers





Case Example – Oxford, NE – Population 718

Nebraska sex trafficker will spend rest of his life in prison



Billy Quinn > 176 to 300+ Yr Sentence

Billy Quinn (Courtesy Photo)

By [KSNB Local4](#)

Published: Dec. 22, 2021 at 10:55 AM CST



HASTINGS, Neb. (KSNB) - A South Central Nebraska man was sentenced Wednesday for multiple crimes he committed against a 15-

Earlier this summer, a two-week trial ended with a jury finding Quinn guilty of 13 felonies, including counts of sex trafficking of a minor, first-degree sexual assault of a child, and the production of child pornography. To date, 18 other defendants have been arrested for crimes associated with Quinn's actions.

Final Sentencing Related to Furnas County Human Trafficking Case

Posted: Monday, August 21, 2023



Paul Brooks > 25 to 35 Yr Sentence



Case Example

Six arrested in Omaha sex trafficking investigation

January 8, 2025 11:15 pm by Joseph McCarty



Law Enforcement

- Identified two juvenile victims on local sex ads
- Hotel
- Local, state and federal collaboration

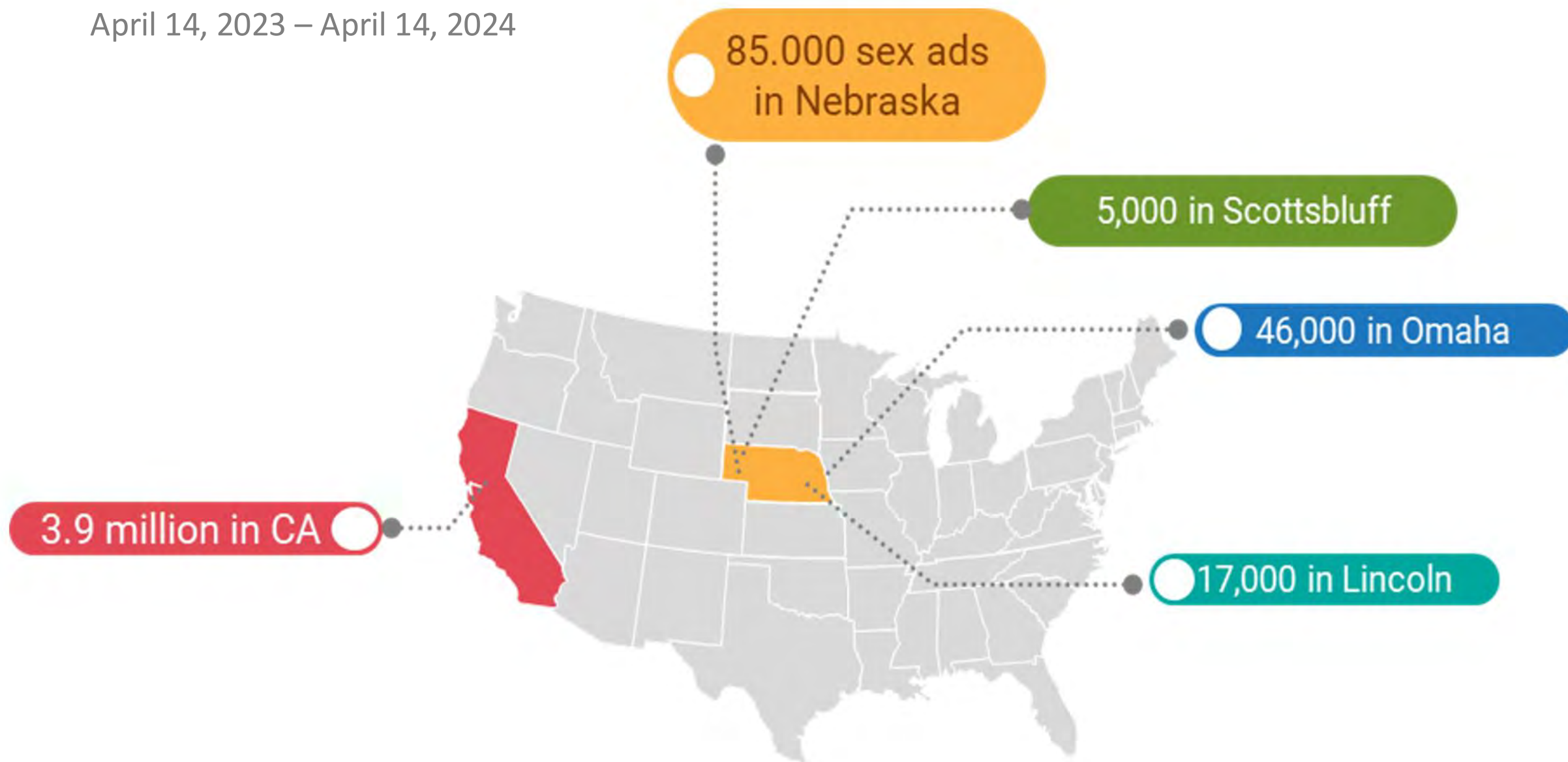
Advocacy

- Crisis response
- Bilingual
- Immediate and ongoing services



Trafficking Statistics

April 14, 2023 – April 14, 2024

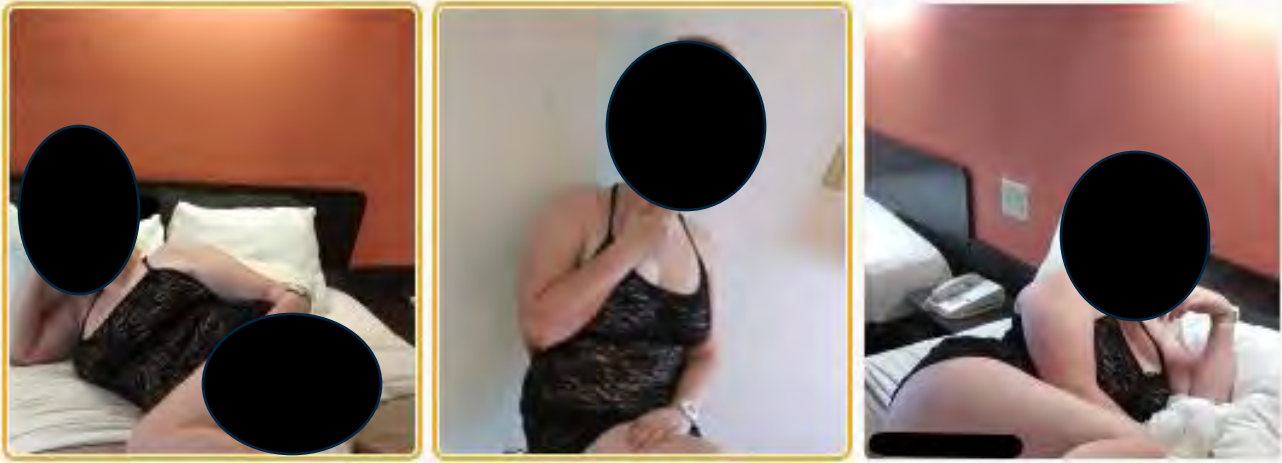




Sex Ads

29yo

I'm just a gorgeous ass thick white from Louisiana n im here in O



+ Show ad text

Juvenile

+ Tag ad

Officer contacts >

post ids

877804572255

first posted

9:19pm Sep 24, 2020 CDT

last posted

9:19pm Sep 24, 2020 CDT

phones

402-699-0137

emails

-

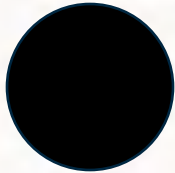
location

Omaha, NE
Council bluffs

url


omaha.skipthega...


copy



Kaka

Seen in 2 locations

2 ads |  Confirmed juvenile



Download

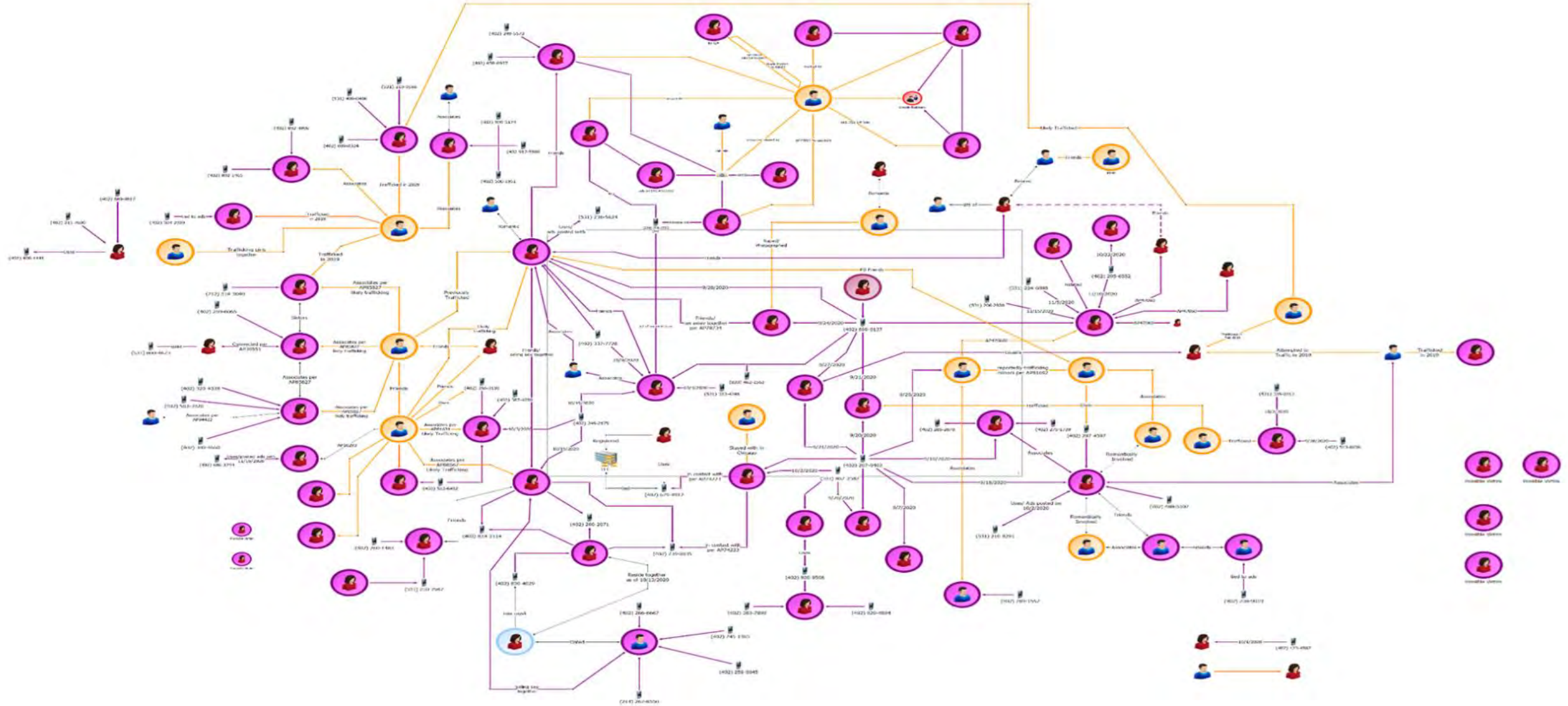


What Do We Know About Traffickers?





Combined Trafficking Ring – Omaha





Characteristics of Traffickers

- Manipulative
- Charming
- Domineering
- Narcissistic
- Controlling





Types of Pimps



Gorilla

- Uses violence
- Tendency to target survival needs



Romeo

- Love
- Charismatic



Trafficking Youth



Vulnerability

- Traffickers target needs that are not being met
- Basic, emotional, & family needs – common vulnerabilities

Manipulation

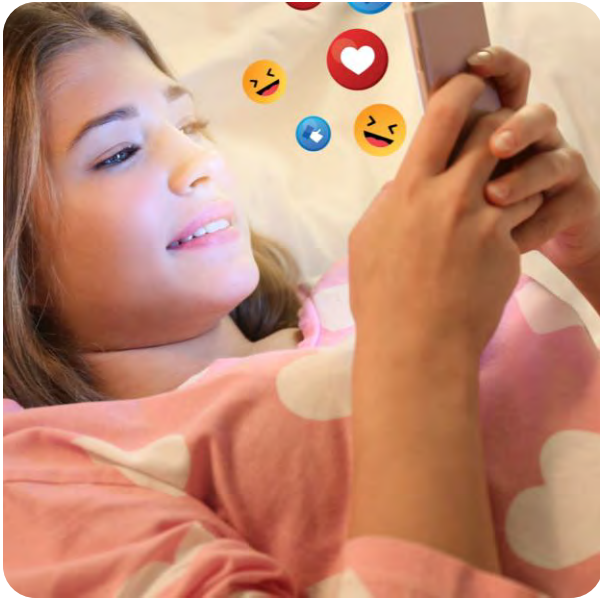
- Trips to the mall
- Perceived love

Bonding

- The process creates very strong relationships
- Trauma bonding



Case Example



Youth Involved

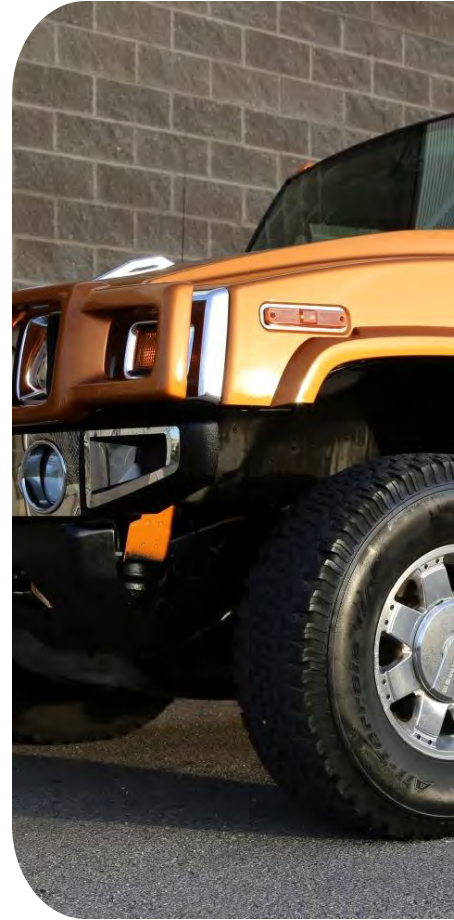
- 8 youth identified – 5 known victims of trafficking
- Started when youth were 12-13 yr

Perpetrator

- 37 yr old business owner
- Used his daughter's Facebook to meet girls
- Initially charged for sexual assault after youth disclosed at hospital

Investigation

- Evidence gathered over time – match police reports similarities – victim statements – digital evidence – perpetrator details (locations, vehicle, abuse patterns, etc.)





Case Example



Prosecution

- Over 3 years (typically 18 months – 2 ½ years)
- Federal – Plead
- Sentenced to 35 years federal prison
- \$200,000 fine
- Restitution for victims

Support For Victim

- Recognition of abuse – Report It
- Victim's disclosure and cooperation through sentencing – nearly 3 years
- Consistent Victim support and services to maintain engagement





OPD & Project Harmony Statistics

Youth Served – 2024

- ATYS Specialists served 135 clients ages 12-24 years
- 21 youth staffed at High-Risk MDT
- Currently only serve Omaha Police Department jurisdiction

Investigations – July 2024

- 36 task force investigations for sex trafficking led by OPD
- 48 confirmed juvenile victims of sex trafficking
- 31 arrests made
- 22 convictions to date
- Average sentence – 21 years (1 life-in-prison sentence)





**Where do we go
from here?**





Community-Wide Anti-Trafficking Initiative

- Recognized a need to bring awareness to this hidden issue after working in partnership with OPD and key partners.
- Began discussions with key community leaders: Mayor, Chief of Police, DHHS, CA's, MOAC, Attorney General's Office, Governor, etc.
- ALL agreed it was time for action and a need to expand our services to entire Omaha Metro Area – Sarpy County





Initiative Progress

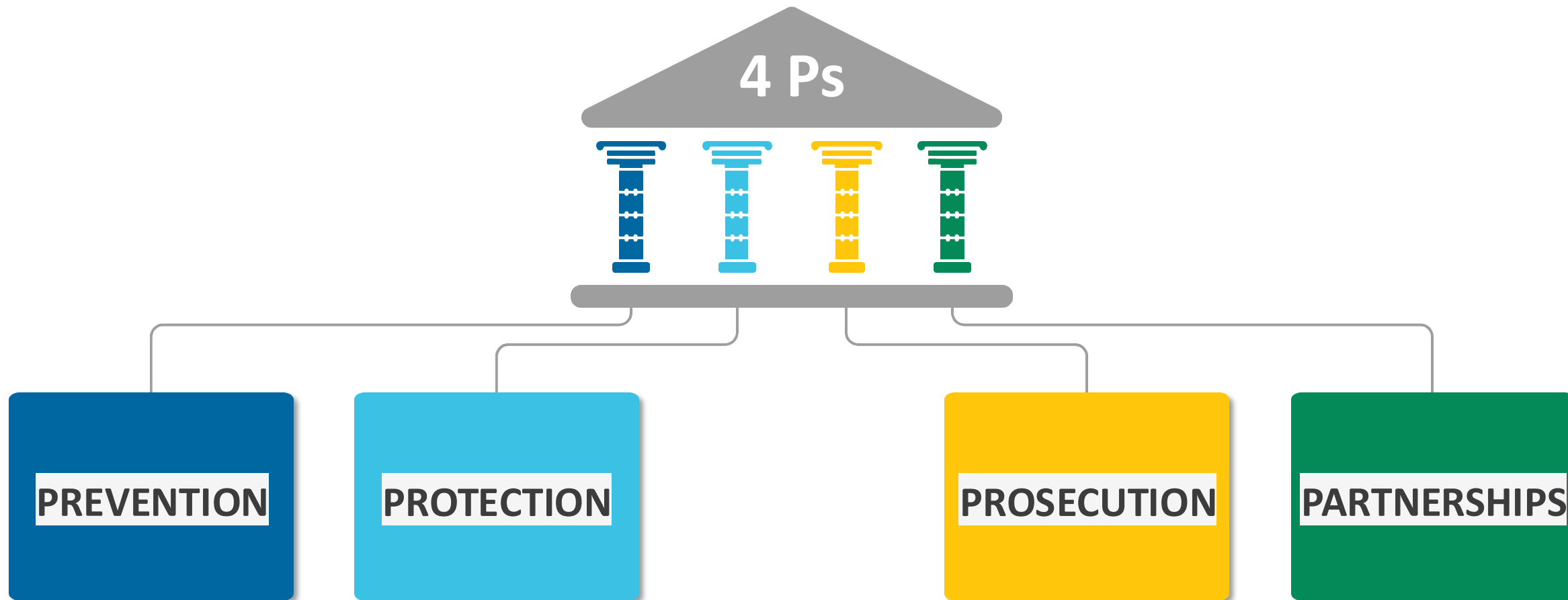


- **Began 2024** – key community leaders
- **March 2024** – two community partner meetings
75+ participants – 60+ community agencies
- **April 2024** – Speaking of Children
- **June 2024** – Steering Committee
- **July 2024** – Subcommittees

Prevention > Protection > Prosecution > Partnership

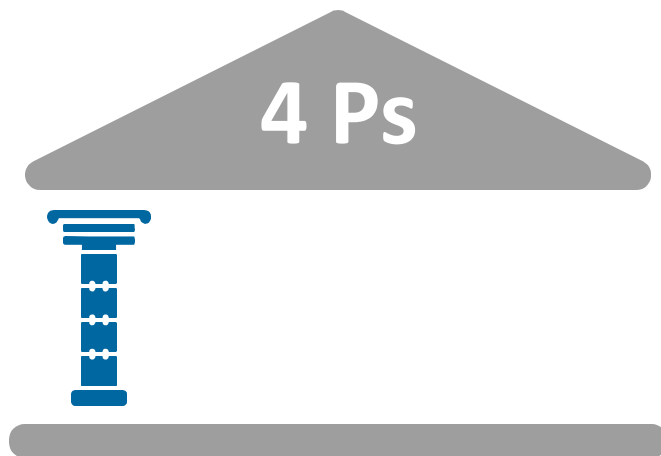


Community-Wide Anti-Trafficking Initiative





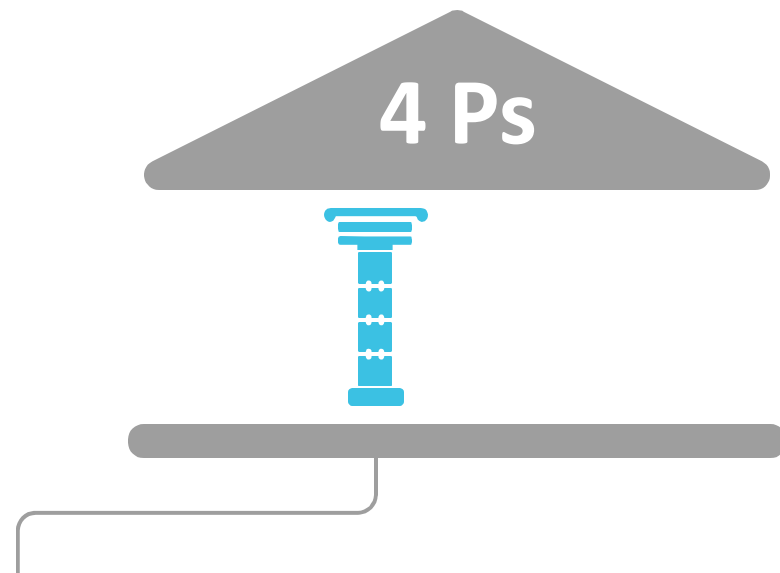
Community-Wide Anti-Trafficking Initiative



PREVENTION: Bring awareness and education to our community to foster a safer environment for our children, to include effective messaging strategies for reducing supply and demand.



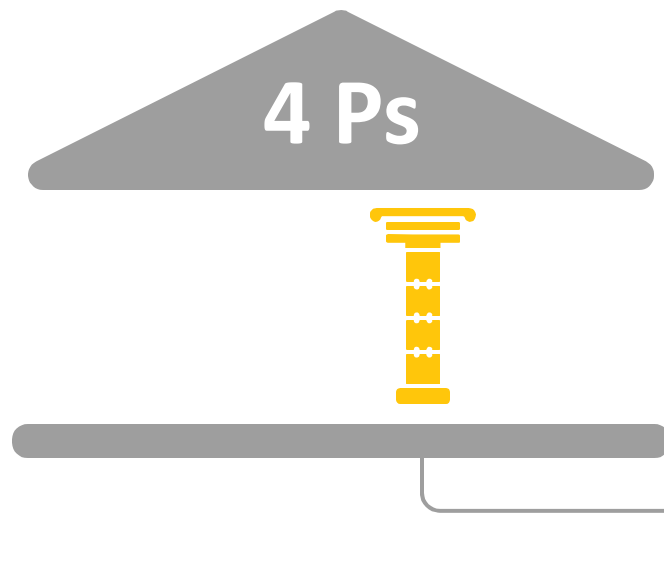
Community-Wide Anti-Trafficking Initiative



PROTECTION: Provide a comprehensive continuum of care to survivors to promote healing and a long-term environment for them to thrive.



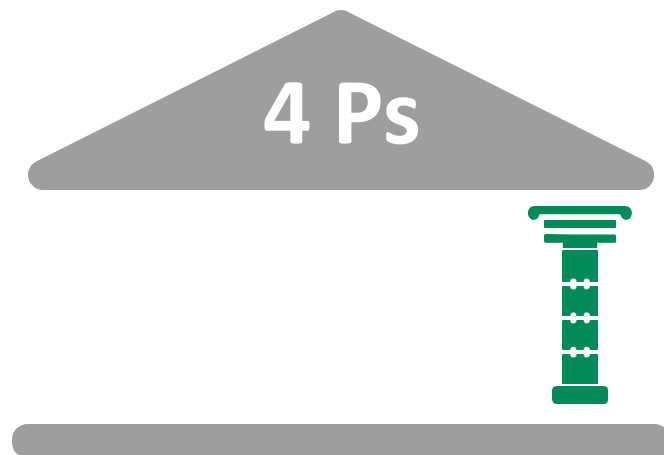
Community-Wide Anti-Trafficking Initiative



PROSECUTION: Support and strengthen legal framework and law enforcement to ensure traffickers and those who exploit survivors are brought to justice, serving as a deterrent to future crimes.



Community-Wide Anti-Trafficking Initiative



PARTNERSHIPS: It will take us all to make a Collective Impact.



What Can You Do?

Recognize the Signs of Trafficking

- School attendance issues
- Frequently missing from home
- Exhibits signs of physical trauma or withdrawn behavior
- Lacks control over schedule
- Shows signs of drug addiction
- Coached/rehearsed responses
- Not allowed to speak

- Sudden change behavior
- Sexual terminology beyond age
- Has secret online profiles or references dating websites
- Tattoos
- Much older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Possesses hotel keys, cash, or cell phones



What Can You Do?

Report Suspected Trafficking

- **NE Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline**
1-800-652-1999
- **NE Human Trafficking Hotline**
1-833-PLS-LOOK
1-833-757-5665
Text “Help” or “Info” to 233733
- **Missing Minors – NCMEC**
1-800-THE-LOST
1-800-843-5678
- **Child Sex Abuse Materials (CSAM)**
NCMEC Cybertipline
report.cybertip.org

Questions?

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