

SOUTH CAROLINA HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The State Task Force was legislatively mandated in 2012 under S.C. Code Ann. 16-3-2050 (B)(1). It leads a strategic, multi-disciplinary approach to combatting human trafficking in South Carolina. The collaborative approach includes efforts from mandated and non-mandated state agencies, state and federal law enforcement, nonprofits, faith leaders, community volunteers, professionals in medicine and education, and survivors. The law dictates that the Task Force will submit annual reports, inclusive of findings and recommendations, to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate. This document summarizes the Task Force’s key findings in the 2020 Annual Report. (HumanTrafficking.scag.gov/data-reports)

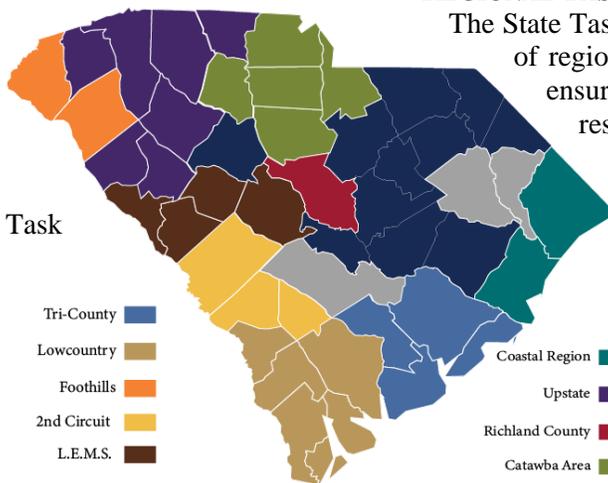
STATE TASK FORCE RESPONSE

In 2020, the State Task Force began modifications to the existing subcommittee structures to align with the new Strategic Response Model. The model will help ensure that state-level efforts are best coordinated to benefit the multiple sectors working to prevent and respond to human trafficking in South Carolina. Three subcommittees are still in the process of restructuring; the Task Force aims to finalize these in early 2021. The State Task Force also launched the Advisory Council to leverage subject matter expertise in topics related to human trafficking vulnerability.

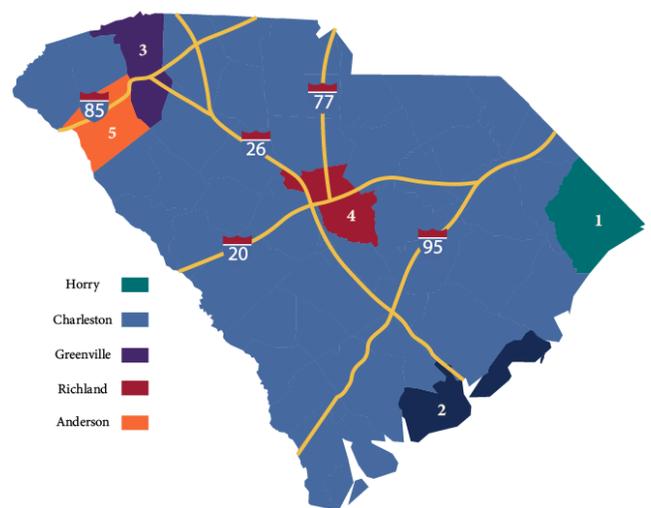


REGIONAL TASK FORCES

The State Task Force encourages the development of regional task forces across South Carolina to ensure that every region of the state is equipped with the resources and infrastructure necessary to effectively combat human trafficking. In 2020, the Task Force supported the launch of the Lexington, Edgefield, McCormick, and Saluda (LEMS) Regional Force.



Top 5 Counties for Reported Human Trafficking



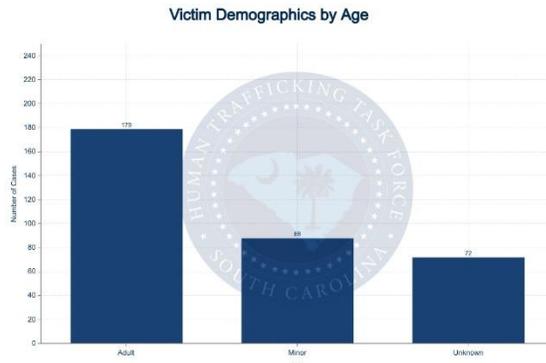
DETERMINING THE MAGNITUDE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Understanding extent and scope of human trafficking throughout the state is critical to developing an effective strategy to combat the crime. Through the State Task Force’s ongoing partnership with the National Human Trafficking Hotline, the Task Force receives data that informs the statewide response. Given the complexities of maintaining and ensuring clean data, the National Human Trafficking Hotline provided 2019 statistics pertaining to human trafficking in South Carolina. The statistics provided *do not* represent a comprehensive report of trafficking cases in South Carolina throughout that period. They represent only signals and cases made to the National Human Trafficking Hotline during the time period.

INVESTIGATING AND PROSECUTING HUMAN TRAFFICKERS

In 2020, 10 different defendants were charged with human trafficking, some with more than one charge, totaling 13 charges of human trafficking in the South Carolina State Courts. Three defendants pled guilty in 2020 to charges related to trafficking. Five charges were dismissed, one because the defendant pled to a different charge for a total of eight cases closed. As of this report, there are 75 charges of human trafficking pending in South Carolina State Courts with 22 different

defendants. While tips are starting to come in concerning labor trafficking, the pending charges all reflect sex trafficking allegations in South Carolina.



PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH CAROLINA Collaboration is central to the Task Force’s multi-sector approach to preventing human trafficking in South Carolina. The Task Force, through the Attorney General’s Office, leveraged new and existing partnerships throughout 2020 to combat the crime. The State Task Force established a new partnership with the South Carolina Department on Aging (SCDOA). This partnership was formed with the recognition that while the aging population is at risk of human trafficking victimization, there are few anti-human trafficking efforts underway in South Carolina to address their vulnerability. Together, SCDOA and the Task Force aim to share resources, implement trainings, and collaborate on additional efforts.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

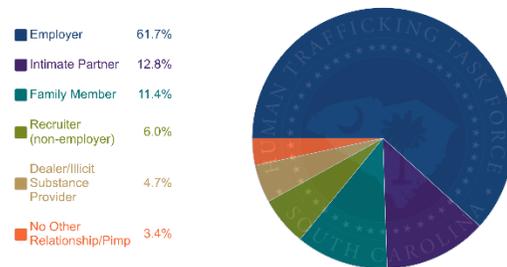
Throughout 2020, the Task Force also responded to the unique threats presented by the COVID-19 pandemic to anti-human trafficking work. Task Force members working in direct service provision have developed innovative and creative ways to reach and serve survivors, even in the midst of the ongoing public health crisis. The State Task Force launched a bilingual online resource library to educate the public in a virtual environment, while continuing to conduct online trainings and meetings with local, state, and national partners.

The State Task Force has adapted its statewide response to the new challenges brought on by the COVID-19 crisis. Yet, as the pandemic worsens, it continues to wreak havoc across economies, healthcare systems, schools, and communities statewide. Such widespread disruption breeds vulnerability to human trafficking and exacerbates existing economic, social, and racial inequalities that can lead to victimization. While human trafficking can happen to anyone, the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified a harsh reality: Those who already face physical, emotional, economic, social, or other vulnerabilities may face more routes to human trafficking victimization.

LABOR TRAFFICKING INITIATIVE

The data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline reflect a growing need to address labor trafficking in South Carolina. In order to better protect and serve labor trafficking victims and survivors in the state, the State Task Force relaunched its Labor Trafficking Subcommittee in 2020 and plans to convene its first meeting in January 2021. The Task Force will also host a public training on labor trafficking, the first of its kind, to educate South Carolinians about this particular crime.

Trafficker Relationship to Victim
Top Listed Relationships



STATEWIDE PUBLIC AWARENESS & OUTREACH

Throughout the month of January, as part of the Facts Matter campaign, there will be daily social media posts sharing human trafficking information with members of the virtual community. Furthermore, the Task Force will be launching a billboard campaign in four areas of the state, distributing both the mandated poster and new posters aligned with the campaign, and sharing brochures on the website for download. The goal is to educate communities across South Carolina about human trafficking through the use of accurate, reliably sourced information.