



Human Trafficking of Children Annual Report

Department of Children and Families
Office of Child and Family Well-Being
October 1, 2023

Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Background

Section 39.001(5), Florida Statutes (F.S.), establishes the following goals for the status and treatment of sexually exploited children who are residing in the dependency system:

- Ensure these children are safe;
- Provide for the treatment of such children as dependent children, rather than as delinquents in the criminal or juvenile justice system;
- Sever the bond between exploited children and traffickers, and reunite these children with their families or provide them with appropriate guardians; and
- Enable these children to be willing and reliable witnesses in the prosecution of traffickers.

Purpose

This report provides information as required in section 39.524(3), F.S., as follows:

- The prevalence of child commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) – the number of children verified as victims of CSE.
- The specialized services provided (residential and non-residential) and placement of such children.
- The number of children placed in safe houses and safe foster homes during the year.
- The criteria used to determine the placement of children.
- The number of children who were evaluated for placement.
- The number of children who were placed based upon the evaluation.
- The number of children who were not placed.
- The number of children who were referred to a safe house or safe foster home for whom placement was unavailable.
- The regions in which such placement was unavailable.
- The Florida Department of Children and Families (Department's) response to the findings and recommendations made by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

The activities described within this report occurred between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023 (State Fiscal Year [SFY] 2022-23), unless otherwise noted.

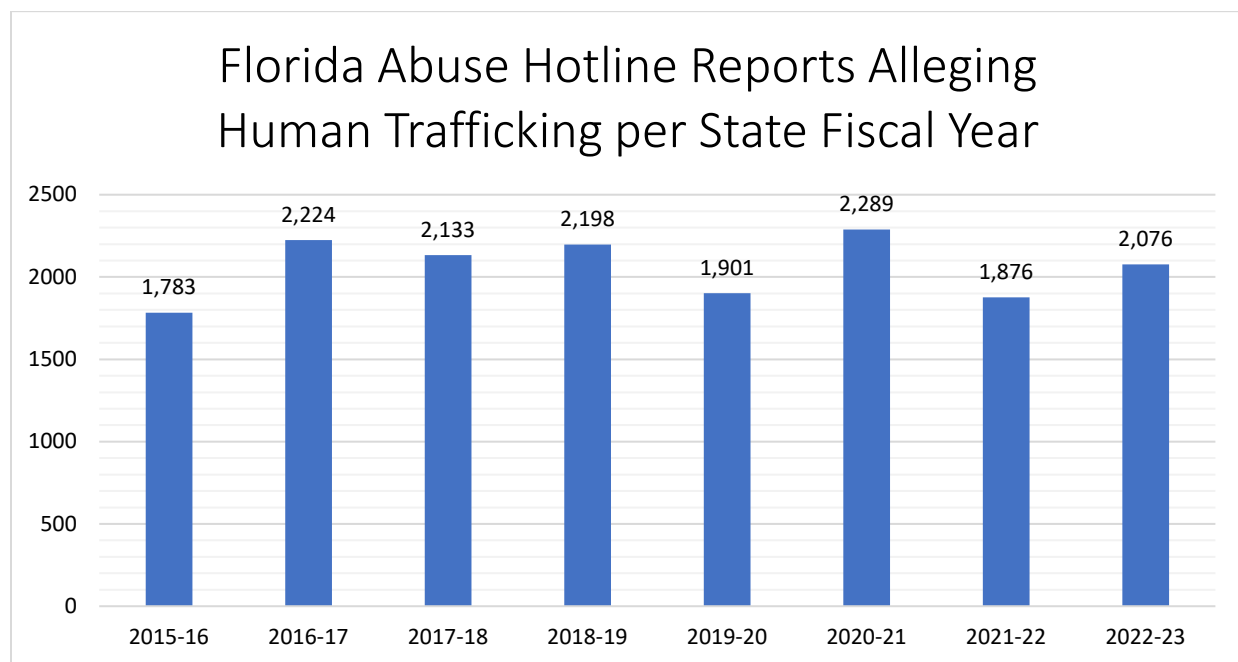
The Department tracked Human Trafficking allegations in two primary categories:

- *Human Trafficking-Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Child (CSEC)*: This maltreatment type is used for cases in which the allegations involve commercial sexual exploitation of a child (e.g., adult entertainment clubs, escort services, prostitution, etc.). Investigative types for this category include *Caregiver*, *Other*, or *Institutional*. This distinction separates reports based on whether the alleged perpetrator is a parent, legal guardian, caregiver, unrelated adult, or appears to be an institution.
- *Human Trafficking-Labor*: This maltreatment type is used in cases in which the allegations involve issues associated with forced labor, slavery, or servitude that do not appear to be sexual in nature.

Human Trafficking–CSEC and Human Trafficking–Labor are the only maltreatments that do not require an alleged perpetrator to be a parent or caregiver to the child victim but rather any person who is suspected of exploiting that child.

Investigative Intakes

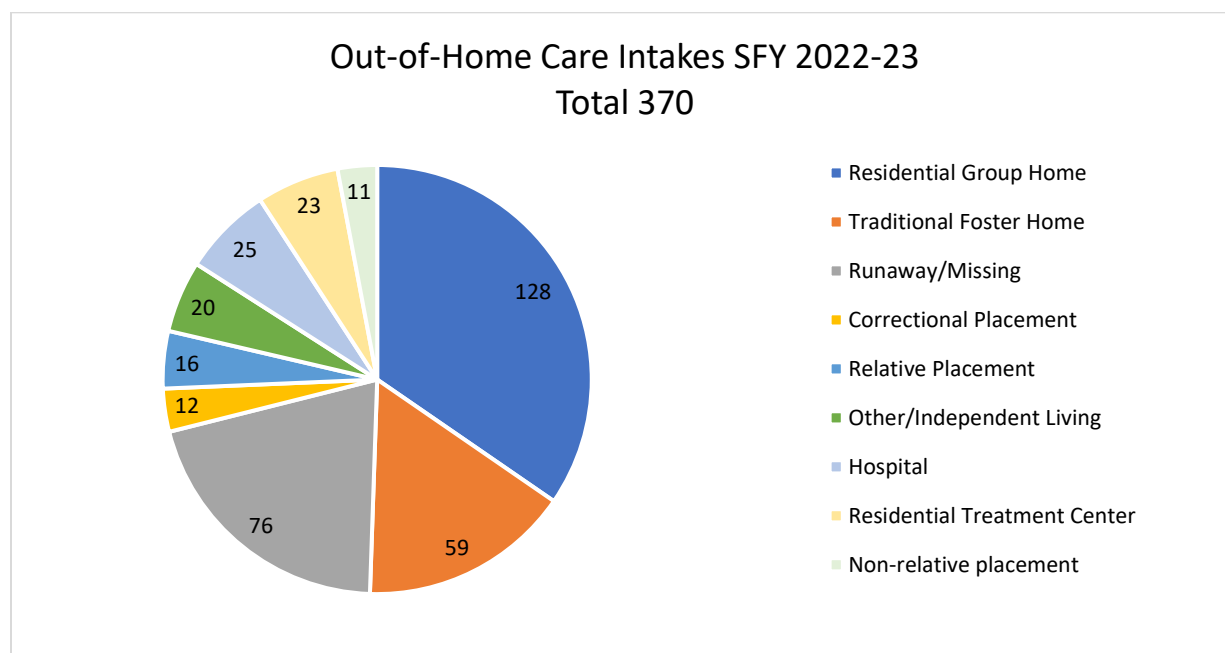
In SFY 2022-23, the total number of reports, initial and additional, accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline (Hotline) alleging one of the human trafficking maltreatments was 2,076 involving 1,627 children. Out of the 2,076 accepted reports, 1,862 (89.69 percent) were coded as CSEC; 214 (10.31 percent) were for Labor Trafficking. The chart below shows the trend in cases since SFY 2015-16.



For SFY 2022-23, out of 2,076 reports, 81 percent (1,685) were for female alleged victims and almost 18 percent (372) were for male alleged victims. This percentage distribution is very similar to the numbers from the previous year.

Of the 2,076 reports, 79 percent of reports listed children living at home with their parents or other caregiver, while 17 percent (370 reports) had children listed in out-of-home care at the time of intake. This is two percent lower than the prior year. Out of those 370 reports, 128 listed children living in residential group homes (an eight percent decrease from the previous year) and 59 children living in a traditional foster home (a two percent decrease from the previous year).

These numbers dispute the widespread assumption that human trafficking mostly affects children in foster care.



County level data indicates that Miami-Dade (222), Hillsborough (166), and Orange (164) Counties received the highest number of reports followed by Duval (131) and Broward (127) Counties. The following chart shows the number of reports received by Department region. As illustrated below, the highest number of reports for human trafficking (HT) maltreatment were received in the Central Region (545) followed by the Suncoast Region (457).

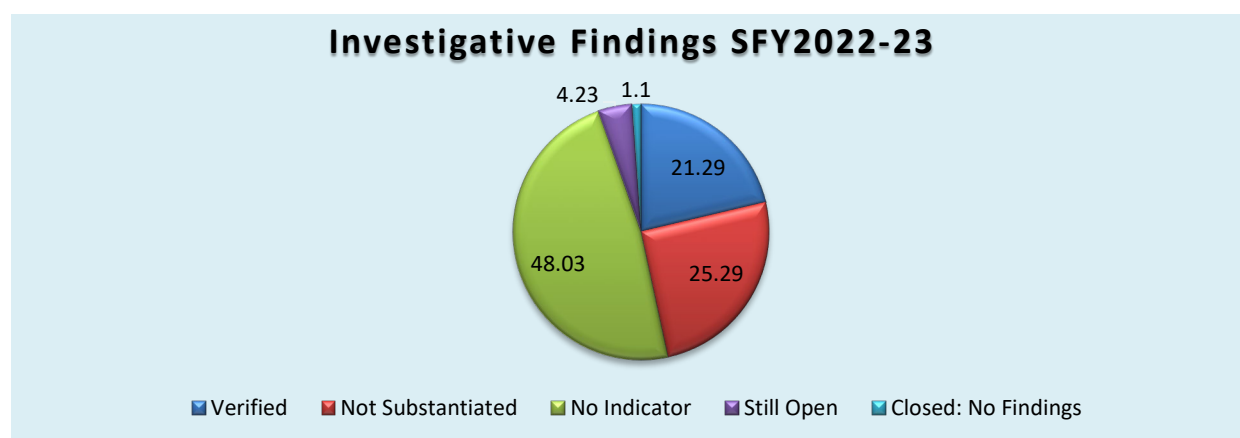
Region	Human Trafficking - CSEC	Human Trafficking - Labor	Grand Total
Central	495	50	545
Suncoast	392	65	457
Northeast	346	25	371
Southeast	226	41	267

Southern	203	22	225
Northwest	200	11	211
Totals	1,862	214	2,076

Investigative Findings

The chart below depicts the outcome of human trafficking investigations conducted for the fiscal year. Compared to last fiscal year, there has been a three percent increase in the number of reported CSEC cases that resulted in a verified finding.

Regarding labor trafficking, the Department received a significant increase in the number of reports to the hotline, but fewer resulted in a verified finding. This is largely attributed to many of the case findings demonstrating that employers were violating child labor regulations, but the cases did not meet the definition of minor labor trafficking.



Safe Houses and Safe Foster Home Capacity and Placement

Safe Home Capacity

Specialized residential placements currently exist in the Central, Suncoast, Southeast, Southern, and Northeast Regions. The Department's Human Trafficking Unit staff meet with all specialized CSEC residential providers on a quarterly basis to discuss issues and provide technical support.

During SFY 2022-23, the number of available safe houses did not change and remained at five homes with a capacity of 33 beds. As of July 2023, there were six available beds and no waiting list for safe home beds. The Department requests monthly bed availability checks from all specialized providers. The number of available beds in safe homes and safe therapeutic foster homes (STFH) for the first six months of 2023 are presented in the table below:

Provider	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Safe Homes	7	6	3	4	2	5	6
STFH	2	3	1	1	1	1	3

As of July 2023, there were 8 safe therapeutic foster homes within the Citrus Helping Adolescents Negatively Impacted by Commercial Exploitation (CHANCE) Program, a treatment program by Citrus Health Network, implemented in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, to address the unique mental and behavioral health needs of youth who have been commercially sexually exploited.

Devereux Florida, through its DELTA Foster Home Program, has 14 safe foster homes located in Central, Southeast, and Northeast Regions. Devereux continues to provide training for foster families statewide and collaborates with the Community-Based Care Lead Agencies in the state to develop safe foster home capacity. The Safe Foster Home model can serve male and female children.

Safe Home Placement

Upon identification of a child as a victim of CSEC, Lead Agencies assess the child to determine the most appropriate placement. The current mechanism for assessment of placement is through an MDT staffing and the use of the Level of Care Placement Tool. The Level of Care Placement Tool considers factors that help determine the most appropriate placement for a youth including runaway history, foster care history, current involvement with a gang and/or trafficker, current substance use, behavioral and psychiatric history, positive support systems, location considerations such as court involvement, and readiness to receive services. Youth with high-level needs, such as substance abuse or mental health treatment, often require a higher level of targeted care such as a substance abuse treatment facility or a residential treatment center. Youth with a good support system at home may be best served with specialized community-based wrap-around services. Those CSE youth who may need a structured living environment and are ready to receive services may be a good fit for a safe house.

SFY 2022-23 data reported by Lead Agencies across the state shows that a total of 393 youths were evaluated for placement in a safe house or safe foster home. Of these 393 youth, 46 (11.7 percent) were placed in a safe house or safe foster home based on their evaluation. The Central Region Lead Agency reported the highest number of youth (14 total) placed in a safe house or safe foster home.

Of the 393 youths evaluated for a safe home placement, 46 were placed in a safe home. Three hundred and forty-seven youth were not placed in a safe house or safe foster home for a variety of reasons. For some youth, a safe house was not a recommended level of care, as they needed to be placed in a substance abuse treatment program, mental health facility, or were placed in DJJ commitment programs.

There were 26 youth not placed in a safe house due to their runaway status. There are cases where a youth may still be placed in a safe house or safe foster home after recovery from a runaway episode or upon discharge from a juvenile justice facility or higher-level mental health facility. Many of these youth are referred to specialized non-residential services in the community to address their needs as a victim of CSEC.

There were 11 youth who were referred to a safe house or safe foster home for whom placement was unavailable. Out of those 11 youth, six were from the Northeast Region; one was from the Northwest Region, two were from the Southern Region and two was from Central Region. It is important to note that going to a safe house program is voluntary and youth must consent to the placement. In SFY 2022-23 there were 35 youths referred to a safe house or safe foster home. Of these 35 youths, none were placed in a safe house or safe foster home based on their decision.

Although the number of identified child survivors of human trafficking is higher than the number of beds available in safe houses, these beds may not always be filled because decisions to place each child are based on the existing make-up of current safe house residents and the individual's specific needs. The complexity of the residents' needs may limit the number of youths a safe home accepts at any given time. Occasionally, there is a decision to not introduce too many new youths into a home over a short period of time to ensure adequate assimilation of new youth into the program and consistent and stable staff engagement with the existing youth. Each facility has its own intake and assessment process and ultimately determines the appropriateness of any child for that specific placement. Youth who are not in the custody of the Department (i.e., "community youth") are placed in safe houses if their individual circumstances require that level of placement and services. It has been estimated that 25-30 percent of safe house residents are community youth. It is also important to note that not all verified survivors require the level of care provided at a safe house; some survivors may be more appropriately served in their own homes with community-based wrap-around services while others may need a higher level of care.

Other Specialized Services (Non-Residential)

The State of Florida offers an array of community-based supports for survivors of human trafficking. Community-based services are a crucial part of the continuum of specialized services that are available to CSEC youth and can be utilized for a youth that has a stable and supportive living environment, does not want to go to a safe house, or does not need the level of care of a safe foster home, safe house, or residential treatment center. Typically, these services include therapy, specialized case management or advocacy, and other services to meet the individualized needs of that youth.

Providing substance abuse treatment often becomes a priority when this need is identified. This allows a youth to reach a more stable state prior to receiving services to meet their needs. A safe house placement would not be an appropriate placement for a youth who struggles with severe substance abuse or in need of detox; therefore, it is

critical that substance abuse treatment providers are trained on CSEC and able to serve the needs of this population. The Department continues its efforts to identify other programs serving substance-dependent youth who are willing to train their staff on the nuances of working with commercially sexually exploited children.

Appendix A includes a chart of organizations across the State that are providing services to survivors of human trafficking, including specifying whether they offer mental health and substance use treatment.

Expenditures for Human Trafficking

Three million dollars in recurring funds has been appropriated annually through the General Appropriations Act to serve the needs of youth who were survivors of sexual exploitation and had been adjudicated dependent or who were the subject of an open investigation due to allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. As directed by the legislature, the funds are provided to the Community-Based Care Lead Agencies for costs associated with placement and services for sexually exploited youth. The Lead Agencies reported expenditures totaling \$2,949,739 on CSEC services during SFY 2022-23. Of the payments reported for CSEC services, the average annual cost of care for an individual client was \$38,812.

The Department's response to the findings and recommendations made by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

Section 39.524(3), Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires the Department to provide a response to the findings and recommendations made by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) in its annual study on commercial sexual exploitation of children. The following are OPPAGA's findings and recommendations:

- *Since OPPAGA's 2022 review, state agencies have made few changes to improve services for CSE youth. (P.21)*
- *Improve the collection of data related to youth assessed for placement in safe houses and safe foster homes.*
- *Work with lead agencies and providers to recruit Tier 1 safe houses.*
- *Collaborate with the lead agencies to develop a consistent process for monitoring and assuring the quality of safe house providers.*
- *Review the criteria for Victims Compensation funds for CSE victims.*

The Department has been engaged in modernizing the child welfare data system under the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). Initial system updates were launched in September 2023 in Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), which enables the future inclusion of the Comprehensive Placement and the Level of Care Tools in the transition to CCWIS. As the Department continues to transition to CCWIS, these tools will transition into the new system.

The Department's Licensing Team has begun meeting with provider networks and lead agencies to actively recruit providers, review all current providers across the continuum (at-risk, traditional group homes, foster network), assess current level of care provided, and gauge interest in shifting to another level of care needed within the continuum such as Safe House, Safe Foster Home, or Qualifies Residential Programs (QRTP).

The quality of Safe House services is monitored by the Department's Licensing Team through reviews of child files, interviews with children, and quality surveys. The Licensing Team visits all safe houses on a quarterly basis. The Department's Human Trafficking Team holds quarterly meetings with all providers to address any issues and provide technical assistance.

The Department will partner with the Office of Attorney General and other key partners to address criteria for Victims Compensation funds.

There has been significant work to increase services across the state over the past several years. During the 2023 Legislative Session, the Department received \$1.5 million to expand upon the evidenced-based program, CHANCE, which was designed to serve survivors of human trafficking, particularly those in the dependency system. This model will enable the Department to offer additional treatment options for this population.

In addition, the Department has incorporated an annual review of all CSEC cases to identify service needs and gaps, as well as trends that may aid in prevention efforts.

The Department has also:

- Engaged the provider network and safe foster home providers to increase capacity and identify best practices for statewide use.
- Implemented the Child Protective Investigator Career Ladder to create subject matter experts in human trafficking to increase identification, engagement, assessment, and connection to appropriate interventions.
- Collaborated with sister agencies such as the Department of Health, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Education, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Attorney General's Office, and others, on areas of training, improving identification of victims, identification of at-risk youth and adults, and other priorities identified in the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP).

Additional Strategies

Human Trafficking Awareness

Over the last two years, the Department has amplified its efforts to bring greater awareness to this heinous crime. Beginning in July 2022, foster parents and agency staff are required to successfully complete preservice training related to human trafficking, including basic information on risk factors, steps that should be taken to prevent at-risk youth from becoming victims, and ways to report human trafficking to the Hotline and law enforcement agencies.

In 2021, the Department created a new licensure type for group homes that requires enhanced training related to human trafficking. These homes are designed to serve youth who are at risk for sex trafficking. “Child or youth at risk of sex trafficking” means an individual who has experienced trauma, such as abuse, neglect, and/or maltreatment, and presents with one or more of the following risk factors:

- History of running away and/or homelessness.
- History of sexual abuse and/or sexually acting out behavior.
- Inappropriate interpersonal and/or social media boundaries.
- Family history of or exposure to human trafficking.
- Out-of-home placement instability demonstrated by repeated moves from less restrictive levels of care.

As of July 2023, there are 163 licensed group homes meeting this designation.

Appendix A

The following chart lists the organizations across the State that are providing services to survivors of human trafficking.

Circuit	Service providers	Mental Health Services	Substance Use Services	Peer Mentors	Specialized CSEC Housing
1	The Secret Place Home Set Free Refuge Nissi	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
2	STACC Camelot	No	Yes	No	No
3	Florida Recovery Schools Vera Matajic (Taylor) Village Counseling Center • Suwannee • Madison • Columbia Another Way • Columbia • Hamilton • Lafayette • Suwannee CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services • Columbia • Lafayette • Hamilton • Suwannee Three Rivers Legal Services • Columbia • Hamilton • Lafayette • Madison • Suwannee	Yes	Yes	No	No
4	Open Doors/Deloris Barr Weaver One More Child CAT Teams Florida Recovery Schools Gateway Clay Behavior Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
5		Yes		No	No

	Delta Devereux FLITE Center (Lake) Camelot The Centers LifeStream		Yes		
6	More too Life One More Child	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
7	Beacon Center CAT Team Florida Recovery Schools House Next Door Open Doors (Saint Johns) One More Child (Volusia) Devereux (Volusia) Steward Marchman Center Wrap Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Florida Recovery Schools Child Advocacy Center Alachua/Gainesville (supports surrounding counties) Created Gainesville (17 or older) Village Counseling Center • Alachua • Levy • Gilchrist • Baker • Bradford	Yes	Yes	No	No
9	PACE Center for Girls FLITE Center ONE Hope United One More Child Delta Devereux Aspire Health Partners	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	One More Child Delta Devereux TriCounty Human Services Inc.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

11	Project Gold/Kristi House Jackson Thrive Clinic Survivors Pathway The Chance Program (Citrus) Camillus House	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12	One More Child More Too Life Selah Freedom	Yes	No	Yes	No
13	More too Life One More Child Redefining Refuge	Yes	No	Yes	No
14	Gulf Coast Child Advocacy Center	Yes	No	No	No
15	FLITE Center Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
16	Project Gold/Kristi House Jackson Thrive Clinic The Chance Program (Citrus)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
17	CHANCE program PACE Center for Girls Henderson Behavioral Health FLITE Center ONE Hope United Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network Nancy J Cotterman Center (NJCC)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
18	One More Child Delta Devereux The Grove	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
19		Yes		Yes	No

	Henderson Behavioral Health FLITE Center ONE Hope United Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network		Yes		
20	One More Child Salus Care Vince Smith Center	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes