Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

https://www.vera.org/blog/out-of-the-shadows-and-into-the-field-the-trafficking-victim-identification-tool-at-six-months

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Since its release more than six months ago, the Vera-created[Trafficking Victim Identification Tool](TVIT)the first-ever validated screening tool for victims of human traffickinghas generated interest from researchers, immigration attorneys, law enforcement and government agencies, and domestic and international advocacy organizations seeking to strengthen their ability to help more victims of human trafficking come out of the shadows. The interest in the TVIT reflects the worldwide recognition of the global scale of human trafficking, as well as the cruelties and trauma it inflicts on the countless people trapped in modern-day slavery.

The tool was created to make it easier to identify trafficking victims, and subsequently get them the services and support they need while also generating evidence against their traffickers. The nature of human trafficking means that victims are often kept out of sight, living in fear, oras can be the case with victims used in prostitutiontreated as criminals by law enforcement.

Although organizations are not obligated to notify Vera when they use the tool, it is gratifying that many have. Researchers, in particular, are exploring how they can use the tool to improve outcomes for trafficking victims. One National Institute of Justice study will use part of the tool to help investigate gang involvement in human trafficking in San Diego, while another will use it to evaluate the effectiveness of New York States newly-launched Human Intervention Trafficking Courts. Researchers in Puerto Ricowho also assisted Vera in translating the toolsuser guide into Spanish will validate the tool among at-risk children in marginalized communities and disseminate it among law enforcement and childrens services departments within the territory.

Similarly, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Administration for Children and Families features the tool in its current national training for health care workers, and it has also been disseminated to Veras networks of lawyers serving immigrant children and adults.

The list of organizations that have expressed interest in using the tool in their anti-trafficking efforts is even longer, from child welfare agencies, hospitals, and local and federal law enforcement agencies in the U.S., to researchers in the Netherlands and Bosnia and the Greek and Turkish Ministries of Justice, Health and Public Order, which deals with unaccompanied and trafficked children at their shared border. Lastly, the tool is the proposed basis for the development of a multilingual app for use by law enforcement investigators and victims service providers, which will be tested by the International Association of Human Trafficking Investigators.

As awareness of this insidious problem continues to grow, we hope more agencies in the public and private sector will recognize the importance of the TVIT and incorporate it into their work. Many people, from police officers to doctors to nonprofit staff members, unknowingly come across trafficking victims every day, but often miss key opportunities to identify and assist them because they did not ask the right questions. The TVIT has the right questions. With its increased use, these missed opportunities can be avoided, giving even more victims a chance for a better life.

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