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# VI Dept. of Justice Announces Awareness Campaign Aimed at Ending Human Trafficking in U.S. Virgin Islands

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The V.I. Dept. of Justice has announced a collaboration with the national child protection think tank, CHILD USA, local and federal law enforcement agencies as well as victim services organizations in the Virgin Islands to spearhead programs to combat human trafficking crimes that the V.I. D.O.J. says "have plagued the Virgin Islands for years."

January has been proclaimed by President Joe Biden as National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. The proclamation is dedicated to deepening public understanding of human trafficking as well as an opportunity to denounce individuals, institutions, and systems that enable and perpetuate human trafficking.

According to the 2020 Federal Human Trafficking Report from the Human Trafficking Institute, in 2020, U.S. Virgin Islands federal courts [handled the highest number of sex trafficking cases](#) in the United States on a per capita basis when taking population into account. Local victim advocate organizations such as the Women's Coalition of St. Croix and the Family Resource Center in St. Thomas have been providing help to human trafficking victims referred by law enforcement agencies and individuals for years, the V.I. D.O.J. said.

Human Trafficking is considered modern-day slavery and involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of forced labor or commercial sex activity. The crime includes the use of coercion or deception to compel an adult to engage in prostitution or forced labor activity or to make a child or person under 18 available for the purpose of engaging the minor in commercial sexual activities or sexual servitude.

Traffickers use many means to gain control over victims, including grooming, threats of violence, threats of deportation, false promises of legitimate jobs, careers or training, manipulation, and even seduction into romantic relationships that turn into coerced sexual activity or prostitution. Although most human trafficking victims are women and girls, and sometimes undocumented immigrants, it can and does happen to anyone regardless of gender or nationality. It is a highly profitable crime run by criminal enterprises or individuals.

The crime often occurs hidden under the guise of a legitimate business or personal activity such as, in hotels, guest houses, restaurants, gas stations, streets, homes, strip clubs, private islands, or residences.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline received 51,667 reports of trafficking according to the Federal Human Trafficking Report. Despite the significant number of cases nationally and locally, human trafficking remains underreported. This means that sex trafficking victims in the Virgin Islands may continue to suffer in silence until rescued by the V.I. Police Department, federal law enforcement partners, and local victim advocate services organizations such as the Family Resource Center in St. Thomas and the Women's Coalition in St. Croix, both of which have been providing help to human trafficking victims for years.

If you are a victim or suspect that someone you know is, please say something. Whether it is sex trafficking, forced labor, domestic servitude, or modern-day slavery, call 911 or contact either of the following hotlines to make a report and to get help:

- Women's Coalition of St. Croix 340-773-9272
- Family Resource Center St. Thomas 340-776-7867
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 1 (888) 373-7888

"We want to empower Virgin Islands residents to recognize and respond to trafficking, while working jointly with the VIPD and our federal partners in preparing public servants to meet the needs of victims and stop traffickers," said V.I. Attorney General Denise George. "We must send a clear message that the Virgin Islands stand with victims and will not be a haven for traffickers."