

Kansas Conference on Slavery and Human Trafficking (02/01/2013)

Advocacy Working Group - Executive Summary

Prepared by Ryan Gibb, University of Kansas

Minutes by Alisa Moldavanova

## **Executive Summary**

The advocacy working group included students (undergraduate and graduate), faculty, staff, activists, practitioners, and state officials. The conversation centered around three main ideas: future partnerships, training/awareness, and immediate advocacy. Participants were eager to share their experiences – both success and failures – both as advocates against human trafficking and as practitioners who shelter and counsel victims.

### *Brainstorming for Future Partnerships*

The advocacy working group decided that effective advocacy requires community participation. To that end, the working group wanted to collect a list of “best practices” employed by other advocates and colleagues. There are networks to disseminate this information at the national level, and advocates shared experiences with similar organizations in Kansas. Secondly, the group wanted to collaborate with law enforcement to prevent human trafficking. Law enforcement and emergency responders are in a unique position to prevent human trafficking and connect victims of human trafficking to support networks. Overall, participants sought more sharing between organization and greater awareness of human trafficking locally.

### *Training and Awareness*

The working group identified two major groups advocates need to target for awareness campaigns. The first group is community members who are potential victims of human trafficking. Among the potential victims are the economically impoverished, children in the foster care system, and people with mental health issues. Advocacy here could focus on recognizing traffickers and the dangers of human trafficking.

A second awareness campaign could be to target populations that are buying services of human trafficking victims – the demand side of human trafficking economics. Reports from participants named male college students, members of the armed services, and police officers as typical customers. Combating human the demand side of human trafficking could reduce its profitability and spread. These awareness campaigns could focus on military installations, ROTC programs, fraternities, and college campuses in general.

### *Advocating Against Environmental Factors*

The group named two possible ways forward in order to combat the poverty side of human trafficking. Letters to Governor Brownback might persuade him to rethink funding cuts to social security programs, mental health programs, and after-school programs that make target populations more vulnerable to human traffickers. The working group suggested a state-wide letter campaign and online surveys to illustrate that voters are concerned about human trafficking.

The working group also suggested creating a forum for people to discuss human trafficking issues online. This forum could bring the governor's attention to human trafficking issues in the state. Such a forum could include the aforementioned "best practices" list, local shelters for victims, legal information/pro bono attorneys, and hotline telephone numbers.