

Identifying and Addressing Human Trafficking in Child Welfare Agencies

OMB Information Collection Request
0970 – New Collection

Supporting Statement Part B

October 2020

Submitted By:
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

Part B

B1. Objectives

Study Objectives

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks approval for a one-time study of child welfare practice in screening for human trafficking, and the relationship between screening and specialized services. The goal of the Identifying and Addressing Human Trafficking in Child Welfare Agencies (IAHT) study is to better understand how child welfare agencies select and implement screening tools, train workers on their use, and explore how children and youth identified as trafficked or at increased risk of trafficking are connected to services that meet their needs. The study will include data extraction from agency reports and websites; telephone interviews with state agency personnel; and individual and small group interviews with local agency leaders, casework supervisors, and case managers. Findings from this study may help inform child welfare practice by sharing information on widely used practices and those considered as promising strategies for identifying children and youth who have been trafficked and connecting them to specialized services.

Generalizability of Results

This study is intended to present an internally-valid description of child welfare practice in screening for human trafficking and the relationship between screening and specialized services, both nationally and in selected states and counties. It is not intended to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations.

Appropriateness of Study Design and Methods for Planned Uses

The study will use qualitative data collection, including semi-structured individual and small group interviews and case narratives, to collect the data necessary to address its goal. The study design selected is intended to balance the breadth achieved by reviewing extant data from all states and conducting telephone interviews with approximately 25 states, with the depth achieved by collecting detailed information in up to eight sites. Qualitative methods were selected to best capture decision-making, contextual factors, and respondents' assessment implementation with respect to screening and connections to specialized services.

This study is intended to document and describe current practice and experiences of selected sites in order to provide a resource for other child welfare agencies developing and implementing human trafficking screening and specialized services protocols. Resulting data is not intended to be representative. The study does not include impact evaluation of the identified practices and should not be used to assess participant outcomes. These limitations will be included in written products associated with the study.

As noted in Supporting Statement A, this information is not intended to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions and is not expected to meet the threshold of influential or highly influential scientific information.

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B2. Methods and Design

Target Population

The IAHT study will be a one-time qualitative study of state and local child welfare human trafficking leaders, casework supervisors, and case managers. We plan to collect data from state agency personnel in 25 states and local agency personnel in up to eight states.

Telephone interviews

For each of the 25 state child welfare agencies selected for the telephone interview, we will collect information from the identified state human trafficking coordinator or other staff member with a leadership role in the state child welfare response to human trafficking.

Case studies

For each of the up to eight selected case study sites (local child welfare agencies or offices), we will collect information from specific agency staff members: a local human trafficking coordinator; caseworker supervisors; and caseworkers who are knowledgeable about specific children and youth.

Sampling and Site Selection

Telephone interviews

State child welfare agencies selection. We will purposively select approximately 25 state child welfare agencies for telephone interviews. Selection will be based on information compiled during earlier reviews of state child welfare practice, updated with targeted searches of FY 2019 Annual Progress and Services Reports and state child welfare agency websites. Criteria for selection will include diverse and well-developed screening protocols, approaches to screening, implementation of specialized services and potentially geographic location as well.

State agency respondent selection. State agency respondents will be child welfare human trafficking coordinators or leaders filling that role. The study team will identify individuals based on information in the state's Annual Progress and Service Report (APSR), or targeted queries to the person submitting the APSR. Because participants will be purposively selected, they will not be representative of the population of child welfare human trafficking leaders.

Case studies

Case study site selection. We will select up to eight sites (local child welfare agencies or offices) and 2 alternate sites will be selected for case studies based on information collected in the state agency telephone interviews. Criteria for selection will include strong and diverse approaches, substantial numbers of identified and at-risk children and youth, and existing service responses after identification of trafficking or risk of trafficking. Criteria may also include geographic location, size, and county or state level administration.

Case study respondent selection. The study team will ask state child welfare leaders to make initial contact with local child welfare directors in agencies identified for participation. The study team will contact the local director to address any questions, confirm local participation, and identify potential informants within the agency. Because participants will be purposively selected, they will not be representative of the population of all child welfare staff.

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B3. Design of Data Collection Instruments

Development of Data Collection Instrument(s)

The data collection instruments were developed to address study research questions using semi-structured interviews to balance consistent data collection with opportunities to pursue topics of relevance to agency practice or participants' roles. Interview guides are structured to streamline data collection wherever possible by referencing information from extant data and previous interviews within each state and local site. The interviewer will summarize this information and request that participants update or clarify if needed. **Table 2** in Supporting Statement A presents specific topics and data sources for each of the study's focus areas. **Instruments 1-4** are interview guides for state human trafficking leaders, local human trafficking leaders, casework supervisors, and case managers.

The interview guides were reviewed by subject matter experts (See Section A8 of Supporting Statement A under Consultation with Experts Outside of the Study).

B4. Collection of Data and Quality Control

The contractor, RTI International, will collect all data for this one-time qualitative data collection with state and local human trafficking leaders, casework supervisors, and case managers.

Informed Consent Procedures

Respondents will receive a copy of the consent language prior to an interview. The consent script is included in each interview guide (**Instruments 1-4**). The interviewer will read the consent script aloud to introduce the respondent to the study, assure them that what they tell the study team will be kept private to the extent permitted by law, and to provide the respondents with an understanding of the voluntary nature of participation and their right to refuse to answer any question we ask of them.

Data Collection Procedures

The study team will contact state agencies by telephone to confirm the identity of the appropriate respondent, describe the study, address any questions, and request participation (**See Appendix C: State Participation Invitation**). Prior to their interviews, participants will be sent an advance e-mail that will provide information about the study, the interview, and consent information (**Appendices D-G**). State and local coordinators will also be asked to provide key protocols and documents to review in advance of the visit (e.g., screening tools and protocols, training materials). Prior to the case narrative interviews, RTI will work with local coordinators to define criteria for selecting cases to discuss, based on available information about the number and characteristics of children and youth identified as trafficked. Criteria will include length of involvement with agency, identification as victim of sex and/or labor trafficking, and demographic diversity.

Interviews will be conducted by telephone (state human trafficking coordinator interviews) or in-person or via video conferencing call (local human trafficking coordinator interviews, caseworker supervisor small group interviews, and caseworker case narratives). For in-person and virtual interviews, participating sites will be asked to help to schedule and provide a private location for staff interviews (e.g., a conference room), which will last 60-90 minutes each, depending on staff role. The interviews will be conducted by two research staff trained in qualitative data collection techniques. The primary interviewer will obtain informed consent from staff prior to each interview and lead the interview

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questions. The secondary interviewer will take notes during the interview. The research team will digitally audio record the interview if respondent's consent.

The audio recording will be erased once written notes are finalized. Interview notes will not include the participant's name. Written notes will be saved on RTI's private network in a share drive that only authorized RTI evaluation team members can access.

Data Quality

All interviewers will complete a training on interview protocol and note taking prior to the start of data collection. The secondary interviewer will take near-verbatim notes of the interview. After each interview, the secondary interviewer will clean their notes using the audio recording as backup and confirmation. The primary interviewer will review clean notes for accuracy and add any missing information. Summaries will be provided to individual interview respondents for validation.

B5. Response Rates and Potential Nonresponse Bias

The study team will identify alternate states and localities for data collection, to be contacted in the event that any of those initially identified are unable to participate. As a result, the study should meet its goals of 25 states and up to eight county agencies, with no potential nonresponse bias.

Response Rates

The interviews and case studies are not designed to produce statistically generalizable findings and participation is wholly at the respondent's discretion. Response rates will not be calculated or reported.

NonResponse

As participants will not be randomly sampled and findings are not intended to be representative, non-response bias will not be calculated. Respondent demographics will be documented and reported in written materials associated with the data collection. Refusals will also be documented and reported.

B6. Production of Estimates and Projections

The data will not be used to generate population estimates, either for internal use or dissemination.

B7. Data Handling and Analysis

Data Handling

Electronic notes and recordings will be transferred nightly from encrypted laptops to RTI's private network to minimize loss of data. See section A10 of Supporting Statement A under Data Security and Monitoring for information regarding data security.

For approaches to minimize errors in coding, please see the following subsection, *Data Analysis*.

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data (state and local coordinators, caseworker supervisors, and caseworker case narrative interviews) will begin with the development of deductive codes, which will represent topics addressed within the interview guides (e.g., screening tool selection). The qualitative team will create a detailed codebook with definitions. To facilitate analysis, data will be abstracted into a qualitative data management program (NVivo). As interview notes are reviewed and coded, team members will also

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identify issues, facts, or topics that were not anticipated but are potentially significant to what is being described. Two team members will each separately code a sample of interview notes for each respondent type and compare their coding decisions to identify any possible ambiguities that require clarification before coding proceeds. As coding proceeds, the team will abstract information from the notes into the database and continually review the inductive codes to ascertain which merit inclusion in the existing coding structure. The inductive codes will be added to the database and populated with data as they are identified during review. Following completion of deductive coding of all interview notes, the notes will be reviewed a second time to identify additional instances to which the inductive codes might apply. This method has been widely used by RTI researchers in situations requiring cost-efficient handling of qualitative data. RTI will then prepare matrices that summarize themes across sites or by types of respondents to develop a broad perspective of potential patterns. In addition, they will triangulate data by comparing qualitative data from different sites and respondents.

Data Use

Dissemination of survey findings may include practice briefs, webinars, and summary reports. Priority audiences for these products will include child welfare professionals and researchers focused on vulnerable children and youth and human trafficking. A set of deidentified interview notes and case narratives may be submitted to a select repository for archiving. If this is the case, RTI will prepare supporting materials to contextualize and assist in interpretation of the data including codebooks.

B8. Contact Person(s)

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Attachments

- Instrument 1: State Human Trafficking Coordinator Telephone Interview Guide
- Instrument 2: Local Human Trafficking Coordinator Interview Guide
- Instrument 3: Casework Supervisor Group Interview Guide
- Instrument 4: Caseworker Case Narrative Interview Guide
- Appendix A: 60-Day Federal Register Notice - IAHT
- Appendix B: Public Comments - IAHT
- Appendix C: State Participation Invitation
- Appendix D: State Human Trafficking Coordinator Advance E-mail
- Appendix E: Local Human Trafficking Coordinator Advance E-mail
- Appendix F: Casework Supervisor Advance E-mail
- Appendix G: Caseworker Advance E-mail