Evaluation of the Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP) and Aspire: Child Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (Aspire)

OMB Information Collection Request
New Collection

Supporting Statement
Part B

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Part B

B1. Objectives

Study Objectives

The objectives of the proposed process evaluation are to document and examine the redesigned Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP) and Aspire: Child Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (Aspire). This includes (1) how the programs are structured and administered, (2) how partnerships are developed and maintained, (3) how clients reach the programs, (4) how comprehensive case management services are provided, and (5) factors that affect program implementation. The proposed information collection will compare and assess variation in these aspects of implementation across the regions under the regional administration model. See the evaluation questions in **Exhibit A1** *of Supporting Statement A (SSA)*.

Generalizability of Results

This study is intended to present an internally valid description of the TVAP and Aspire programs and the people they serve, not to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations. The information will provide feedback to Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) and Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) and potentially help inform the implementation of services to people who have experienced trafficking (See *Section A2 of SSA* for more details).

The results from the process evaluation will also be useful to other service providers that are supporting or want to support people who have experienced human trafficking. Although community context varies, the challenges encountered (including how they are addressed) and the lessons learned (including what works well) may be helpful to other providers designing and implementing similar victims service programs.

Appropriateness of Study Design and Methods for Planned Uses

Initial interviews at the national level (see A2. *Other Data Sources and Uses of Information* in *SSA*) suggested significant variation in program implementation and practice, particularly across regions. This evaluation will use a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative approach with in-depth interviews in selected regions and a survey of all subrecipients across regions. The study design selected is intended to be the least burdensome while allowing for both a deep understanding of implementation experiences and comparative analysis across regions.

Qualitative interviews will bring nuanced perspectives to this complex program. Interviews provide flexible in-depth exploration of the respondents' perceptions and experiences. Qualitative methods also allow the interviewer the flexibility to pursue relevant and important issues as they arise during the discussion, which is important because of the variation between and within regions and the inherent variation among respondent narratives and experiences. This approach uses a small, purposive sample to gain in-depth understanding.

Interview findings can be compared across selected regions, but not all regions. The quantitative surveys will allow for inputs from a broader set of service providers with lower burden. They will provide the research team with measurable data, which will provide the ability to present descriptive statistics across all regions, beyond the selected regions. Together, the qualitative and quantitative methods will assist in answering the evaluation questions.

In alignment with the research questions, the results are context specific in nature and are not designed to be representative of or generalizable to a given subpopulation. Limitations will be noted in any publications resulting from the information collection.

As noted in *SSA*, 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.

B2. Methods and Design

Target Population

<u>Interviews:</u>
For each of the two to three selected regions we will collect information from the following:

1. Subrecipient staff: These participants will be staff at all subrecipient organizations that work with TVAP/Aspire clients in the selected regions.
2. Other services providers: These participants will be staff at service organizations in the community that do not have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the TVAP/Aspire programs but receive referrals from the prime award case managers or subrecipients and provide services to TVAP/Aspire clients in the selected regions.
3. Local government system professionals: These participants will be staff at local government system agencies that interact with TVAP/Aspire program staff, particularly regional coordinators, in responding to client needs in the selected regions.
4. Clients: These participants will be current and former TVAP/Aspire clients now over 18 years of age, who received services in the selected regions.

The evaluation team will use non-probability, purposive sampling to identify potential respondents who can provide information on the evaluation's key constructs. Because participants will be purposively selected, they will not be representative of the population of subrecipient staff, service providers, or government agencies. Clients will not be representative of the population of people the TVAP and Aspire programs serve. Instead, we aim to obtain variation in client experiences with services with a given subrecipient.

<u>Subrecipient Survey:</u>
The subrecipient survey will be provided to all organizations with MOUs with the prime award recipient to provide services to TVAP/Aspire clients.

Regional Site Selection

The TVAP and Aspire programs utilize 9 regional coordinators to manage program activities across the ACF geographical regions. A subset of two to three regions will be selected for an in-depth examination of TVAP and Aspire implementation.

Regions will be selected based on consultation from OTIP and the prime recipient, as well as findings from national level interviews across all ACF regions (See *Other Data Sources and Uses of Information* in *Section A2 of SSA* for details). Final selection factors are to be determined but will likely include geographic location, regions' client characteristics (e.g., volume, breakdown between TVAP and Aspire), number of subrecipient organizations, presence of a case manager employed by the prime recipient and reported implementation challenges and strengths.

Respondent Recruitment

Subrecipient interviews

The prime award recipient will provide points of contact for each subrecipient with an MOU in selected regions. RTI will work with these points of contact at the subrecipient organization to identify staff who can answer questions related to process and implementation. They will provide contact information to RTI. RTI will then send a recruitment e-mail to identified individuals, which includes high-level information about the evaluation and an opportunity to schedule an interview time that is convenient for them. Interested individuals will demonstrate their voluntary interest in participating by scheduling an interview time. Those who volunteer will receive an advance confirmation e-mail prior to their interview, that will include high-level information about the evaluation and informed consent information (see **Appendix A**).

Other provider interviews

The prime award recipient and subrecipient organizations will provide points of contact for service providers they work with in selected regions that provide services to TVAP/Aspire clients, but do not have an MOU with the prime award recipient. RTI will work with these points of contact at the service provider organization to identify staff who can answer questions related to process and implementation. They will provide contact information to RTI. RTI will then send a recruitment e-mail to identified individuals, which includes high-level information about the evaluation and an opportunity to schedule an interview time that is convenient for them. Interested individuals will demonstrate their voluntary interest in participating by scheduling an interview time. Those who volunteer will receive an advance confirmation e-mail prior to their interview, that will include high-level information about the evaluation and informed consent information (see **Appendix B**).

Local government professional interviews

The prime award recipient will provide points of contact for local government agencies that interact with program staff, particularly regional coordinators, in responding to TVAP/Aspire client needs and receiving client referrals. RTI will work with these points of contact at the service provider organization to identify staff who can answer questions related to process and implementation. They will provide contact information to RTI. RTI will then send a recruitment e-mail to identified individuals, which includes high-level information about the evaluation and an opportunity to schedule an interview time that is convenient for them. Interested individuals will demonstrate their voluntary interest in participating by scheduling an interview time. Those who volunteer will receive an advance confirmation e-mail prior to their interview, that will include high-level information about the evaluation and informed consent information (see **Appendix C**).

Client interviews

Case managers from the prime award recipient and subrecipient organizations will help identify adult current and former TVAP/Aspire clients who may be in a place in their healing to be able to participate in an evaluation. Case managers will facilitate communication with potential client participants. They will share the recruitment e-mail with identified individuals, which includes high-level information about the evaluation and an opportunity to schedule an interview time that is convenient for them. Interested individuals will demonstrate their voluntary interest in participating by scheduling an interview time directly with RTI or through their case manager for anonymous participation. Those who schedule an interview will receive an advance confirmation e-mail prior to their interview, that will include high-level information about the evaluation and informed consent information (see **Appendix D**).

Subrecipient Survey

A census of subrecipients will be invited to participate in the subrecipient web-survey by e-mail (see **Appendix E**) including the subset of subrecipients who participated in the subrecipient interview. The goal of this data collection is to capture the breadth and diversity of subrecipient practice and experience which is supported by conducting a census.

B3. Design of Data Collection Instruments

Five instruments will be used for this data collection (see Instruments 1-5).

Development of Data Collection Instruments

The interview guides were developed to address study research questions using semi-structured interviews to balance consistent data collection with opportunities to pursue topics of relevance to variations in regional and organizational implementation approaches. Interview guides are structured to streamline data collection wherever possible by referencing information from extant data and previous interviews with prime recipient staff (as referenced *in Other Data Sources and Uses of Information in Section A2 of SSA*). **Exhibit A2** in *SSA* presents specific topics and data sources for each of the study's focus areas.

Instrument 1: Subrecipient Interview Guide was designed to address research questions about implementation models, participant and implementer engagement, and implementation facilitators and barriers. Specifically, this semi-structured interview guide addresses research questions (RQs) 1a, 2a, 3a-e, 4a-e, 5a-k, and 6a-b, as listed in **Exhibit A1** of *SSA*.

Instrument 2: Other Service Provider Interview Guide was designed to address research questions about how other service providers interact and coordinate with the prime award recipient. Specifically, this semi-structured interview guide addresses RQs 1a, 3b-e, 4c-e, 5a-e, k, and 6a-b, as listed in **Exhibit A1** of *SSA*.

Instrument 3: Local Government Systems Interview Guide was designed to address research questions about how other agencies interact and coordinate with the prime award recipient. Specifically, this semi-structured interview guide addresses RQs 1a, 3b-e, 4c-e, 5a-e, k, and 6a-b, as listed in **Exhibit A1** of *SSA*.

Instrument 4: Client Interview Guide was designed to answer questions about clients' experience in the programs, how the programs met their needs, and feedback for the programs. Specifically, this semi-structured interview guide addresses RQs 1a, 4a-b and 5f-i, as listed in **Exhibit A1** of *SSA*.

Instrument 5: Subrecipient Survey is intended to address experiences with client referral and service provision, support provided by the prime award recipient, and overall program implementation. Specifically, this survey addresses RQs 1a, 2a, 3a-e, 4a-e, 5a-k, and 6a-b, as listed in **Exhibit A1** of *SSA*.

The instruments were developed with input and/or review by the following groups of expert consultants.

- OTIP Personnel involved in TVAP and/or Aspire programs
- Select TVAP and Aspire Prime Recipient Personnel
- Select TVAP and Aspire Subrecipient Personnel
- Select survivors from the Prime Recipient's Survivor Advisory Board
- USC TVAP and Aspire Research Team

B4. Collection of Data and Quality Control

Data Collection Mode

Interviews will be conducted via video or teleconference, depending on respondents' preference. Interviews are expected to last 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the participant (see burden estimates in *A.12 in SSA*) and will be conducted by two evaluation team staff trained in qualitative data collection techniques. The primary interviewer will obtain informed consent from respondents prior to each interview and lead the interview questions. The secondary interviewer will take notes during the interview. The research team will digitally audio record the interview if participants consent. The audio recording will be erased once written notes are finalized. Interview notes will not include the participants' names. Written notes will be saved on RTI's private network in a share drive that only authorized RTI evaluation team members can access.

Potential survey participants will receive a link to a web-based survey by e-mail. The survey will be self-administered using a secure web platform. Respondents will see the consent language on the first page of the web-based survey after clicking their unique web link. They will use their personal device to self-administer the survey at a time that is convenient for them. After indicating agreement to participate by clicking the begin button on the screen, respondents will complete the survey questions (see **Instrument 5: Subrecipient Survey** for consent and survey questions).

Data Quality and Monitoring

All interviewers will complete a training on interview protocols and note taking prior to the start of data collection. The secondary interviewer will take near-verbatim notes of the interview. After each interview, it will be transcribed based on the audio recording. The primary interviewer will review clean transcript for accuracy.

B5. Response Rates and Potential Nonresponse Bias

Response Rates

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

Based on recent similar surveys conducted with program implementers and victim services providers (Feeney et. al., 2023; RTI International, 2023; Yu, Hendrix and Rinderle, 2024), RTI estimates a 45% response rate for surveys.

NonResponse

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

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

Interviews

All interviewers will complete a training on interview protocols 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.

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 SSA* under *Data Security and Monitoring* for information regarding data security.

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

Survey

RTI staff will thoroughly test the instruments to ensure that the surveys are programmed into the web-based survey accurately and in a manner that minimizes error. This includes automated and manual checks on the programming of each system to ensure that skip patterns are properly programmed, and response options are within allowable ranges. RTI staff will attempt to test all possible response categories for each question in order to identify embedded logic errors, as well as obvious skip problems. Several analysts may test the program simultaneously to identify problems quickly, and to double check the comprehensiveness of the testing.

Data Analysis

Interviews

Analysis of qualitative data will begin with the development of deductive codes and codebooks, which will represent topics addressed within the interview guides. Two team members will each separately code a sample of interview notes, identify unanticipated but salient topics and themes, and compare their coding decisions to identify any possible ambiguities that require clarification before coding proceeds. As coding proceeds, the team will extract information from the notes into the database and review new inductive codes that might merit inclusion in the existing coding structure. Any 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 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 regions 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 regions and respondents.

Survey

Analysis of survey data will include 3 components: data cleaning and variable creation, descriptive statistics, and analytical models.

For data cleaning, variable and value labels will be attached to all survey items, and variables will be recoded as necessary to prepare for analytical models or to clearly describe the data using descriptive statistics (e.g., collapsing categories, creating dummy variables, creating new variables that represent the sum or combination of multiple items). Factor analysis may be used to describe variability among observed and correlated variables and to create a fewer number of unobserved factors, or latent class analysis may be used to group respondents based on how they answered a series of questions.

For descriptive statistics, we will present the number of subrecipients represented by the respondents and the average number of respondents per subrecipient and region. We will then present descriptive statistics for all survey items, including category percentages for nominal and ordinal variables and means and standard deviations for continuous or interval-level variables.

We will examine between- and within region variance on outcome measures, intraclass correlation coefficients, and variance partition components to indicate how much variance in the outcome variable is attributed to differences between regions.

Data Use

Dissemination of study findings may include research briefs, summary reports, and peer-reviewed journal manuscripts. Priority audiences for these products will include researchers and policymakers focused on human trafficking, victims service providers, and other service providers concerned with human trafficking. ACF and RTI are committed to transparency in research. Sharing access to the survey data sets will support further analyses that can inform policy and practice related to trafficking. We will archive the final, deidentified survey data sets, likely with the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), following their requirements for ensuring privacy. RTI will prepare supporting materials to contextualize and assist in interpretation of the data and as required by ICPSR, including documentation of the survey instrument, data set, data dictionary, recode and analytical syntax, and user guide. Archiving data and supporting information will support future contributions to our understanding of the implementation of services for people who have experienced human trafficking, including analyses by researchers and within other federally funded studies.

B8. Contact Persons

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Attachments

Instrument 1: Subrecipient Interview Guide

Instrument 2: Other Service Provider Interview Guide

Instrument 3: Local Government Systems Interview Guide

Instrument 4: Client Interview Guide

Instrument 5: Subrecipient Survey

Appendix A: Subrecipient Interview Recruitment and Advance E-mail

Appendix B: Other Service Provider Interview Recruitment and Advance E-mail

Appendix C: Local Government Systems Interview Recruitment and Advance E-mail

Appendix D: Client Interview Recruitment and Advance E-mail

Appendix E: Subrecipient Survey Recruitment E-mail

References

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Yu, Lilly, Hendrix, Joshua, and Rinderle, Abigail. (2024). Process Evaluation of the 2020–2023 Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education (HTYPE) Demonstration Program: Final Report, OPRE Report No. 2024-275, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.