

# Governor Abbott's Child Sex Trafficking Team: An Overview

The Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) was created and initially funded by the 84th Texas Legislature as part of the Office of the Governor. It began operations in FY2016 under CJD and in FY2018 became a stand-alone division within the Public Safety Office.

CSTT's mission is to:

- **Protect** children by building their awareness of and resilience to child exploitation and curbing demand for child sex trafficking (CST).
- **Recognize** child sex trafficking in all its forms by raising public awareness and implementing screening tools.
- **Recover** victims with protective and empowering – not punitive – responses spanning multiple systems.
- **Restore** survivors through trauma-informed and responsive services and provide the support needed to heal and thrive.
- **Bring justice** for survivors by holding traffickers, buyers, and those who profit from trafficking accountable.



CSTT focuses on collaboration and partnerships to achieve its goals and leverages state and federal funding to help advance emerging practices to fill gaps around the state. Over the past two years, CSTT made great strides in building capacity in Texas in the following areas:

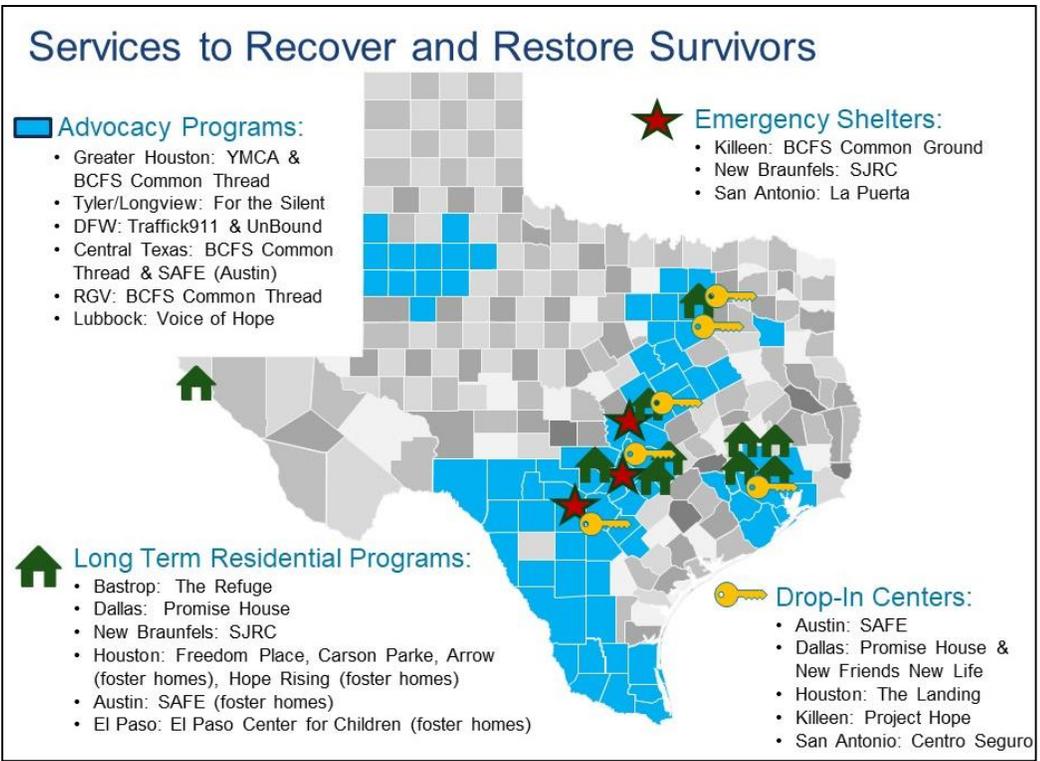
- **Public Awareness & Prevention Education.** Child sex trafficking is not limited to any race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or zip code. Traffickers prey upon vulnerability, and children and youth are inherently vulnerable. Sadly, these exploiters can often be the very people our children trust – friends, boyfriends, family members, teachers, and others. CSTT is implementing the following key prevention strategies: providing age appropriate, research-based prevention education to youth; leveraging existing child abuse and sexual violence training and prevention programs; focusing on building healthy connections and other protective factors, especially for highly vulnerable children such as homeless and foster youth; and targeting demand by increasing efforts to deter and prosecute buyers, as well as by educating youth and young men.



**Governor's "Be the One" Challenge**  
*Be the One* is a documentary from the Texas Attorney General that trains viewers to identify and respond to human trafficking. Governor Abbott challenged state agencies to incorporate the film into mandatory staff training. Nearly 100,000 state employees across 73 agencies have been trained as a result of the challenge.

CSTT's website for more resources: [www.gov.texas.gov/cstt](http://www.gov.texas.gov/cstt)  
View the *Be the One* documentary: [Click Here](#)

- Screening Tool.** Child sex trafficking victims frequently do not self identify or make disclosures, and exploitation often continues for a significant time before being identified. CSTT identified the Commercial Sexual Exploitation – Identification Tool (CSE-IT) as the best suited instrument to improve identification rates in Texas. The team promoted adoption of the tool by providing training and technical assistance to the Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, and many child-serving agencies.
- Care Coordination Teams.** CSTT is partnering with the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas to develop Care Coordination Teams (CCTs) across the state. CCTs are made up of law enforcement, juvenile justice, child protection, CST advocates, and medical and behavioral health services. Each CCT staffs the cases of survivors up to 18 years of age, regardless of system involvement. The CCT develops recommended service plans, and if a guardian authorizes, facilitates access to services in the short and long-term.
- Safety & Shelter.** Drop-in centers provide opportunities to engage in services and meet basic needs, and emergency shelters are available 24/7 to provide physical safety to survivors and a trauma-informed alternative to detention.
- Child Sex Trafficking Advocates.** CST advocates are trained to provide crisis intervention, ongoing case management, and a healthy, supportive long-term relationship for survivors under age 25. CSTT has provided funding for seven advocacy agencies to reach 76 counties across the state. These agencies have provided services to 540 youth.
- Regional Continuum of Care.** CSTT is building a regional continuum of care in North, South, East, West, and Central Texas. Each region will have an array of victim-centered, trauma-informed services to meet the immediate and long-term needs of survivors. This includes specialized foster homes and other long-term residential programs, as well as community based services.
- Specialized Prosecutors and Supports.** CSTT grants have supported training for all parts of the criminal justice system and funded positions in Harris, Dallas, and Bexar Counties to prosecute child sex trafficking crimes. Project 180 in Harris County is a pilot that diverts young people arrested for prostitution to services; identifies trafficking cases that were mistaken for prostitution cases; and increases investigations and prosecutions of exploiters.



*“CST advocates and care coordination together have proven to be a game changer in Dallas and a successful model for recovering child sex trafficking victims.”*

- Retired Dallas Police Department Sergeant Byron Fassett on the formation of the Dallas County CST Care Coordination Team and the development of Traffick911’s advocacy program.