

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Children's Aid Society of Alabama (CAS) is delighted to announce that the **Child Trafficking Solutions Project** (CTSP), created in 2016 and supported since inception by the Children's Policy Cooperative (JeffCo CPC), became an official program of CAS on 7/1/2022 and began providing direct services under the CAS umbrella on 10/1/2022. We are fortunate that Teresa Collier, primary educator for CTSP and a Forensic Child Interview Specialist, has joined CAS as the CTSP Program Director. CTSP now has a permanent home base at the CAS *Alice McSpadden Williams Center for Children, Youth, and Families* on Birmingham's Southside. The specialized CTSP service team will spend most of their time expanding partnerships around the state through training sessions, conferences, and other public education and awareness activities. CTSP will soon have a presence on the CAS website and social media platforms.

In the meantime, please see <https://www.facebook.com/ChildTraffickingSolutionsProject/> and <https://www.jeffersoncountychildren.org/trafficking> to learn more about CTSP's mission. The Child Trafficking Solutions Project is a statewide coalition comprised of human trafficking organizations; local, state, and federal law enforcement; government agencies; non-government/non-profit organizations; child protective services; and survivor care providers. **CTSP works to rescue and restore child victims of sex trafficking through development of uniform response protocols, training, and strategic partnerships with law enforcement, first-responders, healthcare providers, juvenile justice, child-welfare agencies, and schools, while mobilizing communities to prevent abuse, raise awareness, and increase safety.** Customized comprehensive training is offered for audiences of law enforcement, first responders, medical personnel, educators, child-serving professionals, parents, and students to prevent, recognize, and respond to child trafficking. Our Trafficking Training is offered at no-charge for all law enforcement.

Child sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, patronizing, and/or soliciting of a minor for the purpose of a commercial sex act. Offenders target and gain control over vulnerable children using a variety of manipulations. **Every child, of any gender, involved in this form of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a victim.** Victims are heavily conditioned to remain loyal to the trafficker and distrust law enforcement. **CAS and CTSP will provide a uniform response protocol and comprehensive training strategy focused upon first responders, law enforcement, child-welfare, juvenile justice intake and juvenile probation officers, judges, and detention personnel to recognize, rethink, and respond to prospective child victims.**

CTSP's strategic community outreach and education leads directly to the establishment of **Trafficking-Free Zones** in Alabama, including the adoption of systemic changes in the approach of both law enforcement and the juvenile justice system toward identification, rescue, treatment, and stabilization of trafficking victims. Through FY2022, CTSP has helped to establish 19 "Trafficking-Free Zones (TFZ)" in Alabama. Our ambitious expansion plan for FY2023 will raise that number to at least 40 TFZ! Generous financial support from the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham and Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, with committed government, school, and community engagement throughout Alabama, will ensure that CTSP reaches this goal.

The agency leaders who shepherded this transition share their enthusiastic support:

We are thrilled that the Child Trafficking Solutions Project has joined Children's Aid Society! CTSP's critical work aligns beautifully with CAS' mission, vision, and beliefs. This partnership will enable CTSP to continue positively impacting communities across the state through advocacy and education. **Shelly Mize, Executive Director, Children's Policy Cooperative of Jefferson County**

The Child Trafficking Solutions Project (CTSP) founders and staff are honored to partner with Children's Aid Society, which has been providing services to families and children in Alabama for over a century. Child trafficking is, unfortunately, a crime that is on the rise in Alabama and throughout our nation. Our mission at CTSP is to train law enforcement, DHR and communities to recognize the red flags of child trafficking and more importantly, recognize those "at-risk" children in time to intervene to prevent exploitation. The partnership with CAS expands our opportunities to train others to recognize, rethink, and respond to child trafficking incidents. **Teresa Collier, CTSP Program Director and Co-Founder**

CAS is honored to be involved in this worthwhile project, as we now know how widespread trafficking of our children, youth, and young adults has become, and how detrimental it is to their young lives. By heightening awareness throughout Alabama, we will have a better chance of preventing trafficking altogether or intervening early when it is detected. **Gayle Watts, CEO, Children's Aid Society of Alabama**

CTSP was instrumental in creating the Human Trafficking training that was mandatory for over 3,000 volunteers in advance of the World Games hosted June 2022 in Birmingham and the surrounding area. A few successful outcomes of that effort are linked below.

<https://www.al.com/news/2022/07/world-games-human-trafficking-operation-leads-to-rescue-of-several-victims-including-children-and-dozens-of-arrests.html>

<https://www.wbrc.com/2022/07/18/homeland-security-operation-nets-dozens-human-trafficking-related-arrests-during-world-games/>

<https://www.wbrc.com/2022/07/20/community-awareness-credited-with-helping-human-trafficking-victims-during-world-games/>

<https://wbhm.org/2022/world-games-human-exploitation-task-force-announces-arrests/>

For additional information or to schedule a training, please contact: CTSPinfo@childrensaid.org or call 205-719-0471

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