



# DHS EFFORTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Combating [human trafficking](#) is a top priority for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Every year, nearly 25 million men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide – including here in the United States. DHS is a federal leader in this fight and works with partners at every level to prevent this heinous crime, identify and protect victims, and bring perpetrators to justice.

The DHS [Center for Countering Human Trafficking](#) (CCHT) integrates the efforts of 16 Agencies and Offices within DHS that carry out our anti-trafficking mission. These efforts range from criminal investigations, victim assistance, and combating forced labor in exports destined for the United States to external outreach and public education, intelligence, and training. Under the leadership of Secretary Mayorkas, DHS is incorporating a [victim-centered approach](#) into every facet of the counter-human trafficking mission.

## DHS Fiscal Year 2021 Counter-Human Trafficking Highlights:

- DHS established the [Center for Countering Human Trafficking](#) (CCHT) to coordinate and integrate the Department's many counter-trafficking efforts.
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) detained 1,469 shipments and seized 57 shipments containing nearly \$500 million in merchandise linked to forced labor abroad, a nearly 900 percent increase from under \$50 million in detained and seized goods in Fiscal Year 2020. CBP issued seven significant Withhold Release Orders (WROs) and two forced labor Findings to prevent merchandise produced with forced labor abroad from being imported into the United States.
- CBP modified three WROs and a Finding after foreign producers subject to these orders and findings took corrective actions to remediate forced labor conditions, improving the lives of thousands of workers. This included improvements in living and working conditions and repayment of unjust recruitment fees of over \$30 million paid by workers.
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) made 2,360 human trafficking arrests and provided support to 728 victims. HSI human trafficking investigations led to 349 convictions of perpetrators.
- ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) now has human trafficking points of contact in every office and has collaborated with the DHS Blue Campaign on posters and materials to distribute.
- The Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) trained more than 3,300 federal law enforcement officers on the indicators of human trafficking, how to respond, and how to support victims.
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released the first-ever T Visa Resource Guide for law enforcement and certifying agencies, and approved 829 T visas for victims of trafficking and 622 T visas for their qualifying family members.
- The DHS Blue Campaign, the Department's national human trafficking public awareness initiative, delivered 68 presentations to over 4,500 federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, law enforcement agencies, congressional offices, and members of the public to enable them to recognize the indicators of human trafficking and properly respond to potential trafficking cases. To raise awareness about human trafficking and how to respond, the Blue Campaign also developed three new trainings for youth program professionals, front-line convenience store employees, and campus law enforcement, and created two animated videos for youth and the trucking industry.
- The [Blue Lightning Initiative](#), an element of Blue Campaign led by CBP and the Department of Transportation (DOT), attracted 29 new partners. The Initiative trains aviation personnel to identify potential traffickers and human trafficking victims, and to report their suspicions to federal law enforcement.

## HOW DHS COUNTERS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Victim Protection and Assistance

- USCIS and ICE HSI provide [short-term](#) and [long-term](#) immigration protections to eligible victims.
- The ICE HSI Victim Assistance Program [informs victims](#) of their rights and connects victims with organizations that provide direct services to support victims and their families. This support helps to protect and stabilize victims, and in turn enables them to pursue justice by actively participating in the investigation and prosecution of the crimes committed against them.

### Investigations and Enforcement

- ICE HSI [investigates sex trafficking and forced labor](#), including forced labor in the U.S. supply chain, arrests perpetrators, and supports prosecutions.

- ICE ERO removes convicted human traffickers from the country.
- The DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) develops and deploys [leading-edge tools and technology](#) to help identify victims and bring perpetrators to justice, including facial recognition technology to help identify child victims of exploitation, data analytics software to help law enforcement better understand signs of criminal activity that could indicate trafficking, and rapid DNA testing technology.
- [CBP](#) investigates allegations of forced labor in the U.S. supply chain and detains or seizes goods when information indicates that merchandise imported into the United States was produced with forced labor.

- U.S. Coast Guard conducts enforcement operations to deter and counter human trafficking at sea. The Coast Guard also collaborates with interagency and international partners to promote identification and protection of victims and address all forms of labor exploitation on vessels.
- DHS leads the interagency Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF), which monitors U.S. enforcement of the prohibition on importing goods produced with forced labor. The broad federal collaboration within the Task Force ensures the U.S. Government can effectively enforce relevant laws and combat forced labor globally.

### Identification and Screening

- DHS employees are trained to identify and screen for suspected human trafficking victims and perpetrators on land, at sea, or in the air through CBP, USCIS, ICE, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Secret Service (USSS), and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

### Public Engagement, Awareness, Training and Outreach

- The [Blue Campaign](#) educates the public, non-governmental organizations, and industry and law enforcement partners about human trafficking and how to report suspected cases of trafficking. The Blue Campaign also develops trainings and materials to increase detection and reporting of human trafficking, and to identify victims.
- FEMA, through the [DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships](#), supports the development of anti-trafficking awareness materials and provides informational outreach to faith and community partners for the Blue Campaign.
- FLETC trains federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and international law enforcement so they have the tools and expertise to recognize and respond to human trafficking.
- As part of the Blue Campaign, DHS, through CBP, partners with the Department of Transportation to lead the Blue Lightning Initiative (BLI). This initiative trains aviation industry personnel to identify potential traffickers and human trafficking victims, and to report their suspicions to federal law enforcement.
- USSS provides educational training on preventing and responding to child sex trafficking to schools, parents, and other community partners as part of its Childhood Smart Program.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Report suspected human trafficking to DHS law enforcement by calling the HSI Tip Line at 1-866-347-2423.
- Get help from the National Human Trafficking Hotline by calling 1-888-373-7888 or texting HELP or INFO to 233733 (BEFREE).
- If you have information on goods produced with forced labor destined for the United States, provide it to CBP at <https://eallegations.cbp.gov/s/> and [info@ccht.dhs.gov](mailto:info@ccht.dhs.gov).
- Raise awareness of human trafficking in your community using DHS Blue Campaign resources on [DHS.gov/BlueCampaign](#).

### CASE SPOTLIGHTS

#### **HSI Baltimore Helps Secure Conviction for Sex Trafficker, Supports Victims**

*In November 2021, a non-citizen illegally present in the U.S. was [convicted](#) of sex trafficking and drug distribution charges, following a nearly three-year investigation by HSI Baltimore and the Baltimore County Police Department (BCPD). Based on information from an informant, HSI and BCPD conducted surveillance, interviewed witnesses and victims, and executed search warrants for the suspect's social media platforms. Eight victims were identified, though evidence was presented at trial that indicated the convicted trafficker forced more than 25 individuals, including minors, into commercial sex work. An HSI Victim Advocate continues to help the identified victims and their families with stabilization and rehabilitation services.*

#### **HSI Leads Investigation Resulting in 54-Count Indictment for Human Smuggling and Labor Trafficking**

*In November 2018, investigators from HSI, along with federal interagency partners, began a multi-year investigation into a largescale human smuggling and labor trafficking operation carried out by the Patricio transnational criminal organization. As part of this operation, Mexican and Central American workers were smuggled into the United States and subjected to brutal working conditions on South Georgia farms. Known as Operation Blooming Onion, the multi-agency effort led by HSI resulted in a [54-count indictment](#) in November 2021 against two dozen defendants for their roles in labor exploitation and visa fraud. The conspirators had required the workers to pay unlawful fees for transportation, food, and housing while illegally withholding their travel and identification documents, forcing the workers to perform demanding labor for little or no pay, housing them in crowded, unsanitary, and degrading living conditions, and threatening them with deportation and violence. The conspirators are alleged to have reaped more than \$200 million from the illegal scheme.*



- Visit the [DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking](#) to learn more about our Department-wide efforts to combat human trafficking.
- Follow DHS Blue Campaign on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter: @DHSBlueCampaign.
- Read the [DHS Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, the Importation of Goods Produced with Forced Labor, and Child Sexual Exploitation](#).
- Read the [White House National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking](#).