

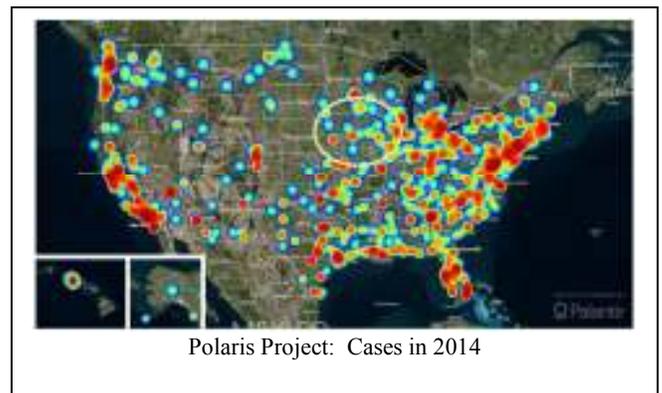


Human Trafficking: The Iowa Experience

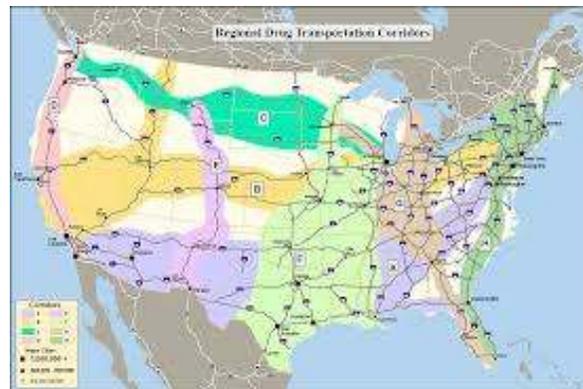
Human trafficking has been identified as a national and international problem, and Iowa has not been immune to sex or labor trafficking. The number of prosecutions has been small, but the cases that have received public attention have occurred throughout the state. These cases involve many types of sex trafficking, including personal or family relationships, child abduction, enticement and force or coercion.

More significantly, there are some indicators that the incidence of trafficking is much greater. The Polaris Project monitors calls to hotlines and online ads for underage escorts.¹ Many online advertisements include multiple cities in Iowa, and appear to include underage “escorts” who may be trafficked.

Frequent trafficking patterns among the top metropolitan hubs for human trafficking include some routes through Iowa.² The human trafficking routes generally track the routes commonly used for drug trafficking.³ Human traffickers often supply drugs to their victims in order to control their actions. Traffickers benefit from having victims become dependent upon drugs.



Human Trafficking Routes



Drug Trafficking Routes

¹ Polaris Project, 2014 Statistics, available online: <http://www.polarisproject.org/storage/documents/2014statistics.pdf>

² National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, “Five Things to Know About Teen Parents and How to Help Them,” available online: <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/media-center/slideshows/five-things-know-about-teen-parents-and-how-help-them>

³ US Dep’t of Justice, National Drug Threat Assessment 2010, available online: <http://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs38/38661/movement.htm>



Human trafficking is a hidden crime. It depends on the trafficker's success in luring or forcing a victim into trafficking and then controlling the victim's access to resources, including contacts with others who could help the victim to escape. Thus, much of the organization is hidden, and victims do not feel safe to come forward to seek assistance. This means that any organized effort to combat trafficking must not only identify the trafficking operation and the individuals being victimized, but also must identify the resources available to counteract the trafficking.



The statewide strategy for combatting human trafficking is based on the ability of police to investigate the crimes, so that prosecutors can successfully hold trafficking offenders accountable through the justice system. Each case can be challenging because it often involves multiple locations, and given the complexity of the trafficking networks, it is essential for law enforcement agencies to work together in task forces and to provide trafficking-organization information to a central repository, so that the entire network can be held accountable. In addition, reports to the national hotline should continue to be coordinated among federal, state and local agencies.

As a practical matter, it is essential to provide resources to victims, whose ties with family and community have been severed and whose needs are particularly acute. Because of the importance of community support for severely isolated victims, community funding of human trafficking resources can provide sustainability and can foster commitment to the continued support for trafficking victims.

Public awareness also plays a key role, given the hidden nature of human trafficking. Educating the public about the signs of trafficking can help to identify victims and may assist in the investigation and prosecution of cases. It also can provide essential community support.

Specifically, the current needs, to implement the strategy:

- Training, especially for law enforcement and victim services
- Development and support for task force operations and collection of intelligence information about networks
- Public awareness efforts, to identify the signs of trafficking and identify how to report suspected incidents
- Coordination of community resources to recognize and provide support to trafficking victims, especially teenage victims of trafficking
- Development of sustainable private funding sources, which can promote community support.

Signs of Teen Sex Trafficking

- Unexplained absence from school
- Runs away from home
- Fearful, anxious, depressed, tense
- Inability to speak for themselves
- Deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care (malnourished)
- Minimal contact with family
- “Boyfriend” or “uncle” or “daddy” controls teen’s life, speaks for teen
- Tattoos or someone’s name
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Multiple cell phones

Signs of Labor Trafficking

- Escorted to and from a work site
- Living at or near the work site
- Kept under surveillance
- Housed with others who have similar jobs
- Extreme reluctance or fearful of talking with others
- Indicators of physical abuse
- Payment does not go to worker
- Does not possess the worker’s own identification documents