



News Release

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Cumberland DSS Will Be Adviser for Child Trafficking Study

FAYETTEVILLE – The Cumberland County Department of Social Services has been invited to be a part of the advisory group for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work’s “Project NO REST – North Carolina Organizing and Responding to the Exploitation and Sexual Trafficking of Children.”

Researchers at the UNC-CH School of Social Work have received a five-year \$1.24 million grant from the U.S. Children’s Bureau, Office of the Administration for Children & Families, to undertake the project to address human trafficking within the child welfare system in the state. The project’s aim is to reduce the number of youth who are trafficked to improve the outcomes of victims by bringing together government agencies, organizations and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan to address human trafficking among children involved in the state’s welfare system, especially those in foster care.

Cumberland County DSS’s role on the advisory group will be to help oversee the development of the NO REST strategic plan to address trafficking and provide needed services to child victims, including screening, assessment, therapeutic care, medical and oral health care, housing, employment, education and life skills.

North Carolina ranks eighth in the nation in potential child trafficking cases. The state’s major highways, ports, large agricultural community and access to tourist areas are contributing factors to North Carolina’s ranking.

Several factors contribute to the state’s climate for trafficking, including the convenience of major highways and ports, which make it easier to transport victims, according to UNC-CH School of Social Work Research Professor Dr. Dean Duncan. Easy access to and from tourist areas, where there is a high demand for labor and sex trafficking, and the state’s large military presence, which often attracts nearby adult businesses that fuel or front for sex trafficking, also make North Carolina an appealing place for the slave trade.

“We also have an expansive agricultural community that has a high demand for manual laborers and large isolated, rural areas in which trafficked laborers can be easily concealed,” Duncan said. “So all of these features make it easy for predators to locate, coerce or seize, move, and sell vulnerable victims.”

The U.S. State Department estimates that 800,000 people are trafficked worldwide every year – 50 percent of which are children age 13 on average. Many victims are runaways who have been in foster care or who were living in abusive homes.

The Department of Social Services is located at 1225 Ramsey St. The main phone number is 910-323-1540 and the agency can be visited online at co.cumberland.nc.us/social_services.aspx.