



### **Texas Center Grant to Support Victims of Child Sex Trafficking**

**AUSTIN** - The Texas Center for Child and Family Studies (the Center), the training and research arm of the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS), has received a grant from the Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team to kick-start a program to support treatment and services to vulnerable child sex trafficking victims.

The \$150,000 grant will enable the Center to accelerate its very important work to understand what services and treatment child sex trafficking victims need most urgently, and to match those needs with what's currently available for victims in Texas. Ideally, programs to help victims of child sex trafficking can grow as a result of this work. And, a repository of resources for organizations working with child sex trafficking victims can be developed.

"We look forward to working with the Center to build and strengthen capacity in our state to provide trauma-informed residential and community-based services for survivors of child sexual exploitation," said Andrea Sparks, Director of Governor Abbott's Child Sex Trafficking Team.

Specifically, the grant will enable the Center to:

- Conduct research to determine the current availability of community services to prevent trafficking and serve victims of trafficking, in collaboration with Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS).
- Provide training and other technical assistance to child and youth serving organizations throughout the state to help improve their ability to serve the current and anticipated future needs of this population.
- Consolidate best practices, training, and other resources for these agencies into a centralized online database that organizations can use to develop or expand programs to most effectively serve these youth.

"This grant is an important piece of the puzzle in our State's ongoing efforts on behalf of child sex trafficking victims," said Blanca Denise Lance, DFPS' Director of Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation. "Coordinated resources like this are needed to further build our system into one that is more substantive and responsive to complex trauma and to support a child or youth victim on their survivorship and restoration journey."

Child sexual exploitation and trafficking is a widespread issue and there is a growing need for services in Texas. The Institute for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault at the University of Texas at Austin recently estimated that there are some 79,000 child and youth victims of sex trafficking in Texas. Of this alarming number of victims, children in foster care represent a significant percent of this population and have a higher risk of future trafficking.

Ongoing efforts by state agencies to improve screening and identification of victims in recent years means that more youth are expected to need sexual exploitation and trafficking services soon, but currently organizations across the state are not fully equipped to address this need.