



Human Trafficking
in **AMERICA'S SCHOOLS**



- **Human Trafficking Webinar Series** –

**Emerging from Trafficking: Meeting the Mental
Health Needs of Survivors**

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 | 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET
Transcript

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Good afternoon, everyone. Before I welcome you to today's webinar, I'd like for us to take a moment to send our thoughts to the community of Uvalde, Texas, and to the educators, staff, children, and family of Rob Elementary School. Thank you.

Welcome to today's webinar, Emerging from Trafficking and Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Survivors. This is the seventh of our webinars in this series, sponsored by the US Department of Education since January of 2020, to focus on the critical roles that American schools play in addressing human trafficking. We're pleased to have you with us today and welcome you all online.

My name is Cindy Carraway-Wilson, and I'm a training specialist for the National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments, or NCSSLE, funded by the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for the US Department of Education.

Our aim is to build the capacity of state education agencies, districts, and schools to make school climate changes and foster safety and a supportive community for young people in their schools. To learn more about NCSSLE and to engage in a range of resources that we have available to you, we have here on this slide images of our homepage on the right hand side and on the left hand side, some of our more popular products that we have that you might be interested in accessing.

Please note that all the materials you see today, including the slides, the referenced webpages and resources will be posted on this website. In fact, some of the items are already posted, including the slides and the speaker bios.

Please note, you can have access to previous webinars in the human trafficking series by visiting the webinar series webpage, which is also listed here and is now posted in the chat for your review.

During registration, we asked you to respond to two polling questions. In the first one, we asked you to describe your role for us so that we would know who was in the room with us. As you can see the majority of you selected specialized instruction support and the other category.

In the other category, many of you identified yourselves as being members of specialized instruction support teams, as well as being staff members in community-based organizations, child and family advocates, people working in the homelessness sector and parents to name a few. The rest of you selected the other categories as shown here on the slide.

The second question that we asked, which we asked you to define for us, why you chose to come, what was your primary reason for participating in this webinar? Here you can see that most of you selected that you had a personal interest in the topic of human trafficking, and so you're attending the webinar because of that.

The next highest category is again, that other category. In this category, we heard folks saying that they were coming because they had heard about human trafficking in some way, and wanted to learn more. Several of you work with young people generally, or specifically with young people who have been trafficked. And several of you are also part of teams working in communities around the topic of trafficking.

So I'd like to briefly review the agenda before moving into our welcome. We've already done the first one here, the introduction and logistics we're finishing up now. In just a moment, I'll be transferring the mic to another person who will do our welcome from the US Department of Education. From there, we'll move into a brief overview and then right into our panel introduction. We will spend the bulk of our time today in that panel discussion. And then we will end with a wrap up and closing and the opportunity for you to provide feedback for the event.

So now we'd like to take a few minutes to hear about the work the Department of Education is doing around addressing human trafficking. And joining us today from the department is Ruth Ryder. Ruth serves as the deputy assistant secretary in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the Department of Education. She has provided significant leadership in the department's efforts to address human trafficking over the past several years. And as I said earlier, Ruth's bio can be seen and be read on the NCSSE website. Ruth, over to you.

Ruth Ryder:

Thank you, Cindy. And I want to thank you for acknowledging the tragic events at Rob Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. I want to very quickly read a short

statement from the secretary of education, Miguel Cardona. The secretary issued this statement yesterday evening.

"My heart is aching for all the families in Uvalde, Texas, who are living through every parent's greatest fear and worst nightmare, a shooting at their children's school. As a parent, I am filled with grief for the families and students, concerned that as our schools move past pandemic closures, the fear of shootings has become all too real once again, and anger at the lack of will by many to pass legislation that can protect our children."

"I pray our nation has not grown numb to the horrors that unfolded today at Rob Elementary School, when the lives of 18 precious children and a devoted educator were cut short. How many more lives must be lost before we realize that we, the people and those we elect have the power and the opportunity to ensure this never happens again?"

The secretary goes on, "My team at the Department of Education is offering every available federal resource, including through our project, SERV, School Emergency Response to Violence program and on-the-ground support to help the families, educators, staff, and greater Rob Elementary School community to recover from this trauma and loss."

And finally, the secretary says, "I spent the formative part of my career in a Connecticut elementary school. I will never forget the ripple effect of fear and heartbreak that spread among students and teachers in the aftermath of the horrific Sandy Hook shooting. We must unite as a country against this senseless cycle of violence, act immediately to protect our children and make sure that every child and every educator feels safe in our schools."

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to read that and recognize that we all share a great sadness over the happenings yesterday at Rob Elementary School.

But to turn to today's topic, thank you so much for joining us for this important discussion today. On behalf of the US Department of Education, I extend our sincere appreciation to you all. Your attendance today demonstrates a commitment to ensuring a positive school climate for all students. And this is another issue of safety for children that is so critically important.

I hope you find today's content helpful in your continued efforts to build a safe, supportive learning environment for every student, including those who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked.

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, today's webinar focuses on how school personnel can support the unique mental health needs every student may have as they return to school, after having been trafficked. This webinar reflects the department's ongoing commitment to addressing human trafficking.

As a member of the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, we here at the department are committed to helping educators

support students affected by trafficking. Since early 2020, the department has led a series of projects to strengthen the support. And let me tell you a little bit about some of them.

First, we have produced with the support of the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, this webinar series addressing human trafficking. Today's webinar is the seventh in the series.

Prior webinars have focused on the latest research in child trafficking, the critical nature of online safety as students find themselves increasingly engaged in virtual environments, the gentle general reintegration of students into school settings after extraction from trafficking, the effective engagement of individuals with lived experience in trafficking, and actions we can take to reduce student vulnerability in the face of community risk factors.

We hope you'll check out the archived webinars of this series at the link appearing in the chat box and join us for future human trafficking webinar events in this series.

We have also produced two critical reference documents related to child trafficking. The first document is a revision of a popular resource, Human Trafficking in America's Schools. The update was released in January 2021 with the goal of bringing the document up to date with recent developments in the field.

The downloadable resource supports school personnel in their role as caring, principled adults who can look out for warning signs of trafficking involvement of students and implement appropriate interventions as warranted. You can access this guide at the link now appearing in the chat.

The second document we produced is Addressing The Growing Problem Of Domestic Sex Trafficking Of Minors Through PBIS, positive behavior interventions and supports. This practice brief addresses how domestic minor sex trafficking can be approached using existing school strategies, such as PBIS. The link to this brief now appears in the chat for your reference.

To complement the Human Trafficking in America's School guide, we recently released the Human Trafficking in American Schools staff development series. It's comprised of three brief online videos with subject matter experts, including those with lived experience sharing information you need to know, and discussion questions individual staff or teams of staff can explore afterward, along with posters and social media website graphics to reiterate key messages.

The titles of the three videos are here on the slide, and we encourage you to check out the series by using the link now posted in the chat. These videos are designed to be used for professional development in schools. They're relatively short and could be used in a number of different ways.

And finally, coming soon, we will be releasing a supplement to the Human Trafficking in America's Schools guide that highlights strategies schools can use to engage individuals with lived experience in trafficking prevention efforts. We will be sure to let you know when that supplement is released.

Please know that all these resources are rooted in the latest research and best practice information available while drawing from the wisdom of individuals with lived experience and trafficking advocates. As I mentioned earlier, our work on these resources has been an important part of the department's commitment to supporting your efforts, to address the trauma of trafficking.

All these resources can be found on a dedicated human trafficking webpage on the US Department of Education's website. The webpage is committed to providing key resources and reference documents to educators who are supporting students impacted by trafficking in America's schools.

With that I would like to thank you once again for joining us today. I and the entire team at the US Department of Education recognize the important work you are all undertaking to create safe, supportive environments for all students, including those who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked. Thank you so much for all you do.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Ruth, thank you so much for your words and for reading secretary's statement. I think that was so important and heartfelt. We really appreciate that. And also for your support in the work around human trafficking. It's absolutely essential that our schools can support our young people in this way. So thank you.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you, Cindy.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. And at this point, I'd like to go ahead and provide just a little bit of context for today's webinar before we move into the panel discussion. You can see on this slide, a framework for trafficking prevention that is also in the guide for Trafficking in America's Schools, the Human Trafficking Guide in America's Schools. Pardon me for that.

It is based on the US Department of Health and Human Service's paradigm for trafficking prevention and outlines the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention tiers, so that we can have a multi-tiered approach to working with young people who are at risk of, or being trafficked. And also that general or universal prevention tier, which is at the very bottom.

Today's webinar, we're going to be focusing up at the top of this triangle in that red sector, that tertiary tier. And we'll be having a great discussion with our panelists on what school personnel can do in this highest level tier to help support young people as they are reintegrating into the school community after having been identified as being trafficked and being extricated from that trafficking.

Without further ado, I'd like to go ahead and introduce our panelists. Today joining us, we have Tamara Clark, who is a survivor support director for Love 146 in New Haven, Connecticut. She oversees all aspects of services related to the coordination and implementation within the Connecticut Survivor Care program.

We also have Charisma De Los Reyes, who is a program specialist for the San Diego County Office of Education, student support services division. In her role, she focuses on student wellness and school culture.

Next, we have Nikki Valila, who is the director of training and partnerships at My Life My Choice. In her role, Nikki leads a team that provides training to youth service professionals on commercial, sexual exploitation of young people.

And finally, we have Suleman Masood who is a subject matter expert on domestic labor trafficking and male victimization. He sits on a council chair of the US Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, where he leads a team that provides recommendation on federal anti-trafficking policies to the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

I'm pleased to welcome all of you to our discussion today, and thank you for being here. First, I'd like to begin by hearing a little bit more about each of your organizations and the work that you are doing to address human trafficking. And Tamara, I'd like to begin with you.

Tamara Clark:

Hello. Okay. So as Cindy said, I work for Love 146 and Love 146 is an international human rights organization. Our headquarters is in New Haven, Connecticut, and our mission is the end of child trafficking, nothing less. And we work towards this by providing prevention education through our, Not a Number curriculum, mobilization of volunteers and people in the community to learn about trafficking, as well as survivor care work.

And so we have survivor care work happening directly with youth in the UK, the Philippines, and in the US, in our Connecticut office. And so I am the director of our Connecticut Survivor Care program. And so we work with youth again directly and in their community, youth who may be high risk, suspected, or confirmed survivors of trafficking. We work with youth throughout the entire state who are usually around the ages of 13 to 17. And we have three programs, rapid response, long term, and employment and education.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Now, I'd like to go ahead and move to Charisma.

Charisma De Los Reyes: Hi everybody. Again, my name is Charisma De Los Reyes, and I am a project specialist with the San Diego County Office of Education in California. I'd like to share that we are currently leading a federal demonstration grant through the Office of Trafficking in Persons called the Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education, or HTYPE grant. This grant serves to train staff and students on human trafficking prevention education, as well as implement a human trafficking school safety protocol in their districts.

Prior to this grant, for over a decade, our county office has partnered with local agencies like child welfare, law enforcement, and other various community stakeholders in countywide human trafficking initiatives. We also support the 42 school districts in our county with trafficking related resources like professional development trainings, development of protocols, guidance on prevention and intervention curriculums, and linking to community-based services.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you, Charisma and welcome. Next, I'd like to move to Suleman.

Suleman Masood: Hello everyone. My name is Suleman Masood and I serve as council chair for the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. As Cindy had mentioned the Advisory Council on Human Trafficking provides a formal platform to advise and make recommendations on federal anti-trafficking policies to the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. One of those federal agencies we provide recommendations to includes the Department of Education.

Just want to quickly just pitch that I'm proud to share that the council released its most recent report at the end of 2021. The report is organized by the council's two committees, one being the Underserved Population's Committee and the Committee on the Administration of Justice.

Outside of the council work, I work with organizations to better understand male victimization, as well as finding ways for organizations to better recognize the needs of survivors of labor trafficking. Grateful to be here.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. And those are important elements to keep in mind, the male perspective and what we need to do there to better engage and also being able to engage fully in the labor trafficking area as well. Thank you. And welcome again to all of you.

Now I'd like to begin with our conversation. Beginning with Nicole first this time, can you tell us a little bit more about how the needs of trafficked young people are different based on their experiences of labor versus sex trafficking?

Nikki Valila: Sure. Cindy, I'll just start with introducing my agency.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: My apologies.

Nikki Valila: It's okay. My name is Nikki Valila. I am the director of training and partnerships at My Life My Choice, which is a community-based anti-trafficking agency in Boston, Massachusetts. We are celebrating 20 years this year and truly believe in survivor leadership throughout all of the work that we do.

We were created back in 2001 after the death of a young 16 year old girl, which really shed a lot of light on what was happening in our communities and what we needed to do to prevent this from happening to another young person. And so with that in 2002, My Life My Choice was founded by Lisa Goldblatt Grace, an adult survivor of the commercial sex industry.

2004, we were really fortunate to create one of the few in our state at the time, a survivor mentoring program, which paired adult survivors with young people who had experienced commercial sexual exploitation. Since then, we now offer a variety of nationally available virtual trainings for providers from all different kind of agencies, whether that's schools, probation courts, social workers, and whatnot. So I would encourage you after this webinar, if you have the opportunity to check out the resources at My Life My Choice for further information and education.

And Cindy, back to your question. I think one of the things I was thinking about in coming up with the answer to this question is just acknowledging and remembering that all of us have the tools we need to do this work. Sometimes when we come across working with this population, we freeze or we contemplate thinking we don't have the ability to best serve these youth. And one of the things I want to remind us is that you do. All of the skills that you do already have are what is needed to best support these young people.

But what I will say is understanding specifically for youth that have been trafficked is that it's complicated. There's various challenges that might come up in your work, in the classroom, outside of the classroom, outside of school, that really can change the dynamics of the presentation of the student throughout the year as they access their education.

And so, one thing I think I would keep in mind is understanding that what does access look like? How can we think outside of the box, as far as credit recovery, alternative school opportunities, if accessing mainstream education is not what's best for that young person, either based on safety or other types of concerns.

But I think specifically around the needs of trafficked youth is acknowledging that this is something that all communities are faced with that these youth are within your schools. And so taking a preventative proactive approach versus reactive is the best way to best serve this population. Oh, Cindy you're muted.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you. Do you have any specifics that you might want to bring up about the mental health needs that you know of, that some of these young people have specifically?

Nikki Valila: So I think specifically we see a lot of depression, anxiety. I think we see presentations of PTSD popping up in school-based settings. So that could look like dissociation or flashbacks, withdrawal, or isolation, and really being attuned to that. What is going on for this kid? Does this presentation look different?

Sometimes in males you might see more outward acting behavior, some more aggressive behavior. In some students, we see more sexualized behavior just as a result of experiencing sexual trauma. And so I think in school-based settings, it's being able to not only tune in to what looks different, but what feels different for that young person and how do we best create access to mental health resources within the school to best meet those needs.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you, Nikki. And Suleman, you already mentioned two of the elements of this question one, the labor versus sex trafficking angle, but also another element of this question would be the difference between working with young men and young women. How does it look different for these groups?

Suleman Masood: Sure. Yeah, I mean, first and foremost, I can say for young males and children of immigrants, a lot of societal stigma, such as shame, make it difficult to open up and accept the services that may be presented to those children. So when it comes to addressing human trafficking service provision, much of the marketing language and representation really revolve around females or revolve around sex trafficking.

So to truly create an inclusive environment, service providers really need to find ways to ensure that the burden is not on a young male or a young child to self-disclose the trauma or to provide intimate details of a story, but really to instead work to accommodate an individual's identities. That may be gender identities. That may be cultural identities. That may be orientation identities, or even in some spaces, faith identities.

A lot of this can be achieved through community partnerships that school systems may be able to create. And I encourage organizations to find ways to offer cross collaboration opportunities among those in the community who understand how to better serve underserved populations like male survivors.

So for school-based professionals, the specific mental health needs a young male student may need is to truly understand that there is no shame in acknowledging their trauma. It's not something that they need to mask or run from, but instead it's something worth facing head on.

And in order to achieve that for that male student, the earlier they are able to acknowledge the victimization or to really just understand that there is a certain level or layer of trauma that existed, the less that they will perceive these injuries as a justification to be closed off. Last thing we want our children to receive is adopting a mindset that hurt people, hurt people.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that, those very powerful pieces of information. And next I'd like to move on to Charisma.

Charisma De Los Reyes: And so really building off of what Nikki and Suleman have shared is really remembering or keeping in mind that a student, an individual's experience while there may be identifiable patterns and themes in their situations, it truly is a unique experience.

We want to remember, and I'm really looking at this from a school perspective, is training in different approaches, like harm reduction, trauma informed practices. And again, emphasizing, like what Nikki had shared, that service provision needs to be individualized, child-centered, equitable, and culturally responsive to meet the needs of our vulnerable student populations like that

Suleman had mentioned, and that all of their unique needs are taken into consideration.

So educators and PPS or people personnel services who include our counselors, our school social workers, our school psychologist, we need to be collaborating and coordinating with the student, their family, and other community-based service providers, which can then increase the likelihood of having a seamless and stable bridge of support between home and school. So the more we can work together, we can reduce miscommunication or delays to services.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Now, did you have anything that you wanted to add around the specific mental health needs that you've noticed that haven't already been mentioned?

Charisma De Los Reyes: No. Nikki really covered that in terms of presentation. And we want to be careful about making any assumptions or especially if we are not trained in that type of specialty of mental health. We just want to be careful to respect each other's lanes and bring each of our strengths to that team effort, to support the student in meeting their mental and behavioral health needs.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. And that's an important element to remember that it's a team approach and that everybody has a specialty. Thank you. And Tamara?

Tamara Clark: Yes. So there was great conversation here, and so I really want to piggyback off a lot of what Nikki, Charisma and Suleman said about ... For us, with trafficking, sex trafficking and labor trafficking, primarily our focus usually is on the sex trafficking, but sometimes there's overlap, where there may be some sex trafficking and labor trafficking and the youth we're serving maybe foreign born.

And so we really do try to collaborate and refer with other organizations in our community because we find that youth needs have needs around advocacy, immigration, legal aid, and referrals to other services of that nature. So we may work on one area while we're also collaborating because they have needs around this area. And so we'll work with organizations that can do that around labor trafficking and what comes with that.

Regarding males, I think, again, piggybacking off all of what everyone said, the same thing. There may be males who don't identify initially as victims, but I think there's also an area where providers are not for whatever reasons, for bias, or just not seeing males as vulnerable enough to sex trafficking or labor trafficking or for males not identifying because of again, our traditional gender roles and things of that nature.

So I think if service providers go into the work, having that understanding of that and bring that to the work, I think that males just deserve, and anyone in how they identify, need the same quality, comprehensive services. But having that understanding and checking our own bias helps us to provide quality service, no matter how anyone identifies. I think there was another question around ...

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Around mental health. I mean, are there particular mental health needs or mental illness needs?

Tamara Clark: I think, again, Nikki really said a lot of what I would say. And again, that the youth show up with this. They're coming to school with the PTSD, anxiety, substance use. And so for us, who have that expectation and really, like Charisma said, give individual attention as to what's going on and how do we support them, to expect that some of this will show up with our youth.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. Great information so far. I'd like to follow this up with another question. If you had to identify something that you think is really important for school personnel to understand related to trafficking and students reintegrating into schools, what would that be? Here, I'd like to begin with Charisma.

Charisma De Los Reyes: From a school perspective, leveraging policies, model, structures, and trainings, as Nikki has said, that schools are already familiar with. Having frames of reference can be extremely helpful for planning and implementation for reentry and reintegration.

I'd also like to mention that one of the things we've learned from implementing HTYPE during the pandemic is for us to be aware of timing and initiative fatigue in schools, messaging that this is not yet another competing demand, but truly part of a continuum of prevention programming.

So concentrating on crafting a more cohesive understanding around school and student safety, wellness, and positive school climate can be a strategy to combat initiative fatigue at schools. Underscoring that any type of exposure to an experience that involves violent or a traumatic event could certainly increase the vulnerabilities of our students in many ways.

And I just want to go back to frames of reference, so let's take suicide prevention for instance. So in part, part of suicide prevention is to have student reentry plans, for students who've experienced a mental health crisis, but are ready to transition back to school.

Student reentry plans are collaborated, coordinated, and comprehensive. And this is all in agreement, with the student, their family and critical school personnel, such as administrators, teachers, PPS, where everyone understands their role and responsibilities within the team is key.

Practice tips, such as designating a staff member who acts as a coordinator and liaison who facilitates the student's return. They also oversee phases of reentry like before the student returns, during school, and also preparing for any aftercare needs.

This designated staff member also serves as the school's primary link between the school and the family, where they keep in regular contact. They do again, facilitate referrals and plans for other school services, such as tutoring.

For more information about re-entry and reintegration student plans, you can go to SAMHSA's guidelines for facilitating a student's return to school, and I believe the link should be in the chat.

And another frame I want to mention are SSTs or student support teams or intervention teams, that are those formalized structure that take a whole child approach to help students achieve both behavioral and academic success.

And finally, existing multi-tiered systems of support frameworks, like you saw, PBIS, positive behavioral intervention supports that support the social, emotional behavioral needs of all students, including those with internalizing concerns that may be negatively impacting their school performance.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent.

Charisma De Los Reyes: And so, yeah. And so again, just to wrap up that piece is just leveraging any or all of these resources that can help us guide and facilitate a student's safe return and reintegration to school. Thank you.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. All right. So I'm going to jump back for a moment to another question here. What are some additional thoughtful ways to reenter or reintegrate young people who are at risk, or have been trafficked, and, or what should already be happening or be in place before the student returns? I think Charisma, you spoke to a lot of those pieces, and so that's really been helpful. I'd like to go to Suleman here and have you go ahead and continue the conversation on that topic.

Suleman Masood: Yeah. And in listening to a lot of Charisma's talking points for me, the overarching theme really goes to evaluating what a child's support system looks like. So it's the basic idea that in order to set up this child for success, it's ensuring that their support system is built in a way where they're surrounded by people who will build them up and not the other way around.

I can say in working with adult survivors and survivors in general, for many of them, we're sometimes put in positions where we have to take care of our own loved ones before we can allow ourselves to heal and help address our own trauma. For many children, especially those that may be children of immigrants, or may have a responsibility to help provide for the family, where an individual who is a child who may be involved with labor trafficking may be victimized to labor trafficking, one of the expectations that was put on them was to help provide and help preserve the family's financial stability.

So tucking away their own complex trauma on the side, allowing themselves to endure the trauma that they've experienced in order to provide the family, it's further distancing themselves from allowing them to get the healing that they need.

So it's really ensuring that once that child is ready to be reintegrated and that school system is working with social workers and working with other partners to

ensure that that individual support system is intact. And it's created in a way where that child has say in terms of who they'd like to add or remove from their support system and maybe individuals who they may be identifying as family who may not necessarily be blood relatives.

So I'd really say for me personally, I think emphasizing and ensuring that the school-based professionals understand who that child support system is and finding ways to continue to see how this child is going to be built up is really ways where I believe a child can be empowered and really the healing journey can really start.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you, Suleman. That's such an important trauma informed practice, is empowering the young people to make those choices and to identify their support systems. That's a great suggestion. Tamara, what would you like to add to the conversation?

Tamara Clark: I'd like to just point out that sometimes just the word reintegration. I think sometimes youth are gone for long periods of time and then come back, but sometimes there may be ... Our experience has been in our program that sometimes youth are somehow still connected to school in some way. They're sometimes going every other month or something like that, and so the work that we're talking about can be done if they've been gone for long periods of time, or if they're occasionally in school. So just wanted folks to keep that in mind.

But I think to Suleman's point about really taking an individual approach with each youth and their family, and think outside the box regarding resources and support that they need. Think about if there's, I think Nikki said something like this, credit recovery options. Even thinking about when you put them in a credit recovery class, if they are 17, is it a good idea to put them in a class with a 13 or 14 year old? Maybe not.

Just think about the impact of their classes and their schedule and that could also mean thinking about subjects that may have a different impact, like a health class, for instance. If there's a youth who has been trafficked or gone through trafficking, they may have been exposed or participated in very adult things than a youth who has not, and they're in the same class, different impact.

Or other classes like gym class, right? Depending on that gym class and what they're required to do, they may be avoiding that class. And so really taking the time to find out why, what's going on for them and think outside the box of how else can we help this youth to get this credit. The purpose is to graduate. And so if we keep that goal in mind and be creative and think outside the box, that will help them to feel safe and successful coming back to school.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. So don't be afraid to be flexible in the ways that we approach young people and to do things that might not have been tried before is the message that I heard loudly there. I also appreciate that you and Suleman both also really did speak about the family and sometimes the family themselves might need

services, so the young person can come forward and engage in healing. So thank you. And Nicole?

Nikki Valila:

I've been waiting patiently for this question. I think one, we have to understand and expect that they're going to return. And I want to acknowledge that at times with heavily trafficked children, it can be really complicated and challenging to reintegrate them successfully and safely back into your school. But the expectation is that they're going to return and that's what we want.

And with that, acknowledging that every time they reenter doesn't mean we're starting from square one. And so the work that you established before they left, you can start right back up with that. We know that children do best when there's structure. And sometimes despite the trafficking experience, school is the one place sometimes where they do feel safe and there is predictability.

On the flip side because of social media and the internet, understanding that young people might not feel safe in school, despite it not occurring in school because others now know what has occurred. And I think we have to be mindful of both those things.

But really thinking critically. When I ran a group home specifically for sexually exploited youth, the best reintegration, reentry meetings began with a point person at the school. We even talked through who was greeting this young person at the door. Was it a smile? Are we happy to see you? Did the young person know what they were walking into? What was going to be discussed in this meeting?

Understanding that if this meeting was just focused on past behavior, this wasn't going to probably be a successful reintegration, that the young person might instead sabotage the reintegration and not knowing how else to manage what's occurring. So understanding what they're walking into. Is there a support person that can attend with them, whether that's a parent, a guardian, a social worker, a therapist. Who's going to be present in the meeting?

I think the more we can create a predictable setting for young people, not only is it trauma informed or more likely to get a student more willing to work with us, if they feel like they know what they're walking into. And then what's the goal?

The goal of course, is for them to go successfully to school every single day. But as we've all talked about, what that long term goal is versus the short term goal, just getting them to show up might be success. And how do we build off that every single day?

And I think you all mentioned this, we need a really solid safety plan. This young person has been trafficked. So if there's concerns in the classroom, if they're displaying or their presentation seems one of which they're having a really hard time, who is that teacher calling in those moments?

If the young person doesn't show up to class, we don't want to wait three or four hours to report that. Someone needs to know immediately because within seconds, these kids can go missing again. And so just being really thoughtful about what does that safety plan entail.

And the last thing I'll suggest, because I've been at fault to this, never make a plan without the youth. We don't want to give them everything they want, but when adults make plans without youth, they oftentimes don't go well. So do your best to include them in the conversation.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. And I don't think you're alone in that Nikki. I think many of us have made that mistake and with the best of intent. But again, it's important to remember that youth involvement in the planning is essential.

Now I'd like to go back to the question about that really important element. What do you think is really a most important element for school personnel to understand related to trafficked students and their reintegration to school that you may not have already mentioned? Is there something that you'd like to add? We'll start with Charisma here again.

Charisma De Los Reyes: I don't mean to sound like a broken record, but again, it comes down to meeting the needs of the student and cultivating safe and supportive school environments for them to thrive. Everything that Tamara and Nikki and Suleman have shared are all important to understand and take action on.

One of the things that I'd like to bring up now, and again, coming from the school lens is also having school personnel understand how current school policies and practices might affect students who've been exploited.

For example, if we take a look at existing disciplinary policies and procedures that include suspension and expulsion, we need to be asking ourselves, are they trauma informed? Do they look at the whole child in this situation? Are they equitable? Or do they cause further harm and disconnection from school supports, as folks have mentioned here? That may actually be a lifeline.

I can't help, but to think about how many students who've been suspended or expelled were due to the behaviors that were related to their trauma and where are they now? Do they continue to remain disconnected? Do they continue to remain unseen?

Or now are they even a part of our juvenile justice system and how are their educational needs being met there? So those are some of the things, again from more of the system perspective about that impact and interplay when working directly with students and their families.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. Thank you for that. And that idea of school discipline that creates a disengagement, i.e., a suspension or expulsion, and is that the best option for this particular young person? Thank you. All right. I'd like to move to Tamara next on this question.

Tamara Clark:

I think I want to make sure that what I think it's really important for our school personnel to understand is that there's a disproportionate number of amount of kids in schools who have experienced trauma, are experiencing trauma.

And so yes, trafficking is trauma and there's some unique elements to this, but I think if schools are just focusing on addressing trauma, there's supports, there's policy, there's ideas, solutions around trauma in general, because again, it could be a number of things. It could be domestic violence, it could be witnessing death. There's a lot of different traumas and kids are functioning, they're in school right now.

And so if we can address that early on, especially with younger kids, we can lower the risk or vulnerability to trafficking in the first place. So I think that's something really important for us to not think that what we're talking about will only be helpful and effective for trafficked kids. But I think our solutions need to be on around trauma for everyone.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Nice. Thank you. That's incredibly important. Okay. And now I'd like to go to Nicole. Same question.

Nikki Valila:

I think we mentioned this earlier, but I go back to, what are your policies and procedures around integration, specifically around reporting concerns of potential exploitation, trafficking, whether it's labor or sex trafficking? You never want to wait to the moment you think it's happening and then go, "Oh no, what do I do now?"

And I always say in trainings, never worry alone. Who is the point person in the school? Who am I supposed to report this to? This isn't something you want to sleep on for a night or wait a few days to see if things change in the presentation of this student.

For so many of you, you spend more time with people's children, oftentimes than sometimes parents do, due to work schedules and other additional responsibilities. So don't minimize trusting your gut in what you see, what you feel. And it's not coming at it from, I'm judging you, but it's trusting your expertise and knowledge that something doesn't feel right. Something feels and looks different for this student.

A lot of us kind of hinted at this, most victims of trafficking, even if all signs pointed to yes, don't identify as victims at all. They're not ready, they're ashamed, they believe it's their choice. If we do, in fact know a child's been confirmed trafficked, they often don't want to talk about it. They don't want you to walk on eggshells. They don't want you to treat them differently or say, "I'm so sorry this has happened." They want to feel and be treated like everyone else.

Of course, we have to be mindful of the additional potential needs they might have. They might appear more tired in class. If they've been missing for the entire weekend, perhaps they haven't slept or eaten for a while. So as Charisma

mentioned, even thinking about food, access to food and what that might look like for them when they're coming into school.

So those are some of the things I'd consider in just the reintegration, but I would leave you with trust your gut. If something feels like something's off, it likely is. And although it might not be your job to name it or define it, pass that on to the right person, so that child is fully seen and doesn't go left behind.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you, Nikki. And Suleman, do you have anything you'd like to add to this?

Suleman Masood: Yeah, just a couple of points. I mean, I think Tamara and Charisma already made great points on credit recovery. Credit recovery is basically meaning you're losing time, but I'd say outside the classroom, what school based professionals really need to understand is the loss of time doesn't just exist in the classroom. It's losing out on pop culture, knowledge on viral trends that kids may be involved with or understanding what happened in sports, current events, et cetera.

So when an individual is trafficked, they're displaced out of functioning society. So having them come back and understanding how much time was lost. There's almost a catch up period for all aspects of their growth and their development. And I'd say a big part of that loss is also a loss of trust.

Trust is something that was broken for that individual and it will take time for that individual to trust again, even if it's a system in place. So the minute that safety planning or identification of a support system, or even curriculum planning may not be properly executed, that trust may once again be broken. So it's really important for those professionals and those personnel to understand that and to be patient with that student.

Second point I just want to make and related to a safety plan, there's not a one size fits all approach. I mean, I think what we've talked about in previous questions regarding demographics, regarding male and female survivors, youth survivors. Just because one aspect of safety planning worked for one student does not mean that that's going to work for the next student that may be a victim of trafficking.

Every approach I think, as each of the presenters have provided, needs to be tailored. I guess the analogy that I will share, maybe it's relevant, maybe it's not, but when a child who is trafficked and may have been displaced out of school and is reintegrated, the situation needs to be presented just like a foreign exchange program, a foreign exchange student.

This is a student who is not familiar with the language, not familiar with the culture, and not familiar with the system. So the school personnel are working on all ends to make sure that student is feeling comfortable. And I think that a similar kind of mindset needs to be taken with a student who may be victims of human trafficking.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much for that. I like the analogy. I think it is a good one to use in this case, for sure. So several of you have talked about accommodations a couple of times now. So for this next question, I'd like to hear a little bit more about how schools can provide accommodations. What would they be? What might they look like to help support mental health and safety needs of students while still advancing their education? And for this one, I'd like to begin with you, Suleman.

Suleman Masood: Sure. I mean, we've already talked about credit recovery being one form of accommodation. I think another area that school personnel should look at is around testing accommodations and assignment accommodations.

So I'd say for the most part, survivors are individuals who are victimized through trafficking, often experience some form of pressure from their trafficker. So if it's through labor, it's being able to complete all aspects of their tasks and deliver every paycheck and every means of earning that they've received back to their trafficker. And the same is reciprocated or dealt with within sex trafficking, so victims of sex trafficking.

So there's a element of pressure that exists. So when a student is brought back into a school atmosphere and they're put in into testing or quizzes, or they're put into assignments where there is a level of pressure, there is a chance that flashbacks or reminders may take place where it's difficult for that individual to stay engaged because there's so many different aspects of trauma that may be running through their mind in dealing with the pressure.

If the teacher says you have 10 minutes to complete this assignment or they are given an hour to complete an exam, an element of pressure may exist where it's difficult for that individual to concentrate. So I think time accommodations should be provided to those students I think, as well as assignment accommodations.

So if it's an opportunity where based off of the curriculum and based off of discussions with school personnel, it is permissible for that student to do a take home exam, I think those are the types of accommodations that I think can help a student.

But it's really just, again, making a tailored approach to find ways where a student is not reminded of their past, they're not in a position where their thoughts are drifting back to complex trauma. But it's helping them find ways where they feel comfortable in completing exams and completing testing so that they're able to move on to graduate.

I'm going to see if there's anything else that I have. Yeah, again, it's going back to the loss of time. So if there is a forward plan that can be made where the student can be brought back and complete the classes that they can, even if it's done in a more expedited phase, so that they're able to reunite back with friends that they have lost touch with, I think those are ways to really help empower that student.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so very much. Nicole?

Nikki Valila: Placement in the classroom. For some students who've experienced trauma, having people sit behind them and not know what's coming behind them can be really triggering or activating. So asking a student, do you feel comfortable sitting in this desk or would you prefer to sit somewhere else? They might feel more comfortable sitting by a door because there's easy access to exit if they need to.

Are there coping strategies perhaps that counselors or social workers at the school can work with them around being able to utilize that aren't distracting to everyone else? Can they chew gum? Can they hold a fidget in their hand? Progressive muscle relaxation. Other types of strategies that students can access within the classroom because oftentimes they don't want the attention on them, but they feel as if everybody's looking at them. So what are the ways we can be mindful of that?

Even physical touch, I think we're really mindful of that in schools, but coming up from behind a student, even putting your hand on their shoulder can be extremely triggering or activating, particularly for cisgender females who maybe have experienced harm at the hands of men. So just being mindful of that, just being a male presence, possibly a very positive male presence, always asking for permission and acknowledging your presence, I'm coming up from behind you, I'm going to pass this out, can be really helpful.

Small group work. Suleman mentioned just testing accommodations. Is it more helpful for the student to be in a smaller classroom to access their schoolwork? Maybe being in a large classroom is too overwhelming and stimulating. Are they allowed to listen to music because that can actually help ground them and make them feel safe. And so just being creative.

Again, not one size fits all but how can you best work to support that student and meet those needs, understanding that their trauma is what's impacting their behavior and presentation. And we don't want it to feel there being consequence because of something they had no control over.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much for that. That was a wonderful wealth of information. And how about Tamara? Do you want to jump in on here?

Tamara Clark: Sure. I think I have two suggestions around accommodations and one speaks to a little bit of what you talked about Nikki, and one is giving youth a way out, where they may be in a classroom when we talked about certain subjects or things that can get overwhelming.

So one strategy is giving youth a pass. It's something that has already been talked about with the teachers so that when that happens, they don't have to make a scene or anything. They can go sit at the counselor's office, talk to the counselor, or just sit outside the office, do whatever coping strategies they have, and then when they feel better come back.

Because I think the challenges, if a youth is in a classroom and is feeling trapped, then you get that fight or flight response, which you don't want. And so having options for youth to take a way out helps keep the youth safe and help keeps the classroom safe and the teacher safe.

The other accommodation is something that was very interesting. One of our social workers talked to me about this is that just the understanding that sometimes youth are recruited and exploited at school. And sometimes those potential offenders and exploiters are in the school environment.

And what is the school's policies and what accommodations do they make around this to make sure that youth is feeling safe, because a lot of time, the burden falls on the victim to make accommodations. So I think for the school to keep that in mind as well, that it's not always outside of the school, it can be in the school. And so what are they doing around offenders in the school?

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yes. Great. Thank you so much for that. And even if the offender's no longer present, there was that experience. And so then everybody's a potential offender, or could be for some young people. Thank you so much, it's really important to keep in mind. And then finally, over to Charisma. Do you have any thoughts you want to add to this before we move on?

Charisma De Los Reyes: Yeah. Just reminding ourselves in this movement of balancing social, emotional behavioral needs and development with academics. We all know that what is the famous slogan right now, Maslow before Bloom. A child who is not feeling psychologically safe, physically safe, emotionally safe, they will not be able to learn, because the brain and the body is so busy in survival mode and in this hyper-vigilance potentially, or trying to cope in the best ways that it's just not going to happen.

And so the connection and as well as the co-regulation. I know we've been talking a lot about the student part of it, but what is the responsibility of adults at the school, not only teachers, but other folks to be able to co-regulate? Because a lot of times students are reacting or taking on what is being put out there. And so I just want to mention that.

And I would also say I can't stress enough, not only trauma informed practices, but understanding what harm reduction means around trauma and development. It's going to feel like sometimes students take two steps forward and 10 steps back. And so what does that mean? What does that actually look like? And it's not a loss per se, but how do we build on the assets that have been created thus far?

And if there are people missing from these teams of intervention, because it should be living and breathing, right? The team should be living and breathing based on what the student needs are at that time. And so who needs to come in and out? What things need to be more intensified or maybe reduced because safety has been enhanced? So again, as a lot of you all have mentioned is that tailored approach.

And lastly, I also want to say that regardless of whatever title position we are in the school community is understanding what resources or services are available at the school. And be informed about student rights, especially if the student has an IEP, or the individualized education plan, or 504 Plan, does it need to be re revisited?

Lean on your school team, the community-based team. Hopefully they're already in communication. And that we are insisting on equity and accountability at any given moment, right throughout this partnering with the student and their family.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. All great points. Related to this, we had a statement from a participant who puts out an interesting reframe here. The person put it out in the form of a question. Is it possible to change reintegration to reunite, which has a different tone to it? And it is about coming back in and it has some of the similar elements, but feels different. I like that piece.

So we only have about four or five minutes left, so we're coming around to the end here. Are there any brief comments any of you would like to make related to what should happen when a student recycles back into risky or dangerous behaviors or relationships? I'd like to begin with Tamara. Let us see if you had anything that you'd like to say here on this one?

Tamara Clark: Again, I would make sure for people to understand that each situation is different, there's different dynamics. And similar to when you first find out about this youth is involved in trafficking, now that they are again, to really talk to the youth, if possible. Get information and details, communicate with their parent or guardian. Talk about safety concerns, safety planning. And then working with them to contact the appropriate authorities, whether that's Department of Children and Families, the police, the National Human Trafficking Hotline. So similar to when you first find out, right? So it's not that different.

I think, depending on the situation and the circumstances, which it all varies, proceeding in the same way, but also understanding that sometimes throughout a youth's healing process that cycling in and out of trafficking situations happens. So if you have that baseline in understanding similar to what Charisma talked about, it isn't that you failed or everything is over. It happens. When they come back out of that situation, welcome back, we're happy to see you, let's keep moving into the work that we have been doing with you. So I think just understanding baseline that that may happen.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: You got lots of emphatic nods there, Tamara. How about Nicole? I'd like to hear from you, Nikki.

Nikki Valila: Yeah. I can't reiterate enough, the warm welcome matters. No one wants to come back to an environment that doesn't feel safe, that they are wanted. And so that warm smile can really go a long way. And as Tamara said, and Charisma, relapse is part of this. Nobody that's experienced trauma, oftentimes loses some of those behaviors or symptoms of just because.

And so it's bound to happen that this young person is resilient. They're a survivor. They're getting up every single day and acknowledging the strengths attached to that I think. But as all of us have said, your job is not to worry alone. You have community-based resources. So your job is to pass this information on. And so whether it's the school social worker or adjustment counselor, somebody reaching out.

In some of your counties, you have children's advocacy centers, multidisciplinary teams that are working to support these young people from a collaborative perspective in the community with their families and other providers. So knowing those other systems exist, and we want those systems involved with that young person to best support them in all aspects of who they are and what they do.

But I think a young person relapsing is not a failure on behalf of the school. What we want to do is capitalize every single time they return, because that tells us you're doing something right. So I'm just going to end with that.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much, Nikki. And Suleman?

Suleman Masood: Yeah. I strongly agree with Nikki's point on externally looking out for community partnerships and relying on those community partnerships and relaying some information out to them. And I'd say internally within the school, what may be as a supplement, school personnel can, I would say, find ways to create peer support groups for those students.

So Tamara, at the beginning of the presentation mentioned complex trauma. It may not be human trafficking specific, but being able to create peer support groups around complex trauma for other students to understand that they're not alone, to help them understand that trauma is something that it is a journey, it's something that's a marathon. It takes years to address and find ways to heal. And helping them feel that they're not alone. I think these are ways that the school can better address ways in which there may be situations where a student may be cycling back and forth.

But that's part of, I think the bigger welcome that Nikki had mentioned as well around what welcoming them back will be part of, the peer support groups.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Great. Thank you. And Charisma, we have about a minute, do you want to add in your thoughts?

Charisma De Los Reyes: And so I'm thinking, I'm always thinking about resources for school, things that they can turn to, especially if they may not have already protocols or policies in place. And so during this recycling process and the assessment process, if the question of school placement arises, we want to try to resist automatically recommending transferring a student to a different school or an alternative school. And I can say that we can understand why that may be needed, because of immediate safety or things like that. But again, let's really slow down and think about what is the best interest?

So the last resource I'd like to highlight is adapting the Best Interest Analysis worksheet that is part of School of Origin, Best Interest Determination Procedures for Foster Youth. So again, we have a frame of reference. This worksheet can act as a guide for SSTs or intervention teams to discuss pros and cons of moving a student to a different school or staying in the current one.

And again, we can't emphasize enough that from the very beginning, we should be teaming with the student and their family. We should be uplifting and protecting student family voice and choice while balancing the expertise of the team. And so my closing thought, excuse me, is ensuring that students have teams that see them, hear them and value them, teams that are meeting their needs, and most importantly, teams that empower them to thrive no matter where they may be in their journey towards healing.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: And thank you very much. It's a great note to end on, that concept of thriving. As some of our participants have pointed out, these young people are going through some very complex situations. And so the suggestions that you all provided and the frames that you all provided for school professionals to work with have been very helpful.

Unfortunately, we are at the end of our time. So I'd like to thank all of you for participating as our speakers today and for giving us all these wonderful suggestions, and also for pointing out that success doesn't always look like not relapsing and that we don't have to worry alone. There were some great quotes and ideas that came out of all of your suggestions.

So as we come to the end of our time together, I want to thank the participants also for being here today, your willingness to commit time to be here and spend time listening to the conversation and for the questions you provided have been greatly appreciated by us and our speakers. We all know that you are playing a super important role here in protecting our young people and ensuring that they're going to be safe at school and be able to achieve their educational accomplishments.

At this point, I'd also like to point out the event webpage is up. All of the information that you heard today will be in the recording there, the slide deck will be there. And we also have the list of the resources that have been mentioned by our speakers today. You can also look at the rest of the Human Trafficking webinar series in the archive form, and you can also visit the Department of Education's human trafficking web page, which is also on the slide.

And finally, we'd like to encourage you to take a few moments to go to our link, to provide some feedback and information on how you felt today's webinar went. That link is also going into the chat box so that you can provide that feedback.

We'll have another human trafficking webinar that is taking place June 29th. And this one will be focusing in on how bias impacts the identification,

intervention, and treatment of young people and what we all can do together in this school environment to counteract that and to ensure an equitable approach to working with our young people.

Again, I'd like to thank all of you for being with us today, and we sincerely look forward to seeing you the next time. Have a wonderful remainder of your day. Thank you.