

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series 10 Virtual Participatory Workshops

Recognizing:

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month
May is National Mental Health Awareness Month

Program may be subject to change based upon unexpected events.

Conference Registration Instructions:

- **Registration is directly through each workshop's individual Teams link**
 - The virtual platform will be Microsoft Teams for each sessions and a individual Teams registration links can be found in the title of each workshop's.
 - To register, please enter your name, title, agency, city, state and email.
 - After you register, Teams will send an email with the workshop entry link. *Save the email with the Teams link to enter the workshop on its scheduled day.* Teams will also send a reminder email with the entrance link one hour before the workshop begins.
 - Please prepare to join each session at least 10 minutes before the workshop start time in case troubleshooting is needed. We cannot assist with troubleshooting after a workshop has started.
 - Our Teams program permits registration of up to 1,000, which is the maximum for each session. If you register and cannot attend, please cancel as soon as possible to let someone else attend. Please use the registration link in the email sent from Teams to cancel. Even if you cancel one hour before the workshop with the Teams reminder email, someone else will be happy to take your seat.
 - There is no password required. Anyone with the join link can attend.
- **All workshop hours are scheduled for Eastern Standard Time (EST).** Please adjust for your time zone.
- There are no Continuing Education Units (CEU) attached to these workshops. We can provide an attendance verification email, but we do not provide individual certificates for each workshop.
- **For all questions, troubleshooting, and attendance verification, email Traffickingtraining@acs.nyc.gov**

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

Workshop Descriptions and Registration Links:

April 21 (Tuesday) from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm EST:

Register Here for [“All in the Family” - The Dynamics and Repercussions of Familial Trafficking](#)

- **Selina Higgins, MA, MSW, LCSW-R, DBT-C**, Executive Director,
Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation, NYC Administration for Children’s Services

Familial trafficking occurs when a family member, guardian or romantic partner facilitates a victim’s sexual exchange for any item of value, or through the production, posting or trade of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM). It can also occur through forced or uncompensated labor, or when monetary proceeds are taken by a partner or family member. In certain circumstances, although not actively facilitating trafficking, family members can also be complicit.

Familial trafficking is often a hidden crime, due access and control factors which create a shield of invisibility to both victims and potential observers. Since they have no other comparison, victims accept the abuse because they view it as their “normal”. Their love and loyalty to the abuser makes it difficult for victims to recognize their situation and for outsiders to identify the abuse. The violation of trust and protective responsibility can result in betrayal trauma, resulting in profound emotional harm of a level that exceeds stranger trafficking.

This workshop will discuss the concept of family, the difference between sex abuse and familial trafficking, power dynamics, social misconceptions, red flags, psychological and systemic repercussions, and tips for working with survivors, including safety planning. Media cases will be utilized as examples. Please note that some people may find these cases distressing so please focus on your well-being before deciding to register to ensure emotional safety and informed choice.

April 22 (Wednesday) from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm EST:

Register Here for [Mediha, A Shining Example of Survival, Courage, and Fortitude](#)

- **Mediha Ibrahim Alhamad, Survivor and Advocate**
- **Hasan Oswald, Documentary Film Director**

Mediha’s story is that of one girl’s fight to find her missing family members, revealing the strength and determination of a young survivor as she reclaims her voice and future.

Mediha Ibrahim Alhamad, a teenage Yazidi girl was kidnapped in the Sinjar massacre and sold into sexual slavery, surviving ISIS captivity. After she was released and living in a camp for internally displaced people in Iraqi Kurdistan, c. 2019 she met American documentary filmmaker Hasan Oswald. Oswald gave her a film camera and through her personal video-diaries she told her family’s story, as well as documented the challenges she faced after captivity. Oswald turned her footage into the 2024 documentary MEDIHA. This workshop will feature Mediha sharing her story of courage and determination to confront her past and move towards a future of justice and healing. Mediha will be accompanied by her director, friend and advocate, Hasan Oswald.

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

April 23 (Thursday) from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [FIFA World Cup 2026 - Child Safeguarding & Trafficking Prevention](#)

- **Katie Hanna**, Head of North America, Centre for Sport and Human Rights
- **Claudia Villa-Hughes**, Head of Safeguarding, Centre for Sport and Human Rights
- **Emily Ashton**, Senior Advisor, NYC Emergency Management
- **Melody Mills**, Senior Policy Advisor, NYC Children’s Cabinet

With many known preventable safeguarding and trafficking risks at mega-sporting events, presenters will highlight safeguarding efforts in local host cities and across North America leading up to the FIFA World Cup in the summer of 2026. Through case studies, data insights, and sharing one new tool currently being piloted, attendees will have an increased understanding of the risks at the tournament, safeguarding approaches for prevention, and identify at least one new resource for collaborating on safeguarding legacy with sport organizations, venues, and city governments. Presenters will also provide a detailed overview on safety planning and support for New York City and New Jersey.

April 24 (Friday) from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [Preventing AWOC: Proactive Strategies to Support Youth Safety and Stability](#)

- **Whatley Ozer**, LMSW, Individual & Family Therapist, Empower House II
- **Jennifer D. Madera**, Division Director of Safe Harbor Services, The Children’s Village

This training supports staff in preventing AWOC (Absent Without Consent) among youth at heightened risk, particularly those with known or suspected trafficking histories. Grounded in the EMPOWER program model, the session emphasizes trauma informed, strengths based, and relationship driven strategies that prioritize youth voice, safety, and stability. Participants will learn to recognize early warning signs, apply proactive engagement techniques, and use empowerment focused practices to reduce AWOC risk and enhance protective factors for vulnerable youth.



2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

April 27 (Monday) from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [Forensic Interviewing: Increasing Accuracy, Minimizing Harm](#)

- **Emily Waters, PhD, LCSW, MPA**, Bronx CAC Clinical and Forensic Services Director

Child Advocacy Centers are designed to minimize trauma to children who have experienced abuse by providing a coordinated response from various professionals, including law enforcement, medical personnel, mental health experts, and child protective services. This multidisciplinary approach ensures that children only have to tell their story once to a trained interviewer, reducing the need for repeated questioning by different authorities, and avoiding re-traumatization.

This workshop will explore how the forensic interview process at a Child Advocacy Center takes place. The workshop will also delve into how a multidisciplinary team functions, and how the investigative process interacts with victim advocacy, and mental health by coordinating the investigation, treatment, and advocacy services children need in a safe and supportive environment.

April 28 (Tuesday) from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [After Survival: The Healing No One Talks About](#)

- **Maegan Bell**, Sex Trafficking Survivor & Community Prevention Educator & Outreach for the Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Center / The Children's Advocacy Center

A survivor-led healing conversation with community prevention educator Maegan Bell about life after sex trafficking, exploring the journey few people talk about: Healing, reclaiming identity, restoration, and rebuilding a life, and how lived experience informs her prevention education work through her body value and consent curriculum.

April 29 (Wednesday) from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [Breaking the Silence: Protecting Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities from Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#)

- **Jessie Boye-Doe, LCSW**, Vice President of Mental Health Services Impact and Strategy, Good Shepherd Services
- **Jessica Schutte, Psy.D**, Psychologist and Trainer, Center for Healing, JCCA's Westchester Residential Treatment Center

Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) face heightened vulnerability to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), yet their experiences are often overlooked or misidentified. This training examines how disability-related factors intersect with grooming and exploitation tactics, increasing risk for youth with cognitive and communication differences. Participants will learn to recognize indicators of exploitation, understand barriers to disclosure, and apply trauma-informed, disability-responsive strategies when working with youth with IDD. The session will also highlight practical approaches for improving identification, reporting, and cross-system collaboration to better protect and support affected children.

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

April 30 (Thursday) from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [NYC's Child Welfare Trafficking Policy and Screening Children for Sex Trafficking in ACS' Child Trafficking Database \(CTDB\)](#)

- **Selina Higgins, LCSW-R**, Executive Director, Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy
- **Clifton Robertson, LMSW**, Child Trafficking Specialist Residential Social Worker, Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy

In September 2020, ACS released Policy and Procedure 2020/05: Identifying, Assessing, and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims, which articulates guidelines and procedures for ACS and provider agency staff in identifying children and youth for sex and/or labor trafficking, and for safety planning, coordinating with law enforcement, and making referrals for appropriate services. The Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) is the electronic mechanism that all ACS and provider agency staff must use to screen children for sex trafficking. This training will provide an overview of child trafficking, a description of the legislation that led to mandated sex trafficking screenings for children in the NYS and NYC child welfare systems, a detailed overview of the policy and a step by step walk through of CTDB screening procedures, including a hands-on demonstration of CTDB screenings. This training is a must for all NYC child welfare staff and any other professional who needs to understand ACS' trafficking policy and to perform the screenings correctly.

May 5 (Tuesday) from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [Simply Report: Changing How We Identify and Respond to Trafficking and Support Victims](#)

- **Kristi Wells**, CEO of Safe House Project

Human trafficking is one of the most underreported crimes in the nation — not because people aren't seeing it, but because they don't know how to act on what they see. Simply Report is changing that.

This session explores how an AI-powered tip reporting platform is transforming the way law enforcement and service providers identify trafficking and connect victims to care. With statewide deployments through Attorney General partnerships and a 371% increase in survivors identified in pilot states, Simply Report is proving that the right technology can save lives. Walk away knowing how your state, agency, or organization can be part of the solution.

May 6 (Tuesday) from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm EST:

Register Here for [Working with LGBTQ+ Youth Who Have Experienced or are At-Risk for Sex Trafficking](#)

- **Steven Gordon**, Director of LGBTQAI+ Equity Strategies, NYC Administration for Children's Services
- **Selina Higgins, LCSW-R**, Executive Director, Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation, NYC Administration for Children's Services
- **Carmen Sanchez, LCSW**, Child Trafficking Social Worker, Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

Consultation, NYC Administration for Children's Services

Co-developed by the Hetrick Martin Institute and the NYC Administration for Children's Services' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation and Office of LGBTQAI+ Equity Strategies, this workshop will offer both awareness and practical guidance on how to identify and provide the necessary support and resources LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced trafficking or are at risk for trafficking. Participants will:

- Develop an understanding of what is child sex trafficking.
- Gain insight into the unique vulnerabilities faced by LGBTQ+ youth and the intersection with trafficking.
- Learn about trauma-informed approaches and their application in supporting sex trafficking survivors.
- Develop cultural competency and sensitivity to better connect with LGBTQ+ trafficking survivors.
- Learn how to create safe and inclusive spaces where LGBTQ+ survivors can access needed help.
- Learn about the NYC child welfare system's policies that support LGBTQ+ and trafficked youth.
- Learn about the primary resources within NYC's child welfare system (Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy and Office of LGBTQ+ Equities) that can assist with information, service referrals and other needed help.

Presenter Bios:

Bios provided by presenters have been listed alphabetically by first name.

Carmen Sanchez, LCSW is a Child Trafficking Social Worker with ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Social Worker from Fordham University's Graduate School of Social Work with an emphasis on working with Children and Families. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a Minor in Art Therapy at The College of New Rochelle.

Carmen has 20+ years of experience working with Children and Families in various capacities including Child Welfare, Mental Health, and Staff Development. In addition, to working directly with families in the Child Welfare and Mental Health systems, Carmen has worked directly with child welfare staff delivering trainings to assist in providing trauma-focused and client centered material that will help service providers under the needs of children who have been abused and maltreated. Trainings include, but are not limited to: Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Creative Arts therapy, Mandated Reported Training, MAPP: Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting, Shaken Baby Syndrome, and Caring for our Own: Training for Kinship Caregivers.

Claudia Villa-Hughes is an International Safeguarding Specialist & Consultant with experiences working in humanitarian and sport safeguarding, including International Sport Federations, National Governing Bodies, Sport Governance and Management as well as Major Event Hosting.

As the Centre's Head of Safeguarding, Claudia leads and coordinates safeguarding initiatives within the organisation and the broader sports community. She is responsible for establishing and implementing robust safeguarding policies and procedures, ensuring alignment with organisational governance frameworks and strategic objectives. In addition, Claudia is part of the Council of Europe pool of international experts on safe sport and International Safeguards for Children in Sport working group.

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

Claudia was the inaugural lead for the Commonwealth Sport Safeguarding agenda and designed, developed and implemented safeguarding policies and procedures from the beginning, including the safeguarding frameworks for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and Trinbago 2023 Commonwealth Youth, using a multi-agency approach that sees local and international organisations embedded in the response mechanisms.

Claudia's safeguarding approach has been shaped by over a decade of leading services to support children who were trafficked and suffered abuse and exploitation. Working closely with Local Governments, Law Enforcement Agencies, and Education, Claudia covered strategic advisory roles for Safeguarding Children Partnerships where she influenced and supported the development of local governments' policies and procedures on child sexual abuse and exploitation, including criminal exploitation.

Claudia is also a recognised humanitarian sector expert; leading and developing support services for refugees and asylum seekers at both the UN Migration Agency (IOM) and British Red Cross where she still volunteers as a member of the Psychosocial Support Team to support people in crisis. Her passion and dedication in this field has been recognised with the Queen's Award.

Clifton Robertson, LMSW is the Residential Child Trafficking Social Worker with the ACS Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the State University of New York College at Old Westbury, and a Master of Social Work degree from Adelphi University. He is accredited as a Licensed Master Social Worker. As the Residential Child Trafficking Specialist, Clifton is the point person for the residential, group home, and foster care staff that support and provide services to trafficked youth and youth at-risk for trafficking. He also works directly with vulnerable youth, providing psychoeducational awareness, groupwork sessions which includes Dialectic Behavioral Therapy, Creative Arts in Psychotherapy, and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and a variety of prevention strategies individualized as per each child's needs and strengths. In addition, he provides support, guidance, and training to NYC child welfare stakeholders. Clifton has over a decade of cumulative experience in the fields of mental health, developmentally disabled and other vulnerable populations.

Emily Ashton is a senior public-sector executive and crisis leader with more than twenty years of experience strengthening human service systems during large scale emergencies. She has led some of New York City's most complex operational responses, with a focus on protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring equitable access to essential services.

She currently serves as a Senior Advisor at New York City Emergency Management, where she leads preparedness and operational planning for major citywide events including the 2026 FIFA World Cup. In this role, she brings together city, state, federal, and international partners to anticipate risks and ensure that major event operations remain accessible and responsive to community needs. She also serves as the city's Disability and Functional Access Needs Manager, embedding inclusive planning across emergency and human services operations.

Previously, Emily directed New York City's Asylum Seeker Operations, overseeing a network of emergency respite centers and service hubs that supported tens of thousands of newly arrived individuals. Her leadership focused on rapid sheltering solutions, humane service delivery, and cross sector coordination to meet urgent health, housing, and social support needs.

Her prior roles include Assistant Commissioner and Acting Deputy Commissioner at the NYC Department of

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

Health and Mental Hygiene, where she oversaw administration and strategy for a 2,700 person division and led major components of the city's COVID 19 response, including staffing redeployment and return to school operations.

Emily holds an MPA in Finance from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a BA from the University of Chicago. She is a Coro Leadership New York alumna and is committed to strengthening human service systems, advancing inclusive emergency planning, and building resilience in the face of increasingly complex challenges.

Emily Waters has served as a consultant in human trafficking prevention, research, legislation, operational and leadership support, and aftercare solutions in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and the US for over 13 years. She has presented and trained clinicians, law enforcement, and medical teams around the world in recognizing and responding to victims of trafficking and other forms of violence, and recognizing and treating survivors of genocidal rape.

Emily is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in New York and Virginia, holds a Master of Social Work degree from Azusa Pacific University and a Master of Public Administration from Pennsylvania State University, and is a PhD in Behavioral Health from the International University for Graduate Studies in the Netherlands. She currently works as the Clinical and Forensics Director at the Bronx Child Advocacy Center for Safe Horizon, and is a contractor for the US Department of State.

Hasan Oswald is a Harlem-based filmmaker working across documentary and narrative. His vérité-driven work is marked by emotional immediacy, uncommon intimacy, and sustained access to people living on the margins. His debut feature documentary, HIGHER LOVE (2020)—shot over four years in Camden, New Jersey—won the Slamdance Grand Jury Award and established his immersive, character-driven voice. His most recent feature, MEDIHA (2024), executive produced by Emma Thompson, received 15 Grand Jury Awards and 15 additional honors, won both the Grierson and SIMA Awards, and earned PGA and IDA nominations. Hasan was also named one of DOC NYC's 40 Under 40 documentary rising stars to watch, co-presented by HBO Documentary Films. A Sundance Feature Film Development Track finalist, his work moves fluidly between documentary and narrative while remaining grounded in lived experience and moral urgency.

Jennifer D. Madera is the Division Director of Safe Harbor Services and The Sanctuary Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter at The Children's Village. With over 20 years of experience in the human services field, she specializes in trauma informed interventions for vulnerable and marginalized youth, including survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. Jennifer has led the development and implementation of research-based programming for sexually exploited and at risk minors across New York State, including a curriculum

used in psychoeducational and therapeutic group settings. She oversees both community based and residential services, including Empower House, a certified Safe Harbor program serving youth in foster care. Jennifer holds a B.S. in Psychology from Mercy College and a Master's degree in School Psychology from Iona University, with advanced training in CBT, DBT, and specialized interventions for exploited youth.

Dr. Jessica Schutte is a staff psychologist and trainer for Center for Healing at JCCA's Westchester Residential Treatment Center. She has spent her career working with children and adolescents, and currently provides therapy, assessment, and crisis interventions services to youth in foster care who need high levels of therapeutic intervention. Dr. Schutte has clinical interest and expertise in the areas of attachment, trauma,

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

serious mental illness, and working with youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation.

[Jessie Boye-Doe, LCSW](#) is the Vice President of Mental Health Services Impact and Strategy at Good Shepherd Services in New York, where she serves as the agency's internal expert on mental health and wellbeing practices. She leads the strategic alignment of clinical, non-clinical, and community based mental health services across a large, multi-program organization, with a focus on healing informed and trauma responsive systems.

With more than 15 years of experience spanning direct practice, program development, and executive leadership, Jessie has deep expertise in trauma informed care, child and adult sexual abuse prevention, intimate partner violence intervention, and Medicaid licensed behavioral health services. She has led the development and expansion of evidence based clinical programs, overseen regulatory compliance and quality improvement initiatives, and designed workforce development strategies, including graduate level social work internship pipelines.

Jessie is a licensed clinical social worker in New York, and a frequent national and state conference presenter on trauma, exploitation prevention, and systems level mental health practice.

[Katie Hanna](#) is the Centre for Sport and Human Rights' Head of North America. Katie leads CSHR's Generation 2026 initiative, which aims to promote safer and more inclusive environments for youth in sport in the lead-up to the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In this role, she represents CSHR across North America, advancing collaboration among stakeholders to drive systemic change in safeguarding and abuse prevention in sport. Generation 2026 is the largest multi-year programme developed to date by CSHR, with Katie overseeing all elements, including managing key donor relationships, programme design, financial management and line management of a project team across North America.

Katie brings nearly two decades of experience in sexual abuse prevention, youth protection, and public policy, with a particular focus on child safeguarding in sport. Her leadership has contributed to the passage of four U.S. federal and state laws addressing sexual violence, the development of national safeguarding policies, and the implementation of over 13 online prevention training programmes, reaching more than three million people. She has managed large-scale projects, co-led a national athlete climate survey, and served on expert panels, including for the CDC and FIFA's global safe sport initiative.

Katie has held leadership roles across government, civil society, and sport, including as Vice President of Education & Public Policy at the U.S. Center for SafeSport, Visiting Fellow at the U.S. Department of Justice, and Executive Director of the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence. She has authored several academic publications on abuse in sport and contributed to national toolkits on campus and youth safety. Her work has been recognised with the Visionary Voice Award for Ohio by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center in 2017.

Based in Denver, Colorado, Katie holds a BFA in Photography from the Rochester Institute of Technology and an M.Ed. in School & Community Counselling from Ohio University. Katie has served on the Board of Directors for the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (2013–2017) and has been an active board member of the

National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (Prevent Together) since 2020, including in executive leadership roles. She joined CSHR in 2022, bringing with her a deep commitment to advancing safe, inclusive, and rights-respecting sport environments.

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

Kristi Wells is the CEO and Co-Founder of Safe House Project, a national anti-human trafficking nonprofit and a leading voice in state and federal policy to combat trafficking. With over a decade of experience at the intersection of advocacy, technology, and survivor care, Kristi advises lawmakers, Attorneys General, and congressional offices across the country on legislation and tools that drive real results.

Under her leadership, Safe House Project has grown from serving 250 survivors annually to more than 2,600 — and Simply Report, the organization's AI-powered tip reporting platform, has been adopted statewide through Attorney General partnerships, delivering a 371% increase in survivors identified in pilot states.

Kristi is a trusted authority on anti-trafficking innovation and policy, bringing both strategic vision and on-the-ground expertise to every room she enters — from Capitol Hill to state legislatures to the front lines of survivor services.

Maegan Bell is a survivor-led prevention advocate, speaker, writer, and community educator dedicated to protecting and empowering the next generation. As a survivor of sex trafficking, she brings her lived experience into every aspect of her work, helping communities understand the often-unspoken journey of healing and the importance of prevention education rooted in real-life insight. Maegan has a deep passion for body image awareness and confidence, knowing that valuing your body is one of the first steps in preventing sexual abuse. As a former plus-size model in NYC, she understands firsthand the importance of helping children and young people recognize their worth, believe in themselves, and stand confidently in their valuable identity. Through her role as outreach and community prevention educator at the Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Center, Maegan works across elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as college campuses, creating trauma-informed, survivor-led curriculum that focuses on body value, consent, and healthy relationships. She also created Songbirds, an early childhood prevention program designed to build confidence, emotional awareness, and a strong foundation for healthy identity and community connection. Beyond the classroom, Maegan partners with diverse sectors of the community—police departments, children's museums, libraries, nursing programs, reentry and incarceration programs, addiction recovery communities, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, after school teen programming, and women and children's shelters—meeting people where they are and equipping communities with practical tools for prevention, healing, and restoration. A woman of faith with a love for reading, spiritual growth, and revival, Maegan believes everyone is a powerful person capable of freedom, liberty, & restorative transformation. She brings joy, passion, and hospitality into difficult spaces, helping individuals and communities rediscover hope, love, and authenticity. Above all, Maegan has a heart for community prevention and believes educating youth is critical to creating a safer, stronger future. She is a proud single mother of two children who inspire her every day and the driving force behind her work. Maegan can be reached at Maegan.Bell@silentnomore.org

Mediha Alhamad is a young advocate who is passionate about justice and human rights. She currently lives in New York City and is working toward her educational goals. Mediha plans to study business and later attend law school to become a lawyer. Her dream is to work with the United Nations and advocate for people who have experienced injustice. She hopes to use her voice to bring awareness and inspire change.

Melody Mills (she/her) serves as a Senior Policy Advisor in NYC's Children's Cabinet, where she helped launch the "Every Child and Family is Known" initiative—convening agencies including NYC Public Schools, DHS, DSS, ACS, CIDI, and community partners to strengthen coordinated support for children and families. A Brooklyn native, Melody has lived and worked in Italy, Spain, Ghana, Peru, and Brazil. Her previous work includes leadership development with nonprofits in urban and rural New York and establishing an intercultural department for a growing school network in Rio de Janeiro.

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

Melody received a Fulbright to conduct participatory research with girls in street situations in Lima, Peru and published *Microphone to the World*. She holds BAs in Psychology and Political Science from CUNY Baruch College and an MA in Human Rights from Columbia University.

Selina Higgins, LCSW-R, MA, DBT-C has been the inaugural Executive Director of the NYC Administration for Children's Services' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation (OCTPC) since its creation in 2015 as the first office within a NYC public agency dedicated to trafficked and at-risk youth. OCTPC coordinates all aspects of policy and practice concerning children involved in human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, including identification, assessment, prevention, intervention, mitigation and service coordination for the entire NYC child welfare system. OCTPC also consults with and supports other City and community-based agencies, provides training for professionals and communities, facilitates a variety of trafficking awareness and prevention groupwork models for youth and a large-scale Child Trafficking Awareness Campaign. Originating with Selina as its only staffing, across the past eleven years OCTPC has incrementally expanded to a talented team of seven clinical and administrative members. Selina is also NYC's Safe Harbour Coordinator.

Selina has worked in the field of child welfare for 34 years, beginning as a Child Protective Specialist investigating abuse and maltreatment reports, then rising to a variety of clinical and administrative roles. A decorated veteran of the United States Army, Selina is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW-R) with a Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology, a Master of Social Work, and post-graduate certifications in Infant-Parent Dyadic Therapy and Trauma Assessment, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (partial) and Social Work Administration. Additional substantial clinical training includes Play Therapy, Suicide Prevention, Creative Arts Therapy, Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) and Other Specified Dissociation Disorder (OSDD) and LGBTQ Familial Therapy. She has been an MSW Practicum Instructor for over 20 years, firmly believing in professional development and the social work tradition of "paying it forward".

Publications include a variety of articles, the *Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: Tools for NYC Child Welfare Professionals* toolkit, and co-authoring *Human Trafficking in the Foster Care System* for the Springer Nature 2020 textbook, *Medical Perspectives on Human Trafficking in Adolescents: A Case-Based Guide*. Presentations include international, national and regional conferences, including multiple original workshops at the International Association of Social Work with Groups' annual symposiums and Shared Hope International's Juvenile Sex Trafficking (JuST) conferences, the largest and most renowned annual conference on child sex trafficking in the United States.

You can learn more about the work at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/traffickedyouth.page>

Steven Gordon has over 18 years of government, nonprofit direct service, administrative, development, and technical assistance/capacity building experience. His areas of expertise include, but not limited to HIV/AIDS, youth development, homelessness, sexual and behavioral health, program development and implementation, grants management, race equity, social justice, community organizing, LGBTQAI+ equity, gender equity, and policy/advocacy. Currently, as the Director of LGBTQAI+ Equity Strategies at ACS, Steven leads the agency's LGBTQAI+ equity efforts. Steven's past professional experiences includes:

- Principle of Steven Gordon Consulting where his primary functions were development, fundraising, grant writing, technical assistance, and capacity building to private companies, nonprofits, hospitals/healthcare centers, and colleges/universities. Some of his clients include: Gershwin Lehman

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

- Group, Sage Publishing, Howard University, Vera Institute of Justice, Substance Abuse Mental and Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), etc.
- Executive Director of The Pride Network, a small Brooklyn based non-profit whose mission is to empower and support the next generation of LGBTQ Leadership through social justice education, workforce development and leadership training.
- Director of Drop-In for Ali Forney Center. There he managed a large program budget, 6 grant contracts, a team of staff, interns and consultants of over 20, and a very busy triage center for youth in crisis.

[Whatley Ozer, LMSW](#) is the Individual and Family Therapist for Empower House II, The Children's Village.

2026 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series

How to Contact the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation (OCTPC)

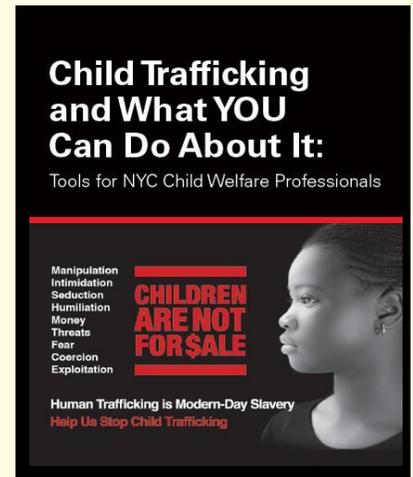
- For NYC child notifications: Child.trafficking@acs.nyc.gov
- For information on upcoming trainings: Traffickingtraining@acs.nyc.gov

Access our Resources:

Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: Tools for NYC Child Welfare Professionals

Link available on the Preventing Youth Trafficking
webpage, or click here:

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/youth/childtrafficking/2024/what-you-can-do-about-it.pdf>



Webpages with Downloads:

- About the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Consultation:
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/traffickedyouth.page#about-octpp>
- Preventing Youth Trafficking:
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/traffickedyouth.page>
- Resources for Professionals (our training handouts):
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/child-trafficking/resources.page>
- Virtual Resource Fair (listing of anti-trafficking providers):
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/virtualresourcefair.page>
- Awareness Campaign Materials (posters and brochure in 12 languages!):
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/virtualresourcefair.page#AwarenessCampaigns>