

Executive Summary

2024 Human Trafficking Annual Report

Introduction

The State Task Force was legislatively mandated in 2012 under S.C. Code Ann. 16-3-2050 (B)(1). It leads a strategic, multi-disciplinary approach to combat human trafficking in South Carolina. The law dictates that the Task Force will submit annual reports, inclusive of findings and recommendations, to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate. This document summarizes the Task Force's key findings in the 2024 Annual Report.

State Task Force Membership

The South Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force works with numerous state agencies in its efforts to prevent the crime, investigate sex and labor trafficking, protect victims, respond to the needs of survivors, and prosecute cases. While the mandated member state agencies are engaged in broader efforts, there are also several state agencies who are at the table in discussions. The Task Force prioritized identifying agencies that are key to the statewide response and would like to see the formalization of their membership through an amendment to the original 2012 legislation.

Task Force Initiatives

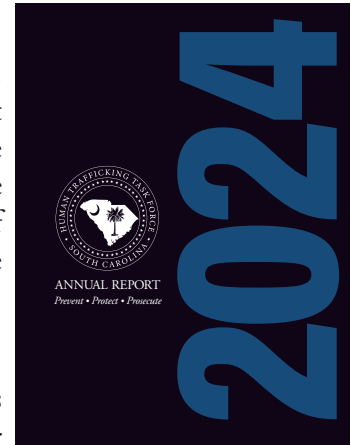
The transportation and tourism initiative, TravelWatchSC, rolled out in 2024 in partnership with Columbia Metropolitan, Greenville-Spartanburg International, and Myrtle Beach International Airports. The Task Force then partnered with the SC Trucking Association to distribute 50,000 decals, in English and Spanish. Regional task forces supported an initiative to disburse 50,000 personal hygiene items, with the National Hotline information, to unhoused and runaway shelters. The State Task Force also launched the first phase of a state-wide Hispanic awareness campaign.

State Task Force Training and Outreach

In 2024, the State Task Force completed 22 training events including 968 trainees. The total includes seven two-day Advanced Law Enforcement training events across South Carolina. More than 160 law enforcement completed the intensive program addressing both foundational and advanced strategies for responding to labor and sex trafficking. In addition, the Law Enforcement Subcommittee, chaired by SLED, facilitated similar training events in Rock Hill and Pickens. State Task Force staff and prosecutors at the SC Attorney General's Office provided 106 presentations statewide reaching approximately 5,155 attendees.

TraffickProofSC

The State Task Force's prevention education curriculum, TraffickProofSC, won a silver Telly Award. The award honors excellence in video and television and is one of the most coveted awards in that industry. Furthermore, the South Carolina Department of Education selected TraffickProofSC as recommended instructional materials for sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention.



\$6.5 million Appropriation to Build Services for Minor Victims

The State Task Force requested funding to increase the number of specialized service providers in South Carolina. The General Assembly appropriated \$6.5 million for the development of residential programming for minors of both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The funds are to be dispersed through a Human Trafficking Grant Program that will seek proposals for multiple levels of care for both minor female and male victims.

South Carolina Law Enforcement Division

SLED investigated 285 tips involving human trafficking. The tips included 392 victims and were investigated in 40 out of 46 counties in 2024. The counties with the most investigations included Greenville (32), Richland and Charleston (31 each), Horry (22), Lexington (21), Berkeley (18), and Spartanburg (16).

The National Human Trafficking Hotline

According to the Hotline, the crime is being reported the most in Greenville, Horry, Richland, Charleston, and Spartanburg Counties. Their data also shows that situations of suspected sex trafficking are being reported at a higher rate. The number one location for sex trafficking in South Carolina is hotels and motels and the most common for labor trafficking is within retail/small businesses.

South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice

The SC Department of Juvenile Justice identified 63 juveniles as human trafficking victims. 98% of the victims were female and 2% of the victims were male. Runaway was the most prevalent offense for the victims.

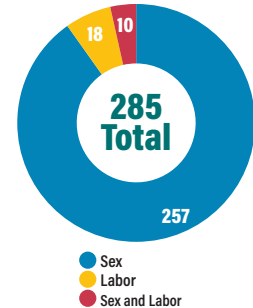
State-Level Human Trafficking Legislation

The Task Force advocated for the passage of state-level human trafficking legislation. Changes and additions to the Human Trafficking laws went into effect July 2, 2024. The changes include adding to the definition of sex trafficking, South Carolina Code Section 16-3-2010(7), the following crimes: (k) sexual exploitation of a minor; or (l) promoting or participating in prostitution of a minor. Additionally, the new law expands the safe harbor provision for minors to include nonviolent misdemeanors and Class F felonies in both general sessions and family court and provides instructions to ensure the Department of Social Services has been notified of the situation. The amended law allows both minors and adults to move to expunge a conviction and provides the method to carry it out. The expungement is available in the discretion of the court. Victims of trafficking who are being tried or adjudicated for any crime may raise the affirmative defense that the crime was done under duress or coercion because it is directly a result of, or interrelated to, being a victim of trafficking.

Court Data: Pending and Closed

At the conclusion of 2024, 37 different defendants had a total of 62 charges pending for human trafficking in the South Carolina State Courts. Twenty-eight human trafficking charges were closed in 2024, one defendant with two charges was convicted by a jury trial in Richland County prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office, four charges pled to human trafficking, 5 charges pled to other charges related to trafficking, and the trafficking charges were dismissed. Sixteen charges involving four defendants were dismissed for federal prosecution and prosecutorial decisions on the same facts, one charge was dismissed. Twenty new charges of trafficking were opened reflecting sixteen separate defendants. Half of the charges were for trafficking of minors under 21 and half were for trafficking adults.

Tips Investigated in 2024



Adult and Minor Victims

