

BCFS HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
HUMAN TRAFFICKING INTERDICTION DIVISION
17319 San Pedro Ave. Suite 208 | San Antonio, TX, 78232

This Memorandum of Understanding ("Agreement") is entered into by and between BCFS Health and Human Services Human Trafficking Interdiction-Common Thread (BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread), located at 17319 San Pedro Ave., Suite 208, San Antonio, TX 78232 and Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office located at 100 E. Cano Street Edinburg, TX 78539.

I. PURPOSE. The purpose of this Agreement is to:

- A. Provide BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread advocacy for survivors referred by, or otherwise served by, **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office.**
- B. Collaborate toward the goal of supporting all child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation up to the age of 24 years of age to receive advocacy, case management, and other appropriate services.

II. TERM OF THE AGREEMENT. TERM OF THE AGREEMENT.

The term of this Agreement will commence on October 14, 2025 and will be reviewed and amended every two years if no amendment is needed. The MOU will be renewed at 2-year intervals or otherwise, unless one party notifies the other in writing at least 30 days before the expiration of said term of its intention not to renew or to amend this Agreement otherwise. This term is contingent upon BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread notice of award.

III. OTHER DEFINITIONS. The following definitions apply:

- A. Agreement: This Memorandum of Understanding.

IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office will:

1. Refer eligible Participants to BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread as deemed appropriate by **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office.** Eligible participants will be Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) and those at high risk (CSEY) up to the age of 24 years old, regardless of gender or nationality.
2. Provide survivors or their guardians with information on court ordered restitution, felony case indictment notice, information on crime victim rights, assistance with the crime victims compensation application and victim impact statements, Victim Information and Notification Everyday System (VINE) registration, legal advocacy, protective order assistance, notification of felonious criminal and civil bond reduction hearings, court accompaniment, crisis intervention and referrals to outside agencies.
3. Allow BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread to perform introductory training for **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** —advocates and personnel on referring eligible participants to BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread programming.
4. Call BCFS HHS Common Thread's 24-hour hotline at 1-888-8THREAD to refer eligible Participants and provide a safe address at which the BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread advocate may meet the Participant.
5. Facilitate communication between BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and participants in care/services from **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office.**
6. Assign a point of contact (POC) with whom BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread may communicate possible referrals and schedule visits.

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7. When possible and appropriate, facilitate an introduction of and continued communication with the BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread advocate with the referred Survivor and participate in collaborative case planning.
8. Participate in scheduled collaborative case planning meetings between BCFS HHS Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** personnel, as requested.
9. When receiving a referred participant from BCFS HHS Common Thread, allow the BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread to support the Participant's transition into services.
10. Communicate general intake guidelines and protocols for the program and notify BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread if any eligibility criteria are adjusted.
11. Seek authorization from participants at intake or as soon as possible to share information with BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread as is relevant for case planning.
12. Maintain client confidentiality—any information shared between **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** and BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread will be shared for collaborative case planning. **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** will not share information gathered by BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread with third parties (redisclose) without the express written consent of BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread, who will ensure the Participant's consent before authorizing information sharing (see below section of BCFS HHS Common Thread responsibilities).
13. Ensure that individuals providing services under this Agreement have the necessary qualifications to perform the services to which they are assigned.
14. Ensure personnel who directly interact with participants referred by BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread undergo criminal background checks and child abuse and neglect screenings.
15. Provide feedback to BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread regarding the partnership to ensure continuous quality of service provision.

B. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread will:

1. Arrive within 90 minutes of receiving an emergency hotline referral with the BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread service area from **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** and confirming capacity, ensure that an advocate arrives at the designated safe location to meet the Participant.
2. Provide immediate, flexible, and relationship-focused services 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for domestic and foreign confirmed and high-risk (Clear concern) victims of CSEY up to age 24. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread will begin transition out of the program for survivors at 24.5 years old.
3. If a non-emergent hotline referral is placed, an appointment is scheduled, and the assigned advocate arrives on time and as planned.
4. Abide by all mandated reporting laws, including within the family and penal codes.
5. Maintain strict confidentiality of all information and records relating to all Participants, and not redisclose any information regarding any Participant except as required by law or as necessary to perform the services provided pursuant to this Agreement.
6. Ensure that individuals providing services under this Agreement have the necessary qualifications to perform the services to which they are assigned.
7. Ensure that advocates who provide services directly to Participants undergo background checks and child abuse and neglect history screenings.
8. Provide feedback to **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** regarding the partnership to ensure continuous quality of service provision.
9. Provide advocacy services to Survivors until:

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CSEY Advocacy

- The Survivor requests case closure.
 - The Survivor has sustained a "maintenance" state of change and is assessed to be prepared for case closure.
 - Services are requested to terminate per funding agency request, or whichever comes first.
10. Should services terminate for any reason, services may be reinitiated should the Survivor re-engage with BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread, and the needs assessment determines appropriate candidacy for the program. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread will notify **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** if a mutual survivor is discharged from their program.
11. Meet periodically to check in with **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** regarding our partnership to ensure a collaborative working relationship between BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** teams and continuous quality of service provision.

COLLABORATIVE COMPONENTS:

1. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** will designate a representative to act as a liaison between agencies. Disagreements or issues that may arise will be discussed with the designated representative. Should the issue not be resolved, the designated representatives will elevate the issue to the appropriate individual within their agency.
2. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread advocates and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** personnel will communicate issues raised by survivors and discuss these issues respectfully and transparently to avoid "staff and agency splitting" by the Survivor.
3. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** will support each other's agency goals and objectives to the extent resources and funding will allow.
4. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread leadership and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** leadership will meet once a month to address questions and concerns, if needed.
5. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread Advocates and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** personnel can meet separately to collaborate on service plans and avoid duplication of services.
6. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread Advocates will call the **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** phone number to schedule any visits with survivors (if applicable) at the **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** prior to confirming with the Survivor to ensure availability.

VI. REQUIRED BACKGROUND CHECKS AND TRAINING.

- A. All employees, volunteers, or any other individuals working under the auspices of the BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread who may have direct access to participants must undergo fingerprint-based background searches and child abuse registry checks. The child abuse registry checks will be conducted through the Texas Department of Family Protective Services ("TDFPS") Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect. Both BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** ensure that all employees, volunteers, or any other individuals interacting with survivors via this partnership have satisfactorily passed these background searches and registry checks. Individuals with a disqualifying criminal history are prohibited from providing services under this Agreement. Additionally, if the BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and/or **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** receives future notification of an arrest of any personnel for potentially disqualifying criminal conduct, the individual with said conduct may be removed from providing services under this Agreement.

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VI. DUTY TO REPORT

- A. All BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread personnel are "mandated reporters" and will report any allegation or witnessing of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread maintains a Zero Tolerance Policy and will immediately terminate any personnel found to have engaged in the abuse or neglect of a child or to have knowingly withheld information contributing to the abuse or neglect of a child.
- B. CSEY Reporting: BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** will report allegations of sex trafficking and exploitation in accordance with the law and each agency's internal protocol.

VII. ADDITIONAL TERMS

- A. Legal Compliance. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** will adhere to all federal, state, county, and city laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards applicable to the provision of services described herein and the performance of all obligations undertaken pursuant to this Agreement.
- B. Confidentiality. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** will maintain strict confidentiality of all information and records relating to all participants. They will not redisclose the information except as required to perform the services pursuant to this Agreement or as may be required by law.
- C. Equal Opportunity. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** will respect and protect the civil and legal rights of all clients and their parents. It will not unlawfully discriminate against any employee, prospective employee, child, parent/ legal guardian/ custodian based on age, race, color, sex, religion, disability, national origin, or other legally protected categories, classes, or characteristics.
- D. Funding. Any appropriate funding agency shall provide funding for services under this Agreement. BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread and **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** mutual obligation to perform services under this Agreement is contingent upon funding being available. Neither BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread nor **Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office** has any obligation to pay for these services and will not be presented with any bill for payment.
- E. Agreements Superseded. This Agreement constitutes the sole and only Agreement of the parties hereto and supersedes any prior understandings or written or oral Agreement between the parties respecting the subject matter.
- F. Amendments. No amendment, modification, or alteration of the terms of this Agreement shall be binding unless the same be in writing, dated after the date hereof, and duly executed by the parties hereof.

VIII. TERMINATION

- A. Either party may terminate this Agreement at any time, with or without cause, upon 30 days' prior written notice to the other party. Either party may terminate this Agreement at any time if either party, in its sole discretion, determines that the life, health, welfare, or safety of children may be endangered either directly or indirectly through either party's intentional, willful, negligent discharge of its duties.

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IX. CONTACT REPRESENTATIVES

The following individuals are designated as representatives of each entity and shall communicate as needed to ensure the success of the project:

Hidalgo County District Attorney’s Office

Contact Person: Daniel Gonzalez
Title: Interim Victims Unit Director
Address: 100 E. Cano Street Edinburg, Tx. 78589
Telephone: 956-292-7600 ext. 8032
Email Address: Daniel.gonzalez@da.co.hidalgo.tx.us

Common Thread:

Contact Person: Paola Charry
Title: Director of Community Outreach & Education
Address: 17319 San Pedro Ave., Suite 208, San Antonio, TX 78259
Telephone: Mobile 210-309-1691
Email Address: pc0915@bcfs.net

X. EXECUTION

- A. Each person signing this Agreement below warrants that he or she has the power and authority to bind the party for which he or she signs to all the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

BCFS HHS HTI Common Thread

Hidalgo County District Attorney’s Office

Chara McMichael

Executive Director

Date: _____

Toribio “Terry” Palacios

District Attorney

Date: _____