The Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking

At the Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute

INFORMATION BRIEFING

As of July 23, 2024
Overview
The Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking

At the Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute

OVERVIEW

• Background
• Mission, Vision, and Strategic Objectives
• Performance Metrics
• Staff
• Advisory Board
• Research Committee
• Website
• Newsletter
OVERVIEW

• Initiatives
  ▪ Annual Conference to Counter Human Trafficking
  ▪ Internship Program
  ▪ Research Network – Institutions
  ▪ Research Network – Individuals
  ▪ Ports Challenge
  ▪ Research Bibliography (?)

• Funding

• Questions / Discussion
The Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking
At the Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute

BACKGROUND

• Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute was cited as a Center of Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking on December 12, 2023.

• Terminology was changed from “Center of Excellence” to a “Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking” after much discussion within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

• The Center has aligned its operations to DHS Office of University Programs guidance to Centers of Excellence.

• The Center is currently unfunded by DHS. Staffing is one person, part-time.

• Research and organizational efforts continue, limited by lack of funding.
Strategy
Develop Action Plan

Align construct of the Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking with the evaluation criteria found in the OUP Biennial Review

Establish Mission, Vision, Strategic Objectives

Establish Advisory Board
  • Organizational Meeting scheduled in late August 2024

Create Research Committee
  • (multiple universities and research institutions)
STRATEGY

• Conduct focused Internships (May-June 2024)
• Conduct 2024 Conference to Counter Human Trafficking (July 23-24, 2024)
• Establish research networks (institutions and individuals)
• Establish network of non-profit organizations who will partner in research
• Performance Metrics IAW Office of University Programs Biennial Review
  • Following Advisory Board Organizational Meeting
• Develop robust website; and then…
Mission, Vision & Strategic Objectives
MISSION

To provide impactful research and analysis, create innovative technology solutions, and develop educational resources in support of law enforcement efforts and victim-services organizations to enhance our Nation’s ability to combat human trafficking and end slavery.
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VISION

To be the premier academic research center for a nation-wide network of researchers and innovators, attuned to the needs of law enforcement and trafficking victims, working in collaboration to end human trafficking and slavery.
TO CLARIFY...

CRECHT is not a University of Houston-focused Center, rather it is an umbrella organization that fosters an alliance of universities, colleges, and research centers.

We also work with NGOs in that engage in research initiatives.

We are not in competition with the National Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT). We work in support of their efforts by providing relevant research and technology solutions.

We are not interested in recreating the wheel.
Objective 1. Ally institutions of higher education with Federal, State, Tribal, regional, and local law enforcement agencies to combat human trafficking.

- **Objective 1a**: Respond to requests for research and information by the National Targeting Center and law enforcement agencies;

- **Objective 1b**: Create an international network of interested researchers in colleges, universities, and think tanks. This network, with access available to law enforcement agencies, would contain information on names of researchers/subject matter experts, their qualifications, contact information, associated university(ies), relevant past publications, and research area(s) of interest. Network would also include university colleges and/or departments with special focus in combating human trafficking.
Objective 2. Foster research in institutions of higher education to aid in combating human trafficking;

- **Objective 2a**: Provide funding (made available through the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security) to promising research topics;
- **Objective 2b**: Create a Research Committee to review, critique and ensure quality control of funded research projects;
- **Objective 2c**: Conduct an annual conference to highlight recent research and technological advancements to assist law enforcement officers engaged in combating human trafficking.
Objective 3. Foster the development of technology to assist law enforcement and intelligence officers in investigations and prosecutions;

Objective 4: Create online resources for best practices, published research, and promising technology that may be used to combat human trafficking;

Objective 5: Promote the use and growth of best practices and existing programs in combating human trafficking (as identified/approved by the DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking);
Objective 6. Promote awareness in the community of the scourge of human trafficking, indicators, and methods to detect it, and how to report it.

• **Objective 6a**: Create periodic social media postings and quarterly Center of Excellence newsletter to keep researchers informed of research needs and opportunities, recent publications, and advances in technology;

• **Objective 6b**: Create a multi-lingual training website, by which workers of various industries (commercial drivers, taxi drivers, hospitality sectors, medical sector, etc.) attain a desired standard in knowledge of human trafficking indicators for their industrial sector – and how to report instances quickly and to the appropriate authorities.
This website may be used to identify those individuals who have successfully undergone training and attained the desired threshold of knowledge before licensing (CDL drivers, employees in hotels and restaurants, medical clinics, etc.)
Performance Metrics
PERFORMANCE METRICS

TO BE DEVELOPED
Advisory Board
Invited members from each of the following organizations/entities

- U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
  Director Roderick Hudson
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
  SA Audrey Baugher
- U.S. Coast Guard  
  Awaiting General Counsel
- U.S. Marshals Service  
  Awaiting General Counsel
- Office of Refugee Resettlement  
  TBD
- Office of the Governor of Louisiana  
  Mary Kate Andrepont
- Office of the State Attorney General, Texas  
  Awaiting Response
Invited members from each of the following organizations/entities

• Texas Department of Public Safety Awaiting Response
• City of Houston Police Department Awaiting Response
• Center for Immigration Studies Jessica Vaughan
• Traverse Austin Shamlin
• UnboundNow Marilyn Plunk
Research Committee
Invited members from each of the following academic institutions:

• **Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute**  
  • Director of Research  
  • **Hady Salloum**, PhD

• **University of Central Florida**  
  • Hospitality and Tourism Management  
  • **Jessica Wickey**, PhD

• **Southern Methodist University**  
  • Data Analysis  
  • **Beth Wheatley-Paramo**, PhD

• **University of North Texas**  
  • College of Social Work  
  • **Martha Felini**, PhD

• **Villanova University**  
  • Legislation and Policy  
  • **TBD**
Website
The Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking
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CRECHT WEBSITE

• Mission, Vision, and Strategic Objectives
• CRECHT Initiatives
• Conference to Combat Human Trafficking: Research and Technology
• Research Projects
• Calendar
• Advisory Board
• Research Committee
• BTI Fellows
• Internships
• Research Network – Partner Institutions
• Research Network – Researchers
• Research Network – International
• Partner Nonprofit Agencies *(partnering in research)*
• Research Collaboration
• Research Bibliography *(to be determined)*
• Best Practices
• News
• Contact Us
• **CRECHT Initiatives**
  • *Provide updates on Center initiatives, research opportunities*

• **Research Network – Institutions**
  • *Highlight the work of a CRECHT partner institution*

• **Research Institution – Individuals**
  • *Highlight the work of a CRECHT partner researcher*

• **Internship Program**
  • *Announcements and information on work of CRECHT Interns*

• **News**
  • *Synopses/links to human trafficking news and investigations (BTI Fellow)*

• **Conference to Counter Human Trafficking**
  • *Provide updates (speakers and focus) for the Center’s annual Conference*
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NEWSLETTER

• Calendar
  • Provide year-long calendar of events (conferences, meetings, etc.)

• NGO Network
  • Highlight the work of a CRECHT partner

• Special Announcements
  • Announcements of legislation and Federal Directives impacting Human Trafficking

• Advisory Board
  • Spotlight on bio and interest of Advisory Board member

• HOTLINE
  • Provide hotline information at the bottom of each page

• Other
  • As developed
Initiatives
Annual Conference
The Conference began in 2022, hosted by the BTI Institute. The purpose of the conference is two-fold:

1. To present new research and innovative technologies that may be used in efforts to halt human trafficking; and

2. To identify areas for future research and to develop viable solutions through technologies and enhanced capabilities to counter human trafficking and smuggling.

3rd Annual Conference to Combat Human Trafficking is scheduled July 23-24, 2024, at Harris County Department of Education Conference Center, in Houston.
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- 2-3 days of presentations on the latest research and technology impacting human trafficking.
- Registration and parking are free to participants.
- Increasingly, the Conference has taken on an international flavor with attendees from Ghana, Angola, Turkey, U.K, Nepal, Taiwan, Gambia, Costa Rica, and more
- The 2024 Conference to Combat Human Trafficking is followed by 2 days of training “Interdiction for the Protection of Children,” by the Texas Department of Public Safety.
Internship Program
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INTERNSHIPS

- Summer Internships
  - 4-weeks, on-site
  - Seeking funding from DHS
- Traditional Institutions
  - U.S. Military Academy
  - U.S. Coast Guard Academy
  - Native American Tribes
- Research/Work Projects
  - This is **not** “making copies”
Cadet Elizabeth Fisher, U.S. Military Academy, Class of 2026, assisted in the planning and creation of web pages for the new Academic Research Center to Counter Human Trafficking, participated in the initial planning of the “Port Challenge to Counter Human Trafficking,” planned the expansion of the BTI Institute Internship Program, and began research to create an online network or researchers covering the typology of Human Trafficking. She attended the Southern Methodist University Human Trafficking Data Conference (June 2-4) and assisted in preparation of the BTI Institute’s 3rd Annual Conference to Combat Human Trafficking: Thru Research and Technology.
Research Network: Institutions
Objective 1. Ally institutions of higher education with Federal, State, Tribal, regional, and local law enforcement agencies to combat human trafficking.

Objective 1b: …Network would also include university colleges and/or departments with special focus in combating human trafficking.

Key Points:
- Provide online listing of university/college programs engaged in research to counter human trafficking. Include program synopses and contact information.
- Initiated. Ongoing. Four universities/research institutes cited.
- Mechanism to add researchers and information online
- Intern project (?) to add/update institutions
The following institutions have partnered with the Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking:

• Center for Immigration Studies
• University of Central Florida
• University of North Texas
• Human Trafficking Institute
• Southern Methodist University
Research Network: Researchers
Objective 1b: Create an international network of interested researchers in colleges, universities, and think tanks. This network, with access available to law enforcement agencies, would contain information on names of researchers/subject matter experts, their qualifications, contact information, associated university(ies), relevant past publications, and research area(s) of interest…

Key Points:
• Provide online listing of researchers, to include contact information, areas of research
• 45 researchers were initially listed
• Mechanism provided to add researchers and information online
• Intern project (?) to add/update researchers
Research Network: Researchers
INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Creating a network of international researchers to facilitate collaboration:

- United Kingdom (University of Bournemouth)
- TBD

Assisted by the Organization of American States
Research Network:
International Research Council
The following organizations have partnered with the Center of Research Excellence to Counter Human Trafficking:

• DeliverFund
• Institute for Shelter Care
• Traverse Project
• Unbound
Objective 6b: Create a multi-lingual training website, by which workers of various industries (commercial drivers, taxi drivers, hospitality sectors, medical sector, etc.) attain a desired standard in knowledge of human trafficking indicators for their industrial sector – and how to report instances quickly and to the appropriate authorities.

Key Points:

• Virtually all significant human trafficking initiatives focus on delivery of training
• Cost?
• Partnering with SalesForce
Key Points:
• No cost to take this training.
• Website design ensures individuals attain a pre-determined “threshold of knowledge”
• Individual may take training at any date, any time, any location
• Training may be taken in his/her native language to facilitate comprehension
• Training may be taken for a specific industry sector
  • “One size does not fit all” - Addresses nuances
• Provide a cost-effective avenue to effect legislation to require training as a prerequisite to hiring, or during in-processing, and/or as periodic refresher training
Objective: Engage seaports in an initiative to conduct training of all port personnel, employees of associated businesses, and vessel crews to in awareness of indicators and reporting of incidents of suspected human trafficking.

Key Points:
• BTI Institute’s Port of the Future Conference routinely attracts representatives from more than 60 ports
• Build on Port of Seattle’s/BEST Ports Allied Against Human Trafficking
• Develop online training to increase awareness and outline reporting procedures
• Use DHS resources to provide posters, videos, flyers, etc. to maintain high levels of awareness
• Partner with port associations to amplify the effort
Objective: Provide community leaders with recommended actions and best practices to address human trafficking in their communities.

Key Points:
- Facilitate creation of a research-based action plan tailored to the local community
- There is a plethora of recommended actions that may be taken to help counter human trafficking in local communities.
- Capture this information over time
- List actions in a Task, Discussion, Recommendation, Action and Budget format
- Provide source information for context
- Implement based on community leaders’ budget and timeline
Task: Train Fire Marshals to recognize indicators of Human Trafficking

Discussion: Where law enforcement officers require a warrant for access into buildings and facilities, fire marshals do not. Fire Marshals may request law enforcement officers accompany them on fire code inspections should security be an issue. Hence Fire Marshals can be a valued asset to law enforcement agencies seeking to eradicate human trafficking in their communities.

Recommendation: Over the next quarter, train Fire Marshals in the county/city to recognize indicators of human trafficking

Responsibility: Assisted By:

Source: Budget Considerations:
Technology
Cellrizon Endoscope – This is a low-cost (<$20) waterproof endoscope that uses a phone as the power supply and display for what the camera sees. The camera is on the end of a 3-meter cable, includes a right-angle mirror for the camera, and a dimmable light mounted in parallel to the camera at the end of the cable. Mounted on a selfie stick, it allows for inspection under and behind obstructions, and the associated app can capture video or still images. This provides the means to easily look behind vehicle dashboards, inside vehicle vents, under seats, containers, tanks, and other closed or difficult-to-access areas.
**CELL PHONE APPS – THE WALABOT**

**Walabot** – This sensor package attaches to back of the phone, transmits radio waves, and then reads the echoes of the radio waves. Simply put, this is a handheld radar device that uses the phone as a display. It can be used to detect objects and voids in walls, vehicles, etc. It simplifies the detection of the concealment of drug loads in tires and other possible stash locations. Because it can pick very low energy vibrations, it can detect movement within containers.
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Contact Information

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