

# Collaboration

A WARNATH GROUP PRACTICE GUIDE



# Collaboration

## PRACTICE GUIDE by The Warnath Group

*“Collaboration is a means to an end. It should be the vehicle serving at the heart of effective, informed and coordinated work driving more effective action against human trafficking and supporting those who have survived being trapped in subjugation and servitude. Successful collaboration involves more than holding meetings to conduct interagency briefings to update one another. Meaningful collaboration produces coordinated operational action against human trafficking.”*

*- Stephen Warnath, CEO & President, Warnath Group*

### AT A GLANCE

#### Intended Audience:

- Law enforcement, service providers, survivors, prosecutors, policy makers, and community members working on human trafficking cases

**Takeaway:** Collaboration in the fight against human trafficking exists across a spectrum – from simple, informal efforts to gather donations for a local shelter to complex multi-national agreements that establish standards and create collaborative partnerships. This Practice Guide offers important guidance for collaboration at any point on that spectrum. It is divided into five parts each of which covers the key considerations and elements for effective collaboration at that stage.

#### In This Practice Guide:

- Part I: Getting Started
- Part II: Formalizing the Collaboration (Optional Step)
- Part III: Managing the Day-to-Day & Anticipated Challenges
- Part IV: Anticipating Cases
- Part V: Responding to Cases

## Introduction

Human trafficking is a dynamic crime that requires a multifront, multidisciplinary response. Law enforcement, service providers, survivors, prosecutors, policy makers, and community members all have potential roles to play in responding to human trafficking. These roles do not operate independent of each other, with any dynamic response requiring collaboration across sectors and roles. This collaboration is crucial and, importantly, something that takes time, intention, attention, and cultivation – it is a non-linear process with many moving parts.

## Why this Guide:

Despite being the cornerstone of any response to human trafficking, and the source of many of the challenges and

conflicts those in the field experience, collaboration is frequently overlooked or taken for granted. When you unpack the foundations and mechanisms of collaboration – actions such as defining roles and responsibilities or establishing norms for communication and convening – you can begin to understand why these things are attenuated from the primary work of the respective parties. With this in mind, this Practice Guide offers a set of key considerations and practical advice to assist groups in building and strengthening collaboration in their response to human trafficking.

## Part 1: Getting Started



### Quick Summary Points

- ✓ Identify intent and shared purpose
- ✓ Recognize that collaboration takes time and cultivation
- ✓ Build Relationships
- ✓ Determine model/setup

In some respects, getting started is the hardest part of collaborative efforts. Bringing together different organizations, groups, and people with perhaps similar, but not identical, interests and goals, all trying to figure out what unites them and how they will work together toward a common goal, is no easy feat. With some guidance the process can be easier, and the following provides an overview of

considerations, elements, and some questions to ask when you start to begin forming and building collaborative efforts.



- ✓ Notably, creating collaboration is not a linear process, your collaborative efforts will evolve over time. Regardless of whether a group is just getting started or has worked together for years, it is always a good idea to check in on foundational elements and adjust as necessary.

A. **Identify intent and shared purpose**: Collaborative efforts are grounded in a shared vision. That vision alone, however, is not sufficient to sustain or even really start a collaborative effort. Groups getting started also need to identify why you are coming together, what unites you, and for what purpose you intend to collaborate. Failure to do so will inevitably result in conflict or simply ineffectiveness that stymies or even dissolves your efforts. *As you come together with a shared vision for change, consider the following:*

- **What is it that unites you?** Groups may be united for the purpose of a specific end goal such as passing legislation to protect migrant workers or domestic workers from being trapped in situations of human trafficking or based on common belief systems and shared values such as the importance of protecting children from exploitation. Understanding what unites the group helps inform what action items or goals the group might have, and how members will work together long-term.
- **What is it that you want to do?** Related to identifying what unites the group is identifying what it is the group hopes to accomplish. Some collaborations exist with loose goals of simply supporting each other as they provide direct support to survivors or communicate intelligence for investigations. Others might want to make substantive changes to the ways in which systems respond to trafficking. Figuring out where your group exists on that spectrum helps you decide whether and to what extent to pursue more formal elements such as mission statements, goals, and specific objectives.

- **Why is each party part of the group at the table?** Collaborative effort need participation from individuals and agencies that offer a variety of things. Some partners may have important information or insight into the problem. Others might add value based on their ability to marshal or provide funding. Understanding why members are engaged helps inform ultimate action items and goals. It also can lay the groundwork to determine which entities will likely be actively involved on working toward a subset of the collectively agreed upon actions or goals. Not everyone will need to participate on everything.

B. **Recognize that collaboration takes time and cultivation**: Collaborative efforts do not happen overnight, nor are they created by simply signing an agreement to work together. A critical step for any collaborative effort, regardless of where it falls on the spectrum, is simply discussing the need for and importance of collaboration and acknowledging that it is a process that takes time, intention, attention, and cultivation. Doing so helps establish commitment, set and manage expectations across the group, and mitigate conflict.

C. **Build Relationship(s)**: The cornerstone of a collaborative effort is relationships. Some collaborative efforts form with individuals who already have relationships with each other, while others put people together for the first time. Regardless of where you fall on the spectrum, it is important that the group take the time to build and/or strengthen and define relationships with each other. Doing so helps to build trust and the desired culture and goes a long way toward informing how you will work together. Moreover, strong relationships will enable parties to avoid or effectively navigate future conflicts. *Key considerations as you establish and build relationships include:*



## Tips for Building Relationships

- ✓ Existing Relationships: For groups that have existing relationships and a history of working together it is still important to have or revisit some of the questions and considerations below. Too often groups with existing relationships move forward based on assumptions of how things have worked in the past, which can create confusion and conflict.

- **Different types of involvement:** Recognize the different types of involvement and perspectives, such as those involved as individuals, individuals representing agencies, and agency level involvement. The type of involvement will inform how you build a relationship. For example, if a colleague is involved as a representative of an agency, you will want to establish a relationship with that colleague while also developing a relationship with the agency beyond that one individual.
- **Understanding others:** Take the time to get to know each party and understand more about what they do and how they operate. Create opportunities for members to share an overview of their participation and commitment from each perspective that applies.



## Tips for Building Relationships

- ✓ Understand your partner's limits and boundaries.
- ✓ Understand how change happens within your partner agencies and organizations. Who are the decision makers? What are the access points?
- ✓ Ask them to share some highlights of their accomplishments. This may seem somewhat attenuated but can be an important step in better understanding a partner agency/organization, their capabilities, and creating a group culture that is supportive, appreciative, and collegial.

D. **Determine How Formal Your Setup Should Be**: All collaborative efforts have some level of organization or setup that exists across a spectrum from informal to formal. This organization or setup informs and, in some cases, dictates how the group works together. Groups at the informal end might have a setup that organizes communications as necessary, and meetings are convened on an ad-hoc basis. The extent to which your collaborative effort formalizes its setup is up to you, and it is often necessary to find a balance of informal and formal. *Key considerations in determining setup include:*

- **Timing**: How do you know when to create a more formal structure? There is no specific answer to this question, however there are several factors that can indicate that formalizing would be of benefit. These include as the group grows larger; if the group wants to seek funding; if the scope of work changes; and if there is frequent conflict, confusion, or redundancy in efforts.



- ✓ Many collaborative efforts begin with one or more individuals championing the issue and bringing others together. While these individual relationships are important and provide a catalyst for action, without additional considerations such groups run the risk of disintegrating should those champions leave. As you consider your collaborative efforts, keep future turnover in mind. In the context of human trafficking and related issues, keeping in mind how to institutionalize and sustain efforts over time is essential to mount a credible counter-trafficking initiative.

- **Depth**: How do you know the extent of formalizing? Figuring out just what your group needs and wants in terms of formalizing is also often a process. In finding what best fits your group, you can start with some simple and basic elements and build on those over time as necessary.
  - (1) Start with basics such as a mission statement and some guiding principles
  - (2) Consider creating a signed agreement that memorializes your intent to work together and the roles of each respective member

(3) See Part II for more guidance on formalizing your collaborative efforts.



*One collaborative group was developed through a partnership between a local detective and a service provider that worked together on cases involving interpersonal violence. Together the pair pushed to get more resources devoted to human trafficking, and quickly gained a reputation for being the go-to people in cases of trafficking or suspected trafficking. Service providers especially were happy to have a detective who understood trauma and could engage with victims without scaring them. A little over two years after their first case, the detective was promoted to another unit. The new detective was unfamiliar with trafficking and not trained in victim-centered and trauma-informed methods. The group struggled to move cases forward and the service provider partners became hesitant to refer to law enforcement.*

*Morale among service providers dropped as they confronted the need to start over with building a relationship with the detective and educating them on working with victims.*

*Lesson learned: This is a situation where developing connections beyond the primary individual could have helped, by making it easier to identify other detectives who had knowledge of or were interested in learning about victim-centered and trauma-informed approaches in advance of or in the immediate aftermath of the detective's promotion.*



## Part II: Formalizing the Collaboration (Optional Step)



### Quick Summary Points

- ✓ Identify and define partners/members and their roles
- ✓ Establish and define structural foundation
- ✓ Establish leadership
- ✓ Establish membership parameters
- ✓ Establish key supports

While formalizing the relationship is not a necessary step, and may not be appropriate for some collaborations, it offers a multitude of benefits.

Formalizing creates clear processes and roles to mitigate conflict and help everyone stay focused. It promotes sustainability if that is a desired element and can help in long-term or organizationally/logistically complex anti-trafficking efforts. At the same time, groups can create overly formal structures that stymie efforts. Finding

the right balance is part of the collaborative process. The following includes considerations, elements, and some questions to ask in formalizing collaborative efforts.



### A Note on Formalizing

- ✓ “Formalizing” refers to the simple actions of establishing some standard practices and creating some simple structures that support your work. Whether your collaborative group is comprised of multiple layers of structure with expansive goals or operates on more loose terms and comes together only in response to cases, you can take steps to formalize that will benefit in the long run.

A. **Identify and define partners/members and their roles:** In the initial stages of collaboration, groups begin building effective working relationships by getting to know more about what an individual or agency does. When a group is ready to formalize efforts, this relationship building expands to include specific and intentional conversations regarding the role of that individual or agency as part of the

collaborative. Often this information is memorialized in some written manner (see below, Signed Agreements). *Key considerations for defining roles include:*

- **What is their role generally?** Take some time for each person to explain what they or their organization do generally as a start. This gives context to why they are part of the group and helps build familiarity and trust.
- **Why are they a member of the collaboration?** Have each member describe and define why they are part of the group, with an emphasis on the expertise, skills and resources they bring to the table, and the assistance they may be seeking from others.
- **What role(s) do they play in the collaboration?** Have each participant define their role, specifically with respect to the work of the collaborative group. Note that an individual's role in general and their role as part of the collaborative effort can and are very likely different. In many cases a person's role as part of a collaborative effort is just a small part of larger roles they play in a community or agency.
- **What are their limits?** Equally important as knowing what a person or organization does and what they contribute to group efforts is knowing what they cannot do. Have members consider and share their limits. Limitations may exist due, for example, to capacities, resources, jurisdiction, expertise or operational capabilities.



## Where to Start

- ✓ This one is important, more so than probably any other one. Even if your group operates loosely, you should still take some time to understand what your partners can and cannot do, and what resources they bring to the response.



## Vignette

*Law enforcement wants guaranteed 24/7 response; services are understaffed and not paid to be on call 24/7. Law enforcement gets frustrated.*

*Lesson: If the service providers make clear when services are actually readily and easily available there will be no misunderstanding and associated frustration. In this situation, accurate information shared as part of the formalization will allow law enforcement to plan for situations when there may be a delay in accessing services for victim.*

- B. **Establish and define the group structure:** At this point you should have already discussed your setup with respect to the desired degree of formalization. Once the decision to formalize is made, the group should consider how it wants to structure efforts. Structure can help groups work efficiently, maximize efforts, create stability, and manage all the tasks and interests that need to be addressed. *Key considerations for establishing and defining structure include:*
- **How large is the group?** The size of the group can be a good indicator of how to structure the group. Groups that are too large run the risk of not getting things done.
  - **What is the scope of work/goals the group has?** The scope of work and the goals of the group also factor into the structure you create. Groups that have several distinct goals might consider creating committees for each goal.
  - **What is the best format to accomplish your goals and objectives?**
    - *Committees and subcommittees:* committees provide a way to accomplish a wide variety of tasks, manage group interest and time, and better coordinate and highlight individual skills and interests.
    - *Work Groups:* work groups are distinct from committees in that they are often task-specific and time limited.

C. **Establish leadership**: Leadership is more than who runs a meeting. Leadership sets the tone and the framework for the collaborative effort, and ultimately can help or hinder success. If the leadership isn't engaged, the members/partners often are not engaged. If leadership isn't action-oriented, then there likely won't be action resulting in better anti-trafficking efforts. Different groups use different models – some have a single leader; others share leadership between two or more individuals/agencies. *Key considerations for establishing leadership include:*

- **Decide on leadership model/setup.** Here it is important to choose a setup that works for the group. As you move from informal to formal it can be useful to observe who naturally takes up leadership roles. Note that the leadership setup might change over time based on the development and needs of the collaborative effort/group. Questions to consider:
  - (1) Will you use a single leader or co-leadership model?
  - (2) How will leadership be chosen?
  - (3) What qualifications do you want in the leadership roles?
  - (4) Are there agencies and/or individuals that have greater capacity for leadership than others?
  
- **Establish a process for selecting leadership.** Build in periodic review of your leadership. This could be in the form of term limits, or a simple check-in to see if the current leadership is still the right fit. Keep in mind that often, the needs of a group at the start differ from those of a well-established group, and thus require different leadership skills. Creating a process for selecting leadership and considering time limits creates opportunities for new ideas and helps mitigate the risk of power imbalances and inertia. If there is a pre-existing check-in period or term-limit a leadership change can happen as a matter of course and will not require unhappy members of the group to oust an ineffective leader, which could create a rift undermining the desired collaborative efforts.
  
- **Define the authority, roles and responsibilities of the leadership or leadership team.** Devoting time to discussing the leadership role provides clarity for the whole group and mitigates conflict in the long run. Take the time to engage the group in a discussion to establish the scope of authority for the leadership, including noting limits on authority. This is particularly important with

respect to decision making and public engagement. Two examples of areas to clarify are:

- (1) can the leadership make decisions for the group without input/approval?
- (2) can one member of the leadership team make public statements without prior discussion with other members of the leadership team and/or group?



- ✓ Keep in mind that leadership takes time, and anyone serving in a leadership role needs to be given some authority to act.
- ✓ Cultivate leadership within the collaborative if the effort is one that will be sustained over time.
- ✓ **Appointed & Figurehead Leaders:** Some collaborative efforts begin as a mandate from policy makers, and those groups often have appointed or figurehead leadership. A chairmanship for a task force, for example, may be a high-level political official who will not be available for day-to-day operational engagement of the work of the task force. In such circumstances it is helpful to keep in mind that you might also need a day-to-day leadership structure to ensure forward movement when the appointed/figurehead cannot be present or does not have sufficient time to devote to the day-to-day.

D. **Establish Membership parameters:** A collaborative effort is only as strong as its membership. For this reason, it is important to give due consideration to membership parameters. Some groups have an open-door policy, wherein any individual or agency that wants can be a member. Others have strict criteria in place. Establishing parameters will help manage expectations, identify gaps, and focus on who needs to be at the table to accomplish goals. As with other elements and considerations, membership parameters also help mitigate conflict. Likewise, membership parameters may evolve over time based on the needs of the group. *Key considerations when establishing membership parameters include:*

- **Will the group be open to anyone that is interested, or have a more limited scope?** Whether a group is open or more limited depends on the work being done. Often groups start with a more open setup and over time identify and define criteria for membership. Of course, much of the professional work against human trafficking – e.g. law enforcement – involves bringing specific areas of expertise together to organize and take official action against perpetrators.
- **What are the criteria and process for becoming a member?** Establishing criteria for membership and participation in the collaborative effort happens in most groups, across a spectrum of informal to formal. Criteria could be as simple as “only law enforcement,” or “only those directly involved in a human trafficking case.”
- **Are there guiding principles all members are expected to uphold?** Guiding principles help create a strong group culture and enhance your ability to work effectively. Common guiding principles for anti-trafficking collaborative efforts include commitments to being victim-centered and trauma-informed.
- **What are the expectations for members?** All participants in a collaborative effort should have a role to play, and many groups find it useful to establish a set of expectations around group participation to help manage the work and avoid inertia.
- **What actions will result in removal from the group if necessary?** While not ideal, there are circumstances where it might be necessary to remove someone from a collaborative effort. To avoid unnecessary conflict in such circumstances, many groups find it useful to outline in advance what sorts of actions would result in removal.



Universal  
Commitments:  
A “Quid Pro Quo”  
Membership Model

- ✓ Everyone can and should contribute something as a member of a collaborative effort. Some groups find it useful to implement a *quid pro quo* model, where members articulate specific commitments and/or all members agree to a set of universal commitments. This is especially valuable when some members do not have a role in the direct response.

**Quid pro quo examples**

- ✓ Group A agrees to organize one training per year for their field
- ✓ Group B agrees to provide space for one training event per year

**Universal commitment examples**

- ✓ All members agree to participate in one training event per year.
- ✓ All members commit to attending regular group meetings

- E. **Establish key supports**: Key supports are the backbone of any formalized collaboration. They include things such as protocols, meetings, and Memorandum of Understandings or other documents that memorialize commitments. These key supports set and help manage expectations and provide reference points to manage the work and mitigate conflict.



Where to Start:  
Key Supports

- ✓ With respect to collaborating in response to cases, one place to start is creating a simple flowchart of what that response looks like and how each component part can be contacted.

- **Signed Agreements:** A signed agreement supports collaborative efforts by memorializing commitments across a collaborative effort. It serves as a formal declaration of an intent to work together, outlines responsibilities and expectations, and helps create accountability.
- **Meetings:** Meetings support collaborative efforts by creating space for consistent interaction, and time for cultivation of group cohesion and work. Regular meetings are the basis for relationship building, training, exchange of ideas, problem solving, resolving conflicts, innovation, recovering from shortfalls, and celebrating successes.
- **Protocols:** Protocols support collaborative efforts by documenting and formalizing a range of activities for a group and creating consistency across the different parties. Protocols may include, but are not limited to, information exchange between group members, investigative and prosecutorial guidelines, victim response processes and standards, and conflict resolution.



## Where to Start: Protocols

- ✓ Any collaborative effort can have, and will benefit from, protocols. In this context protocols refers to standard practices and routines, things that reduce the need to make decisions during times of stress and help streamline efforts. Once your group has identified the need for a standard practice, the best place to start is simply writing down what you currently do or would do. From there, refining the protocol can happen through discussion with your partners, as well as through the experience of responding to cases and debriefing afterward to identify what worked well and what can be improved upon in the next response. Protocols do not need to be long, complex, or address every possible situation. Good protocols can be simple, direct, and easy for everyone to remember and understand. They can be very valuable in structuring and clarifying collaboration in law enforcement efforts addressing human trafficking cases and to organize support and care for victims/survivors.



## Part III: Managing the Day-to-Day



### Quick Summary Points

- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Information Sharing
- ✓ Buy-in & Participation
- ✓ Anticipated Challenges

Collaboration takes work, and that means managing the day-to-day aspects of the group's work including communication and information sharing. There are many several challenges you can anticipate encountering in day-to-day operations. *Key considerations for managing the day-to-day and anticipating challenges include:*

- A. **Communication:** Communication is the core of any collaborative group. Lack of communication sows confusion and conflict, and poor communication can have harmful impacts not only on group dynamics, but also investigations and victims. To avoid problems, groups can practice regular and open communication.
- B. **Information Sharing:** Sharing information is another core part of any collaborative effort. It is also a frequent source of conflict. Certain professions are often unable to share information without informed consent, and others might worry that sharing information will create risks for the case and/or victims. Because it is fraught it is important that your collaborative group take the time to discuss how, when, and what information will be shared, as well as both individual limits on sharing by members, and any limits the group might want to create together.



### Tip on Information Sharing - Confidentiality

- ✓ Managing information sharing should always take into consideration confidentiality and safety. Confidentiality is critical to the work of task forces but can be fraught with complications. It is important to have early and frequent conversations about confidentiality, legal and ethical requirements for each member, and processes for assessing need-to-know vs. want-to-know information.

C. **Buy-in and participation:** Many groups face challenges in obtaining buy-in from organizations and agencies that they feel could provide support. Similarly, many groups face challenges in maintaining active participation by group members. Having a clear purpose, meaningful and action-oriented goals and objectives, and clear action steps toward goals and objectives can help mitigate such challenges.

D. **Anticipated Challenges:** Across all collaborative efforts, there are a few issues that tend to be the most common cause of conflict. By anticipating these issues, you can be proactive in preventing challenges, or at least creating processes for handling the issues as they present. Moreover, being aware of trends in challenges within your group. When an issue presents, you can all take a step back, better understand what might be driving the issue, and use it as an opportunity to strengthen the collaboration by discussing the matter. *Key challenges to anticipate include:*

- **Philosophical Differences:** Your underlying philosophy informs many, if not all, of the actions you take. Consider different philosophies of the varied types of individuals/organizations that may be present in your collaborative effort: Criminal justice/system based/law and order (convict trafficker), Human rights (empower victim), Grassroots (make it work), Rescue mentality (doing things for victim). The best way to avoid conflict stemming from philosophical differences is open and frequent communication. Take the time to understand the perspective of

different partners and explain your perspective. Find the common ground, focus on common goals, and agree to disagree on certain things.



*In one collaborative group a victim was taken into custody as a material witness. From a law enforcement perspective this made sense – it provided a safe place for the victim to be and ensured their presence for interviews. This caused substantial conflict with service providers, who adhered to an empowerment philosophy and felt that such circumstances were detrimental to the victim. Ultimately the two groups were able to discuss their respective points of view and overcome the conflict. The law enforcement partner recognized the harm in holding the victim in jail, and the service provider partner explained the variety of ways they work with victims to support reporting to law enforcement and being available for interviews. This is an example of how, by constructively discussing philosophical difference, and what specific circumstances can help each group meet their objectives, you can work through apparent differences to strengthen overall collaborative work together and identify paths forward where your missions and/or objectives overlap and, ultimately, are shared.*

- **Assumptions:** Assumptions are a key cause of conflict in a collaborative group. Examples include assumptions about the readiness of a group to respond to a case of human trafficking, and assumptions about other members roles, work, and capacity.

**Safe Assumptions:**

- ✓ There is a lot we don't know
- ✓ We are better together
- ✓ Everyone can play a role
- ✓ We will make mistakes
- ✓ It may be messy

**Harmful Assumptions:**

- ✓ We know the answer
- ✓ One size fits all
- ✓ Existing system will work



## Vignette

*One collaborative group spent several months developing an intricate response protocol for cases of human trafficking, including places to call for emergency shelter. This protocol was shared with all members. Because so much effort went into it, and because it mirrored the protocol for similar crimes, everyone assumed they were ready for the first case. Unfortunately, this group forgot to train the staff at the emergency shelter locations on what an incoming referral for trafficking might look like, and how it might differ from their regular service population. When the first case presented and contacted the designated shelter they were denied.*

- **Ongoing Role Clarification:** Defining roles of members is an important part of formalizing collaborative efforts, but this is not a onetime action. In all groups, ongoing role clarification is important, and one of the most overlooked considerations. Many times members of a collaborative effort feel that they already know and understand the other roles, and/or that their role is understood by others. This is especially true as more time goes from the early days where roles were first articulated. In reality, most members only vaguely understand what their colleagues do and what their limits are. Thus, failure to define, clarify, and revisit roles can lead to a lot of unnecessary confusion and even conflict.



### 5 Reasons to Understand Roles and Responsibilities

1. Mitigates conflict within a collaborative effort
2. Helps avoid confusion for partners and outside stakeholders
3. Helps identify gaps in manpower and training
4. Helps individuals maintain role integrity
5. Helps manage expectations across the collaborative effort

## Part IV: Anticipating Cases



### Quick Summary Points

- ✓ What is your role in the response?
- ✓ Who else needs to be involved?
- ✓ Gathering your resources

Many collaborative groups in the anti-trafficking field begin in response to an actual case, with the members of the group dictated by investigative and victims' needs. As the case unfolds, those involved identify gaps in support and reach out to the community to fill those gaps, thus growing the collaborative work. *Key considerations for individuals and groups that come together specifically to respond to cases include:*

- A. **What is your role in responding to human trafficking?** This is a preliminary consideration, something to think about before you are involved in a group or receive notice of a case. Doing so will help you identify who else might be needed, and then take a few basic steps to ready yourself if a case comes up. Different people and

agencies play different roles in responding to human trafficking. Some are direct responders – they provide services to victims or are tasked with investigating crimes. Others play different roles, perhaps taking on policy change or doing fundraising to sustain anti-trafficking efforts. Thus, the first step in a collaborative case response is recognizing whether you are a direct responder or not.

- B. **Who else would need to be involved?** Recognizing that you are in a role that may encounter a human trafficking case and be asked to respond directly, the next step is to identify what other roles or people should be involved. Here it is useful to review resources in your community to identify those already involved in responding to human trafficking or those who hold similar roles in related matters.
- C. **Contact other people/Gather your resources:** To the extent practicable, you can reach out to the possible partners in advance and even arrange a meetup of several others that might play a part in responding. In doing so, you can learn more about their work and capacity to respond and share important information about contacting each other if a case arises.

## **Part V: Responding to Cases**

While establishing leadership and structure, defining roles, having regular communication, signing agreements and creating protocols can go a long way toward a smooth and effective response, real cases will serve as the ultimate test of collaboration and provide important feedback necessary to build and refine a strong collaborative effort. *Key considerations for collaboration when responding to a case:*

- A. **Deploying your collaborative response:** In some respects, no amount of preparation on paper or in discussions will truly prepare you to respond to a case. The difference between the ideal and reality can be vast. Groups will fare better if they keep this in mind as they prepare as well as during an actual case response

that would include victim services and investigation. *Some key considerations to keep in mind include:*

- **Recognize that things will not go smoothly:** Even the best formulated plans have hiccups, and your response plan will likely hit a few bumps and challenges. Issues will arise that were not fully anticipated. One of the best strategies you can take is to recognize this from the beginning and foster open communication and patience.
- **Plan alternatives and backup options if possible:** When resources and capacity allow, build-on back up options.
- **Communicate:** Communicate regularly to avoid or mitigate challenges. Give your partners advanced notice to the extent you are able. *Note* that this does not mean an information free-for-all, and your communication might not be about the case or the victims. In fact, there may be ethical or legal prohibitions against sharing certain pieces of information.

B. **Debriefing & Adapting**: Debriefing is critical if you want to improve your efforts. Many groups find it useful to debrief after the initial response, to identify ways they can improve and adapt their response for the next time. Debriefing also provides times to identify any gaps in the response, and to refine response protocols.



## Vignette

*One collaborative group convenes several times a year to debrief the cases they have responded to and how they can improve for future cases. They begin with each group member sharing one way they can improve. This sets an open and supportive tone. If each group critiques itself, there is less pointing of fingers and blame. Things will go wrong, but it is more important to be forward looking than backward blaming. Focus on the goal of most effectively responding to a case of human trafficking and realistic adjustments that can be made by each party to improve moving forward.*

C. **Noting your progress**: One of the best ways to build and maintain momentum is to recognize the progress your group makes, regardless of how small that might be. Milestones such as responding to your first case, bringing in a new partner to fill a gap, connecting a victim to services, and hosting a training for local stakeholders are just a few examples of times to celebrate your growth and success.

In the field of professional responses against human trafficking should be designed to result in meaningful collaborative and coordinated operational action against human trafficking.



## End Note

“Because the many forms of human trafficking range from small local cases to wide-ranging transnational cases conducted by organized criminal enterprises, effective meaningful collaboration among anti-trafficking actors in and out of governments is essential. Needed collaboration against human trafficking also must take many forms: it may be among colleagues within an office or within a Department or Ministry. It may be inter-agency, inter-governmental or between government and non-government civil society representatives. Highly organized, planned and orchestrated action provides the most promising opportunity for success, both in terms of investigating and prosecuting cases. But importantly, in the context of combatting human trafficking, even when the overall goals are relatively general, there should always be specific actions pursued together – purposefully coordinated and seamlessly communicated – that are designed to lead to achievement of positive impact.

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For more information or for technical assistance to improve the effective joint activities of your national or community interagency coordinating entities addressing human trafficking, please contact us at [info@WarnathGroup.com](mailto:info@WarnathGroup.com). To access additional practical tools and resources, visit our website at [www.WarnathGroup.com](http://www.WarnathGroup.com). You can find additional resources and material available to your initiatives – e.g. on organizing effective collaborative victim-centered referral procedures and mechanisms on a national or local levels -- at [www.NEXUSInstitute.net](http://www.NEXUSInstitute.net).

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