

TITLE Coordinated Response for Survivors of Trafficking (CReST)	POLICY NUMBER DCS 09-07	
RESPONSIBLE AREA Office of Accountability	EFFECTIVE DATE September 8, 2025	REVISION

## **I. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) is committed to a statewide Coordinated Response for Survivors of Trafficking (CReST) that emphasizes a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach. Because [A.R.S. § 8-201](#) defines abuse as including commercial sexual exploitation of a minor and child sex trafficking, the Department has the authority to arrange, provide, and coordinate programs and services such as prevention, intervention, or treatment for sexually exploited or trafficked children who are subject to a DCS report or are in the care, custody, and control of the Department.

To support this approach, the Department employs staff, including the statewide CReST Coordinators within the Office of Accountability to assist DCS Specialists in needs assessments, behavioral health interventions, documentation, service referrals, and case management for child victims, or those at risk of becoming, victims of sex trafficking.

## **II. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to staff assigned to CReST as well as all other DCS staff when working with trafficking victims, whether through intake, investigation, placement, ongoing, contracts, or other units.

## **III. AUTHORITY**

[A.R.S. § 8-457](#)

Service coordination function

<a href="#">A.R.S. § 13-3212</a>	Child sex trafficking; classification; increased punishment; definition
<a href="#">P.L. 106-386</a>	Trafficking Victims Protection Act
<a href="#">P.L. 114-22</a>	Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act
<a href="#">P.L. 113-183</a>	Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act
<a href="#">P.L. 115-123, Title VII, Part IV, Section 50741</a>	Family First Prevention Services Act

#### IV. DEFINITIONS

Commercial sexual act or exploitation: Any sex act, on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Confirmed victim: A youth who is confirmed through law enforcement and/or self-disclosure to a credible source that they are a victim of sex trafficking, or other significant evidence corroborates the existence of sex trafficking.

Department or DCS: The Arizona Department of Child Safety.

High Risk (may be used interchangeably with “At Risk”): A term applied to a youth who exhibits multiple endangering behaviors, e.g., frequent extended runaway episodes; presence of, or communication with, an older controlling person; substance use; gang involvement; association with others involved in trafficking, etc. but there is no indication that they have been trafficked.

Sex trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion or in which the person induced is under 18 years of age.

Survivor: As used in this policy, a person who has survived the ordeal and trauma of being sex trafficked. This term acknowledges the strength and courage needed to survive such a traumatic event.

Suspected victim: A youth who has not disclosed, nor has law enforcement confirmed, the existence of sex trafficking but considerable information is available that suggests trafficking, or a credible source provides evidence to conclude that sex trafficking has occurred.

Trauma-informed: Approaches delivered with an understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma. A trauma-informed approach recognizes signs of trauma in staff, clients, and others and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings to restore a survivor's feelings of safety, choice, and control.

Victim-centered approach: Placing the survivor's priorities, needs, and interests at the center of the work with the victim; providing nonjudgmental assistance, with an emphasis on client self-determination, where appropriate, and assisting victims in making informed choices; ensuring that restoring victims' feelings of safety and security are a priority and safeguarding against policies and practices that may inadvertently re-traumatize victims; ensuring that victims' rights, voices, and perspectives are incorporated when developing and implementing system- and community-based efforts that impact victims.

## **V. POLICY**

### **A. DCS Responsibilities**

The Department is committed to a multi-system approach to support survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking. This approach fosters collaboration, communication, and information sharing among multiple disciplines and across agencies that work together for service coordination and delivery. Systems include victim and support service providers, health and mental health care providers, law enforcement, juvenile justice, educators, and others who address the needs of victims. The Department shall:

1. ensure that sex trafficking survivors' immediate, short-term, and long-term needs are met through a coordinated effort. These needs may include but are not limited to:
  - a. comprehensive case management;
  - b. medical care;

- c. behavioral/mental health care;
  - d. substance abuse treatment/detox services;
  - e. safe housing/placement;
  - f. legal services;
  - g. counseling/therapy;
  - h. immigration services;
  - i. education;
  - j. community/culturally-specific support.
2. secure placements that have demonstrated the competencies to serve sex trafficked minors;
  3. facilitate trauma-informed, victim-centered, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate services directly or through referrals to outside agencies;
  4. mandate initial and ongoing training regarding working with sex trafficking for employees who provide services to children and families;
  5. report, to the maximum extent practicable, the number of children who have experienced sex trafficking to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS);
  6. maintain protocols to determine a child's experiences while missing from care, including screening to determine if they experienced sex trafficking.

#### B. CReST Coordinator Objectives

DCS CReST Coordinators serve as an integral point of contact to streamline access to services and resources, and to improve the management of cases involving youth who have experienced sex trafficking. The CReST Coordinator's

overall objectives include:

1. maintaining and building collaborative relationships with community partners and stakeholders such as runaway and homeless youth service providers, law enforcement, juvenile justice, courts, schools, medical and behavioral health providers, crime victim service providers, as well as community and faith-based organizations;
2. developing and maintaining on SharePoint an updated directory of contacts, resources, and service providers for survivors of trafficking as well as their caregivers;
3. providing technical assistance on addressing child sex trafficking as it pertains to the child welfare system to local partners as requested;
4. monitoring the effectiveness of department practices and procedures for identifying, documenting, and determining services for children who are at risk for, or who have experienced, sex trafficking, and updating them as needed in accordance with best practices;
5. tracking outcomes regarding identifying, assessing, and providing comprehensive services for sex trafficking survivors;
6. overseeing the implementation of a validated screening tool for children who are suspected, at risk, or confirmed to be victims of sex trafficking;
7. assisting in the development of training presentations for various audiences that serve trafficked youth; topics may include the definition of sex trafficking; risk factors; potential indicators and dynamics of trafficking; the neurobiology and impact of trauma; victim rights; evidence-informed interventions; and other pertinent topics;
8. supporting the field with their subject matter expertise as needed, including coordinating with community resources;
9. ensuring the maximum protection of privacy and confidentiality rights of information or records that is designated as confidential under state law.

## **VI. PROCEDURES**

#### A. CReST Coordinator Duties

For children who are ***NOT*** in the care, custody, and control of DCS, CReST Coordinators shall:

1. receive an email notification from a field supervisor and complete/update the Sex Trafficking Detail in Guardian;
2. when notified that a child has been removed from the home, the coordinator, as needed, emails the Mercy Care inbox at [CESC@MercyCareAZ.org](mailto:CESC@MercyCareAZ.org) and the System of Care Coordinator at [CHPSystemofCare@azdcs.gov](mailto:CHPSystemofCare@azdcs.gov).

For children who ***ARE*** in the care, custody, and control of DCS, CReST Coordinators shall:

1. notify the assigned DCS Specialist by email within two (2) business days that they are assigned to the case, introduce themselves, and describe the assistance they can provide;
2. coordinate services with the DCS Specialist and help them overcome obstacles to progress as needed;
3. record the case on a CReST internal tracking system within one (1) business day;
4. if an arrest has been made, or a criminal case is pending, make a referral to the Victim Services Unit;
5. assess immediate needs and review the relevant history, police reports, placement information, court reports, and status communications;
6. if a child is in crisis, assist with coordinating immediate behavioral health interventions; if the child is not in crisis, contact the DCS Specialist to confirm their stability and ask to be added to CFTs or other meetings;
7. complete Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT);
8. upload the results of the screening tool in the Sex Trafficking Detail tab on

the Person Record in Guardian;

9. update the Sex Trafficking Detail and add narrative of assessment results;
10. as needed, involve Mercy Care by emailing [CESC@MercyCareAZ.org](mailto:CESC@MercyCareAZ.org) and/or the System of Care Coordinator at [CHPSystemofCare@azdcs.gov](mailto:CHPSystemofCare@azdcs.gov);
11. continue to participate in activities to support the field, including attending Child and Family Team meetings and court hearings, and facilitating communication and planning with Placement Administration, behavioral health clinics, hospitals, law enforcement, Mercy Care, and other agencies identified in the Family Care Central;
12. periodically review assigned cases determine the need for future follow up.

## **VII. FORMS INDEX**

N/A