

***Journal of Global Social Work Practice, Volume 3, Number 1,  
May/June 2010***

## **An Effective Model of Case Management Collaboration for Victims of Human Trafficking**

Amy R. Siniscalchi, L.M.S.W.  
Director of Programs  
My Sisters' Place, Inc.

Bincy Jacob, B.A.  
Deputy Director of Policy and Training  
My Sisters' Place, Inc.

### **Abstract**

Increased attention has recently been placed on human trafficking occurring domestically in the United States. As a response, many agencies that traditionally do not serve trafficking victims are expanding their scope of services and stepping in to try to address victims' needs. Unfortunately, many providers do not understand the dynamics of human trafficking and do not modify case practice to better serve this population. Through the firsthand experience of a comprehensive domestic violence agency in Westchester County, New York, which has been serving trafficking victims for over 10 years, lessons are provided to improve case management practices for this population. Key focus areas include interagency collaboration, client identification and referral, specific needs of trafficking victims, and challenges arising from lack of training, minimal funding, and limited specialized services.

**Keywords:** human trafficking, trafficking, case management, victimization

### **Contents**

[Introduction: The Need for Case Management and Interagency Collaboration](#)

[Client Identification and Referral](#)

[Prioritizing and Addressing Client Needs](#)

[Case Management Model for Victims of Human Trafficking at My Sister's Place \(MSP\)](#)

[Trust-Building and Confidentiality](#)

[Replication](#)

[Challenges in Case Management and Service Provision](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[About the Authors](#)

## **Introduction: The Need for Case Management and Interagency Collaboration**

One of the most vulnerable populations which many social workers and case managers will work with is victims of human trafficking. The *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* defines human trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (United Nations, 2000, p. 2)

The physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as the isolation, deception, and coercion involved in these clients' lives often make for complex cases. Comprehensive case management can help address the myriad of safety and practical needs that victims may have, as well as examine the assistance needed for long term stabilization and self-sufficiency.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) defines case management as the "collaborative process of assessment, planning, and facilitation for options and services to meet an individual's complex needs" (NASW, 2005). Some of the broad goals of case management include:

- enhancing developmental, problem-solving, and coping capacities of clients
- creating and promoting the effective and humane operation of systems that provide resources and services to people
- linking people with systems that provide them with resources, services, and opportunities
- improving the scope and capacity of the delivery system
- contributing to the development and improvement of social policy (NASW, 1992)

Although the problem of human trafficking in the United States is not new, case management with victims has been an emergent area of practice for many types of social service providers over the past decade or so. While some providers have received funding to establish programs dedicated solely to working with trafficking victims, many have not. Yet, since many organizations' missions and core values involve working to fight social injustice and advance human rights, these agencies have felt compelled to provide direct assistance to trafficking victims. The various types of social service agencies, as well as faith-based organizations, which may be working with trafficking victims include those that work with victims of domestic violence; immigrant and refugee populations; rape and sexual assault victims; troubled youth; low income individuals, homeless or other displaced adults and youth; and crime victims.

My Sisters' Place, Inc. (MSP) has been providing comprehensive case management and support services since 1978 to adults and children who have been victimized by domestic violence. MSP is located just north of New York City in Westchester County, NY. Each year, MSP serves approximately 3,000 victims of domestic violence and their children, and provides training to over 8,000 community members and students. In addition, MSP has provided its shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of human trafficking since 2000. Between 2000 and 2007, when the state of New York passed its first anti-trafficking law, MSP had served approximately two to three victims of trafficking per year, or approximately 15-20 victims total. Since implementation of the law, MSP was named by New York as one of eight regional service

providers for human trafficking services, and numbers have been climbing as more law enforcement and service providers are trained in identifying victims. In 2009, MSP served 10 victims and provided technical assistance in dozens of more cases in and around the region.

The model of case management collaboration employed by MSP to serve victims of human trafficking has evolved as a result of lessons learned and best practices developed over a thirty-plus year history serving victims of domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence and human trafficking often experience similar types of abuse and injustices. These can include several of the following:

- being beaten or physically tortured, often repeatedly
- being isolated or locked in from the world
- being forced to work or have sex
- having their ID and legal documents taken
- having their money taken
- being threatened with further violence or death if they escaped or reported anything to the authorities
- being belittled/feeling reduced to nothing
- losing hope, and not knowing that there was anywhere to turn for help

While it is clear that there can be many overlapping kinds of abuse for both types of victims, MSP has also learned through attending trainings, and by gaining direct experience working with trafficking victims, that the dynamics and issues that emerge for these victims can be different than they are for domestic violence victims. Victims of trafficking may not share the same feelings towards their traffickers as domestic violence victims feel towards their abusive partners. While society's awareness of the dynamics of domestic violence has increased over the years, knowledge of human trafficking victimization is not nearly as widespread, which may lead to higher levels of judgment or stigmatization of these victims. Trafficking victims who have been involved in large, organized rings may experience levels of fear regarding threats made to themselves or their families that are often too much for these victims to bear and may ultimately lead them to return to the traffickers. Trafficking victims involved in federal and/or local investigations may become easily overwhelmed and increasingly anxious or fearful of the repercussions of their cooperation in the investigations. While these dynamics may also be true for victims of domestic violence, the authors have found that many times these are heightened or intensified for victims of trafficking.

The similarities, as well as the key differences, between the two victimization types have lead MSP to offer, for practice consideration, its model for case management collaboration for victims of human trafficking. The approach is guided by the voices of a diverse group of individuals that MSP has served and learned from over the last ten years, who have hailed from countries in South and Central America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and the United States. In addition, though MSP is a multi-service agency that is constantly honing the skills of its workers in terms of providing effective case management to both domestic violence and human trafficking victims, the agency simply can not offer every tool or resource needed to meet every victim's needs. The collaborative aspect of their case management means that the agency relies on both longstanding and developing relationships with social service, legal service, governmental, and law enforcement agencies who have partnered with MSP to identify victims of trafficking and address their range of needs.

With the potential of having multiple service providers involved in assisting trafficking victims, it is essential that case management for these victims takes into account the various areas of expertise that each agency offers, and maximizes these services for the benefit of the clients. Summers (2009) discusses the changing role that case managers have played throughout the history of case management, and how in the 1980's, case managers "took on greater responsibility for managing resources, finding innovative supports, and coordinating services"

(p. 40). Rather than only assisting clients with their presenting problems, case managers have been asked to take a more holistic view of their clients' needs and developing individualized service plans that take all of these needs into account (Summers, 2009, p. 40).

Paramount to achieving any case management goals with victims of human trafficking is the need to help them feel safe and to gain their trust. To this point, it is essential to consider the victim's comfort level in terms of the service provider(s) with which he or she would like to work; for example, victims may be working with a case manager from one agency, but prefer to work with an attorney at a different agency. The multitude of agencies that may be involved with these victims have a strong need to work together to help achieve these shared goals.

Perhaps a more useful definition of case management in work with victims of trafficking might be "a collaborative means of helping people who are disadvantaged or devalued in society, to discover their strengths and personal power, pursue their own objectives, and begin to confront the systems that oppress them, in order to redistribute power and thereby improve their life chances and quality of life" (Spindel, 2008, p.15). This definition, which involves partnership and empowerment so that victims can realize meaningful change, has been operational in the field of domestic violence for decades and is now informing our work in the area of human trafficking.

## **Client Identification and Referral**

Victims of human trafficking may come to the attention of a service provider in a variety of ways:

*The provider may be contacted by federal, state, or local law enforcement* in situations in which a potential sex or labor trafficking situation is being investigated, and victims have already been identified or are expected to be identified soon. Depending on whether the traffickers have been arrested or are in custody and/or the known level of organization and connectedness of the trafficking ring, identified victims' immediate safety needs may take priority over all other needs, as is often the case with victims of domestic violence. In some cases, the identified victims may have been arrested for prostitution or for working illegally in the U.S. In a recent case, a victim from Central America was arrested for falsifying documents and for identity theft, which she was forced to do by her trafficker. MSP provided technical assistance to the social service agency working with the victim and advised staff there to educate their local District Attorney's office about New York's human trafficking law. With the case manager's advocacy, the District Attorney's office dropped the charges against the victim and instead began an investigation focused on the trafficking.

Whether the trafficking victims that are referred by law enforcement are U.S. citizens or foreign-born persons, there may be varying levels of fear or distrust toward the officials who removed, or are attempting to remove, them from the trafficking situation. These feelings are often heightened when the victims are first arrested. The prevailing attitude toward law enforcement in many countries is that of fear. Therefore, for many foreign-born victims, there is intense doubt that law enforcement will actually help them, but rather further abuse or exploit them. In some situations, the traffickers are not immediately arrested or brought into custody. This may occur because they have not been located; they are out of the jurisdiction of the local law enforcement; or an immediate arrest will jeopardize a pending investigation or the safety of other victims. It is at this critical point that case managers often face the biggest obstacles to initial trust-building with victims who are referred by law enforcement and are experiencing this kind of anxiety, fear, or skepticism.

*The provider may be contacted by another social service provider* who does not provide direct services to trafficking victims, or needs to refer victims to services in a particular geographic region. The referring agency may have provided some level of service to victims, establishing a level of trust. This can help ease the facilitation of a referral to the partner agency, or, conversely, could make it more difficult if victims do not want to alter or terminate the

relationship they have with the referring agency. Another common example of a service provider referral is when the referring agency needs to relocate the victims for safety reasons, often to place them outside of the area where the trafficker's cohorts are likely to be located.

*The provider is contacted by a friend, family member, or other party concerned for a person possibly in a trafficking situation.* Sometimes friends, family members, or other community members have observed aspects of potential victims' lives that lead them to believe things are not quite right. Most often these referring sources may have a sense that the situation has illegal aspects to it, or may just know that a person is being harmed, abused, or exploited. MSP received a call last year from a woman working as a nanny who had met another female nanny at the local public library where they often took the children they were caring for during the day. The woman who called MSP expressed serious concern for her new friend, a young woman from Indonesia who had described to her an environment of exploitation and isolation by the parents who employed her in their home. They had apparently taken her passport and other important documents, paid her far below the standard rate for a nanny in the area, and would only allow her to visit the library, even in her "free" time.

Although the referring source may be able to provide a lot of information, one common barrier with this kind of referral is directly connecting service providers with the potential victims. This can occur because the potential victims may be afraid to leave the situation or access help, may have limited or no time when they can speak to a case manager, may not understand the dynamics of human trafficking, or may be minimizing or denying that they are, in fact, being victimized. Although MSP staff guided the caller in the above situation through ways that she could connect her friend directly to the agency for services, the potential victim began minimizing the seriousness of her situation and ultimately told her friend that she would soon be returning to Indonesia and did not need any services. Agencies working with domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse victims are most familiar with this kind of referral.

*The provider is already providing services to individuals who may later be identified as trafficking victims.* Sometimes individuals seek out needed services, such as emergency shelter, counseling, legal services, or public benefits advocacy; and through the course of the initial or ongoing assessment, the case managers may receive information that leads them to believe that these individuals could also be victims of trafficking. While the individuals seeking services may realize that they have been treated badly, they may not know what trafficking is or even that they have been victimized in this way. Or, as social workers at MSP have seen, victims may know they have been victimized, but for a multitude of reasons choose not to share this information.

For example, at MSP, workers have served women in the emergency shelters whose boyfriends or spouses have physically, sexually, or emotionally abused them. This was the case with 19 year-old Donna\*, a U.S. citizen who had been verbally tormented and physically battered by her boyfriend of two years. Through the case managers' ongoing assessment, which included questions about the exact nature of the different forms of abuse suffered, any work history, and workplace conditions, Donna slowly revealed that her boyfriend was also forcing or coercing her into sexual servitude with other men for his own profit. Donna's service plan was adjusted to help her define, identify, and understand that what she experienced was trafficking in addition to domestic violence.

If the trafficking victims come to the attention of the service provider through any of the above sources—namely, referrals from another provider; referrals from a family member, friend, or other party; or identification of clients already being served—the case manager should also create or shift service plan goals to include the possibility of law enforcement involvement. This will be further addressed in the next section on needs assessment and service planning.

## **Prioritizing and Addressing Client Needs**

When conducting an initial assessment of trafficking victims' needs, as is the case with other vulnerable populations and victim types, it is important for case managers to gather as much information on the victims and the circumstances involved in the trafficking. This information usually comes initially from the referring source, but can also come from other providers who may have come into contact with the victims, or from any law enforcement agency with knowledge of the situation. This source should also be asked if they have a sense of what the victims' most immediate needs are, so the worker can begin to consider which agency, or program within an agency, is the most appropriate point of entry for providing assistance.

It should, however, be noted that the victims may have a different perspective on what their own immediate needs are and, whenever possible, these needs should be addressed first to enhance the victims' safety, autonomy, and comfort, and to continue building trust. In fact, the guiding principles for ongoing client assessment seem to involve a fusion of two areas of intellectual tension, according to Dean & Poorvu (2008): a "collaborative effort in which the clients' views are primary (constructionist) [and] worker's expertise to guide the process (empiricist)." Although the authors point out that these tensions have existed since social work began as a profession, they have found in their work at MSP that both elements, in varying measure according to the individual circumstances, are essential to assessing and serving victims.

In some cases, there may not be enough time to speak with multiple sources to gather information prior to speaking directly with the victims, yet the case manager should minimally make efforts to find out what languages the victims speak to determine the need for interpretation. If the victims' first language is not English, all efforts should be made to locate an interpreter. Although a trained interpreter is ideal, the authors have found that staying connected to partner agencies within a wide-reaching geographic region has been helpful in locating someone who speaks the specific language required for initial client support. For example, one e-mail to MSP's provider listserv resulted in multiple offers to assist with a client who spoke Khmer, a language native to Cambodia that is not widely spoken in Westchester County, New York.

It is also important to consider the effect that a victim's specific cultural or religious background may have on the people he or she is willing to communicate with and what information the victim is likely to provide. Some victims may be more comfortable working with service providers with whom they have more in common, while other victims prefer to speak with a provider outside of their cultural, ethnic, or religious group for confidentiality or safety reasons. Case managers need to engage the victims' preferences in this way, and should either locate service providers that offer culturally specific services, or "adapt services to better meet the culturally unique needs of clients" in-house (NASW, 2001). Social workers and case managers must commit to a career-long process of learning about as many cultures' norms, traditions, and values as possible, since, as the authors have learned at MSP, trafficking victims often emerge from perhaps a rather surprising range of countries and cultures.

When the case manager is finally able to communicate with the victims, it is important to focus on the victims' needs rather than to attempt to complete a fact-finding investigation on the circumstances surrounding the trafficking which, in most circumstances, should be left to the law enforcement investigating the case or to the victim's attorney. However, specific facts about the trafficking situation may be extremely relevant to a case manager meeting the victims' immediate needs, in particular if they have urgent medical issues, such as acute injury, illness, or communicable disease. There is a high probability that these conditions are a result of the victims' sex or labor trafficking, and can be reversed or significantly mitigated if referrals to medical providers are made early.

An initial assessment would also identify victims' needs for immediate or alternative housing. If victims are seeing the case manager immediately after removal or departure from the trafficking situation, emergency shelter may be the most appropriate course of action. Victims may also

choose to utilize individuals or groups, often from a common culture or faith, that they are already connected to in the community for housing options. In other cases, victims have access to resources which allow them to seek their own housing. In these last two instances, the case manager should help clients explore any safety issues, such as the traffickers' knowledge of, or connection to, this support system, and develop a plan if an emergency arises.

If it is a large group of victims, it is important to make an individual assessment for each person. This is important in all areas of need, including mental health, housing, and safety. In one case that the authors provided assistance with, one client in a group of trafficking victims had severe mental health issues that went unaddressed for several months because an individual assessment and treatment plan had not been completed. It was only after the client's suicide attempt that the appropriate intervention was made and the client was supported. Clients have also reported that having individual relationships with their providers and being given the opportunity to make choices that do not relate to the group have helped them distance themselves from the group label they had been assigned, empowering them as they moved on to a new chapter in their lives.

If the victim is a minor, then there may be involvement and placement by the local Department of Social Services (DSS). If a minor victim first comes to the attention of the service provider, the provider should inform DSS so that appropriate custody or guardianship proceedings can occur. It should be noted that the service provider may have to conduct formal or informal training for their local DSS office on the dynamics of human trafficking so that minor victims' needs can be appropriately addressed.

The case manager should also inquire early in the assessment process whether victims have vulnerable family members they are concerned about, such as children, spouses, or elderly parents, and if so, what immediate concerns victims have about those individuals' safety or other needs. Assessing family members' needs can be easily overlooked in cases of trafficking, particularly since victims are often presented to the case manager alone. *It is important to recognize that for many victims the physical and emotional safety of their family members often comes before their own safety.* Family members in another country may also not be aware of victims' previous or current situations. In one example, a victim who always calls home at a particular time each day may be intent on continuing that pattern so that his or her family member is not alarmed. In another example, creating a physical safety plan for family members who were located in a south Asian country required case managers to reach out to law enforcement, governmental agencies, and similarly situated organizations in the home country. While this can be complicated and challenging, it is an important step in building trust and helping the victim feel comfortable and safe before they are able to make additional decisions for their future.

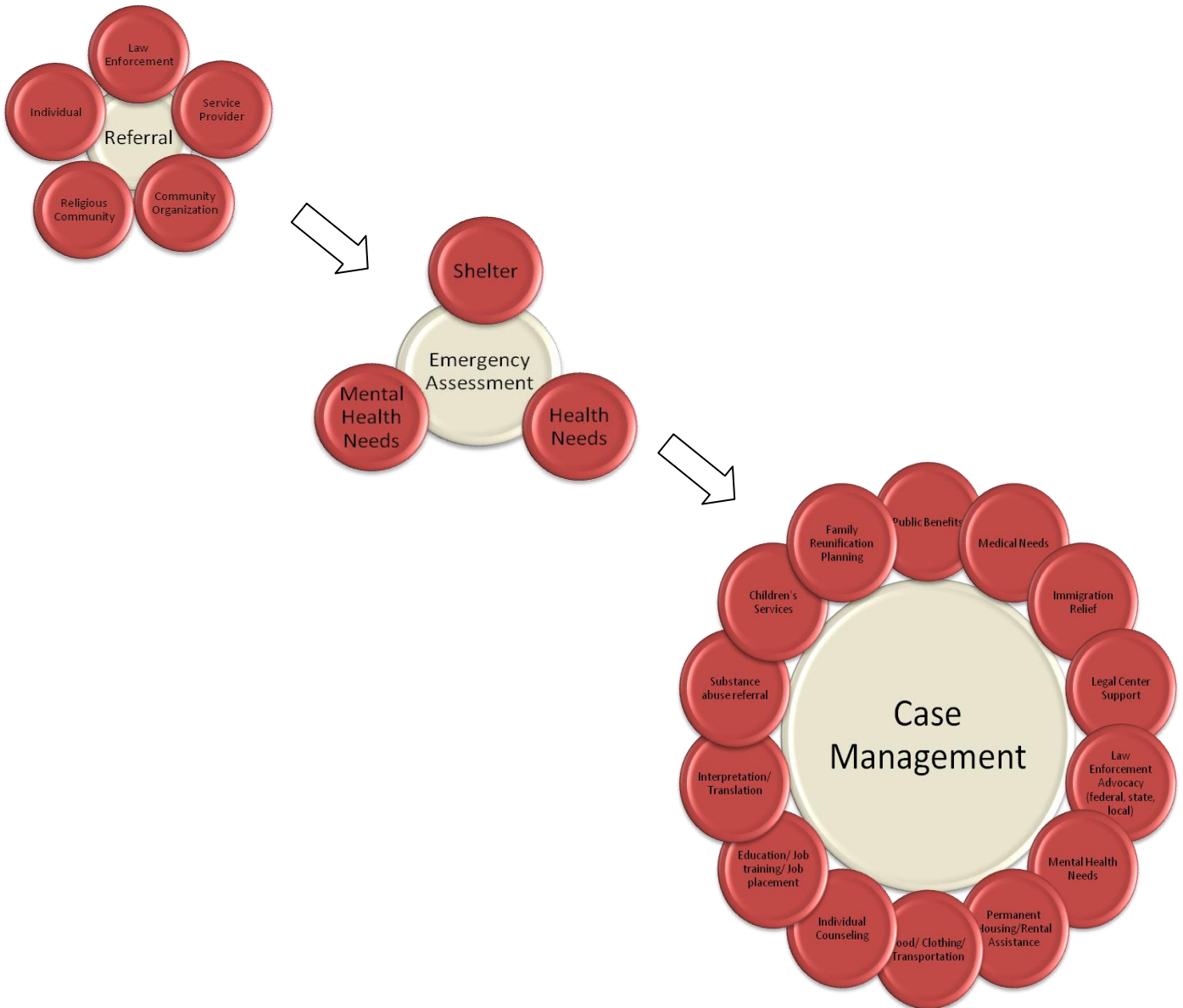
As is the practice at MSP, the case manager may want to make a referral early on in the assessment process to an attorney specializing in trafficking issues so the victims can obtain accurate information about their legal rights and relief options. This information may empower victims and equip them to make decisions about participating in investigations, obtaining immigration status, or accessing public benefits. Early involvement is also beneficial for clients who decide to participate in an investigation, as there may be opportunities to maximize law enforcement involvement in order to get key statements or necessary documents. It is highly advisable that in non-emergency situations with foreign-born clients, case managers should contact a trusted attorney prior to initiating federal law enforcement involvement, so as to avoid exposing their client to possible deportation.

After considering immediate medical, housing, and legal needs, case managers will find themselves supporting the victim with a range of additional needs which may include food, clothing, mental health assessment and treatment, public benefits advocacy, family law services, services for children, substance abuse treatment, job and life skills training, and finding employment. While not always seen as urgent by the case manager, it is often a

perceived lack of support in these areas that leave victims feeling vulnerable and potentially at risk of being re-victimized.

Case managers should be aware of which services can be provided in-house and which services are best provided by other specialized agencies. Ideally, the primary agency should have well-established relationships with a range of other providers so that services can be put into place quickly and seamlessly. MSP has used the following visual to guide their work with victims of trafficking:

### Case Management Model for Victims of Human Trafficking at My Sister's Place (MSP)



As this chart illustrates, even if victims are being served by a single agency, there are potentially dozens of people that they will encounter during their time. This can be challenging, particularly if there are multiple law enforcement agencies or attorneys who all hold an obligation of privilege



to the client. Case managers should make every effort to help clients understand the different roles and responsibilities that each member of the team holds. A study by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2007 shows that trafficking survivors have felt left out, uninformed, and in some cases deceived when information was not shared in a timely manner. Clients also reported that they felt their providers did not work well together, particularly when partners did not share information with each other. However, the same study goes on to state that with further support, clients reported feeling comfortable and safe with the service providers who were helping them (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2007).

As an example, several trafficking victims were brought into custody and placed into immigration detention as a result of a workplace raid. These survivors were then supported by an immigration attorney who was working on their T Visas as well as doing case management; federal public defenders assigned to their criminal case; local pro bono attorneys and law students representing them in immigration court; and a team of lawyers representing them in a civil case against the company that trafficked them. Adding to the confusion was the fact that, in some of the cases, one attorney represented the entire group, while in other cases each person was assigned separate counsel.

Case managers also need to familiarize themselves with the process in each of the legal, governmental, and service systems, as well as with the jargon used at each agency. Case managers need to understand, and be able to explain, systems of federal benefits; differences between federal certification and any state confirmation that may exist; T visa regulations; local public benefit options; investigative practices of local, state, and federal law enforcement; accessing medical and mental health service provision; and local employment skills development programs.

Finally, social workers and case managers must recognize that a needs assessment for trafficking victims, as for all vulnerable populations, should be an ongoing process that takes into account changes in circumstance for victims that would necessitate adjustments in service provision and/or additional referrals. This evaluation should be done consistently, and should be informed by the feedback that victims provide about the services they are using.

## **Trust-Building and Confidentiality**

The ability of a case manager to offer confidentiality to trafficking victims can be a tremendous help in gaining their trust. It is important for victims to understand the meaning of confidentiality, in their native language when possible, as the concept may be completely new to them. It is also key for victims to understand the possible exceptions to confidentiality, which may include potential harm to self or others, or an order of the court.

Trust is usually gained once victims get the sense that social workers/case managers are actually helping them. A strong confidentiality policy may enhance this feeling, particularly if victims are fearful of what might happen to themselves or their loved ones should certain information be disclosed to other parties. However, because there are certain protections and legal remedies that may only come when victims begin cooperating with law enforcement, it is also the role of the case manager to help foster trust-building between victims and federal, state, or local agencies.

Social workers at MSP have found that it often comforts victims to know that the agency already has positive working relationships with the law enforcement agencies involved in their case. In a county, such as Westchester, with 42 separate police departments, as well as state and county police, this is sometimes challenging, as a worker may not know every officer who may come across a trafficking victim. However, workers at MSP have participated in every training session in the county and region for the last two years, so that officers being trained on the subject are aware of the agency's services. MSP also works to maintain strong ties to staff in the local

District Attorney's office, which will often involve MSP social workers as soon as cases come to their attention.

It is also just as important to get to know the federal law enforcement officials in your area who will be working on trafficking cases. This includes staff in the U.S. Attorney's office and agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Labor, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Homeland Security (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), and the Department of Justice.

With respect to collaborating with law enforcement agencies, it is imperative that the case manager make it clear to law enforcement exactly what the role of the case manager is in a human trafficking case. The case manager is there to offer support services to victims, gain victims' trust, and serve as a liaison with law enforcement agencies on the case. While the case manager may share information with law enforcement, this is only with the victims' express signed consent. Many law enforcement agencies wrongly believe that a service provider or case manager brought into the picture will conduct part or most of the agency's investigation by speaking with victims, getting information, and turning it over to law enforcement. While case managers must be clear that they will not serve as de facto investigators, they can assist law enforcement by helping them understand appropriate and effective methods for interviewing victims.

## **Replication**

Through various committees and task forces, as well as by attending local and national trainings and conferences, MSP has learned that domestic violence agencies and other service providers around the U.S. have adopted many of the same best practices over the years, simply by sharing information with each other and by having trafficking victims explain what their needs have been and how they can be met. Though domestic violence and human trafficking laws vary from state to state, agencies have learned from each other the most effective ways to advocate for policy and social changes so that victims are treated fairly and have access to services, and so that perpetrators are held accountable.

Based on this, it would seem that replicating a collaborative model of case management for trafficking victims would be feasible within much of the U.S.; what is not as well known is the adaptability of this model in other countries around the world. Since human trafficking, similar to domestic violence, involves tactics of power and control, replication in parts of the world governed by strict laws and societal norms that include the sanctioned subjugation of the poor or lower classes, ethnic minorities, women, children, and/or the disabled may be extremely challenging. However, it is also important to note that many such countries have individuals and groups that are working within or, in some cases around, their own laws and norms in order to create social change and provide these vital services in their own ways.

## **Challenges in Case Management and Service Provision**

### *Training*

One of the primary challenges in providing services to victims of trafficking is initial client identification, which is widely acknowledged as an issue arising from a lack of sufficient training for both law enforcement and service providers. While trainings in the region of Westchester County have been well attended, MSP has only reached a fraction of the personnel who may come into contact with trafficking victims.

Law enforcement training is also vital in providing coordinated services to clients beyond the initial identification period. Officers and prosecutors who are trained in the dynamics of human trafficking will be able to understand the intricacies of the federal, state, and local systems; work

with service providers in obtaining necessary documents for emergency support; and effectively navigate a complicated criminal justice, immigration, and legal system. This leads to better communication and services for the client.

In addition, many service providers are willing to assist the state agencies with local and regional trainings, but without dedicated funding, staff time and resources are limited. It is important to note that these are just examples of training challenges in a state that has an anti-trafficking law as well as some level of training by state officials. The challenges are certainly magnified for providers and law enforcement in states that are not similarly situated.

### *Funding*

While MSP receives federal and state funds that are helpful in providing some direct aid to victims and relief to our agency, these funds are also limited in amount, scope, and time. Although the agency soon hopes to be able to hire staff that is dedicated solely to working with trafficking victims, it has not yet been able to do so. There is a tremendous amount of coordination, direct service, follow up, and advocacy (including direct accompaniment) that goes into a single case, as well as participation in community training and outreach as mentioned earlier. When a single trafficking scenario yields multiple victims, the level of coordination, time, and resources needed goes up tremendously. In an agency with a different primary service population already facing high caseloads and limited resources, adding a new population with such urgent needs often proves to be extremely taxing. Currently, a variety of experienced staff serve as case managers on different cases. While challenging at times, this can also allow continuity for individual clients, experience and education for staff, and a distribution of workload.

There is also a lack of adequate direct funding for clients who are experiencing trafficking, especially during the pre-certification period. Foreign and domestic born clients also have varying challenges in qualifying for certain benefits; case managers evaluate the possibility of resources to support each person based on several individual differences and advocate for the best support possible.

### *Limited Specialized Services*

As mentioned earlier, while many types of service providers have begun to identify and provide services to adult and child victims of both sex and labor trafficking, only a small percentage of these providers have dedicated staffing or programming for working specifically with this population. While other types of providers have been resourceful and creative in adapting services typically offered to other primary populations to trafficking victims, there are times when available services fall short of meeting specialized needs.

For example, although MSP has housed many female victims of trafficking in its emergency shelters, the agency is not currently able to accommodate large groups of victims who may have escaped together, male victims, or unaccompanied children under the age of 16. In order to help individuals who fall into these categories, case managers work hard to identify other agencies and solutions that can help maintain safety and security for the victim. Additionally, although MSP is proud of the support it has provided over the years to victims of trafficking, shelters that are specifically designed with adult (female and male) and child victims of trafficking in mind would help address this gap in service.

Further, the support groups that take place within the residential shelters have been designed for victims of domestic violence and do not always address the experiences and feelings of the trafficking victims. Many of the domestic violence victims in these support groups discuss feelings of love for their abusers. This is not often a feeling that trafficking victims can relate to, as their traffickers often exploited them from an early point in their relationship, and did not show loving or caring behavior the way many abusive intimate partners do. One study also explains that a "Human Trafficking 101" course does not remedy this issue. Rather, clients who

were provided with ongoing training and technical assistance, one-to-one case management, and sensitivity to their cultural needs were much more likely to remain in the United States and assist law enforcement in prosecuting their case (Clawson et al., 2003).

Victims of trafficking in an emergency shelter may also require a longer length of stay due to the ongoing investigative nature of trafficking cases and long waits for federal processing and benefits. This can be a challenge in a domestic violence shelter, where individual state regulations limit the length of time that victims can stay. It is the hope of many workers that, as more service providers and law enforcement personnel are trained in proper identification of victims, additional funding to establish specialized services will become available.

## Conclusion

Case management and the provision of additional support services are indispensable parts of the whole package of assistance that trafficking victims need. As trafficking continues to emerge as a critical human rights issue, government agencies and service providers must be prepared to work together in a way that respects victims' wishes and achieves the common goals of safety and support. Collaborative efforts that embrace a social justice perspective are important, as these consider "the ways in which social forces and conditions constrain clients' lives and affect the ways we see them" (Dean & Poorvu, 2008). This involves a sensitivity to the social inequities and dynamics of power that are inherent in the lives of many vulnerable or oppressed populations, and also helps social workers gain awareness of their role and power in a helping relationship (Dean & Poorvu, 2008).

The U.S. government and the state of New York have made some major strides in working to protect and serve victims of sex and labor trafficking. Although, as mentioned, there needs to be more training for law enforcement around the issue, government agencies and service providers are faced with the classic dilemma of raising awareness and conducting outreach to a population without enough services in place to meet the resulting increased demand. While many groups are happy to see what has been historically an underground and hidden problem being brought out into the open, a greater amount of resources are required to help these victims and to keep the light shining on the issue.

\* Name changed to protect confidentiality of victim

## References

- Caliber. (2007). *Evaluation of comprehensive services for victims of human trafficking: Key findings and lessons learned*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218777.pdf>
- Clawson, H.J., Small, K.M., Go, E.S., Myles, B.W. (2003). *Needs assessment for service providers and trafficking victims*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/202469.pdf>
- Dean, R.G. & Poorvu, N.L. (2008). Assessment and formulation: A contemporary social work perspective. *Families in Society*, 89(4), 596-604.
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (1992). *NASW standards for social work case management*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/sw\\_case\\_mgmt.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/sw_case_mgmt.asp)
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2001). *NASW standards for cultural competence in social work practice*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/NASWCulturalStandards.pdf>

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2005). *NASW standards for social work practice in healthcare settings*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/NASWHealthCareStandards.pdf>

Spindel, P. (2008). *Case management from an empowerment perspective: A guide for health and human service professionals*. (1st Canadian ed.). Mississauga, Canada: Nu-Spin Publications.

Summers, N. (2008). *Fundamentals of case management practice: Skills for the human services*. (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

United Nations. (2000). *Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations convention against transnational organized crime*. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_%20traff\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf)

## Acknowledgements

On behalf of My Sisters' Place, we would like to thank the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services, the Somaly Mam Foundation, and our corporate partner LexisNexis for providing funding and technical support in our work with victims of human trafficking. We thank R. Anna Hayward, MSW, Ph.D., for providing guidance and research assistance for this article, and we would also like to acknowledge the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice for all they have taught us in standing up for workers' rights. Very special thanks go to the staff of My Sisters' Place, whose passion, hard work, and commitment to serving victims of domestic violence and now human trafficking is, in our admittedly biased opinions, unparalleled. Lastly, we would like to extend our deepest appreciation to the many survivors of trafficking whose stories and acts of courage inform our work and inspire us every day.

## About the Authors

**Amy R. Siniscalchi**, L.M.S.W. has worked in the fields of domestic violence, trauma, and child abuse for over thirteen years and joined My Sisters' Place (MSP) in 2004. As the Director of Programs, Siniscalchi oversees the agency's counseling, shelter, and outreach programs. She leads the agency's efforts to address the needs of victims of trafficking, and was instrumental in securing initial funding to support MSP's work. In addition, Siniscalchi is a member of the service provider advisory committee for New York State's Interagency Taskforce on Responding to Human Trafficking, and serves as vice president of the board of directors for the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV). She received her B.A. in sociology from Vassar College and her MSW from Hunter College.

**Bincy Jacob**, B.A. joined My Sisters' Place (MSP) in 2006, after years of experience in New York City's Administration for Children's Services and the New York City Police Department. She is a certified Federal Domestic Violence Law Enforcement trainer, and has trained thousands of people on topics in domestic violence, child welfare, and trafficking. Bincy has been volunteering for two years at the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, working with victims of human trafficking on legal, labor, and immigrant rights issues across the United States. She currently serves at MSP as the Deputy Director of Policy & Training, supervising training programs and supporting new agency initiatives. Bincy received her B.A. in sociology from the State University of New York at Albany.