

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

1350 Norris Road, Bakersfield, CA 93308
661.391.7500 - www.kernsheriff.org

DONNY YOUNGBLOOD
Sheriff - Coroner - Public Administrator



ISSUE: 25-31

TRAINING BULLETIN

DATE: August 14, 2025

California Assembly Bill 1874

In accordance with newly enacted legislation, all law enforcement agencies are required to establish and maintain written policies regarding interactions with survivors of human trafficking by no later than December 1, 2026. These policies must align with guidelines developed by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), which are set to be released by June 1, 2026.

Purpose:

This bulletin serves to inform law enforcement personnel of the key provisions outlined in the policy framework mandated by Welfare & Institutions (W&I) Code sections 23020, 23022, and 23024. The purpose of these provisions is to enhance survivor-centered responses, protect survivors' rights, and ensure appropriate referrals to support services.

Policy Requirements

Each law enforcement agency must develop and implement policies that include the following provisions:

1. Advocacy and Survivor Rights

- Officers must inform survivors of human trafficking that they have the right to have an advocate present during interviews, examinations, and proceedings.
- Officers must explain the benefits of advocate representation, including confidentiality, emotional support, and assistance in accessing legal and social resources.

2. Facilitating Advocacy Services

- If a survivor requests an advocate, officers must contact an appropriate organization, such as a rape crisis center or an immigrant services provider, to arrange for advocacy support.
- If a survivor declines advocacy services, officers must obtain a written waiver, ensuring the survivor is aware they can revoke the waiver and request an advocate at any time.

3. Referral to Support Services

- Officers must provide survivors with referrals to community organizations that specialize in human trafficking support, including those that offer services tailored to cultural background, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- Agencies must collaborate with community-based organizations to facilitate connections between survivors and county social services departments.

4. Standardized Waiver Development

- Each law enforcement agency must create a standardized written waiver of advocacy or use the waiver developed by the commission under W&I Code Section 23024.

Implementation and Compliance

- Law enforcement personnel must familiarize themselves with the established guidelines prior to the implementation deadline.
- Training sessions will be scheduled to ensure officers understand best practices for survivor interactions, advocacy facilitation, and referral procedures.
- Compliance with these requirements will be monitored to ensure survivor-centered approaches are effectively integrated into agency policies.

Next Steps

- Await the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training's official guidelines, set to be released no later than June 1, 2026.
- Develop and finalize written policies in alignment with these guidelines before December 1, 2026.
- Conduct training sessions for personnel on survivor interaction protocols and advocacy support procedures.

There is currently no section in the Field Patrol Manual providing guidance with how to interact with human trafficking victims or perform preliminary investigations of human trafficking. These investigations are difficult due to the relationship between the victim and abuser being different than many other types of investigations; due to conditioning from the abuser, the victim may be unlikely to disclose the abuse due to fear of retaliatory physical abuse, monetary punishment, losing access to their children, or even have a feeling of betrayal due to having an emotional bond with the abuser. The victim may deny being a victim of human trafficking altogether, downplay the situation, or frame the situation as domestic violence. These obstacles must be removed to ensure the safety of the victim and increase the rate of disclosure, allowing for further investigation to continue. However, the recommended best practice for achieving this goal is counterintuitive: offer and secure shelter and services before conducting any further investigation.

On a patrol level, you should do the following:

- 1) Upon identifying a **potential** human trafficking victim, attempt to interview them alone and outside of public view (where the abuser could be monitoring in secret). *Other human trafficking victims may also serve as abusers in some situations.*
- 2) Collect basic information regarding their situation. Avoid prying questions focused on confirming that they are human trafficking victims.
- 3) Inform the victim of your suspicion that they are a victim and offer to put them into contact with an advocate regardless of disclosure (do not attempt to confirm unless they willingly provide the information).
 - a. Explain that advocates are confidential and can assist in providing food, shelter, assistance with retraining orders, childcare, housing assistance, and other similar services.
 - i. If the victim believes that they are "in danger," shelter can immediately be provided for their protection (*this could be also accomplished if domestic violence is reported if they are hesitant to disclose human trafficking*). These shelters are specifically meant to protect victims, are confidential, and do not disclose their location to the public.
- 4) If a disclosure is made that they ARE human trafficking victims, you **SHALL** inform them of the right to have an advocate present prior to any further questioning and explain the benefits of having an advocate. If they waive the right to an advocate, you **SHALL** have the victim sign a waiver prior to continuing the interview.

- 5) The deputy **SHALL** provide referrals to organizations that provide services* (*There is no such pamphlet or referral form, so Deputies may refer to victims to the "Resources" and "Domestic Violence" sections of a Marsy's Card*).
- 6) Upon completion of your contact, send an e-mail to SVUCrimeInfo@KernSheriff.org briefly describing the contact, your suspicion that they are a victim of human trafficking, the victim's basic contact information, and case number.
- 7) Complete a detailed report including all relevant information.
- 8) SVU Detectives will follow up with the victim within three to seven days and attempt to gain further information.

Advocacy Waiver Forms and Human Trafficking Pamphlets are in the process of being created for circulation on patrol.

During the investigation, it is best practice to **NOT** seize the victim's phone or conduct other intrusive law enforcement action to further confirm they are victims during the first contact with the victim **UNLESS** other pertinent crimes are also being investigated.

To be clear, it is *absolutely legal* to seize a phone as evidence if the situation necessitates, however, it tends to reinforce the negative view of law enforcement the abuser has conditioned the victim to believe. By taking the phone during the first contact, the victim will be further isolated, less likely to accept services, and significantly less likely to disclose the abuse and cooperate with the investigation.

To contact an advocate, call The Open Door Network 24-hours Crisis Hotline at (661)327-1091. This telephone number is listed under the Domestic Violence portion of a Marsy's Card.

All staff of the Deputy Sheriff, Detentions Deputy, Park Ranger, and Community Service Technician ranks are required to review and acknowledge this training bulletin by **Friday, September 12, 2025.**