

Santa Monica City Attorney's Office to Launch Human Trafficking Awareness and Enforcement Project

September 14, 2016

Contact: Gary Rhoades, Deputy City Attorney (310-458-8336)

Following the Santa Monica City Council's passage of an anti-Human Trafficking resolution brought by Councilman Kevin McKeown on September 13, 2016, the Santa Monica City Attorney's Office (CAO) is implementing a Human Trafficking Awareness and Enforcement Project this month.

Now a \$9 billion industry, human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing criminal enterprises in the United States. Up to 17,500 victims are trafficked here every year with the County of Los Angeles being one of the top destinations. According to the state and federal laws, human trafficking victims include anyone who is coerced to engage in any activity and cannot leave—whether it is commercial sex, housework, farm work, construction, factory, retail, or restaurant work, or any other activity.

Sex workers make up the great majority of human trafficking victims and many of them are minors. For victims facing the fear and isolation that are endemic with human trafficking, a poster with information on trafficking and hotline resources can be a lifeline.

That's where the CAO's new project comes in. Deputy City Attorney Gary Rhoades stated that the CAO has been working with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Human Trafficking Bureau, the National Council of Jewish Women|Los Angeles, and City of Santa Monica's Commission on the Status of Women to develop an awareness and enforcement project to address the problem. According to Rhoades, the project will begin this month with the distribution in Santa Monica of a free tri-lingual (English, Spanish and Chinese) poster with national and California hotline information.

"In other jurisdictions, one effect of the hotline posters has been a 250 percent increase in calls from that city to the human trafficking hotline," said Rhoades. "We've put together a plan and a poster with the goal of reaching a similar increase in reporting."

A requirement for certain businesses to display human trafficking hotline resources was added to California law in 2013. These businesses include:

- Bars and nightclubs
- adult or sexually-oriented businesses
- primary airports
- intercity passenger rail stations or light rail stations
- bus stations

- truck stops
- hospital emergency rooms or urgent care centers
- privately operated job recruitment centers
- businesses or establishments offering massage or bodywork services for compensation

The CAO will begin mailing free copies of the hotline poster to these establishments this month along with a letter describing the legal obligations to display it. The CAO will work with the other agencies to monitor compliance, and it has also just joined the Los Angeles County Sheriff's multi-jurisdictional Human Trafficking Task Force.

The hotline numbers include the California Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) at 1-888-539-2373 and the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888. For more information, readers can also go to the CAO Consumer Protection Division's web page at smconsumer.org.