

# IMPACT REPORT 2022-2023



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
**SAFE CENTER**  
FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS  
EMPOWERING THE STATE

SUPPORT, ADVOCACY, FREEDOM, AND EMPOWERMENT CENTER



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## MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER AND CEO



In 2022 and 2023, the University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors expanded to meet growing demand for our services. Our comprehensive services and multidisciplinary team approach remains a unique model in Maryland for meeting human trafficking survivors' needs. I am in awe of the dedication and talent of our diverse staff and of the strength and resilience of the survivors we serve.

We continue to prioritize survivor engagement at the SAFE Center, ensuring that survivor feedback shapes our services. We have intensified our focus on labor trafficking not only in terms of the types of cases we handle, but also through our systemic approach to prevention and response. This involves spearheading the Maryland and Prince George's County Labor Trafficking committees and seeking to develop systemically focused policy initiatives. We have also deepened our focus on the prevention of child trafficking. As the regional navigator for Prince George's and Montgomery counties, we train youth-serving organizations on how to identify trafficking, conduct intakes, and provide services for youth referred to us. We are increasingly serving newly arrived immigrant youth, especially unaccompanied minors, and raising awareness about their vulnerability to trafficking.

Over the past two years, our collaborations in the community, with business partners, and with government agencies have strengthened our efforts in serving clients, empowering survivors, providing training, and implementing initiatives to prevent trafficking.

As we mark our eighth year since our founding, I want to extend my gratitude to all those who have contributed to our ability to provide comprehensive services for trafficking survivors in our region. We are especially grateful for the survivor voices that have informed this work as well as the ongoing contributions and generosity of the University of Maryland, Baltimore and University of Maryland, College Park, local partners, and our donors.

With gratitude,

Susan Esserman  
*Founder and CEO*

## MISSION

The University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors provides survivor-centered and trauma-informed services that empower trafficking survivors to heal and reclaim their lives. The SAFE Center aims to prevent trafficking and better serve survivors through research and policy advocacy.



**MORE THAN 400**

**TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS AND  
THEIR FAMILIES SERVED**

# TWO-YEAR RECAP

## Over the last two years, the SAFE Center:

- ▶ Provided free and confidential services for over 200 survivors of human trafficking and their families.
- ▶ Launched the nationwide rollout of a hospitality job training program for sex and labor trafficking survivors in collaboration with Marriott International and with support from the American Hotel and Lodging Association.
- ▶ Established a comprehensive human trafficking response and referral pathway in five units at the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center in partnership with University of Maryland Capital Region Health.
- ▶ Led human trafficking prevention programming in middle schools and high schools in Prince George's and Montgomery counties, reaching youth, parents, teachers, and staff.
- ▶ Worked with survivors to design community engagement programs and workshops where survivors can develop positive relationships, enhance life skills, and maintain healing processes.
- ▶ Developed and led a high-level program — Critical Updates: The Fight Against Human Trafficking, Federal and International — featuring leaders from across the U.S. government, international organizations, and the survivor community.
- ▶ Strengthened the local safety net for youth survivors of sex trafficking by serving as Regional Navigator in Prince George's and Montgomery counties.



## SOCIAL SERVICES | 2022-2023

Our Social Services team works with clients to create personalized service plans based on their self-determined needs and goals. Our case managers use their expertise in victim services to build supportive relationships with clients, offering safety planning, advocacy for public benefits, crisis response, and referrals to additional victim service programs and community support.



### Survivor Ambassadors Organize Food Drive

In July 2022, survivors, staff, and local business partners hosted a food drive benefiting over 60 SAFE Center clients and their families. The drive was the culmination of the seven-week Survivor Ambassador Internship program, developed and run by the Social Services and Economic Empowerment teams, which aims to help survivor leaders learn and hone marketable skills. During the course of the internship, participants are trained in research, project management, outreach, and public speaking, all while working on a capstone project that gives them the opportunity to use these new skills.

336

CRISIS INTERVENTIONS  
PERFORMED FOR  
62 CLIENTS



## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH | 2022-2023

Our Behavioral Health services aid clients in processing trauma in a safe environment. The focus of our services is stabilizing and reducing negative behavioral health symptoms following trafficking victimization. Our long-term clinical services target severe mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and complex trauma symptoms, employing tailored therapeutic approaches for each individual.



**826** COUNSELING SESSIONS  
PROVIDED



### Expanding Youth Prevention Efforts

Prevention social worker Tanejah Jones led the SAFE Center Behavioral Health team in region-wide prevention efforts in 2022 and 2023, focusing on student safety and mental well-being through school visits, youth training, and peer leadership programs to promote awareness, services, and prevention of human trafficking. Prevention outreach events aim to teach students, parents, teachers, and administrators across Prince George's and Montgomery counties to recognize trafficking indicators.

**3,344**

**STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND  
EDUCATORS RECEIVED  
PREVENTION TRAININGS**



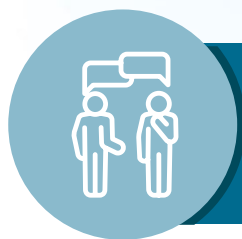
*You have made me feel safe and provided the environment to talk about the trauma I experienced. Instead of avoiding the hard topics, you made me embrace and own them, and that has helped me a lot.*

— BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLIENT



## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT | 2022-2023

Our Economic Empowerment program provides clients with career-focused training and resources. Aligned with clients' goals, the Economic Empowerment program facilitates educational opportunities, vocational training, and job readiness services. This innovative program also offers clients hospitality training, tax preparation, survivor leadership, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) software, paid internships, and access to technology.



**431**

**HOURS OF SERVICE  
PROVISION AND CLIENT  
INTERACTION**

### **SAFE Center, Marriott, and American Hotel and Lodging Association Foundation Roll Out National Survivor Hospitality Training**

The Futures in Training (FiT) curriculum, developed by Marriott International and the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, is aimed at empowering survivors of human trafficking who are interested in hospitality careers. It previously was piloted by the SAFE Center and three other service providers across three cities, and, since July 2023, we have worked closely with Marriott and the American Hotel and Lodging Association Foundation to expand to 11 metropolitan areas in the United States, training up to 150 survivors by July 2024 and building connections between hospitality businesses and participating agencies to support employability goals.

**228**

**PARTICIPANTS IN THE  
HOSPITALITY TRAINING  
PROGRAM**



*Without the initial help from the SAFE Center, I wouldn't have been able to get the internship in the first place, and the internship is what helped me land a position in the company. The SAFE Center helped me out tremendously, and I'm very grateful for them.*

— SAFE CENTER CLIENT



## LEGAL SERVICES | 2022-2023

Our in-house immigration practice includes representation before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Immigration Court; petitions for T and U visas, asylum or withholding of removal, and Special Immigrant Juvenile status; law enforcement advocacy in requesting continued presence, deferred action, and advanced parole; adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident; and naturalization/U.S. citizenship. We have a network of pro bono and low bono attorneys in Maryland to help our clients with legal matters that we do not provide in-house, such as worker compensation claims, custody disputes, tax-related questions, landlord-tenant issues, consumer debt, criminal justice, and other matters.



### Legal Team Welcomes Newcomers at Bienvenidos Resource Fair

In 2023, our legal team participated in the Bienvenidos Resource Fair, where they provided information to community members about the services we offer. During the event, SAFE Center lawyers met with non-citizens, offering assistance with their immigration cases and connecting them with local immigration nonprofits. Through involvement in events like the resource fair, the center continues to strengthen our ties with the Montgomery County community and beyond, ensuring that survivors of human trafficking receive the support and resources they need to thrive.

*This is priceless — to see the results of your work. Thanks to God and you [for] putting [my sister] on her path. I admire your intelligence and professionalism as a lawyer.*

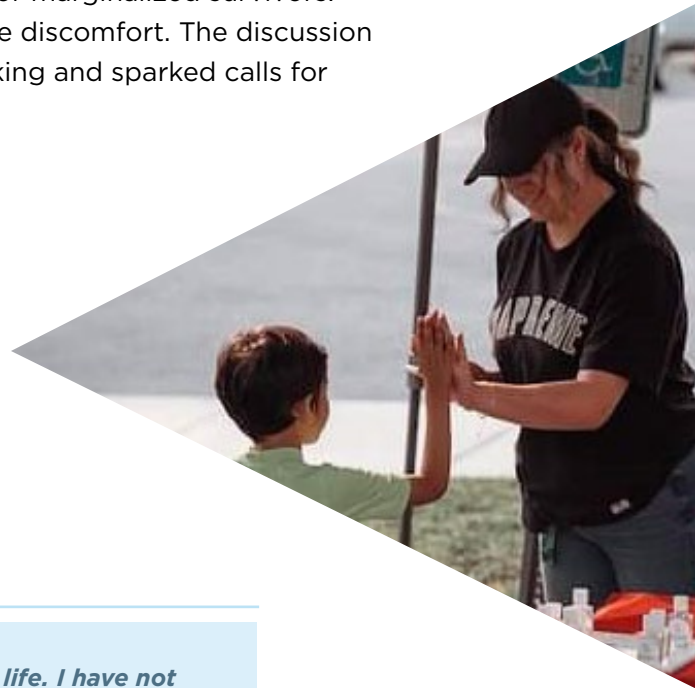
— RELATIVE OF SAFE CENTER CLIENT

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | 2022-2023

Our staff members regularly deliver trainings and panel presentations on sex trafficking, labor trafficking, trauma, and mental health therapy techniques to raise awareness about trafficking among social workers, lawyers, medical professionals, faith communities, school counselors, foreign embassy officials, university students, and community members.

## Race and Equity in Health Care Panel

In 2022, the SAFE Center collaborated with HEAL Trafficking and the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center to host a panel discussing race, trafficking, and health equity. Experts such as Jatnna Gomez, SAFE Center Director of Equity and Community Partnerships, emphasized the links among trafficking, migration, race, gender, and health equity, stressing the importance of intersectionality. They highlighted how medical racism and biases limit access to care, particularly for marginalized survivors. Attendees were urged to confront racism and sexism despite discomfort. The discussion underscored the need for a holistic understanding of trafficking and sparked calls for action to address systemic barriers to care.



“

*In a few words, [the SAFE Center] has saved my life. I have not only received legal help, but also mental health, education, rental assistance, empowerment workshops, English classes, financial assistance, and food assistance for over two years. One of my biggest goals has been to adjust my status in this country, and it has become a reality.*

— BLANCA, SAFE CENTER CLIENT

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## OUR SUPPORTERS | 2022-2023

We express our heartfelt thanks for each donor who has contributed to our mission. Our efforts would not have been possible without the financial contributions made by these public and private funders, and we are grateful for their commitment to partnering with us as we strive to support human trafficking survivors in reclaiming their lives.

### PUBLIC FUNDERS

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University of Maryland Strategic Partnership:  
*MPowering the State*  
U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims  
of Crime

Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention  
and Policy  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County

### PRIVATE FUNDERS

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#### ***Foundations and Organizations***

AHLA (American Hospitality and Lodging  
Association) Foundation  
American Gaming Association  
David and Mikel Blair Family Foundation  
Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation  
Esserman Family Foundation, Inc.  
Greater Suburban Maryland Chapter, Jack and  
Jill of America

Greater Washington Community Foundation  
Marriott International, Inc.  
Patuxent Republican Women  
Salesforce, Inc.  
Steptoe Foundation  
University Christian Church  
University Park Woman's Club

#### ***Individuals***

Amy Abramson  
Joseph and Lorraine Ardito  
Erna Arnesen  
David and Deborah Astrove  
Brigitte Bard  
Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky and  
Edward Cohen  
Brigida Benitez  
Sherry and David Berz  
Theodore (Trey) and Megan Blanchard  
Michael Boucher

Sonya E. Bowen  
Florence Burke  
Christine Carnavos  
Huihong Chen  
Sara Cochran  
Barbara and Chris Creed  
Merlie Deynes Figueroa  
Dr. Laura Esserman and Michael Endicott  
Dr. Lisa Esserman and Dr. Harris I. Goldberg  
Susan G. Esserman and Andrew Marks  
Aloysius and Sharese Essien

## OUR SUPPORTERS | 2022-2023, CONT.

Amanda and Andrew Faigen  
Vince and Susan (Kris) Falcone  
Stephen Fennell and Barbara Smith  
Douglas and Suzanne Firstenberg  
Barbara and David Garlock  
Melissa Garner  
Dr. Mamunul Haque  
Stacie Hartman  
Nancy Hendry and William Baer  
Matthew Heyman and Noella Ronald-Heyman  
Kathryn and Gary Horlick  
Antonia Ianniello and George Chuzi  
Vicki Jackson and Robert Taylor  
Cathy and Mark Knepper  
Philippe Laban  
Suzanne A. Lebold  
June Linowitz  
Susan Liss and Rabbi Fred Reiner  
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James and Mary Rocap  
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Mary Rutledge  
John and Lynn Sachs  
Raphael Sagalyn  
Barbara Salkin  
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Laurie Shahon  
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Kathie Whipple  
Helen and Charles (Sandy) Wilkes  
Karen Williamson



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