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Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence: Fact Sheet Explores Case Studies in the United States

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Human Trafficking Legal Center announces the release of a new fact sheet, "Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence."

Advocates have long understood that human trafficking frequently overlaps with domestic violence. As one trafficking survivor recently stated at a law enforcement forum, "Human trafficking is the most intense form of domestic violence you have ever seen."

The Human Trafficking Legal Center maintains comprehensive civil and criminal federal trafficking case databases. Staff attorneys searched the case databases for examples illustrating the links between these two crimes. The research showed that domestic violence can factor into both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Violence inflicted by family members and intimate partners can force victims into conditions of servitude, including forced labor, forced prostitution, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The case studies' central lesson is clear: understanding the connections between human trafficking and domestic violence is key to identifying appropriate criminal, civil, and immigration remedies.

Martina E. Vandenberg, an attorney and president of the Human Trafficking Legal Center said, "Trafficking victims controlled through domestic violence suffer tremendous harm. Bound by bonds of love and loyalty, trafficking victims held in domestic violence may find it more difficult to escape. They are doubly betrayed, trafficked by the very people they trusted most in the world."

Sarah Bessell, Human Trafficking Legal Center Staff Attorney and author of the Fact Sheet, said, "Advocates representing trafficking victims in immigration, civil, and criminal cases must understand these complex dynamics. These case studies have profound implications for lawyers in the anti-trafficking field. We must work in teams. Immigration attorneys need back-up from family law attorneys, experts on child custody, medical experts, and even tax attorneys."

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About the Human Trafficking Legal Center:

The Human Trafficking Legal Center (HT Legal) connects human trafficking survivors with highly-skilled pro bono attorneys nationwide, holding traffickers accountable for their crimes through civil litigation and criminal restitution. HT Legal, formerly HT Pro Bono, maintains databases of civil and criminal federal trafficking cases filed in the United States. The Human Trafficking Legal Center conducts in-depth research on human trafficking trends and victims' rights. For more information, please visit www.htlegalcenter.org.