



COVID-19 Effects on Human Trafficking Responses

From The Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force

COVID-19 Effects on Human Trafficking Responses

Overview

This report will discuss how members of the Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (BKHTTF) adjusted operations and services related to human trafficking due to the COVID-19 virus in New York City. Because there is extensive accessible information regarding the COVID-19 virus itself, this report will not include details regarding COVID-19. This report will focus on human trafficking resources, operational changes, and updates from members of the BKHTTF due to COVID-19.

Information contained in this report was retrieved from open source, publicly available information as well as from a BKHTTF sponsored webinar. The webinar took place on Thursday, April 2, 2020 via WebEx. BKHTTF members presented on operational and resource adjustments due to COVID-19. Presenters included the Kings County District Attorney's Office, Safe Horizon, Covenant House New York, Mayors Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence, the New York Police Department, New York State Department of Labor, Restore, and Sanctuary for Families. Fifty-seven other BKHTTF members attended the Webinar.

All updates provided in this report are subject to change given the unpredictable nature of COVID-19 crisis. Please refer to agency websites, social media accounts, and other announcements for the most up-to-date information.

Members of the BKHTTF

Resource and operational status reports from members of the BKHTTF will include those who are active members of BKHTTF, provided an update for this report, and/or had publicly available information regarding the effects of COVID-19. Active members are defined as those who participate and attend bi-monthly full task force meetings and/or bi-monthly subcommittee meetings. The list below are agencies that fit the above requirements, however it is not a complete list of the members within the BKHTTF.

Government Agencies

- Administration for Children's Services
- Kings County District Attorney's Office (KCDA)
- Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence (ENDGBV)
- New York Police Department (NYPD)
- New York State Department of Labor (DOL)
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)

Non-Profit Organizations and Service Providers

- Covenant House New York
- Garden of Hope
- Restore
- Safe Horizon
- Sanctuary for Families
- Womankind

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Kings County District Attorney's Office

"Keeping Brooklyn safe and strengthening community trust."¹

Overview

Kings County District Attorney's office (KCDA) is the Law Enforcement Co-Chair of the BKHTTF. During the COVID-19 crisis, KCDA continues to provide essential services necessary to keep Brooklyn safe while also adhering to New York State and New York City COVID-19 regulations.² District Attorney Eric Gonzalez released a public memo describing the new procedures the office is taking due to the COVID-19 threat. DA Gonzalez is exercising prosecutorial discretion by immediately declining to prosecute low-level offenses that do not jeopardize public safety.³

To protect staff members and the public from COVID-19, all non-essential staff are working remotely. Program related information and other resources relating to COVID-19 can be found at: <http://www.brooklynnda.org/2020/03/24/service-changes-and-resources-in-response-to-covid-19/>.

Human Trafficking Unit

The Human Trafficking Unit (HTU) continues to investigate and prepare criminal cases while staff members work remotely. The Assistant District Attorneys, paralegals, and other staff members continue to prioritize public safety and maintain a full caseload of human trafficking cases. All non-essential court proceedings have been adjourned until May and June (more details regarding court closures below.) All interviews with complainants and victims are being conducted via phone or video conferencing. Although most interactions with victims are now virtual, in the case of an emergency, the HTU would provide in-person staff accordingly. Further, all training and outreach is suspended until further notice.

For emergencies: call **911**

To report human trafficking, call the Human Trafficking Hotline: **(718) 250-2770**

Points of Contact

David Weiss
Deputy Chief
WeissD@BrooklynDA.org

Lauren Frey
Human Trafficking Task Force Coordinator
FreyL@BrooklynDA.org

DA's Action Center

The DA's Action Center is fully operational and available to assist the public with criminal justice matters. Complaints can be made on matters such as domestic violence, child abuse, fraud, human trafficking, illegal guns and drug activities. The DA Action Center Hotline is operational and 24/7: **(718) 250-2340**.

¹ "Home," KCDA, accessed April 9, 2020, <http://brooklynnda.org/>.

² Eric Gonzalez, "Statement from Brooklyn DA Eric Gonzalez Regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19)," accessed April 7, 2020. <http://www.brooklynnda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Statement-from-the-Brooklyn-DA%E2%80%99s-Office-regarding-the-Coronavirus-COVID-19.pdf>.

³ Ibid.

Victim Services

The Victim Services Unit (VSU) is fully operational, however all staff are working remotely. VSU continues to provide services to victims of all crimes, including human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault via virtual services, such as video conferencing and teleconferences.

Orders of Protection

All orders of protection issued by criminal and civil courts in New York City have been extended until the next court date. All appearances before a judge will be done via Skype or by phone. To file new temporary orders of protection, use the following information:

- Email NYFCApplications@nycourts.gov or call (646) 386-5299

Essential Court Proceeding

On March 22, 2020, Chief Administrative Judge of the Courts issued an Administrative order suspending certain legal matters. The AO/78/20 mandated that all filings by a county clerk or a court in any matter were to be terminated except those deemed as essential proceedings.⁴

Criminal Matters

The following legal proceedings are deemed essential proceedings will continue via virtual court appearance:

1. Arraignments
2. Bail applications, reviews and writs
3. Temporary orders of protection
4. Resentencing of retained and incarcerated defendants
5. Essential sex offender registration act (SORA) matters⁵

Effective April 13, 2020, the Kings Supreme Court will expand their virtual operations to include non-essential court appearances. For more information, contact KCDA directly.

⁴ New York Courts, "Administrative Order of the Chief Administrative Judge of the Courts," March 22, 2020. Accessed April 7, 2020. <https://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/pdf/AO-78-2020.pdf>.

⁵ Ibid.

Safe Horizon

“Safe Horizon’s mission is to provide support, prevent violence and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families and communities.”⁶

Overview

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, Safe Horizon is prioritizing the well-being and safety of clients and staff while also ensuring offices are virus free. Therefore, Safe Horizon has closed many physical sites, as to prevent the spread and contraction of COVID-19, while also ensuring virtual and telephonic services are available to clients. Although each program has different operational statuses, Safe Horizon reminds clients:

“You are not alone – We are here to help you.”⁷

Anti-Trafficking Program

The Service Provider Co-Chair of the BKHTTF remains operational, however all staff—including administrative, lawyers, and social workers—are working remotely. All in-person work has been moved to virtual contact via web-conferencing or teleconferencing. ATP continues to process Intakes and referrals through the ATP Intake Line.

- (718) 943-8652

To accommodate for the suspension of in-person meetings while still providing needed services to clients, ATP has migrated physical gift-card delivery to digital e-cards to provide financial assistance. ATP social workers continue to provide comprehensive case management, supportive counseling, and trauma-focused therapy to clients remotely. Additionally, ATP’s attorneys continue to provide legal assistance, including preparing and processing immigration relief applications.

Although direct service operations continue, all trainings and conferences have been canceled until further notice.

Trends Due to COVID-19 Crisis

ATP is experiencing previous clients, who may have previously been stable, return for assistance. The return of old clients may be due to work hours being reduced or being laid off and therefore are seeking financial assistance. Others are returning for rental assistance. Further, some are returning for mental and emotional support due to being laid off or possible eviction.

Another trend ATP is experiencing is that because of the “Stay at Home Order,” victims are having to remain in close quarters with their trafficker. Because of these unique circumstances, Safe Horizon’s Family Court staff continue to receive orders of protection requests in direct relation to reported instances of domestic violence and other types of abuses and victimization. These requests are being handled remotely.

⁶ “Home,” Safe Horizon, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://www.safehorizon.org/>.

⁷ Ibid.

24 Hour Hotlines, Helpline, and Safe Chat

- Domestic Violence Hotline: 1- 800-621-HOPE (4673)
- Rape and Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-212-227-3000
- SafeChat with an Advocate: visit [Safehorizon.org/SafeChat](https://www.safehorizon.org/SafeChat)

Essential Programs

- All Domestic Violence Shelters are operating. Please call our Domestic Violence Hotline.
 - 1- 800-621-HOPE (4673)
- All Streetwork Project locations for homeless youth are operational.
 - [Find Document Here](#)
- All Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are operational in all five boroughs.

Programs with Operational Adjustments

The list below includes programs that have either fully close or have moved offsite. Phone numbers and additional program information can be found at Safe Horizon's new COVID-19 Updates landing page: <https://www.safehorizon.org/emergency/>.

- All Family Court Programs are closed, however, staff are working remotely.
- All Criminal Court Programs are closed, however staff are working remotely.
- All Supervised Visitation Programs are closed.
- All Court Program Children's Centers are closed.
- The Domestic Violence Law Project is closed, however, staff are working remotely.
- The Immigration Law Project office is closed, however, staff are working remotely.
- Restitution sites are closed however, staff are working remotely.
- The Counseling Center office is closed, however, social workers are providing usual therapy and counseling service via virtual and telephonic services.
- The Community Program offices are closed however, staff are working remotely.

Administration for Children's Services

"The ACS Office of Child Trafficking Prevention & Policy works to raise awareness of trafficking and helps to identify appropriate services available to help youth at-risk and victims of commercial sexual exploitation and their families."⁸

Overview

During the current public health crisis, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) notes "the health and safety of children, families, and staff is our most important focus."⁹ ACS created a new landing page which details each program's response and operational status during the COVID-19 crisis:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/covid19.page>.

Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy

The Executive Director of the Office of Child Trafficking and Prevention provided the following update via email correspondence:

During the current COVID environment, the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPPS) is operational and available for response to all inquiries, and for the provision of guidance, technical assistance, resource referrals and tattoo removal requests. Case consultation is available by telephone, and multi-disciplinary conference calls can be arranged. Although in-person trainings are currently on hold, OCTPP is available to participate in webinars and to provide training through available web-based environments.¹⁰

Points of Contact

- Selina Higgins, Executive Director Selina.higgins@acs.nyc.gov
- For Cases: Child.Trafficking@acs.nyc.gov
- For Child Trafficking Database: CTDB@acs.nyc.gov
- For Training Requests: Traffickingtraining@acs.nyc.gov
- For Child Tattoo Removal Requests: Child.tattoo.removal.@acs.nyc.gov
- For more information on the tattoo removal program:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGUMtzplo48>
- To Report Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: FGM@acs.nyc.gov

⁸ "About the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy," ACS, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/child-trafficking/aboutchildtrafficking.page>.

⁹ "Novel Coronavirus/COVID-19 General Information," ACS, accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/covid19.page>.

¹⁰ Selina Higgins, email correspondence, April 8, 2020.

Family Court

All New York City Family Courts are currently conducting virtual operations only until further notice. The Chief Administrative Judge of Courts issued Administrative Order AO/78/20 to immediately suspend all non-essential filings in all New York City Courts.¹¹ The Court identified the following procedures as essential Family Court proceedings and therefore exempt from the suspension:

- Child protection intake cases involving removal applications
- Newly filed juvenile delinquency intake cases involving remand placement applications, or modification thereof
- Emergency family offense petitions/ temporary orders of protection
- Orders to show cause
- Stipulations on Submission¹²

Information regarding filing legal papers during the COVID-19 crisis can be found on ACS's website: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/covid19.page>.

Office of Advocacy

The ACS Office of Advocacy remains operational however, staff is communicating with clients via phone and email. The Office of Advocacy continues to provide information concerning parents, youth, foster parents, and others affected by the child welfare system juvenile justice system and other ACS services. Below is the contact information for the Office of Advocacy:

- Helpline: (212) 676-9421
- Incarcerated parents: (212) 619-1309 or (212) 341-3322
- Teletype for the hearing impaired: (212) 442-1447

Casework

On the ACS COVID-19 landing page, ACS provides guidance for various ACS and contracted provider agency staff, which includes:

- Family Services Units
- Foster Care
- Prevention Providers
- Home and Community Health Care Workers

More information about each of these categories, as well as additional information about ACS guidance during COVID-19.

- [Find Document Here](#)

¹¹ New York Courts, "Administrative Order of the Chief Administrative Judge of the Courts," March 22, 2020. Accessed April 7, 2020. <https://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/pdf/AO-78-2020.pdf>.

¹² Ibid.

Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence

"The Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) develops policies and programs, provides training and prevention education, conducts research and evaluations, performs community outreach, and operates the New York City Family Justice Centers."¹³

Overview

The Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence (ENDGBV) adjusted its operational status to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to protect their families, staff, and clients. Given these adjustments, ENGBV developed a COVID-19 Update landing page regarding the status of various programs: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/get-help/covid-19-update.page>. Further ENDGBV will continue to update their website concerning Family Court operations.

Family Justice Centers

On March 17, 2020, all Family Justice Centers (FJC) closed their doors in response to COVID-19.¹⁴ However, FJC staff are available to provide direct services and assistance via phone. FJC staff are assisting clients with immediate safety planning, shelter assistance, mental health and counseling services, legal assistance, and community resources.

All FJC locations are available via phone Monday – Friday, from 9 am – 5 pm.

- NYC Family Justice Center, Bronx
(718) 508-1220
- NYC Family Justice Center, Brooklyn
(718) 250-5113
- NYC Family Justice Center, Manhattan
(212) 602-2800
- NYC Family Justice Center, Queens
(718) 575-4545
- NYC Family Justice Center, Staten Island
(718) 697-4300

When FJC staff are not available via phone (evenings and weekends) ENDGBV has other resources available to provide assistance.¹⁵

- NYC 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 621-4673
- NYC Well: (888) 692-9355

¹³ "About ENDGBV," NYC ENDGBV, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/about/about-endgbv.page>.

¹⁴ Saloni Sethi, BKHTTF Webinar, April 2, 2020.

¹⁵ "COVID-19 Update," NYC ENDGBV, accessed April 8, 2020. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/get-help/covid-19-update.page>.

Additional Resources

ENDGBV created a landing page on their website that lists various resources for survivors during COVID-19. Some of the resources include documents, phone numbers, infographics, and applications for various services during the COVID-19 crisis.

- [Find Document Here](#)

The resources include:

- Personal safety recommendations
- Food and cash assistance
- Housing assistance
- Health and mental health
- Employment and finances

The ENDGBV website also includes resources for different populations and organizations:

- Survivors with children
- Seniors
- Youth
- The community
- Domestic violence programs and non-profit organizations
- Volunteers¹⁶

Trends Due to COVID-19

Although operations have changed due to COVID-19, ENDGBV has identified some trends in providing care.

- Although vulnerability is heightened due to the “Stay at Home” order and other restrictions due to COVID-19, ENDGBV clients have the same needs as pre-COVID-19 crisis.
- Leadership is actively convening conference calls to promote resource sharing and ensure ENGBV can provide the best resources to those in need.¹⁷
- Staff members are adjusting the way they interact with clients due to restrictions from face-to-face contact. For example, staff members are having to rely on phone calls and texting rather than in-person meetings.
- Different technology opportunities are being used to coordinate services, provide direct services, and maintain operations than what was used prior to the COVID-19 crisis.
- Due to non-essential office closures, some staff have increased their interaction with clients. For example, civil legal attorneys and staff are unable to attend court proceedings due to various closures and thus have more time available for client work.¹⁸

Points of Contact

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Saloni Sethi
Director of Policy
ssethi@cityhall.nyc.gov

¹⁶ “Resources for Survivors During COVID-19,” NYC ENDGBV, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/get-help/resources-for-survivors-during-covid-19.page>.

¹⁷ Saloni Sethi, “BKHTTF Webinar,” April 2, 2020.

¹⁸ Hannah Pennington, “BKHTTF Webinar,” April 2, 2020.

New York Police Department

“The mission of the New York City Police Department is to enhance the quality of life in New York City by working in partnership with the community to enforce the law, preserve peace, protect the people, reduce fear, and maintain order.”¹⁹

Overview

The NYPD Human Trafficking Unit (HTU) has maintained operations during the COVID-19 crisis. The HTU continues to investigate cases, coordinate with victims, and assist in case preparations with district attorney’s offices.

For emergencies: call 911.

Human Trafficking Investigations

The HTU continues to investigate active and ongoing investigations. Detectives are actively interacting with victims associated with these cases and are maintaining contact via phone and electronic messaging. During emergencies, detectives can respond to crime scenes and conduct face-to-face interviews if necessary.²⁰

Points of Contact

Human Trafficking Hotline
(646) 610-7272

¹⁹ “Mission,” NYPD, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/about/about-nypd/mission.page>.

²⁰ LT. Amy Capogna, “BKHTTF Webinar,” April 2, 2020.

New York State Department of Labor

“The mission of the New York State Department of Labor is to protect workers, assist the unemployed and connect job seekers to jobs.”²¹

Overview

New York State Department of Labor (DOL) is continuing DOL Wage Investigations, as well as processing request for Supplement B certifications for U and T visas. Further, they are providing easier access to additional resources. The DOL website provides updated information regarding how to file various claims.²²

Unemployment Benefits

The Office of Unemployment Insurance recommends completing an online application to determine eligibility. The DOL Unemployment Insurance website is processing an unprecedented number of claims due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Unemployment Insurance Benefits

- The online application has an English and Spanish option. For new Unemployment Insurance claims, DOL has designated specific days to file based on the first letter of the applicant’s last name. Otherwise, claims may be filed Thursday – Sunday.
 - [Find Document Here](#)
- Unemployment Insurance Claimant Handbook: Available in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, and Spanish.
 - [Find Document Here](#)
- DOL has provided a “Facts and Questions” document regarding the new federal law that provides Unemployment assistance to workers impacted by COVID-19.
 - [Find Document Here](#)
- For employees who were paid off books or as an independent contractor: “It is against the law for any employer to force you to give up your rights to file for Unemployment Insurance benefits. No employer should tell you that you cannot claim benefits. Everyone has a right to file a claim. The Department of Labor will decide if you are eligible for benefits.” Refer to the below document on page 40 for additional information.
 - [Find Document here](#)
- For instances where wages and/or employers are missing from employee’s Monetary Benefit Determination notice, complete the Request for Reconsideration found in the NYS Department of Labor’s guide titled, *Unemployment Insurance: A Bridge to your Next Career*.
 - [Find Document here](#)
- Non. U.S. citizens may receive unemployment insurance if the employee meets the following criteria:
 - Were working legally when you lost your job
 - Are legally allowed to take a new job
 - Meet the other requirements for unemployment insurance

²¹ “About Us,” Department of Labor, accessed April 9, 2020. <https://www.labor.ny.gov/about/>.

²² “Home,” Department of Labor, accessed April 16, 2020. <https://www.labor.ny.gov/home/>.

- Note: immigrants working without legal permission cannot get unemployment benefits.²³

Paid Sick Leave for COVID-19

“In response to the COVID-19 in New York State, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has guaranteed workers job protection and financial compensation in the event they, or their minor dependent child, are subject to a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation issued by the state of New York, the Department of Health, local board of health, or any government entity duly authorized to issue such order due to COVID-19.”²⁴

Paid Sick Leave (PSL) applies to all employees, regardless of immigration status, who work for employers with 1-10 employees and made \$1 million or less in 2019 are only required to provide employees with unpaid sick days. If a worker is not eligible for PSL, they should consider Paid Family Leave.²⁵

- The new dedicated website provides resources for various categories of paid family leave and disability benefits
 - If You Are Quarantined Yourself
 - [Find Document Here](#)
 - If Your Minor Dependent Child is Quarantined
 - [Find Document Here](#)
 - If you have an eligible family member who contracts COVID-19
 - [Find Document Here](#)

NYS Workers’ Compensation Board’s Paid Family Leave

The New York State Workers’ Compensation Board provides other opportunities amid the COVID-19 crisis. Applies to employees who meet the eligibility criteria, regardless of immigration status. The website describes eligibility across employment category:

- Public Employees
- Self-Employed Individuals
- Independent Contractors
- Out of State Employee
- Part-time and Seasonal Employees
- Domestic Workers
- Farm Laborers
- Special Employment

Under the new COVID law an employee may also be able to take Paid Family Leave if they are under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation. If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 you may be able to take PFL for yourself if you’re under the mandatory or precautionary order.²⁶

- [Find Document Here](#)

²³ “Before you Apply for Unemployment: Frequently asked Questions,” DOL, accessed April 16, 2020. <https://labor.ny.gov/ui/claimantinfo/beforeyouapplyfaq.shtm>.

²⁴ “New Paid Leave for COVID-19,” NYS Worker’s Compensation Board, accessed April 7, 2020. <https://paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/covid19>.

²⁵ “New Paid Leave for COVID-19”, NYS Workers’ Compensation Board, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/covid19>.

²⁶ “Eligibility: Who is Eligible for Paid Family Leave?” NYS Workers’ Compensation Board, accessed April 7, 2020, <https://paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/eligibility>.

New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

“Empowering New Yorkers to improve their financial security and household stability in support of strong families and communities.”²⁷

Overview

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance created a landing page for all COVID-19 Resources offered by their office: <https://otda.ny.gov/COVID-19/>. On this webpage, they provide various documents for Supportive Housing, FEMA Disaster Grant information, and Temporary Assistance General Information System. The Temporary Assistance General Information System Messages are used to provide updates regarding OTDA program policy and procedures due to COVID-19. All messages can be found on the COVID-19 landing page.

Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking

Although physical OTDA offices are operating with essential staff only, the Response to Human Trafficking and Unaccompanied Minors Programs continue to work to protect victims of trafficking. Many of OTDA's providers are offering remote case management. For a full list of providers, visit the OTDA Human Trafficking landing page.

- [Find Document Here](#)

OTDA continues to process New York State Victim Confirmation Letters that assist adult and child victims of both sex and labor trafficking to access benefits statewide regardless of immigration status. To download a referral form, please visit: <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/bria/trafficking.asp>.

If assistance is needed to submit information electronically while remote, please contact the program manager.

Point of Contact

Nora Cronin
Program Manager
nora.cronin@otda.ny.gov

²⁷ “Mission and Vision,” NYSOTDA, accessed April 13, 2020.

Covenant House New York

“Our work is guided by a mission to serve youth with absolute respect and unconditional love... to help kids who are suffering... and to protect and safeguard all children in need.”²⁸

Overview

Covenant House has adjusted their operations within their residential facilities as well as administrative offices due to COVID-19. Covenant House has adjusted operations to ensure safety, security, and health amongst young people and staff members.²⁹ In direct response to the COVID-19 crisis, Covenant House New York has suspended new intakes at their Long Island safe home for survivors of trafficking. All other residential programs continue to intake clients when space is available.³⁰ Further, many staff members are working remotely. Resources for young people can be found at: <https://www.covenanthouse.org/>.

Residential Facilities

Unfortunately, Covenant House has experienced symptomatic and positive cases of COVID-19 amongst youth within their facilities. To protect clients and staff members, Covenant House facilities have adjusted various rooms and created quarantine areas for symptomatic individuals.³¹ In Newark, classrooms have been converted to house feverish young people. In Manhattan, the top floor, which was previously used for offices, has been converted into a wellness space for quarantined young people.³²

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, Covenant House has adjusted daily operations within the residential facilities. They have reduced the number of youth in each room to 2-3, depending on the size of the room, by converting some office space into residential bedrooms. They have closed the community lounge and are preventing clients from congregating in masses by ensuring they remain on their assigned floor. The Covenant House New York maintenance and facility staffs are performing additional daily cleaning and disinfecting common areas. Covenant House is providing facemasks to both youth and staff. They are being encouraged to wear them in public and common spaces.³³

The residential facilities are fully staffed with two staff members per floor to ensure safety and security of the residential clients. Direct services are still being provided at the facilities to serve the young people. Further, staff members have increased the number of activities in order to quell boredom and maintain a sense of normality, calm, and safety for the young people they serve.³⁴

During the intake process, staff from the Covenant House New York health center conduct a quick medical assessment to determine whether the youth should go to the quarantine floor or a regular residential floor. Residents must be cleared by staff from the health center before they can return from the quarantine area to a regular residential floor.

²⁸ “Mission and Principles,” Covenant House, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-charity>.

²⁹ Shanesha Joyner, BKHTTF Webinar, April 2, 2020.

³⁰ Jayne Biglesen, email correspondence, April 13, 2020.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Kevin Ryan, “COVID-19 Update on Fox News, Covenant House,” filmed April 3, 2020, Fox News, <https://youtu.be/CENm8DtsnxA>.

³³ Jayne Biglesen, email correspondence, April 13, 2020.

³⁴ Kevin Ryan, “COVID-19 Update on Fox News, Covenant House,” filmed April 3, 2020, Fox News, <https://youtu.be/CENm8DtsnxA>.

General Operations

Due to COVID-19, Covenant House has shifted many other general operations.

- Social workers are assigned to skeleton shifts where at least one social worker is onsite at the residential facilities while others are operating on-call hours. Social workers not onsite are providing direct services, including therapy, to clients via video chats and phone calls.
- Legal services for youth are being provided by phone.
- The health clinic is operational Monday – Friday from 8am – 5pm, with an on-call doctor on the weekend.
- All outreach programs have been canceled.³⁵

Challenges Due to COVID-19 Crisis

As the COVID-19 virus continues, Covenant House staff members are facing a handful of challenges as they continue to provide services to young people.

- Young people within the residential facilities continue to test positive for COVID-19.
- Survivors who were experiencing stabilization prior to the COVID-19 crisis are now facing destabilization due to job loss and change in school schedules
- Survivors are unable to continue in stabilization because resources becoming unavailable
 - For example, survivors cannot obtain an ID due to the Department of Motor Vehicle closures, but this is needed in order to apply for work.³⁶

Points of Contact

Covenant House New York
(212) 613-0300

³⁵ Kevin Ryan, “COVID-19 Update on Fox News, Covenant House,” filmed April 3, 2020, Fox News, <https://youtu.be/CENm8DtsnxA>.

³⁶ Jayne Bigelsen, BKHTTF Webinar, April 2, 2020.

Garden of Hope

“Garden of Hope dedicates itself to serving, caring, and rebuilding the lives of people who have been exposed to domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking; specifically targeting its services towards the growing Chinese communities in the NYC region”.³⁷

Overview

Garden of Hope has made updates to their operations in order to protect staff and clients due to the COVID-19 crisis. Below are programmatic updates:

- Garden of Hope has implemented telework capabilities to sustain services.
- There are no new procedures that are in place, other than service being provided through virtual means
- Garden of Hope continues to take new clients and new referrals for all services except shelter.
 - Contact Amy Dai
- The Garden of Hope helpline is available Monday – Friday from 9am to 5pm.
 - [1-877-990-8595](tel:1-877-990-8595)
- Garden of Hope is providing Transitional Housing and Emergency Funds to support eligible clients.³⁸

Points of Contact

Amy Dai
Human Trafficking Intervention Program
Amydai@gohny.org

³⁷ “Home,” Garden of Hope, accessed 4/10/2020, <https://gohny.org/>.

³⁸ Amy Dai, email communication, April 10, 2020.

Restore

“Our mission is to end sex trafficking in New York and restore the well-being and independence of foreign-national survivors.”³⁹

Overview

All staff except those operating the safe home are working remotely. Restore staff members continue to take intakes and the safe home is fully operational. Restore created various updates throughout their websites for each program: <https://restorenyc.org/>.

The Safehome

Although, the Safehome is currently at full capacity, Restore continues to process in-takes for the facility. There is a possibility of multiple discharges in the next few weeks, which would free up beds at the Safehome. Staff members are ensuring all residents are comfortable and supported.⁴⁰

Financial Resources

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, Restore currently has the capacity to assist clients financially. Restore is assisting previous clients who have been discharged from services, come back to receive assistance due to the COVID-19 crisis. Further, current and newer clients are now accessing financial benefits who, prior to COVID-19, were not. Restore has assisted over 30 people with lost wages and are continuing to accept referrals.⁴¹

Other Programs

Most Restore programs are operational, however are moving to a digital platform.

- Economic Empowerment program
 - Currently operational with all classes remote or one-on-one over the phone.⁴²
- Volunteer Opportunities
 - Due to COVID-19, Restore’s volunteer opportunities are limited.⁴³
- New Referrals
 - Restore is now accepting referrals of foreign nationals and domestic survivors of trafficking.
- Training and conferences
 - Restore’s training and conferences are now via web-based video platform. They have a list of webinars on their website: <https://restorenyc.org/stay-connected>.
- Restore Instagram LIVE
 - Staff members are updating the community on how they are adjusting to services due to COVID-19 every Friday at 1:00pm @restorenyc.

³⁹ “Home page,” Restore, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://restorenyc.org/>.

⁴⁰ Gabrielle Masih, “BKHTTF Webinar,” April 2, 2020.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Volunteer Opportunities,” Restore, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://restorenyc.org/volunteer>.

Points of Contact

Gabrielle Masih
Referral and Case Manager
gabrielle.masih@restorenyc.org

On-Call phone number
After hour emergencies
[\(917\) 688-5392](tel:(917)688-5392)

Sanctuary for Families

“Sanctuary for Families is New York’s leading service provider and advocate for survivors of domestic violence, sex trafficking, and related forms of gender violence.”⁴⁴

Overview

Sanctuary for Families continues to prioritize the health and safety of their clients and staff during the COVID-19 crisis.⁴⁵ All staff members are working remotely except for the essential staff at the shelter locations and crucial administrative staff. Sanctuary for Families’ hotlines are operational, including the anti-trafficking hotline. Depending on the program and staff capacity, Sanctuary for Families may be able to conduct an intake for some resource programs.⁴⁶ Sanctuary for Families created a landing page with resources to support survivors through the COVID-19 crisis: <https://sanctuaryforfamilies.org/coronavirus/>.

- Sanctuary for Families’ hotline is accessible from Monday – Friday from 9am – 5pm.
 - Call: (212) 349-6009

Anti-Trafficking Initiative

Sanctuary for Families’ Anti-Trafficking Initiative continues to serve victims of labor and sex trafficking through legal services, case management, and counseling. Their staff members are working remotely, but are meeting with clients if necessary, for their cases and well-being.

- Sanctuary for Families’ Anti-Trafficking hotline is accessible from Monday – Friday from 9am – 6pm.
 - Call: (347) 704-4500

EMPOWER Center is currently still providing services for people the sex trade and open for referrals. Services have moved remotely except for specific urgent medical needs per state guidelines. Please send all referrals to empower@sffny.org.

Resources for Survivors

Sanctuary for Families developed and published *A Guide for Survivors of Sex Trafficking During COVID-19*. The guide provides the following insights:

- Why COVID-19 might be triggering for survivors,
 - How COVID-19 mirrors different methods of psychological coercion traffickers may use
- [Find Document Here](#)

Sanctuary for Families has also created a document titled *Safety Planning During COVID-19: Tips from Survivors for Survivors*. This guide explains:

- the purpose of a safety plan
- how COVID-19 increases risk of harm

⁴⁴ “Home,” Sanctuary for Families, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://sanctuaryforfamilies.org/>.

⁴⁵ Hon. Judy H. Kluger, “An Update from Sanctuary for Families Regarding COVID-19,” Sanctuary for Families, March 13, 2020, <https://sanctuaryforfamilies.org/update-covid19/>.

⁴⁶ Yvonne Chen, “BKHTTF Webinar,” April 2, 2020.

- survivor-informed safety tips
- various resources available during the COVID-19 crisis.

[Find Document Here](#)

Shelter

Shelters remain fully operational with staff working onsite. Staff continue to provide case management, referrals for public assistance, completion of housing applications, and legal referrals. To protect staff and clients against COVID-19, Sanctuary for Families is distributing face masks, stockpiling food, and cleaning facilities frequently.⁴⁷

Economic Empowerment Program

Sanctuary for Families has distributed laptops and hotspots which allow survivors and participants of the Economic Empowerment Program to continue training remotely. Staff continue to provide crisis intervention to clients in need, as well as monitoring survivors in internships to ensure they are supported.

Challenges due to COVID-19 Crisis

While serving clients remotely and during the COVID-19 crisis, Sanctuary for Families has identified and experiences a few challenges.

- Sanctuary for Families operates a food pantry in their office. However, because the office is closed, clients are unable to access this resource.
- As client interaction moves to web-based technologies, texting, or phone calls, the length of time it takes to serve clients is increasing, compared to when staff meets in person with clients.
- Immigration legal cases are still moving forward, but difficulties arise with signatures and paperwork. Our staff are working incredibly hard to keep serving clients to the best of our abilities.

⁴⁷ Hon. Judy H. Kluger, "An Update from Sanctuary for Families Regarding COVID-19," Sanctuary for Families, March 13, 2020, <https://sanctuaryforfamilies.org/update-covid19/>.

Womankind

“Womankind works with survivors of gender-based violence to rise above trauma and build a path to healing. We bring critical resources and deep cultural competency to help Asian communities find refuge, recovery, and renewal.”⁴⁸

Overview

Womankind is prioritizing the health and safety of the community. To that end, Womankind has transitioned the delivery of all services to phone and email communications. They created a landing page on their website to update the community on the status of Womankind programs during the COVID-19 crisis: <https://www.iamwomankind.org/2020/03/16/covid19/>.

Status of All Programs

Womankind is exercising “continued vigilance in our sanitation and screening efforts,” for all programs, including residential facilities, community offices, and administrative offices. Since March 16, Womankind has adjusted the operational status of many programs to prioritize health and wellness of clients and staff members. Below is their list of adjustments:⁴⁹

- Womankind’s 24/7 emergency residences will remain staffed and emergency services will continue.
- Our 24/7 free multilingual Helpline [1-888-888-7702](tel:1-888-888-7702) will continue to operate as usual. Chat and text services are available in English and Chinese as well.
- Our three community offices in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens will be closed until further notice.
- For those seeking help for the first time, please call the helpline for details on available services.
- We encourage current survivors to contact their advocates directly with any questions or to schedule a call.
- We have cancelled all group activities until further notice including, but not limited to, Pathways to Healing, Later in Life groups, Support Groups, and Movies and Community.
- Our headquarters in Manhattan will remain closed during this time, and we encourage you to contact staff directly via email or phone.
- For active volunteers or those interested in volunteering, please do not hesitate to contact Tiffany Zayas, who is in charge of our volunteer program, at tzayas@iamwk.org for the latest updates on assignments and other needs.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “Home,” Womankind, accessed April 10, 2020, iamwomankind.org.

⁴⁹ “COVID-19, Important Announcements from Womankind,” Womankind, updated March 16, 2020, <https://www.iamwomankind.org/2020/03/16/covid19/>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Points of Contact

- Helpline is Available 24/7 in 18+ Asian languages and dialects, plus Spanish
 - [1.888.888.7702](tel:18888887702)
- Text available Monday-Friday 10 AM - 6 PM
 - English [1.929.207.5907](tel:19292075907)
 - Chinese [1.929.207.5901](tel:19292075901)
- Chat in English and Chinese. Available Monday - Friday 10 AM - 6 PM
 - iamwomankind.org