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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 5476**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF EFFORTS TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes several statutory changes related to preventing human trafficking in the state.

First, the bill creates a human trafficking prevention coordinator position within the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to coordinate efforts between executive branch agencies and law enforcement to prevent human trafficking in the state. It requires all executive branch agencies to give any information, data, or assistance the coordinator needs for this purpose, as long as state or federal law permits it.

The bill increases training on human trafficking laws, available services, and victim interaction for certain professionals. Among other things, it (1) requires, instead of allows, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to provide training for law enforcement and (2) requires DCF and the chief court administrator to train their employees and, for DCF, contracted-with service providers. These trainings must all be done within available appropriations.

The bill also does the following:

1. creates a temporary task force to work and report on implementing recommendations from the Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Taskforce, including setting up a proposed structure, authority, and funding for a permanent statewide entity that coordinates anti-trafficking response across agencies and service providers;
2. requires, instead of allows, DCF and the state's attorneys to set

- up multidisciplinary teams to, among other things, review cases, coordinate intervention and prevention, and ensure treatment of abused, neglected, or trafficked children (see BACKGROUND) (§ 9);
3. increases the Trafficking in Persons Council’s membership by adding the new human trafficking prevention coordinator and the secretary of the state or her designee (see BACKGROUND) (§ 2); and
  4. requires DCF and local law enforcement to assess the security of out-of-home care locations where children are placed due to certain court orders.

Lastly, it makes several minor, technical, and conforming changes, including specifying that the child advocate’s existing responsibility for reviewing where children are placed by a state agency or department includes reviewing Specialized Trauma-Informed Treatment Assessment and Reunification (STTAR) Enhancement Plan homes (§ 7). (STTAR is a short-term group home program for children DCF removes from their homes due to high-risk situations.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the DCF employee and service provider training, security assessment, and temporary task force provisions are effective upon passage, and the provisions on Judicial Branch employee training and DCF’s powers and duties are effective October 1, 2026.

## **§ 1 — HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION COORDINATOR**

### ***Position Appointment***

Under the bill, the OPM secretary appoints the human trafficking prevention coordinator, who must have experience working with human trafficking victims.

### ***Responsibilities***

**General.** The bill tasks the coordinator with (1) comprehensive planning efforts against human trafficking in the state and (2) coordinating executive branch agency activities and programs to

prevent human trafficking. It requires the coordinator to work with the Trafficking in Persons Council and other multidisciplinary partners to align statewide prevention, identification, and response activities (see BACKGROUND).

The bill authorizes the coordinator to (1) enter into necessary contracts, in accordance with established procedures, and (2) receive money, revenue, or services from the federal government, corporations, associations, or individuals, unless the law provides otherwise.

**Training.** The bill requires the coordinator to develop and implement a training curriculum that is adaptable for specific state agencies. The curriculum must implement best practices and may consist of recordings.

Under the bill, the training must at least include the following:

1. awareness of and compliance with the laws and protocols on trafficking minor children;
2. how to identify, get access to, and provide services for trafficking victims; and
3. techniques for (a) de-escalating and reducing harm when encountering victims and (b) receiving trauma disclosures from minor children and adults.

The bill allows the coordinator to offer the training to state agencies, law enforcement agencies, health care facilities, human services agencies, school personnel, and nonprofits.

**Database and Directory.** The bill requires the coordinator to create a database for state agencies to report human trafficking incidents. Under the bill, the database must protect victims' personal information, and this information is exempt from disclosure under state freedom of information laws.

The bill also requires the coordinator to develop and maintain a statewide directory of service providers for human trafficking victims.

The directory must be organized by region, and the coordinator must evaluate the services' availability and identify any funding gaps or regions lacking services.

**Reporting.** Under the bill, the coordinator must, beginning by January 1, 2027, annually submit a report to the Appropriations, Government Oversight, and Judiciary committees that (1) describes the coordinator's activities from the prior year and (2) includes any recommendations, including for implementing legislation.

### **§§ 3-5 & 10 — AGENCY TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

#### ***DCF***

Existing law requires DCF, with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, to develop initial and refresher training programs on accurately and promptly identifying and reporting human trafficking. The bill requires DCF, within available appropriations, to give this training to all its employees and its contracted-with service providers. It correspondingly explicitly includes this training in DCF's listed statutory responsibilities for developing and training staff.

Under the bill, each employee and service provider must complete (1) an initial training program by the later of July 1, 2027, or six months after beginning their employment or the applicable contract date, and (2) refresher training every three years.

#### ***Judicial Branch***

The bill requires the chief court administrator, within available appropriations, to develop and provide training for all Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division employees on the trafficking of minor children.

Under the bill, the trainings must at least include:

1. awareness of and compliance with the laws and protocols on trafficking;
2. how to identify, get access to, and provide services for trafficking victims; and

3. techniques for (a) de-escalating and reducing harm when encountering victims and (b) receiving trauma disclosures.

The bill allows for the use of the human trafficking prevention coordinator's training curriculum described above to meet these requirements (see § 1).

Each employee must complete (1) an initial training program by the later of July 1, 2027, or six months after beginning their employment or the applicable contract date, and (2) refresher training every three years.

### **Law Enforcement**

The bill requires, instead of allows, DCF to provide training to law enforcement officials on the trafficking of minor children. By law, unchanged by the bill, this training must be done within available appropriations and at least include information about the laws and protocols on trafficking minor children and how to identify, get access to, and provide services for victims.

### **§ 6 — OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT SECURITY ASSESSMENT**

The bill requires the DCF commissioner, by July 1, 2027, to assess the security of the placement location of any child DCF places in out-of-home care due to an emergency order, temporary custody order, or commitment order.

Under the bill, the assessment is for determining if additional lighting, security cameras, or other measures are needed to increase security. It must be done in conjunction with the appropriate local law enforcement agency.

The commissioner must submit a report to the Children and Government Oversight committees with the assessment's results by August 1, 2027.

### **§ 8 — TEMPORARY HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE**

The bill creates the temporary Human Trafficking Prevention and Response Task Force to implement the recommendations of "A Blueprint to Strengthen Connecticut's Response to Human Trafficking"

from the Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Taskforce (RHTRT; see BACKGROUND).

Under the bill, this temporary task force must consist of the RHTRT's statewide steering committee's existing members, who represent state agencies, law enforcement, prosecutors, service providers, child advocacy centers, multidisciplinary teams, and survivors, and others RHTRT appoints. The bill specifies that it does not take over any of the Trafficking in Persons Council's responsibilities.

**Purpose**

To implement the recommendations, the bill requires the task force to work on the following:

1. advancing development of a permanent statewide entity to coordinate anti-trafficking response across agencies and service providers, including associated standards;
2. creating and implementing a standard, cross-disciplinary training framework and centralized learning management system;
3. developing and implementing a unified statewide data collection process with shared definitions, standard reporting fields, and secure data-sharing protocols;
4. designing and implementing standard, trauma-informed screening questions and referral methods so that there is consistent identification of and response to victims across systems;
5. expanding and strengthening statewide service capacity by mapping and verifying providers, identifying service and funding gaps, and supporting the creation of a vetted resource directory; and
6. reviewing trafficking trends, identifying systemic gaps, and developing policy recommendations for submission to the

Trafficking in Persons Council.

***Reporting and Work Completion***

By January 1, 2027, the task force must submit to the Government Oversight and Judiciary committees its first report of its activities from the prior year. It must continue with these reports each year until the later of (1) three years after the bill’s passage or (2) when it submits its final report.

Under the bill, the final report must set out the proposed structure, authority, and funding of the permanent statewide entity to coordinate anti-trafficking response. The task force ends on the date it submits this last report.

**BACKGROUND**

***Related Bill***

sHB 5004 (File 103), favorably reported by the Children Committee, requires DCF to develop and provide a mandatory training program for its employees about human trafficking and how to interact with victims (§ 8).

***Multidisciplinary Teams for Child Abuse, Neglect, or Trafficking***

Under current law, the multidisciplinary teams that DCF and state’s attorneys may establish include various professionals, including DCF, law enforcement, a victim advocate, and a forensic interviewer. These teams’ purposes are to, among other things, (1) protect abused, neglected, or trafficked children and their families and (2) advance and coordinate investigations of alleged abuse, neglect, and trafficking (CGS 17a-106a).

***Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Task Force***

RHTRT is a greater-Hartford area partnership to combat trafficking, bringing together law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, and service providers to investigate cases, help victims, and increase prevention efforts.

***Trafficking in Persons Council***

By law, among other things, the Trafficking in Persons Council coordinates human trafficking data collection and analysis and consults with government and non-government organizations in developing recommendations to strengthen efforts to prevent trafficking, protect and help victims, and prosecute traffickers (CGS § 46a-170).

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Government Oversight Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12    Nay 0    (03/17/2026)