

# I Structure of a Task Force

A formalized structure within a task force is crucial to the systemic response to CSEC/Y. Task forces without consistent leadership, for example, tend to struggle to maintain direction and momentum toward their goals.

## Leadership

The Task Force Coordinator is the leader of a task force. The Coordinator is the main point of contact for the task force and ties together members by organizing task force meetings, connecting stakeholders, recruiting members, and keeping the momentum of the task force going. Having a judge as a Task Force Chair tends to give more power and legitimacy to a task force. The Coordinator informs the Chair about meeting agendas, status of on-going projects, and seeks support as needed. Judges can also speak with authority when it comes to policy matters.

## Subcommittees

Task forces can include subcommittees to work on specific goals. The Coordinator helps form subcommittees which members voluntarily join and work independently while providing project status updates to the Coordinator. Possible subcommittees and scopes of work are outlined below and may be adapted to a task force's specific needs.

- **Demand reduction.** This committee collaborates with prosecutors, law enforcement, and other potential community stakeholders in reducing demand for CSEC/Y in a task force's community.
- **Outreach.** This committee's goal is to create CSEC/Y-related physical and digital media for training and educational purposes. Social media management and creation of task force websites may also be undertaken by an outreach committee.
- **Education.** This committee may aim to get connected with schools and create awareness about CSEC/Y in the community, among other education-focused activities.

## Membership

Generally, the process of membership is simple where the leadership team admits CSEC/Y-serving organizations to the task force. Prospective organizations should have the best interests of CSEC/Y in mind, which includes serving them through a victim-centered and trauma-informed lens. It is important to create an inclusive environment where current members openly welcome new organizations to task force meetings. Task Forces are free to create their own protocols for onboarding new members. Often, members are admitted through a referral process where current member organizations refer potential organizations to the leadership team.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between member agencies and the task force helps to confirm the membership of agencies and, in some circumstances, enable a task force to receive grants. MOUs are not mandatory, however. The member agencies of a task force can include, but are not limited to:

- Local law enforcement.
- Community advocates.

- Child Protective Services (CPS).
- Youth service providers (social services, housing, homeless youth case workers, etc.).
- School personnel.
- Public health.
- Prosecutors.
- Defense attorneys.
- Healthcare providers (medical, community-based mental health).
- Federal law enforcement.
- Human trafficking survivors.
- Tribal communities.
- LGBTQ+ representatives.

## What are Community Advocates?

Community advocates are individuals who focus on building trusting relationships with CSEC/Y. They typically work out of domestic violence or sexual assault service providers and receive extensive training in regard to working with CSEC/Y. They are the only ones who do not release information without the child or youth's consent but are surrounded by mandatory reporters. Thus, they should not be the first point of contact with the child or youth and are usually brought into the situation by a mandatory reporter such as a teacher or homeless youth service provider. Community advocates are important in the response to the sexual exploitation of children and youth because most trafficked youth have had poor experiences with law enforcement and service providers. Consequently, it is common for CSEC/Y to reject services or run away from supports. A community advocate is a dependable bridge back to services, as they are someone the child or youth can always contact and have an honest conversation with regarding their options moving forward.

## Why is diversity in membership important?

In Washington, although the majority of the population is White, people of color are disproportionately represented among CSEC/Y victims. Task forces can benefit from more intentionality around recruiting task force members who are people of color. Additionally, it is important to have a diverse occupational membership because CSEC/Y may come in to contact with many community agencies and organizations as outlined above. Furthermore, task force member agencies can suggest changes to their home organizations to better serve CSEC/Y based on information gathered through collaborating with task force members who belong to different sectors.