

# I Starting a Task Force: Phase 1

An effective task force that systemically supports Commercially Sexually Exploited Children and Youth (CSEC/Y) should have dedicated coordination and a shared mission among members as well as be victim-centered and trauma-informed in its collective actions.

## Identifying the Coordinator

The Coordinator is the glue that holds task forces together and should be established early on.

### General duties

- Organize and facilitate meetings.
- Bring in new members and facilitate networking among current members.
- Represent the task force in all outward facing circumstances.
- See the *Task Force Coordinator* toolkit for more information.

This position should be paid. It is a time intensive role with many responsibilities. See the *Task Force Coordinator* toolkit for a more comprehensive outline of coordinator duties and qualities, as well as funding strategies.

## Recruiting members

A task force consists of many, victim-centered stakeholders who should also be trauma informed. Some of the most crucial are listed below. A more comprehensive list of ideal task force membership can be found in the *Structure* toolkit along with steps for joining a task force.

- Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Service Providers.
- Youth Homelessness Service Providers.
- Local Law Enforcement Representatives.
- Representatives from the Prosecutor's Office.
- Human Trafficking Survivors.
- Child Protective Services Representatives.
- Community Advocates.

As the task force continues to evolve, the formation of subcommittees may be helpful to home in on specific focus areas or projects. Subcommittee examples include:

- Reducing the demand for sexual exploitation of children and youth.
- Raising awareness about CSEC/Y, locally.
- Educating community members about sexual exploitation.
- Raising awareness about ballot initiatives.

## Establishing a shared mission

All members should know the overall mission of their task force. Creating a formal mission statement should be an agenda item at the first task force meeting and subsequent members should know of the mission prior to joining. Some example mission statements are provided below:

*“Work together in a coordinated effort to improve the statewide response and capacity to identify and support commercially sexually exploited youth and hold accountable those who exploit them.”*

- Washington Model Protocol, p. 42

*“STARR is committed to increasing education, cultivating countywide awareness and strengthening cross-sector collaboration in order to combat human trafficking in Snohomish County.”*

- Snohomish County Task Force Mission Statement

## What is victim-centered?

Victim-centered means listening to CSEC/Y. This holistic approach considers each person’s trauma history and gives youth a voice. While adults’ priorities may be providing safety and curbing trafficking, youth also need the ability to make decisions for themselves, to build relationships with adults they can trust, and experience a reason to leave their exploiters (Washington Model Protocol p.41).

## What is trauma-informed?

Trauma-informed means approaching individuals from the perspective of “what has happened to you” rather than “what is wrong with you.” Within the context of CSEC/Y it also means recognizing that individuals may have past trauma such as a history of physical abuse or neglect at the hands of a caretaker. As such, organizations supporting CSEC/Y should be thoughtful of triggers that may make children and youth relive their trauma unnecessarily. Overall trauma-informed services focus on respecting the survivor and working towards building a trusting relationship. Further information regarding trauma-informed services can be found online. See the link below for Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs.

## Helpful links

- Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs:  
<https://www.wcsap.org/resources/publications/special-editions/creating-trauma-informed-services>