The horror of sex trafficking exists across the world and right here on American soil. Women and girls are forced to commit sex acts for monetary gain where all the profits go to the trafficker or pimps. Once freed from this bondage, the survivors of this heinous industry are faced with a system of support that is difficult to manage and navigate. The service providers assisting this vulnerable population are also left to find solutions and assistance where they can. Both sides of the equation are left to weave through a labyrinth of policies, providers and agencies of assistance, medical care professions, and a system in place that is held together by ad hoc methodology. Solutions can put into place that streamlines the process for survivors and providers. I want to dedicate the rest of my life to assist the survivors of sex trafficking, ensuring they are cared for and never forgotten or discarded.

The sex trafficking industry is flourishing like never before. Our neighborhood girls and boys are being peddled as human sexual slaves at alarming rates. They are being preyed upon by traffickers and those that are looking to purchase sexual services of one type or another. Girls and women are being coerced from every type of socioeconomic neighborhood and thrust into the world of commercial sex work. Once survivors like Debbie are freed from the bondage of being a sex slave or trafficking victim do service providers across the United States have a holistic approach to assist this vulnerable population?

Polarisproject.org reports that the number of trafficking victims in the U.S. is largely unknown however hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizen minors are estimated to be at risk of sexual exploitation. They also report that every year, human traffickers generate billions of dollars in profits by victimizing millions of people around the world, and here in the United States.  Human trafficking is considered to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world (Polarisproject.org).

Research states that cohesive, manageable, and simplistic solutions can be put into action to ensure the survivor population is taken care of. The proposed solutions address the lack of consolidation and centralization of information for agencies that assist this population, and the lack of coordination of services. They consist of a compilation of current practices, policies, legislation, and ideologies already witnessed in the United States. These solutions consist of a combination of three parts: consolidation and centralization of information found in pockets across the U.S. that can be adoptive to each state, improved collaboration between all agencies assisting, and overall government legislation.

Florida is one of the only states with a centralized and detailed listing of all service providers in one location. This best practice can be adopted by each State in the U.S. so a similar directory would be in place. The directory could then be sent to all parties involved, utilized in trainings, and be housed as well by U.S. Health and Human Services. Once all 50 States have directories in place, the U.S Government in working with Polarisproject.org could support the posting and centralizing the same information on their website. This would allow a one stop collection, posting, and education spot for any agency. It would also allow each state to search for assistance in a neighboring state if needed. Polaris Project has a current map that is posted on polarisproject.org. As of today, there are resources listed for each state when one clicks on each one, but the information is not comprehensive or extensive. Having a detailed directory for each state would be tremendously beneficial to the country, the states, and all service providers. By having this in place the ad hoc methodology utilized by providers today would decrease, and this would allow providers to know exactly what services are available in their communities and who is providing them. Additionally, all pertinent information would be listed in the directory, including web addresses, contact information, and any other built-in networks.

With the service providers for each state listed, relationships, coordination, and multidisciplinary teams have a larger chance of coming together in each county, city, and state. Successful collaboration begins with building trust and business relationships with other agencies that are desperately trying to assist this population. In Sweden experiments were performed to increase collaboration and coordination. The experiments resulted in new legislation making it possible for the different agencies in the rehabilitation field to form local associations for financial coordination. Alexsson states, “The results can be summarized as an illustration of the development from territoriality (growth of the business) to altruism in inter-professional collaboration” (326). The agencies involved utilized the concern for others, and for society at large, instead of traditional growth models, which in itself is the basis of altruism. To begin a similar process in each state in the United States, community organizations, law enforcement, and state agencies need to build relationships and clearly communicate with one another, whether through task forces, joint training programs, or monthly meetings.

By utilizing these practices, providers would be in contact with each other, and that would result in strong relationships, feelings of working together, and would build upon a network of assistance that benefits everybody involved, from victim on up. Each community would have working knowledge of all the opportunities for assistance available, and the relationships formed from working together allow for the breaking down of any and all barriers to service witnessed throughout the social service business world. This in itself would be a huge milestone to ensuring holistic care is given to survivors of sex trafficking. Women and girls across the nation that find themselves survivors of this horrific modern day form of slavery can finally realize that we as a country will care for them.

References:

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*The Polaris Project.* Polarisproject.org. Web. 1 February, 2013.