



WORLDVUE®

Beyond Awareness:

Collaborative Strategies to
Combat Human Trafficking
in Hospitality

Human trafficking is a global crisis of massive scale, generating billions of dollars annually through the labor or sexual exploitation of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion. Given the transient nature of hospitality properties and the expected privacy afforded to guests, hotels are a common place for trafficking activities.

As part of WorldVue's commitment to anti-trafficking work, we recently hosted a webinar addressing the critical roles of the hospitality industry, brands, and non-profit organizations in combatting human trafficking. This white paper shares what we learned from this webinar, exploring the need for collaboration, innovative technologies, and an industry-wide commitment to this issue.

While awareness is the first step to change, we also aim to offer insights and strategies to move beyond mere awareness into actionable solutions. By doing this, hoteliers can create safer environments and disrupt trafficking networks, demonstrating a commitment to human rights and protecting their communities.



The Hard Truth About Human Trafficking

The Safe House Project provided some striking statistics regarding human trafficking:

- Trafficking is a \$150 Billion (annual) criminal industry.
- The US ranks among the top 3 nations for trafficking.
- 40% of victims are trafficked by family, and 12 is the average victim age.
- Only 1% of victims are currently identified.

Notably, **75% of trafficking victims interact with hotels during their exploitation.** This highlights the need for the hospitality industry, brands, and properties to take a leading role in fighting this scourge.



The Importance of Partnerships: AHLA and the Hospitality Industry

As Eliza McCoy, MPA, Vice President of Programs & Impact for the AHLA Foundation, said during the webinar, “Safety is paramount in our industry to ensure that we are successful in providing great experiences for both our guests and our employees. While we can define safety in many ways, hotels certainly need to incorporate anti-human trafficking work when considering safety.”

To accomplish this, McCoy notes that collaborations between hospitality brands, vendors, and anti-trafficking organizations are crucial. Support from industry partners plays a major role in this collaboration. For example, the AHLA Foundation provides free resources to brands and properties for training, signage, and policies as part of its “No Room for Trafficking” initiative. This comes partly from a recognition of diverse business models in the hospitality industry. “Not every company is at a level where they can commit resources as a leader in this space. Others are independents, one-person bed-and-breakfasts, or single owners. So that’s why we make available [things like] model policies, model signage, and training through the Foundation, to ensure that we as an industry are doing things in a unified fashion.”

McCoy also highlighted Marriott International as a brand that has contributed strongly to this by offering training resources to others free of charge. “It’s incredibly important that companies that do have those resources are willing to give them back to the industry as a whole.”

McCoy discussed the AHLA’s No Room for Trafficking Advisory Council, a body of individuals from management companies, ownership groups, and brands. The Council aims for a unified approach throughout the hospitality industry but also incorporates the contributions of individuals taking the lead to share technology, training, and more back to the industry for free use in all different types of business models.

Safety is paramount in our industry to ensure that we are successful in providing great experiences for both our guests and our employees. While we can define safety in many ways, hotels certainly need to incorporate anti-human trafficking work when considering safety.

ELIZA MCCOY, MPA

Vice President of Programs & Impact
AHLA Foundation



How Brands Can Help: Marriott International

Marriott has long demonstrated its commitment to fighting trafficking through partnerships, and they are eager to share resources and collaborate on safety protocols for guests, staff, and the hospitality industry. Abbe Horswill, Director of Human Rights & Social Impact for Marriott International, emphasizes, “We are really more effective when we do this work together.”

Horswill highlighted three specific aspects of Marriott’s approach that are important for hotels:

1. Having a policy in place, either specifically for human trafficking or as part of a broader policy on human rights, as Marriott does. Marriott’s policy is available online to use as a model.
2. Training, as described below.
3. Cultivating a culture of commitment from top leadership to all associates, both bottom-up and top-down, from messaging to time commitments. “It takes that kind of commitment at all levels to effectively implement policies and training.”

Marriott’s implementation of its policy includes mandatory human trafficking awareness training for all associates on property at all Marriott hotels, both managed and franchised. They first developed an introductory version of human trafficking awareness training in 2017, with an expanded version launched in 2021 that provides more context and scenarios that employees might encounter to walk through what trafficking indicators might look like in context. This training is a brand standard that is reviewed and tracked, and Horswill says that hotels can be audited against this standard. It is the first non-service-oriented training for Marriott that has been implemented on a global scale, further demonstrating Marriott’s commitment.

Marriott has donated both versions of that training to their partner PACT with the goal of making them available to the entire industry at no cost, so not only Marriott hotels have access to this, but also other hotel workers around the world.

Over 1.4 million Marriott associates have been trained thus far; publicly available versions have over 1.9 million completions through PACT. This training serves to boost broader community awareness, even in situations outside hotel settings, resulting in the identification and rescue of actual trafficking victims. As Horswill notes, “We’re really talking about a global workforce that stands ready to address this issue.”

“We are really more effective when we do this work together.”

ABBE HORSWILL

Director of Human Rights & Social Impact,
Marriott International





Safe House Project: Training, Survivor Stories, and the Need for Emerging Technologies

Brittany Dunn, MBA, Co-Founder & Chief Operations Officer of Safe House Project, notes that only 1% of trafficking victims are currently identified, so it's important to bring in the hospitality industry as part of combatting trafficking. She says that Marriott's training has led to increased survivor identification in hotels and that AHLA's "No Room for Trafficking" initiative is part of this as well. "We are starting to see more survivors in hotels, and that's really a testament to the groundswell of employees that really care about this, but also that leadership from the top."

Empowering vendors to identify and report trafficking is paramount. Dunn says, "We've seen more training of employees at brands, but the vendors are out there regularly too. The training would benefit people like technicians as well, who are out there alongside everyone else. If we can get more people trained to identify signs of trafficking and give them a safe way to report it, we're going to be able to take that 1% and really move the needle."

Safe House Project has trained over 400,000 people to identify and report suspected trafficking and served over 1500 survivors of human trafficking in 2024. Dunn emphasizes that human trafficking is complex, with 25 unique business models. Indicators vary significantly between child and adult trafficking cases, which can make spotting trafficking highly challenging. There has been a notable 3% rise in the identification of male victims, so "it's important that we're not limiting who we're looking for." Over 40-50% of minor victims are sold by family members, underscoring the importance of understanding complex familial relationships in trafficking and not just looking for people who don't look like they belong together.

Education is the first step in identifying suspected trafficking, and data and survivor stories also help in understanding what indicators are present in actual trafficking situations. Through training, people are able to make more informed decisions, optimize resource use, and make the benefit case for continued investment into anti-trafficking work.



Dunn notes that there is also a need for advanced technology. “Human observation can only go so far, so we really need technology to help track what’s going on at properties and where trafficking is happening.” She says that Safe House Project is developing AI technology to analyze suspected indicators of trafficking and help substantiate reports. “We’re looking for more ways to equip everyone with the information they need to make informed decisions. This is not only to support survivors and help identify potential trafficking but to keep guests and employees safe and bring a holistic approach to the human rights issue.”

Their new platform, Safe Watch, aims to facilitate engagement and reporting, with real-time feedback on potential indicators and the ability to route reports to the proper authorities and connect survivors to necessary services.

Anonymous reporting is crucial for empowering individuals, and Safe Watch also helps with this aspect. Many people lack confidence in reporting trafficking, and there is a fear of reporting due to potential repercussions. Providing other reporting options can decrease barriers to reporting.



Human observation can only go so far, so we really need technology to help track what’s going on at properties and where trafficking is happening ... We’re looking for more ways to equip everyone with the information they need to make informed decisions. This is not only to support survivors and help identify potential trafficking but to keep guests and employees safe and bring a holistic approach to the human rights issue.”

BRITTANY DUNN, MBA

Co-Founder & Chief Operations Officer
Safe House Project

Challenges in Training and Implementation

Horswill observes that, despite the commitment of many brands and properties to combating trafficking, there remain some challenges to taking the next steps:

1. The topic of human trafficking is heavy and difficult to address. Thus, there is a need for approachable, factual messaging for associates and guests.
2. There can be challenges in developing or selecting appropriate training for a given setting. Recognizing indicators of trafficking is complex, in part because trafficking is an underground enterprise that is hidden by its very nature. The resources donated by Marriott and others for training can help properties tackle this complexity.



3. Properties need to tackle implementation hurdles when planning for training and implementation of policies, including:
 - Scheduling training sessions without disrupting operations.
 - The need for a system to track training compliance, especially since more states and localities are starting to implement requirements for training.
 - Localization. Trafficking might not look the same everywhere, so training needs to take that into account.

McCoy also lists some industry-wide challenges, the greatest of which is that the diversity of operations and staff complicates consistency and customization. “The challenge is finding solutions that can fit different models and needs while remaining consistent across the industry.” The development of common training tools such as those provided by AHLA and Marriott can help with this.

It is also essential to establish a culture of safety & empowerment to learn about and report possible trafficking. A focus on reinforcing skills beyond compliance training also helps people spot potential issues beyond just the hotel industry into their daily lives and interactions.

All three presenters again emphasized the importance of collaboration across various sectors, including survivor groups, law enforcement, properties, industry groups, and more. Sharing information and best practices is vital for effectiveness in fighting trafficking.

What Should We Expect in 2025?

Safe House Project

Dunn says that survivors are central to the mission of Safe House Project. Thus, the goal for the organization in 2025 is to serve over 3,000 survivors exiting trafficking situations, with a focus on providing safe housing and necessary care for healing.

Dunn says the organization’s focus in 2025 is to address gaps in reporting and service access for survivors. The introduction of the Safe Watch platform will ease reporting and routing of reports to the right people and will also help survivors access support services. Safe House Project will also launch a mobile application for real-time reporting of suspected trafficking that aims to route tips to law enforcement and connect survivors to support services.

The bottom line for Dunn is that these actions help in “showing survivors that we know they have value, dignity, and worth as a human being and not as a commodity.”



Marriott International

For Marriott, Horswill states that the goal for 2025 is to have 100% of on-property associates trained in human trafficking awareness. And while training is now seen as the minimum standard across the industry, there is also a growing emphasis on supporting survivors beyond training.

The “Future in Training” job readiness program is aimed at survivors interested in pursuing careers in hospitality. This partnership between Marriott, the AHLA Foundation, and the University of Maryland Safe Center offers training and job placement for survivors.

Marriott’s Hotel Help Program is an initiative providing short-term stays in hotels for survivors exiting trafficking. This program addresses challenges in finding shelter placement quickly. Marriott’s goal is to have a pilot program operational in 25 U.S. and Canadian cities this year, with over 100 rooms to start.

AHLA Foundation

In 2025, the AHLA Foundation will focus on collaboration and funding. McCoy says they will continue cultivating collaboration with various companies and organizations to innovate in this space. She highlights the example of G6 Hospitality's training program tailored for limited-service properties. This is similar to Marriott’s training but is designed to fit a different business model. The AHLA Advisory Council provides great examples like this to show what different brands and properties are trying and doing to see what works best in various situations.

The AHLA’s annual “No Room for Trafficking” Summit, planned for July of this year, brings together non-profit organizations, community agencies, and the hospitality industry, both hotels and vendors, to discuss opportunities and initiatives for innovation and collaboration.

McCoy declares that AHLA Foundation will continue to invest in community-based organizations that support survivors. The industry has collectively raised more than \$4 million over the past two years for organizations providing emergency services, employment support, wraparound services, and more to survivors nationwide in the US. The AHLA Foundation has matched those contributions dollar for dollar through grants. “Getting those resources to where they’re needed most is the most exciting thing I have to look forward to in 2025.”



SAFE HOUSE
PROJECT



WorldVue's Commitment

WorldVue has again committed to title sponsorship of the AHLA's annual "No Room for Trafficking" Summit in 2025. We are working to ensure that not only our employees but also our partners, installers, and others are trained to recognize the signs of trafficking. By the end of January 2025, all WorldVue employees will have finished the "Prevent Human Trafficking" training by PACT, the same program Marriott uses. We ask that you continue to help us do the work of raising awareness to help eradicate the worldwide problem of human trafficking.

For more information, visit www.worldvue.com/beyond-awareness



WORLDVUE®

MARKETING@WORLDVUE.COM

WORLDVUE.COM