



Lynn Fitch
ATTORNEY GENERAL

January 5, 2026

The Honorable Shad White
Mississippi State Auditor
Post Office Box 956
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Re: Victims of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Fund –
FY 2025

Dear Auditor White,

House Bill 1559, enacted on July 8, 2020, established the “Victims of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Fund” to be administered by the Attorney General’s Office under the coordination of a seven-person committee with appointments from the Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, Governor, and others. The bill provided that the Fund shall consist of:

- (a) Monies appropriated by the Legislature;
- (b) The interest accruing to the fund;
- (c) Monies received under the provisions of Section 99-19-75;
- (d) Monies received from the federal government;
- (e) Donations to the fund;
- (f) Assessments collected pursuant to Section 83-39-31;
- (g) All other monies received by the state from every source for the support of shelters for victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation; and
- (h) Monies received from such other sources as may be provided by law.

Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-54.11(1). The bill further provided that these monies should be used “to fund and assist human trafficking shelters, commercial sexual exploitation shelters and victim service providers.” Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-54.11(2). Pursuant to the administrative rules promulgated under Section 97-3-54.10, a 3-person independent evaluation panel of experts in the field of human trafficking is empaneled by the Fund Committee to evaluate the funding applications and make funding recommendations to the Committee.

The law requires the Attorney General’s Office to “provide an itemized financial report to the Legislature and State Auditor of all expenditures, statistical data regarding services

that have been provided, and a report of all service activity with geographical description.” Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-54.11(4). This is our fourth such report.

Fund Summary for FY 2025

Fund Status

At the close of Fiscal Year 2025 (June 30, 2025), the balance of the “Victims of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Fund” was \$716,787.48. This sum included \$190,594.57 in assessments paid to the Fund by criminal defendants and sent to the Fund by Mississippi’s court clerks pursuant to Section 99-19-75(2) and \$90,980.92 in earned interest.

Funds Distributed

In November 2024, the Attorney General’s Office opened the third application period for human trafficking shelters, commercial sexual exploitation shelters, and victim service providers to seek funding. Seventeen applications were received, seeking a total of \$6,849,388.94 in funding. Of that total, one was disqualified for failure to meet application requirements, 13 were funded, and three were not funded. Of the 13 proposals that were funded, six were partially funded. Awards were announced in January 2025, and in this third round of funding, the Attorney General’s Office distributed \$3,958,591.78. A detailed breakdown of the awards is provided *infra*.

As noted above, a 3-person independent evaluation panel was empaneled by the Fund Committee to evaluate the funding applications. Each panelist was compensated \$1,000 for her time. While the law permits the Attorney General’s Office to use up to 10 percent, in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.00, per fiscal year for administrative purposes, these were the only distributions made for the administration of the Fund.

FY 2025 Fund Awards and Victims Served

Pursuant to the administrative rules for the Fund, all awardees must enter an MOU with the Attorney General’s Office, which includes a requirement for quarterly reports to the Fund Committee. A summary of the FY 2025 awards and information regarding victims served with the funding is outlined below:

- 1) Children’s Advocacy Centers of Mississippi (CACM) was awarded \$79,300 to address the professional training gap in Mississippi by incorporating a Human Trafficking Education Track at their One Loud Voice Conference, Mississippi’s premier annual child advocacy training event. Additionally, funds were awarded for integrating its database with the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services’ new case management system, Pathways. CACM hosted the 12th Annual One Loud Voice Conference on November 5-6, 2025. The Opening Keynote was by Rebecca Bender, a

trafficking survivor. CACM hosted 56 sessions, with 26 of those falling in the Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation track. A total of 2,007 individuals (duplicated if attending multiple sessions in the track) attended the 26 sessions.

2) Center for Violence Prevention (CVP) was awarded \$932,019.35 to enhance and expand the reach of support services throughout Mississippi and improve outcomes for human trafficking victims through its Tower residential program and Rapid Response Team of advocates. Specifically, they were funded to hire an additional Rapid Response Team advocate this year and are using funds to continue operating the Tower Learning Center for group and individual activities focusing on survivor goal achievement. CVP served 285 clients from January 1, 2025, through December 15, 2025. Of the 285, 33 of those were provided both shelter services and non-shelter services. The other 252 were provided only non-shelter services. Non-shelter services provided this year include crisis intervention, case management, advocacy, mental health counseling, non-therapeutic peer groups, transportation, independent living assistance and many other services, as needed on a case-by-case basis. The counties served this year included Adams, Alcorn, Attala, Benton, Bolivar, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Clarke, Clay, Coahoma, Copiah, Covington, Desoto, Forrest, George, Grenada, Hancock, Harrison, Hinds, Humphreys, Itawamba, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Kemper, Lafayette, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Lee, Leflore, Lincoln, Lowndes, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Monroe, Montgomery, Neshoba, Newton, Oktibbeha, Panola, Perry, Pike, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Stone, Sunflower, Tippah, Tishomingo, Tunica, Union, Walthall, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Webster, Wilkinson, Yalobusha, and Yazoo. There were also 34 services for unidentified counties. In total, 15,219 services were provided to the 285 human trafficking victims. Additionally, CVP provided 30 human trafficking trainings to the community with 1,775 total attendees across the trainings. These trainings were aimed at preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting human trafficking.

3) Domestic Abuse Family Shelter (DAFS) was awarded \$491,126.22 to continue providing comprehensive services to victims of human trafficking as well as outreach activities in their 11-county service area. They are also improving their quality of service by conducting an external evaluation of the program's efficiency, impact, and sustainability. DAFS served 39 victims of human trafficking and provided those victims 2,324 separate services from January 1, 2025, through December 16, 2025. Services provided include case management, emergency funds, individual and group counseling, transportation, relocation, housing assistance, and bed nights. The counties served this year included Covington, Forrest, Harrison, Hinds, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River, Rankin, and Wayne.

4) Easterseals Mississippi was awarded \$64,812.00 to develop and execute a trafficking prevention strategy, including the appointment of a dedicated Child Trafficking Prevention Coordinator, the development of culturally relevant educational materials in English and Spanish, and the prioritization of outreach to Hispanic communities. Easterseals Mississippi reached 280 fifth through twelfth grade students in a school or afterschool setting from January 1, 2025, through December 15, 2025, with prevention education using the curriculum Teen Safety Matters and/or Child Safety

Matters. The counties served this year included Lee, Pontotoc, and Union. Additionally, Easterseals Mississippi presented at three trafficking prevention awareness meetings to the community with 68 total attendees across the trainings. These trainings addressed identifying, preventing, and reporting human trafficking.

5) El Pueblo was awarded \$104,284.21 to enhance culturally and linguistically appropriate services for victims of human trafficking and to continue outreach to law enforcement, mental health service providers, and community groups. They focus on ensuring victims not only receive immediate support but also benefit from long-term, consistent services that empower them to regain stability and independence. From January 1, 2025, through December 17, 2025, El Pueblo served 37 adult clients and 14 children. Services included transportation and interpretation for medical appointments and crime reporting, referrals to mental health counseling, emergency assistance (phones and service cards, food, clothing, and hygiene products), employment assistance and job placement support, referrals to English and parenting classes, and other services. Additionally, El Pueblo conducted 16 community trainings, reaching 475 individuals. Trainings focused on victim vulnerabilities, identification and reporting of human trafficking, and available community resources. In addition, El Pueblo participated in 18 informational tabling events, distributing human trafficking awareness materials to approximately 1,725 individuals. El Pueblo served Madison, Scott, Lauderdale, Jones, Harrison, Rankin, and Hinds counties this year.

6) Gulf Coast Center for Nonviolence (GCCFN) was awarded \$560,000.00 to continue providing a comprehensive and holistic array of services to families and individuals in crisis due to human trafficking and associated harms. GCCFN is working to establish Mississippi's first Family Justice Center model, a one-stop shop that houses services provided by GCCFN, law enforcement, court personnel, and other community service agencies to support victims. Gulf Coast Center for Nonviolence served 153 human trafficking survivors from January 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025, and 82 of those 153 were provided shelter services. The other 71 were provided non-residential services. Services provided this year included crisis intervention, transportation, individual and group counseling, peer support, housing assistance, childcare, emergency financial assistance, case management, and relocation assistance. The counties served this year included Harrison, Hancock, Jackson, George, Stone, and Pearl River counties. Additionally, GCCFN provided seven human trafficking prevention trainings to the community with 97 total attendees across the trainings. These trainings addressed human trafficking trauma-informed care, identifying and responding to human trafficking victims, and how to refer victims to services.

7) Hope Village was awarded \$296,920.00 to operate a new residential program for the specialized treatment of minor female victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. They will promote the wellbeing of the victims in care, address the emotional, social, and mental health issues facing foster youth in their care, provide access to education or vocational programs for victims in their care, and prepare them for successful reintegration into the community. The Harmony House's expected opening date is January 5, 2026, as it is already licensed and fully staffed with qualified personnel.

Hope Village is working with the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, and they are ready to begin sending referrals for Harmony House.

8) Kids Hub Children's Advocacy Center was awarded \$10,000.00 to partner with the University of Southern Mississippi Center for Human Trafficking Research and Training Department to conduct advanced training for all Kids Hub Child Advocacy Center program staff to enhance skills and knowledge related to supporting victims of human trafficking. In addition to the SOAR Training provided by USM, Kids Hub staff participated in other training activities to strengthen competencies in identifying signs and indicators of child trafficking and exploitation, understanding technology's evolving role in abuse dynamics, applying trauma-informed care principles in trafficking response, enhancing consistency in reporting and safety procedures, supporting caregivers through improved online safety education, integrating survivor-informed perspectives into service delivery, and strengthening collaboration with multidisciplinary partners.

9) Mississippi Coalition Against Human Trafficking (MCAHT) was awarded \$366,560.00 to continue growing and supporting its Independent Living Assistance Program (ILA), a program designed to promote sustainable independent living. They hired another Survivor Support Specialist to oversee and facilitate the ILA program in South Mississippi, where the need for survivor support services continues to rise. From December 1, 2024, through December 10, 2025, the MCAHT's ILA Program provided support to 113 individual survivors of human trafficking across the state. During this reporting period, the program fulfilled 229 requests for critical non-shelter assistance designed to support survivors as they work toward independent living. Assistance provided included rent/utility deposits, rental assistance, utility payments, groceries, car payments, and car insurance, as well as limited medical and dental assistance. These supports play an essential role in helping survivors maintain stable housing, secure reliable transportation, and access necessary healthcare, which are fundamental components of long-term recovery and self-sufficiency. The counties served this year included Harrison, Hinds, Forrest, Lee, Monroe, Madison, Lafayette, Scott, Rankin, Jackson, Bolivar, Desoto, Lamar, Alcorn, Marshall, Prentiss, and Lauderdale.

10) On the Road Lending (OTR) was awarded \$200,000.00 to eliminate transportation barriers that hinder economic independence. They focus on supporting victims of trafficking seeking to create sustainable, independent lives by providing reliable vehicles and individualized financial coaching. OTR will use the funds to create a long-term solution for trafficking survivors in Mississippi in collaboration with other service providers to operate as a trusted referral partner for victims with critical transportation needs. OTR continues to work with service providers across the State to develop a program for victims in Mississippi.

11) Southern Christian Services (SCS) was awarded \$739,500.00 to continue operating Mississippi's safe home exclusively for adolescent survivors of human trafficking, which allows young survivors to receive specialized and evidence-based therapeutic services for up to two years. Southern Christian's Sunrise Safe Home served eight clients and one infant in long term shelter care from January 1, 2025, through December 15, 2025. The counties served this year included Hinds, Humphrey, Itawamba,

Hancock, Washington, and Pontotoc. Of the eight served, three discharged into lower levels of care and independence. One was discharged to Job Corps, one to Sunnybrook's Supervised Independent Living Program, and the other to a traditional foster home. One discharged to juvenile detention due to serious property damage and threats to harm others. And one just discharged in December into a foster family placement with her one-year-old child. The other three are still living at Sunrise. Of the three still at Sunrise, one is about to complete her GED, one is about to graduate high school with honors, and two have obtained their driver's license. All youth have received Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) for individual therapy, Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS) for group therapy, and Equine Therapy for experiential treatment.

12) Southwest Mississippi Children's Advocacy Center (SWMSCAC) was awarded \$74,070.00 to provide a comprehensive array of services for victims of human trafficking. They hired a mental health therapist who received specialized training for working with trafficking victims, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) training. From January 1, 2025, through December 8, 2025, SWMSCAC provided services to 39 victims of human trafficking, 32 of whom were sex trafficking victims and seven of whom were labor trafficking victims. Out of the 32, 21 were new victims referred to forensic medical exams and mental health services. They were also given forensic interviews, family advocacy, and case reviews. The 18 victims from previous years were provided ongoing services of advocacy and case management/review. The counties served this year included Pike, Lincoln, Copiah, Amite, and Walthall.

13) Sunnybrook Children's Home was awarded \$40,000.00 to continue their collaboration with Southern Christian Services and the Mississippi Coalition Against Human Trafficking to provide a safe home for adolescent survivors of human trafficking.

Pursuant to the law and the administrative rules, any funds not expended during the 18-month period of the initial MOU may be rolled over into the next year, with a new MOU and continued quarterly funding reports.

FY 2026 Funding

The fourth application period opened on August 1, 2025, and closed on August 28, 2025. A total of 16 applications were received, totaling \$4,964,116.97 in funding requests. The evaluation panel met on October 6, 2025, and its recommendations for funding were presented to the Committee later that month. The Committee voted to approve the 9 applicants recommended for partial or full funding in a total amount of \$2,456,110.45.

Though the Legislature appropriated \$2,500,000.00 for distribution in Fiscal Year 2026, the Governor vetoed that appropriation, and as a result, the Fund had insufficient funds to make the full award at the time awards were made in December 2025. Given these circumstances, the Committee elected to distribute funding in two rounds. The first round used funds currently available when awards were made, and the second round will

be contingent upon legislative appropriation in the 2026 Legislative Session. In the first round of funding, those applicants for whom the Committee made a full award of funding received 41% of their total award. Additional awards are expected should the Legislature appropriate additional funds in the coming session. We look forward to continuing our work with the Legislature to secure additional funding as early in the 2026 Session as possible.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Abby Overby of my office, at abby.overby@ago.ms.gov or 601-359-3094.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Fitch".

Lynn Fitch
Attorney General
State of Mississippi