

# FLS Newsletter

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## **Human trafficking survivors' unmet family law needs – Kristen Berg**

Human traffickers enslave over 20 million people worldwide to profit \$150 billion yearly from their bodies and labor. The Center for Public Policy Studies points out that the problem also hits close to home, with Colorado being a “source, destination and transit route for human trafficking” due to such factors at the state’s international airport, sizeable immigrant population and convergence of major interstate highways. Human trafficking takes many forms; in Colorado, cases have included migrant farm worker abuse, domestic servitude and exploitation in the commercial sex industry. U.S. federal law and Colorado state law criminalize human trafficking, but trafficking survivors often have [legal needs](#) beyond seeing their trafficker prosecuted. The legal community as a whole - from civil litigators to immigration attorneys to family law practitioners - have a vital role to play in holding traffickers accountable and supporting survivors.

After an individual escapes a trafficking situation, he or she often faces many challenges with limited resources - particularly with respect to domestic relations issues. For many survivors, a 30 to 60-minute consultation about their situation makes all the difference in helping them to understand what they can and cannot expect from the legal system, and to be empowered to make informed decisions in this complex area of law. As a family law attorney, your substantive legal knowledge about legal remedies can help survivors access justice and rebuild their lives, particularly as survivors may be related to their trafficker. For example, a survivor may need to divorce her husband, who is also her trafficker, and seek custody of their children. Or a survivor may simply need to speak with someone about the process for obtaining a civil order of protection against his or her trafficker. Other family law needs may include consultation or representation on child support matters, advising on charges of child abduction or child abuse or the court appointment of an advocate to protect the interests of a juvenile.

While trafficking survivors can be men, women or children, foreign-born or U.S. nationals, they share one commonality - a vulnerability that traffickers can exploit. Increased vulnerability - including the lack of a social safety net, discrimination and undocumented status - increases an individual’s risk of trafficking. In the coming months and years, the anti-trafficking movement will need to collaborate with lawyers from all areas of law to ensure that survivors’ diverse legal needs are addressed.

At ALIGHT, we offer an easy and straightforward way to connect the legal community as a resource to the anti-trafficking community. To learn more about our work, including our current [Legal Needs Matching Pilot](#), please visit our website: [www.alightnet.org](http://www.alightnet.org).