



National Survivor Law Collective Convenes Legal Experts to Address Legal Deserts for Human Trafficking Survivors

Human trafficking survivors lacking access to legal services needed to remedy past abuses; survivors sorely in need of solutions on a national scale.

December 6, 2021 Washington, D.C. — The National Survivor Law Collective (NSL Collective) organized an in-person workshop of national legal experts in the wake of troubling findings of major gaps in critical legal services for human trafficking survivors in the U.S. (or, “legal deserts”) identified in *The Legal Deserts Report* published by the Avery Center for Research and Services (the Avery Center) and the NSL Collective. The goals of this November 17th convening were to improve the understanding of the dynamics of this problem, generate additional recommendations and come to an understanding as a community about the practical next steps to execute the needed initiatives.

Co-hosted by the American Bar Association Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence and the Avery Center, this event was moderated by former Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Susan Coppedge and held at the Shared Hope International JuST Conference. Participants in the “Legal Deserts Workshop” included former Ambassador John Cotton Richmond, survivor advocates and over 30 stakeholders from law firms, bar associations, legal organizations, prosecution services, academia and other areas.

The need for action in this area is urgent. As *The Legal Deserts Report* points out, “Human rights that exist only in theory are nothing more than mirages in a desolate desert.” This report was co-published by the Avery Center and the NSL Collective in July 2021 based on the Avery research team’s extensive outreach to 550 organizations from across the country that advertise their legal services to sex trafficking survivors. Key findings of this report include a 20% response rate (only 110 organizations replied), of which 7% clarified that they did not provide any legal services and one-third confirmed that they provided services such as court attendance and advocates, not direct legal services. Further, the report demonstrated that direct legal representation is concentrated in high density urban areas, essentially making most of the U.S. a legal desert. *The Legal Deserts Report* is available for download [here](#).

The NSL Collective is proud to draw attention to this national crisis and work with other stakeholders to bring meaningful legal services to human trafficking survivors in the U.S. It will host other opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on how best to address these legal deserts in support of survivors and hopes to complete a follow up report.

About The National Survivor Law Collective (NSL Collective)

Founded in 2020 in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Survivor Law Collective (NSL Collective) is a collaboration among private legal services organizations that have been providing pro bono legal services to trafficking survivors for many years. Learn more about the NSL Collective [here](#).

The Founding Members are:

[ALIGHT \(Alliance to Lead Impact in Global Human Trafficking\)](#), CO and national
[Free to Thrive](#), CA
[Justice Restoration Center](#), FL and TN
[Trafficking Law Center](#), OR
[Moore & Van Allen PLLC](#), NC
[Paul Hastings LLP](#), NY and national

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