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## Press Release

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# Rhode Island Human Trafficking Task Force Unveils New Response Protocol for the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

*The statewide protocol marks the first time Rhode Island will have a coordinated, streamlined approach to responding to and reporting CSEC cases*

**Providence, RI January 27, 2016** –The Rhode Island Human Trafficking Task Force today unveiled statewide response protocol for cases of child sex trafficking in the state.

The standing room-only event , held at the Rhode Island State House, was the culmination of more than two years of planning, coordination, development and training by members of the task force, which include local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; medical and mental health providers; victim advocates; lawmakers and others from around the state.

Governor Gina Raimondo commended the task force for its efforts. “The reality is, we have a problem,” said Governor Raimondo. “This is important. I’m proud of the work that has been done and excited to recommit ourselves to this effort.”

With more than 75 people in attendance, it was clear child sex trafficking is a topic of great concern among community members. In addition to the Governor, speakers included Senator Teresa Paiva Weed, Senate President, Dr. Christine Barron, the Aubin Center at Hasbro Children’s Hospital, Danielle Obenhaus, trafficking survivor and Day One mentor coordinator, and Peg Langhammer, Day One Executive Director.

“If we are to combat commercial exploitation of children in our community, education, awareness and training are critical,” remarked Senator Paiva Weed.

While the number of trafficking cases in Rhode Island continues to rise, task force members believe having a uniform protocol for responding to this crime will not only aid in the investigation process but ensure victims have access to the services and treatment they need and are not treated like criminals.

Dr. Barron, who has been working locally as well as nationally to create a medical protocol for trafficking victims, said the new response guidelines will help everyone understand their role in addressing CSEC cases.

Attorney General Peter Kilmartin, a member of the task force who was scheduled to speak at today's event, issued this statement: "My Office is involved in virtually every aspect of sex trafficking cases, from the very early stages of an investigation through to successful prosecution. Creating this multi-agency, collaborative approach to these investigations has been critical to our success in arresting and prosecuting traffickers while ensuring that victims get the support and resources they need to recover from the trauma they have endured."

Today's announcement was a first step in addressing the growing issue of CSEC. Langhammer and others noted the focus will now shift to a statewide training effort, as well as a screening tool to help identify at-risk children and expanded, trauma-informed treatment options.

"I am one of very few people who have gone through this trauma and come out on the successful end," said Obenhaus. "I understand what these victims have gone through; that's what Day One's survivor-led mentoring model is based on. When I talk to victims, their whole demeanor changes when they find out I've lived it too."

[The protocol is available online here.](#)

The Rhode Island Human Trafficking Task Force will hold free statewide community awareness sessions beginning in February. [Dates and locations are available here.](#)

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