



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Administration

Roy Cooper, Governor

Machelle Sanders, Secretary

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NC State Employees Encouraged to Wear Blue Today in Recognition of Human Trafficking Awareness Month

North Carolina ranks among the top 15 in the nation for reported human trafficking cases

Raleigh, NC – Today, state employees from across the state are encouraged to wear blue in recognition of human trafficking awareness month. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, buying or selling of human beings for labor and services by means of force, fraud or coercion.

The North Carolina Department of Administration's Council for Women and Youth Involvement is encouraging state employees to wear blue to pay tribute to the many survivors as well as victims of human trafficking across our state and to continue raising awareness for this critical issue.

"There are many misconceptions and myths about human trafficking," said NC Department of Administration Secretary Machelle Sanders. "One common misconception is that human trafficking only happens to women or girls and that is simply not true. It is important that we continue to educate and spread awareness to combat this issue."

In 2019, 266 cases of trafficking in North Carolina were reported to the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#), ranking North Carolina 11th in the nation. Of the 266 cases reported 30 were men. However, since human trafficking is an underreported crime, the true number of cases in North Carolina is likely considerably higher. The pandemic has also exacerbated conditions such as poverty and abuse increasing public vulnerability to traffickers, particularly among marginalized populations.

"It is important to be able to recognize the warning signs of human trafficking," said Mary Williams-Stover, Director of the NC Council for Women and Youth Involvement. "Some of the signs an individual may exhibit are the avoidance of eye contact and social interactions. Knowing the warning signs of human trafficking can help save lives."

January 22 will serve as a day of recognition and is an extension of the national [Blue Campaign](#), established by the US Department of Homeland Security. Each year, in acknowledgement of Human Trafficking Awareness Day on January 11, the Campaign urges everyone to wear blue to promote and educate others on human trafficking. Today, state employees will share photos wearing the color blue across social media, tagging NC Council for Women and Youth Involvement @CouncilNC with #EndHumanTrafficking or #WearBlueDay. Social media graphics, sample social media posts, and outreach videos are available to download on the Council for Women and Youth Involvement [website](#).

Human trafficking is a borderless crime, depriving victims of human dignity and freedom, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, citizenship or socioeconomic status. To heighten awareness, Governor Roy Cooper signed a [proclamation](#) declaring January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. In addition to wear blue day, this evening several downtown complexes including the State Capitol, NC Executive Mansion, Hawkins-Hartness House, and Administration Building will be adorned in blue lights in tribute to the many survivors and victims of human trafficking. A map can be viewed [here](#).

Since the onset of COVID-19, NC Council for Women and Youth Involvement Human Trafficking Program Director Kiricka Yarbough Smith says the need for resources and education is even more significant.

“Due to the pandemic, many of our students are spending most of their day online,” said Kiricka Yarbough Smith. “It’s important that we continue raising awareness and educating our community that human trafficking is still happening even in the midst of the pandemic.”

The NC Council for Women and Youth Involvement, which has partnered with Radio One for continued outreach, focuses on interdisciplinary collaboration and improving identification and response of human trafficking in marginalized, underserved, and unserved communities. In recent years, legislation has been enacted mandating that trafficking prevention and awareness be included in the sexual health education curriculum and training on trafficking to all public-school personnel.

If you believe someone may be a victim of human trafficking, report your suspicions to law enforcement or call the 24-hour National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text “BEFREE” to 233733. To learn more about the NC Council for Women and Youth Involvement’s Human Trafficking Program, please visit ncadmin.nc.gov/human-trafficking for more information.

About DOA

Established in 1957, the Department of Administration acts as the business manager for North Carolina state government. Under the leadership of Secretary Machel Sanders since appointed by Governor Roy Cooper in 2017, the department oversees Government Operations and advocacy programs. The department’s advocacy programs provide advocacy, assistance and services to diverse segments of the state’s population that have been traditionally underserved.

About CFWYI

The North Carolina Council for Women and Youth Involvement (CFWYI) is a division of the North Carolina Department of Administration. The mission of the Council is to advise the Governor, state legislators and state leaders on issues that impact women and youth.

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