



# The OnRamps™ Collaborative:

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**EDUCATION AND VOCATION AS A PATHWAY TO END  
THE EXPLOITATION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS**

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The OnRamps™ initiative is a collective impact modeled project that provides educational and vocational options and leverages partnerships to provide an access mechanism for survivors to permanently leave the life of exploitation.

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## THE SITUATION

Human trafficking is a community health crisis in the San Diego region, and the success rate for women exiting the life is dismal. While heroic efforts continue to open safe houses, rehabilitate victims and prosecute traffickers, without strategic attention to creating a more viable pathway “out” for survivors the need for prosecution and survivor services will only grow. We must stem the tide, and we must create a pathway to a long-term sustainable future to move victims to thrivers and to future financial security.

We believe the OnRamps™ Collaborative does just that: leveraging educational and vocational partnerships to empower survivors to pursue vocation or education as a long term solution to end their exploitation.

In 2016, Point Loma Nazarene University and the University of San Diego published a report that studied, for the first time, the scope of trafficking in San Diego County.

Key findings include:

- > *Sex trafficking is a central part of an \$810 million underground sex economy in San Diego, second in value only to the illicit trade in drugs.*
- > *There are 110 named White, Black and Hispanic gangs taking part in sex trafficking.*
- > *Traffickers, on average, control 4-5 girls and make over \$600,000 per year at this scale.*
- > *There are an estimated 3,000 to 8,000 victims of sex trafficking a year in the county.*
- > *There is evidence of recruitment among all racial/ethnic groups and in neighborhoods of all economic backgrounds.*
- > *While all youth are at risk, youth of color and low-income are most vulnerable.*
- > *Runaways, homeless teens, and foster care youth are particularly at risk.*
- > *Recruitment starts as young as 8-10, but the average age of recruitment is 16.*
- > *While boys can be victims of trafficking, middle school and early high school age girls are the primary targets.*
- > *There was evidence of recruitment happening in all 20 schools where focus groups took place, across the entire county and across the socio-economic and racial/ethnic divides.*

Despite the region’s dedicated efforts to end human trafficking, a gaping hole remains in our current capacity to empower survivors of human trafficking to obtain long term financial success, and therefore the structures that lead to a holistic life of wellness. We consider this a community health crisis, both the exploitation of thousands in our community, and the lack of an organized model to address victim’s long term health and success.

The lack of financial security is one of the most significant factors pulling people back into a life of exploitation. Knowing that education and access to vocational training can unlock healing and long-term financial stability, we are leading an initiative that opens up pathways for survivors to pursue educational and vocational opportunities, creating and leveraging OnRamps™ to holistic stability for survivors.

This macro effort to identify the OnRamps™ for survivors to access educational and vocational opportunity, mobilize the partnerships and create the mechanisms for survivors to access these opportunities demands a community-wide collaborative structure. It is an interruption of the current system, leveraging a new community impact model for the socio-economic upward mobility of survivors. Point Loma Nazarene University has already successfully incubated the only organized onramp available to survivors in our region, the Beauty for Ashes Scholarship, which has graduated three women from the University.

*The OnRamps™ initiative is a collective impact modeled project that identifies educational and vocational options and leverages partnerships to provide an access mechanism for survivors to permanently leave the life of exploitation.* To succeed, this model must be centered around the holistic health needs (Emotional, Intellectual, Spiritual, Physical, Social, Environmental, Financial) of the survivor population.

## **BARRIERS**

Identifying the barriers that keep victims from leaving a life of exploitation and from building a healthy, secure new life is the first step. Coordinating resources to address these barriers and creating effective mechanisms to connect survivors to the process is how we will solve the crisis. A multi-year process for most survivors, the initiative casts the vision, and develops the processes to walk with survivors to take the necessary steps to pursue an educational or vocational pathway.

Barriers, often working in combination with each other, prevent victims of trafficking and exploitation from successfully leaving and/or staying out of the life. These barriers include:

- > *Mental Health: PTSD, trauma, childhood violence, domestic violence and sexual assault, combined with depression and anxiety*
- > *Economic: lack of basic financial skills, bad credit, debt and lack of resources*
- > *Criminalization: legal issues arising from both the exploitation and family law issues*
- > *Housing: lack of adequate, stable housing*
- > *Other basic needs: food, transportation deficiencies increase vulnerability*
- > *Support network: lack of a stable support network cause issues with childcare, etc.*
- > *Educational barriers: poor grades, lack of access to financial aid, education history, criminal record that impacts financial aid*

### **BRAIN RESTORATION: COMPLEX PTSD AND UNLOCKING HEALING**

All survivors of trafficking have PTSD, and share one aspect of their toxic stress: physical brain damage and alterations. The brain-damaging effects of toxic stress and PTSD are reversible. We believe in order for the onramps to provide opportunities for survivors to thrive we must first address brain restoration for every survivor in the program.

Restorative treatments are already provided, in part, from our regional service providers, but no coordinated effort exists to implement best practices for brain restoration. The OnRamps™ Collaborative will organize service providers to provide a standard of care to all survivors in the program, in addition to finding a partner to provide these services in an outpatient setting which include a brain restoration component embedded in a PTSD recovery program: trauma-informed care, and trauma-focused mental health interventions and practices, all tied together.. This step is critical to the success of the overall OnRamps™ Collaborative.

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### **COLLECTIVE IMPACT: THE ONRAMPS™ COLLABORATIVE**

The OnRamps™ Collaborative is a collective impact-modeled coalition of leading organizations in San Diego who have committed to developing multiple OnRamps™ to educational and vocational opportunities for survivors. The OnRamps Collaborative is writing a new road map, and it requires innovation to disrupt a system that is failing survivors and the creation of a new model, supported by the community, to solve the problem.

The goals of the Collaborative include:

- > *Securing the key partners to the Collaborative*
- > *Identifying foundational services that must be in place to support the initiative*
- > *Securing service providers to join the collaboration, including participation in PTSD brain healing protocols*
- > *Developing best practices for all partners to follow to ensure quality outcomes*
- > *Identifying the OnRamps™*
- > *Developing an educational case management program to support survivors throughout the process*

- > *Providing a Coach to each survivor participant*
- > *Securing funding to support partners' efforts that relate to the project*
- > *Gathering data for a longitudinal research study on factors that lead to recidivism*

### **FUNDING/COSTS**

Year One support was provided by PLNU. Year Two funding will launch the project into a county-wide implementation stage which includes educational case management for survivor participants, training of partners, launching the OnRamps Coaching model and other costs for implementing the model across the region.

Funding needed: \$225,000

### **LEADING THE EFFORT: POINT LOMA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY**

Because the Center for Justice & Reconciliation at PLNU sits at the center of the region's collaborative efforts to end human trafficking and has the ability to leverage our leadership, influence and partnerships we are undertaking an ambitious effort to organize a collective impact model that we believe will change the future for thousands of survivors, and the face of our community. This project is being led by Kim Berry Jones, with the partnership of community leaders across our region.

The CJR's current areas of focus center around supporting the region's anti-trafficking efforts through prevention, research and education. These efforts have been anchored by three programs, all developed by the CJR and recognized as both regional and national models: 1) HT-RADAR, Human Trafficking Research and Data Roundtable, 2) The Beauty for Ashes Scholarship and 3) kNOw MORE Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Curriculum.

### **BACKBONE ORGANIZATION:**

Center for Justice & Reconciliation at PLNU

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