

2014 SUMMIT



TOGETHER LET'S STOP TRAFFICK



The anti-HT initiative led by the IPTI (International Police Training Institute), supported by the FBI NAA (National Academy Associates) and hosted by American Military University.



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PRESENTATION TRANSCRIPT

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11/18/14

Good morning everyone. Well as the giant picture of my head demonstrates, I am Danielle Johnson. I work at Polaris, which has been mentioned a few times, so I think several people are familiar with Polaris. We're a nonprofit organization based in Washington D.C. Perhaps best well-known for running the US National Hotline called the National Human Trafficking Resource Center. I am a Program Specialist on our global hotlines team. I cover the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for Polaris. I can talk all day about Russia and Ukraine, but I'm not going to. I will spare you all of that. I also do not have a PowerPoint. I thought it would be painfully awkward for everyone watch me getting myself confused between slides and words. So I'll spare you that.

I want to start just by saying thank you to the organizers of this conferences and to the volunteers to help put this together to AMU, and to the International Police Training Institute. I also really want to say thank you for hosting it in West Virginia, because as some of you may have heard I'm a local. I live just 20 minutes in Shepherdstown, which is a great little town if you have time to see it. Normally I commute into D.C., and my commute is about an hour and half to two hours each way. So now I have a 20 minute commute, which is awesome, so thank you organizers. Thank you Canadians for bringing the cold. I'm pretty sure you guys are the culprits. It's not usually like this here.

It's actually warmer in Toronto.

Okay I wish I didn't know that frankly. That does not bode well for the winter. But yeah, so I hope you all enjoy the lovely state of West Virginia, the eastern panhandle while you are hear. So without further ado, Polaris is an organization that's engaged in a lot of different initiatives. We have a lot of different programs. Policy advocacy,

direct victim assistance, training and technical assistance. We do have a range of things.

And for the last 24 hours that we've been having this summit, a lot of people have asked me, how do you see Polaris' work fitting into the goals of the summit, to what we're trying to accomplish here in terms of global collaboration? And thinking about all of Polaris' different programs, there's a lot of potential different answers to that question. We've talked about data privacy. We've talked about the difficulties of identifying victims. We've talked about what it means to be victim-centered. How NGOs and law enforcement can partner. How to leverage maps and technology. And these are all really relevant to what Polaris does. But in particular, I say I think that hotlines can address all of these issues.

So that's what I want to focus on today is hotlines. And I'm going to start off by telling you a little bit about our experience running the National Hotline, the NHTRC from here on out. But then I want to broaden the lens a little bit and look at some of the lessons that we've learned running the hotline. And particularly, some of the challenges and opportunities that we have seen from our experience and now that's informing our global work. So just to give you a little summary of the NHTRC, it operates 24/7, 365 days a year. Every call is answered by a live call specialist who has specialized training on human trafficking. Services are available in over 180 languages, and that is both because we have bilingual staff. And because we have access to a tele-interpreting service. We have a range of different calls on the hotlines.

I think a lot of people think of hotlines as just talking to victims. But in fact, we get inquiries for general information about human trafficking from community members or students for example. We get a lot of high risk calls from people that are in related issues, such as domestic violence or labor exploitation and maybe at risk of trafficking. We get calls, people reporting tips on human trafficking or people who have seen suspicious activity. People who are worried about a friend or family member. We see training and technical assistance. People calling in and asking, you

know, I work in a hospital, and I really think our nurses should learn to identify human trafficking victims so we can go out and do that. So we get a whole wide range of calls. And to-date we've had, since we were founded in 2007, we've had over 100,000 calls on the hotline. And we've maintained a substantive data record for every single one of those calls.

We've also received thousands of text messages, emails, and online web tips. We have identified over 15,000 victims of trafficking, people that have high indicators of trafficking based on the assessment that our call specialists do when they pick up the phone. We've reported more than 7,000 human trafficking cases to law enforcement all around the country. We have received calls from over 7,000 victims and survivors, and we've provided about 20,000 referrals to service providers and survivor support.

And just for the record, I am awful with numbers, so if you all want more concrete statistics, I encourage you to check out our website. There's a really big wealth of information there. So those numbers come from running the hotline for the last seven years since 2007. But we actually started operating and studying hotlines in 2004 when we had staff members who would answer cell phones 24 hours a day in Washington D.C. or New Jersey. In 2007 we founded, with the help of HHS and private funds, we founded the, we started the NHTRC. So when I give you those numbers, I'm going to talk about, you know, 24/7 live call specialists, lots of languages.

That seems like a big ask for other hotlines around the world or for countries that may be thinking about starting a hotline. That's a pretty big service, range of services that we can provide. And I just want to emphasize that it wasn't always that way. It took a lot of effort and a lot of time to get from not having a hotline, not having a national hotline in 2007 to that point where we had that extensive coverage. So I want to take a moment and think about what the US landscape looked like when we were establishing the NHTRC.

And there were a lot of things that Polaris noticed. One was that there was very little coordination between the different actors in this field. For example, service providers weren't able to really connect with each other very well and track victims as they potentially moved across the country. So one service provider could work with someone in say, Portland, Oregon. And then that person could move to Texas, and there would be no coordination to see what the ultimate outcomes were. There was not a lot of coordination among law enforcement either. Not a lot of sharing of investigative tools for this field. Not a lot of coordination amongst jurisdictions.

What this meant was that we were reinventing the wheel constantly. There was a lot of duplication of efforts in the US. And we also had really low victim identification. It was really hard to figure out who was out there and who needed help. We had no national data hub. No big picture of what the anti-trafficking landscape looked like in the US. No concept of what the major trends were really, except for anecdotal evidence. Survivors, family members, victims, they didn't really know where to call for help. There was no one, clear go-to place for people to call if they needed information or assistance.

And finally, there was a really heavy focus on sex trafficking in the country. And that was to the exclusion of labor trafficking and labor exploitation, which as we all know is a very chief concern and definitely not to be excluded. So a landscape that looked like this meant there was a lot of opportunity for Polaris. And what I can say now in 2014 is we've learned that hotlines are a really critical part of a sustainable comprehensive approach to eradicating human trafficking and modern slavery. Anti-trafficking hotlines can do a lot of things. They can improve victim identification. They can collect data about what is essentially a hidden crime, and that's great in a field that's really bereft of accurate statistics. And they can support data-driven intervention and prevention. Hotlines are great for uniting the field. They can service the connective tissue between all the different stakeholders in the country and really serve to support those actors. Really provide access to all the

tools and all the resources that are out there. And they can serve as a single, centralized information broker for the field.

So throughout the rest of this I'll be talking a little bit more about how we've accomplished that. I will say that when the hotline started in 2007, nobody knew who we were. There's a lot of representatives of law enforcement and federal agencies here. And I'd be interested if any of you have watched the evolution of the NHTRC what your thoughts are on this. But basically when we started, we had our CEO Brad Miles going out and knocking on doors. Doors of federal agencies and law enforcement agencies and saying hi, we have this national hotline now. You guys should recommend us. You should call us. And that's what we did for years. We just went out and we talked to people and we said, this is who we are. This is what we do. And we really worked on getting buy-in and really convincing people that we had a mechanism that could fill a really big gap in this country.

And it took a long time. But what we've managed to do now is essentially create a regional model in which we have one person that's assigned to several states in the United States, and we call them regional specialists. And their whole job is to go out to the states that they're assigned and build relationships and talk to people face-to-face. So it's not just Brad trying to cover the whole country anymore. And that's been really great for us, because we have managed now to convince federal agencies for example that we are a great resource. And if you noticed yesterday, in some of the FBI/DHS presentations, there was a number at the bottom and it said for victim support or for assistance, call this number.

And that was the NHTRC number. So the more we've talked to everybody that's already out working in this field, the less we have to actually promote our number. Because that number is being promoted as the single central source for victims to go to or others who need information about trafficking. The other great thing about actually going out and do that face-to-face relationship building throughout the country is that we now have over 200 tailored response protocols for every city,

state, for every city and state in the country. So no matter where somebody calls in from the United States, we know exactly who to call in law enforcement. We know exactly which service providers do what and which populations they're willing to serve. So we really have that tailored response mechanism built in. And on the other hand, service providers stay in Portland, Oregon.

Again, I don't know why I'm so heavy on Portland today, but there you go. If a service provider has a victim in Portland, they know that there's one person at Polaris that knows the landscape in Oregon really well that they can call. Law enforcement in Portland will know who that Polaris contact is and can do all the follow ups specifically with that person. So we've streamlined everything through this regional model, but we've also designed all these protocols in collaboration with local actors. And right now we have what we call a root system. So if you conceptualize the NHTRC as a tree, we've got these roots all over the country. And we have the database of over 3,000 local actors that we can draw on depending on who is calling the hotline and what services they need. So that might be law enforcement. That might be social service providers. It is a whole range. This leads me to one of the key lessons I really want to impart about hotlines which is that a successful hotline is absolutely impossible without really robust partnerships. A hotline can't operate in isolation.

We should think of hotlines as a national hub, as a gateway to access all the resources that all of the stakeholders throughout the country are putting together. A hotline, a national hotline cannot provide direct comprehensive services to everyone everywhere in the country any time. So we really would need to rely on those partnerships in the community and be able to link them together to create what we call a national safety net for victims and survivors of human trafficking. And this isn't again just service providers and law enforcement. This is also teachers and schools, healthcare professionals, shelters for other related issues, a whole range of services to make sure that no matter who calls our hotline, we know somebody somewhere in the country that can help that person. I think the other

really great thing about this kind of thinking of a hotline as a national hub and as a gateway to that national system of partnerships is that we have a macro perspective. We know what the landscape looks like throughout the country because we do have that root system throughout the whole country.

What that means is that we can see the gaps. We can see where there's not a lot of resources for trafficking survivors and trafficking victims. We can see where there's not necessarily a lot of victim-centered law enforcement training in particular locales. And then we can actually go out there and help provide the resources and the training and the tools to correct that. And that helps strengthen the collective national response to trafficking. So I think when I talk about this, it sounds like there's a lot of people involved. And obviously there are.

There's a lot of stakeholders in this field. There's a lot of stakeholders that a national hotline has to work with and should work with to be effective. But one of the things we've seen particularly working internationally is that there are hotlines operated by everyone and anyone. And there's no real national hotline. So there will be hotlines operated by small local NGOs, and there will be several of them in the country. There'll be a government hotline. There will be a hotline that's staffed by law enforcement. And each one of these models can demonstrate results and can have merit. But what I would say, what we recommend at Polaris based on our experience is that building trust with callers is absolutely the single most important success factor for a hotline and an NGO hotline operator.

Somebody that is with an NGO and not with government or law enforcement has the highest likelihood of establishing caller confidence. Especially with survivors and other at-risk populations. And our statistic is actually that 70% of people who call the hotline don't want anything to do with law enforcement. And this is something we talked about a lot yesterday, which was that there's not a lot of trust. And this is in the US. Seventy percent of our callers are afraid to involve law enforcement. You can imagine what that looks like internationally where there's very corrupt law

enforcement who themselves often play a role in the trafficking. So when they call a hotline run by law enforcement, they're more scared. And they're not likely to call law enforcement-run hotline. But an NGO-run hotline, a nongovernmental hotline operator cannot arrest you, cannot deport you. It has no criminal authority over you. So if you are a victim and you're in a criminal situation but you were coerced into being in that situation, a nongovernmental hotline operator is a lot easier to talk to potentially than law enforcement. Nongovernmental hotlines also tend to have a really victim-centered approach. Their goal is often to empower the caller to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own decisions. This is another rapport-building element that's really important on a nongovernmental hotline. But nongovernmental organizations are able to maintain neutrality and operate autonomously.

And by doing so, they're able to gain significant access to all the actors throughout the country that we talked about before. So like I said, Polaris has these great relationships with law enforcement throughout the country based on these face-to-face relationship building and also training. So we know that there are victim-centered law enforcement folks out there. We've worked with them. We know that we can contact them and call on them at any time of the day if necessary, and they'll provide support.

So I would say that a nongovernmental hotline is critical for building rapport and trust with callers, but strong cooperation and collaboration with law enforcement is absolutely key. The reason is, we do often report to law enforcement. If a caller doesn't want to, we won't. But we can also work with that caller to help them understand their situation and get them ready to connect with law enforcement. So that when they do ultimately connect with law enforcement, that transition is smooth and supported. And this is going to result in better witnesses and higher conviction rates. So that relationship, our ability to build trust with callers, and to know that we have those relationships with victims-centered law enforcement, is key to informing successful prosecutions as well. So now that I've got us thinking a

little bit in this framework of collaboration, which I know everyone in this room is really keen on, I want to raise another point that we've learned about working with the government.

Again, as I mentioned, when you think about the human trafficking ecosystem in any particular country, there might be dozens of hotlines operating. And each might serve a slightly different purpose, a slightly different locale. A slightly different set of services that they can provide. Those abundance of resources can be really problematic. It can be really difficult for people in the country to discern who they're actually supposed to call and what is the function of that actual hotline. Where they're supposed to get the most appropriate services for their particular needs. But when the government initiates and tenders a single national hotline, this instantly lends it legitimacy and credibility and professionalism. That again makes it more likely for victims to actually call it. It can further be legitimized by mentions in official speeches, public postings, inclusion in official documents and ports of entry.

It can be given to immigrants with their work visas. So for example, certain sets of visas in the US, when people come into the US on those visas, they will get a pamphlet called Know Your Rights pamphlet, and the NHCRT number is on that pamphlet. So anybody that comes into this country with a work visa of a particular kind will get that pamphlet and know they can call us. The other great thing about government backing in addition to lending legitimacy to the hotline is that it actually can get the private sector involved. The private sector is much more likely to invest resources in supporting the marketing of a particular number if they know that that number is credible. So for example, Polaris has been able to bring actors like Google, Facebook, Clear Channel Outdoor, to the table for discussions about promoting the hotline, raising awareness of human trafficking, really working in partnership with the field. We would never have been able to do that without that government support. Without those organizations knowing that Polaris is not just some self-appointed national hotline. That it does have that legitimacy, that it's sanctioned by the government and working in partnership with the government.

Unfortunately I can't talk about government backing without talking about funding. Obviously knowing how limited resources are in this country but elsewhere. We know now that human trafficking hotlines provide a huge variety of effective services, including victim identification, appropriate and easy access to services, data collection, [inaudible] and informed prosecutions and policy making which I'll also talk more about in a moment. Partnership development among stakeholders, information training, tools resources, great range of services. And thus we believe that funding a national hotline offers a really significant return on investment for a government to tender a hotline.

The investment in a national hotline should be seen as an optimization of the entire national anti-trafficking response. And it's a mistake to underfund and under-resource these hotlines because they might be viewed as simply a call center. Or they might be viewed as in direct competition with direct service providers. These are not reasons to not fund a hotline. The fact of the matter is, too many hotlines operate in isolation with very little funding, miniscule budget. They're not sustainable because they're cobbling together small grants from all these different foundations. The funding changes from year to year.

They can't afford to pay their staff. And this is really problematic. So this is a huge challenge we've seen working with hotlines internationally. So I know it's easy for me to stand up here and say, governments should back a hotline. They should fund a hotline. I know it's a lot harder than that, but I still want to make the case for why that's so critical for that hotline to have sustainable funding and backing from the government.

So we really do recommend that governments who are thinking about building a robust national response to trafficking make a significant investment in a national human trafficking hotline. So finally before moving on to talk a little bit more about our global work, I just want to raise again this question of the role that hotlines can play in data collection and analysis. Because I know that that's a chief concern for

many of us here. So of all of the victim-centered services of the hotline are critical. So, you know, we can respond in crises. We can make service referrals, and that's great. And that should absolutely be the core of what we do. But to conceptualize a national hotline as just a mechanism for serving victims is really to underestimate the full potential of a national hotline. National hotlines are hubs of data. They collect valuable information on every single call about how and where human trafficking is happening in real time. It's a really immediate operational impact that we get from this as well, because if we're able to build rapport with callers and build trust, they'll be more comfortable telling us more details about their situation. We can vet that information as the hotline.

Figure out how credible we think it is, and then pass those details on to law enforcement. And our call specialists are trained to ask lots of very detailed questions and to build that kind of trust relationship with the caller so that we do have reportable information for law enforcement. Reports to law enforcement are going to be taken more seriously when they come from an organization with strong vetting procedures than if they were just to receive piecemeal reports here and there from smaller groups. So the operation impact again is really strong. But I would say that our data collection and the impact of that is not just limited to the potential for criminal investigations.

Because a hotline that has robust data collection practices can actually analyze patterns and calls, identify trends, identify vulnerable populations, identify what recruitment tactics traffickers are using. And really help describe the entire scope of trafficking in a country. And again, this is a field that doesn't have great statistics. So this is invaluable. It's not anecdotal. It's coming from thousands of call on a real time basis. And there's a lot of potential for this data.

For criminal investigations we talked a little bit about it. But also, we can often identify a specific location where trafficking is happening. Or a specific brothel. Or a specific hotel room. Or a specific field where trafficking is happening in real time.

We can often identify a controller that's been referenced on multiple calls. And our data systems are actually able to connect the dots between people that are referencing somebody when we're able to realize that oh, actually this person is involved in all six of those cases we've heard over the last six months. And we're able to report that information to law enforcement and get concrete names, concrete physical descriptions, concrete location to really help make a direct and immediate impact on particular trafficking situations.

This kind of data, this macro level data can also help direct investments in the field. So for example, if we're getting calls from all over the country every day saying I'm a male survivor of trafficking, and I cannot find a shelter bed. Nobody will take me. Nobody will help me. That's information that's really critical for us to give to other local stakeholders in the field so we know what the immediate gaps are. And we know as a collective how we need to respond better to trafficking. We can also use that data to engage in large scale studies of particular networks.

So Polaris now is engaging directly in studying Asian massage parlors and the network between them throughout this country. And we're using all the information we've gained on this sector throughout our seven years of running the hotline. And we're now combining it with open source data to really try to identify who the traffickers are, how they're connected to each other, how different businesses that might look like they're independent are connected to other businesses. How the taxi drivers that transport women around are connected to each other. So we're using that information to really try to create a big picture of this network so that we can figure out how to more strategically intervene. So data reports from a national hotline are important tools for both law enforcement and for policy makers. And information from the hotline can be used by all stakeholders to inform strategic action and prevention efforts.

And another point I would just like to make about data collection on a hotline comes from some of what we were talking about yesterday, which is that standardized data

collection is key. There's lots of people that have little bits of data that have been collected in different ways. And trying to match all those pieces of data can be really hard. So, if we have one standardized data system, and we're doing a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of this data, we can be a lot clearer. If we're really, if we're really acting as that hub and collecting information from all these different sources through our hotline. We can be much more comfortable in knowing that everything is quite centralized as opposed to getting data from all these desperate sources with different methodologies, which makes it a lot more difficult to analyze and come out with concrete outcomes. So with all that in mind, I want to talk briefly, how much time do I have?

You have [inaudible]. We're getting close to red line.

Okay great. Well I can work with that. I will just briefly tell you a bit about our global work because we've covered all these great benefits of hotlines, but the fact remains that there are millions of victims of human trafficking that remain unidentified throughout the world, including in the United States. These people can't access help. So if hotlines are so great, why is this the case?

Well, the fact of the matter is, there just isn't a robust hotline infrastructure throughout the world. And like I said, hotlines that do exist are often working in isolation. They're often underfunded, under-resourced, and so Polaris' global work really aims to tackle this problem. We, our global team, the global hotline's team began in 2012, so it's one of the relatively newer programs of Polaris. We are funded by J/Tipp and a Google Impact Award. We also have a grant from the Sales Force Foundation. Sales Force is a CRM, Customer Relationship Management System. And it's a database that we have actually taken. It was originally designed for corporations. We took sales force, and we customized it for hotline use. And we're now actually packaging the customization that we have designed over the last seven years and deploying it to hotlines around the world. Again, so we can get at this

standardized data collection. Make sure that all hotlines are really taking data seriously.

So, we have several different goals on the global team in terms of tackling this problem of lacking a robust hotline infrastructure. I will say selfishly a lot of our motives for founding this program was the fact that we were getting a lot of calls to the NHTRC from abroad, and these calls had no international, no US nexus, and we had no idea what to do. We would essentially just Google like, you know, shelter in Togo, and just basically give the phone number or email address of whatever we could find. So our call specialists really needed to know who was out there. So that's the key of what we do on the global team.

We map every human trafficking hotline and organization that we can possibly find out about everywhere in the world. And then we try to connect with them all. So we really want to understand what the global safety net looks like right now and make connections and build partnerships with those organizations across the globe. Then, particularly with hotlines, we actually want to go out and train and provide technical assistance and really help enhance hotline operations where they do exist or actually start national hotlines and help consult on that process where that infrastructure is completely nonexistent. And we can provide training on general human trafficking.

For example, if it's a domestic violence hotline in a country that wants to start taking trafficking calls or is already receiving them. We can give information on how to design a trafficking assessment. We can help them design response protocols. We can get their technical infrastructure set up. We can help them figure out how to establish a database, what data points to collect. How to manage their data. We can help them access the Google One Box, which is essentially work in partnership with Google to make sure that if somebody in that country Googles help human trafficking or help being forced to work, or whatever the case may be, that hotline number is the first thing that comes up in a little box at the top of the page.

That's something that happens for the NHTRC here in the US. That's a service that we're working with Google to provide to other hotlines around the world. And our goal is to ultimately expand the national safety net and to create a network, a formalized platform where human trafficking and related SU hotlines around the world can get together, share best practices, share data, and increase global coordination and collaboration in terms of tackling trafficking across the globe. So I think with that I will end.