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## **National recommendations aimed at improving states' response to sex trafficking of children and youth**

The National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States (NAC) this week released 127 recommendations for states to use as they work to improve response to sex trafficking of young people throughout the country.

Marissa Castellanos, director of Catholic Charities of Louisville's Bakhita Empowerment Initiative (BEI), is one of 21 professionals nationwide serving as representative members on the NAC.

Castellanos said the recommendations are best practices for preventing and responding to the sex trafficking of children and youth, including practical examples and resources aimed at empowering every state to "raise the bar" in local efforts to address sex trafficking.

"The Committee Report is a guide, a tool, to help us do this work better," she said. "This is a collective work. It takes all of us working together."

The recommendations cover 12 topic areas such as consistent screening to increase identification of trafficked children and youth, guidance for child-serving professionals to improve tailored services, improved prevention efforts, and expanded research to increase evidence-based approaches and improve outcomes.

NAC's recommendations were delivered to Congress and to every governor in the United States upon release. In the next few months, each state will be asked to complete a self-assessment based on the recommendations. According to Castellanos, the report recommendations will help to "push forward states who have been doing this work for many years and those who are at the beginning stages of addressing these issues."

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You may access an overview of the recommendations and the full report [here](#).

The NAC was convened in 2017 to develop extensive recommendations on how to best prevent, intervene, and respond to sex trafficking involving children and youth. This includes decreasing risk factors and vulnerabilities, increasing protective factors, and providing high-quality access to services.

The NAC includes diverse membership from across the country representing a variety of disciplines, focus areas, and tremendous expertise to provide balanced points of view in the report's recommendations and resources, Castellanos said.

Bakhita Empowerment Initiative is a program of Catholic Charities of Louisville that provides direct services to survivors of human trafficking statewide, with offices in Louisville and Lexington.

Catholic Charities of Louisville is the social services arm of the Archdiocese of Louisville and a member of Catholic Charities USA. Founded in 1939, Catholic Charities provides services to people in need, advocates for justice in social structures, and calls the entire church and others of goodwill to do the same.

Castellanos is located in Lexington and is available for interviews in person and remotely. You may contact her at 502-974-4947.

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