



USA SERVICES

USA Services' FirstContact Contract Vehicle Helps Agencies Serve Citizens

Partner Agency: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services — Human Trafficking

The Situation

Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor in homes, factories, and farms. Annually, 600,000 to 800,000 victims are trafficked across international borders worldwide; and between 14,500 and 17,500 of those victims are trafficked into the United States. Victims are young children, teenagers, men and women; and human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world.

In October 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act made human trafficking a federal crime. It was enacted to prevent human trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and to protect victims and help them rebuild their lives in the United States. Victims of human trafficking who are not U.S. citizens are eligible for a special visa and can receive benefits and services. Victims of trafficking who are U.S. citizens may already be eligible for many benefits due to their citizenship.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for helping victims of human trafficking receive benefits and services. As part of this effort, HHS has initiated the Rescue & Restore Victims of Human Trafficking campaign to help identify and assist victims of human trafficking in the United States. The first phase of the campaign focuses on educating health care providers, social service organizations, and the law enforcement community. These groups are considered those most likely to encounter victims. The program aims to help these intermediaries recognize victims and offer assistance through local non-government organizations.

A critical component of the Rescue & Restore campaign is the creation of the Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline, 1-888-373-7888 and e-mail service.

Contact: Carole Dobbs, (202) 219-1680, carole.dobbs@gsa.gov

How USA Services Helps

Contact Center:

Using its FirstContact contract, USA Services awarded a task order on June 8, 2005 to Aspen Systems, one of five pre-qualified vendors. The award is for one year, with three, additional, one-year options. USA Services worked closely with HHS throughout the procurement process.

Aspen agents began taking calls on June 18, 2005. The hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and handles 200 calls a month. Agents primarily respond to calls in English and Spanish.

E-mail service began in November, and agents have been responding to about 50 e-mails a month.

Aspen Systems partners with Covenant House, which has 16 years of experience in the field of telephone crisis intervention and information/referral. It is the largest privately funded childcare agency in the United States providing shelter and service to homeless and runaway youth.

Because of the sensitive nature and urgency of the calls—callers may have only one opportunity to make a call—the contract calls for a wait time of only 15 seconds. The average call lasts 12 minutes. Agents must take the time to build trust with the callers as they may be fearful for their own safety or that of others and may require use of an interpreter. During the call, agents take down information, contact a social service agency in the caller's area, and frequently

conference in other parties so that appropriate actions can be discussed with the caller.

FirstGov.gov Website:

The FirstGov Website—the official portal for U.S. Government information on the Internet—currently links to information about human trafficking under the heading of “Public Safety and Law” on its home page. About 86 million people visited the FirstGov website in 2005.

The Outcome

Department of Health and Human Services' Assessment:

“We could not be more pleased with the entire procurement process and with the quality of the agents who are answering the calls on the hotline,” said Steve Wagner, Director of the Human Trafficking Program at HHS. “The people who answer the phones do so with the sensitivity and the urgency that is required to help the callers escape from an inhumane existence. We know that, through this hotline, we are helping to mend lives.”

