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Breaking the Chains: A Public Health Approach to Modern day Slavery

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Conference Abstract

Breaking the chains: A public health approach to modern day slavery

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Background: Modern day slavery is a \$150 billion industry and the second largest criminal enterprise, behind drug trafficking.¹ Approximately 21-30 million men, women, and children are modern day slaves worldwide, and over 200 cases of human trafficking were confirmed in GA in 2016 alone.^{2,3}

In 2006 Georgia incorporated a statute against trafficking of persons for labor or sexual servitude into its criminal code (see O.C.G.A. § 16-5-46). The penalties for this crime are stiff, and those convicted face a minimum of 10 years in state prison and up to a \$100,000 fine. This is not enough, however. There is a need to identify this as a public health issue and work to create Georgia's "Freedom Ecosystem," a network of key players, including state government, businesses, consumers, and non-profit organizations. Together, these players can make strides in ending and preventing modern day slavery.

Methods: Human trafficking is prevalent across our state, partly due to factors related to supply, demand, and facilitation. By applying a public health lens to human trafficking, we may deconstruct the issue across the socio-ecological model to identify the root causes and the most strategic approaches to overcoming systemic barriers, identifying and aiding victims, and empowering survivors. To do so, the Freedom Ecosystem can be used as a framework for harnessing change.

Results: Through external interviews and research, we identified nine ways that organizations play a role in the Freedom Ecosystem.

Conclusions: Members of Georgia's private sector, civil society, government, funding communities, academia, and the broader public can use a collective-action framework with a public health lens to promote prevention and advance freedom from modern-day slavery.

Key words: modern-day slavery; human trafficking; Freedom Ecosystem

References:

- 1: International Labour Organization Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour, 2014
- 2: Free the Slaves, <http://www.freetheslaves.net/about-slavery/faqs-glossary/>
3. Polaris/National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/georgia>

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