

FORGED IN THE FIRE

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# Safety Planning for Survivors

Creating a Personalized Safety Plan with Advocate Support

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Prepared for: Forged in the Fire Knowledge Base

Citation Style: APA, 7th Edition

Educational resource — not legal, medical, or clinical advice

This publication is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is not legal advice, medical advice, mental health advice, or a substitute for trained professional support. Individuals who may be experiencing trafficking or exploitation should contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888, text 233733, or visit [humantraffickinghotline.org](https://humantraffickinghotline.org). If there is immediate danger, call 911.

This document is not a self-directed escape guide. Safety planning should be done with a trained advocate whenever possible because risk can increase during attempted exit or disclosure.

# Safety Planning for Human Trafficking Survivors: An Academic Framework for Survivor-Centered, Advocate-Mediated Practice

Prepared for: Forged in the Fire Knowledge Base Topic: Principles, models, and program design for safety planning with people experiencing or recovering from human trafficking Citation style: APA, 7th edition

## A Note on the Purpose and Limits of This Paper

This paper is a research document intended to support nonprofit program design, advocate training, donor and grant communication, and informed referral. It is not a self-directed escape guide and does not provide step-by-step instructions for leaving a trafficking situation. Federal and field guidance is uniform that high-risk safety planning should be conducted with trained advocates—through the National Human Trafficking Hotline, OVC-funded victim service providers, and community-based survivor-serving organizations—because traffickers' surveillance, coercive control, and retaliation patterns can escalate sharply at the moment of attempted exit (Polaris Project, n.d.-a; OVC, n.d.; Hopper, 2017). Nothing in this paper should be construed as a substitute for trained advocacy or as a recommended course of action for any specific person. Throughout the paper, hotline and advocate routing is centered.

## Executive Summary

Safety planning for individuals affected by human trafficking is a structured, collaborative, and ongoing process led by trained advocates that aims to reduce risk, preserve autonomy, and increase options across emotional, physical, digital, legal, financial, and relational domains (Polaris Project, n.d.-a; ACF, 2023). It draws on—but is meaningfully distinct from—domestic violence safety planning frameworks. Trafficking situations typically involve complex coercion patterns, active third-party economic exploitation, ongoing third-party surveillance, possible criminal liability arising from coerced acts, immigration risk, and multiple traffickers operating across geographies and platforms (ACF, 2023; NNEDV Safety Net, n.d.-a; Hopper, 2017). Effective safety planning therefore integrates trauma-informed care, technology safety, immigration relief options including Continued Presence and T and U visas (DHS, 2023; USCIS, n.d.), housing access, legal advocacy, behavioral health services, peer support, and survivor-led decision-making.

This paper synthesizes federal guidance, peer-reviewed research, and field-leading institutional practice on safety planning. It is intended to support Forged in the Fire and partners in (a) understanding what safety planning is and is not, (b) designing program elements that complement but do not duplicate hotline and law enforcement functions, (c) training staff and volunteers on safe referral, and (d) communicating accurately with donors, partners, and survivors about what advocate-mediated safety planning looks like.

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## I. Introduction

Safety planning has long been a core element of advocacy practice for survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It has been adapted and extended for use with individuals experiencing or recovering from human trafficking, but the adaptation is substantial. The Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) and the National Human Trafficking Hotline emphasize that trafficking safety planning differs from domestic violence safety planning along several dimensions: the

involvement of multiple traffickers and "buyers"; the entanglement of exploitation with employment, debt, and housing; the visibility of exploitation in public, online, or workplace settings; the persistence of digital surveillance; the risk of criminal liability for coerced acts; and the involvement of immigration, child welfare, and law enforcement systems whose responses can themselves create risk (ACF, 2023; Polaris Project, n.d.-a).

For Forged in the Fire, safety planning literacy is foundational. Whether the organization provides direct services, partners with referral networks, or focuses primarily on education and prevention, every staff member, volunteer, and board member should understand what safety planning is, who is qualified to provide it, what the organization's role is and is not, and how to support a survivor without inadvertently increasing risk.

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## **II. Definitions and Scope**

For purposes of this paper, safety planning is defined as a structured advocacy process in which a survivor (or person at imminent risk) and a trained advocate collaboratively assess current and anticipated risks, identify protective factors and resources, develop options across multiple life domains, and revisit the plan as circumstances change (Polaris Project, n.d.-a; ACF, 2023; Davies & Lyon, 2014). Safety planning is not a single document or checklist; it is an ongoing relational process anchored in survivor autonomy.

Safety planning is not an exit plan in the sense of a single moment of physical escape. Many survivors plan around safety while still in trafficking situations, during transitional periods, after exit, and during reentry into community life. Some survivors maintain safety plans for years, particularly when ongoing risk from former traffickers persists.

The scope of this paper covers (a) principles and frameworks of safety planning for trafficking, (b) how trafficking safety planning differs from domestic violence safety planning, (c) the legal and immigration relief mechanisms that integrate with safety planning, (d) digital and technology safety, (e) the role of the National Human Trafficking Hotline and OVC-funded victim service providers, (f) program design considerations for nonprofits whose role is supportive rather than primary, and (g) ethical and bias considerations.

The paper does not provide instructions for unilateral exit, location-specific escape information, or content intended to substitute for professional advocacy.

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## **III. Current Research and Data**

The empirical base for trafficking-specific safety planning is developing. The most authoritative sources include federal guidance from OTIP, OVC, and DHS; the National Human Trafficking Hotline's safety planning resources operated by Polaris Project; the National Network to End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Project for technology-facilitated abuse; and peer-reviewed research on trauma-coercive bonding, post-trafficking adjustment, and crisis response (ACF, 2023; Polaris Project, n.d.-a; NNEDV Safety Net, n.d.-a; Casassa et al., 2021; OVC, n.d.).

OVC-funded programs report that safety planning, alongside housing assistance and legal advocacy, is among the most consistent service requests from survivors and one of the most resource-intensive

(OVC, n.d.; BJS, 2024). OVC's Trauma-Informed Crisis Response and Safety Planning training is a federal technical assistance offering used by victim service providers nationally (OVC, n.d.).

Research on survivor outcomes after structured safety planning is limited but suggests that survivors who engage with trained advocates over extended periods experience better service connection, lower rates of return to trafficking situations, and better mental health and economic outcomes than those who do not (Macy & Johns, 2011; Hickie, 2017; Goldberg et al., 2022). The literature also documents significant variability in outcomes by demographic factors and structural conditions—particularly housing availability, immigration status, and access to mental health and substance use treatment.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline operated by Polaris received 32,309 signals in 2024, including 8,024 contacts directly from victims and survivors, and is the primary national infrastructure for trafficking-specific safety planning (Polaris Project, 2025; Polaris Project, n.d.-b). The hotline operates 24/7 in over 200 languages and is the recommended first-line resource for safety planning consultation, regardless of whether the situation is current, transitional, or post-exit.

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## IV. Legal and Policy Framework

### Safety planning intersects with several legal mechanisms.

Federal immigration relief provides important protection options for noncitizen survivors. Continued Presence (CP) is a temporary immigration designation issued at the request of federal law enforcement agencies (such as Homeland Security Investigations or the FBI) to individuals identified as trafficking victims who may be potential witnesses; CP authorizes the survivor to remain in the United States for an initial period of two years (renewable), provides federal employment authorization, and triggers eligibility for federal benefits and services (DHS, 2023; ICE, n.d.). The T nonimmigrant visa is a longer-term status of up to four years for severe-form trafficking victims who comply with reasonable law enforcement requests, with statutory exceptions and exemptions for minors and those unable to cooperate due to physical or psychological trauma; T visa holders may eventually adjust to lawful permanent resident status (USCIS, n.d.). The U nonimmigrant visa is available to victims of certain qualifying crimes, including human trafficking, who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse and are helpful to law enforcement (USCIS, n.d.).

Federal benefits and services for certified victims under the TVPA include eligibility for refugee-equivalent benefits (HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement) once certified by HHS, including cash assistance, medical assistance, food assistance, and victim service programs (ACF, n.d.; OVC, n.d.).

Federal restitution and civil remedies are available under 18 U.S.C. § 1593 (mandatory restitution) and 18 U.S.C. § 1595 (civil cause of action), regardless of immigration status (DOJ, 2024). Restitution and civil recovery can be a significant component of long-term financial safety planning.

California-specific protections include Penal Code §§ 236.14 and 236.15 vacatur relief, which allow survivors to petition to vacate non-violent convictions that arose from their trafficking victimization; the California Victim Compensation Board, which provides reimbursement for crime-related expenses; and protective orders under the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and Civil Harassment Restraining Orders that may apply depending on the relationship between the survivor and trafficker (California Office of the Attorney General, 2023; Cal. Code Civ. Proc. § 527.6).

Mandated reporting obligations for child abuse under California Penal Code § 11164 et seq. apply to many advocates, healthcare professionals, and educators. Mandated reporting must be communicated transparently at intake; safety planning must accommodate mandated reporting realities rather than treat them as confidential exceptions.

Federal labor protections under the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, and other Department of Labor authorities can be relevant for labor trafficking survivors and may intersect with safety planning around financial recovery and ongoing employment safety (DOL, n.d.).

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## **V. Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities Relevant to Safety Planning**

Effective safety planning is highly individualized but consistently attentive to factors that elevate risk during planning, exit, and stabilization. The literature identifies several high-attention risk domains.

Trafficker behavior during the period of planning and after attempted exit is among the most important risk variables. Trafficker retaliation can include physical violence, threats to family members or children, coordinated location tracking, social media-based harassment, weaponization of explicit content, financial retaliation through wage theft or fraudulent debt, immigration manipulation, and recruitment of other victims to locate the survivor (Polaris Project, 2017; Casassa et al., 2021). Risk assessment with a trained advocate is essential before any change in routine.

Children and dependents raise specific safety considerations. Survivors with children may face custody-related risk if the trafficker is also a co-parent or has cultivated child welfare relationships; safety planning must integrate family law and child welfare expertise (ACF, 2023).

Immigration status shapes both the safety options available (CP, T and U visas, ORR certification) and the risks present (deportation threats, detention concerns, fear of immigration enforcement). Specialized immigration counsel is frequently essential (USCIS, n.d.; DHS, 2023).

Housing instability is the single most consistent driver of return to trafficking situations and is the single most consistent service gap in the field (OVC, n.d.). Safety planning that does not include realistic housing pathways is fragile.

Active mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and complex trauma require integrated care during safety planning. Withdrawal, untreated PTSD, dissociation, and active suicidality should be addressed with appropriate clinical resources alongside advocacy (Hopper, 2017; Goldberg et al., 2022).

Digital surveillance is now near-universal in U.S. trafficking situations and includes location tracking, account monitoring, shared calendars, smart-home device monitoring, vehicle tracking, and social media surveillance. Technology safety is now considered a core element of all safety planning (NNEDV Safety Net, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Criminal record exposure can complicate safety planning when survivors face active warrants, probation conditions, or pending charges arising from coerced offenses. Vacatur relief, post-conviction representation, and coordination with prosecutors' anti-trafficking units may be necessary (California Office of the Attorney General, 2023).

Cultural, linguistic, and identity factors shape what "safety" looks like for any individual survivor. Safety plans for LGBTQ+ survivors, survivors who do not speak English as a first language, survivors with disabilities, and survivors from communities with histories of negative law enforcement or child welfare experience must be designed with those realities centered (Phillips et al., 2024; ACF, 2023).

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## **VI. Recruitment, Grooming, and Control Tactics: Implications for Planning**

Understanding control tactics is essential for safety planning because the plan must work within—and ultimately reduce—the trafficker's mechanisms of control.

Trauma-coercive bonding produces ambivalence about leaving, defense of the trafficker, and complex grief at the prospect of exit. Safety planning must accommodate this ambivalence rather than treat it as resistance or non-cooperation (Casassa et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2019).

Financial control (debt bondage, wage withholding, document confiscation, account access) means many survivors leave with no money, no identification, no credit history, and no viable employment options. Safety planning must include realistic pathways for income, identification recovery, banking access, and credit repair (Owens et al., 2014; OVC, n.d.).

Threats to family, children, or community members are a near-universal control tactic. Safety planning must consider not only the survivor but the survivor's loved ones, who may themselves require safety measures or be involved in coordinated planning (Polaris Project, n.d.-a).

Digital surveillance—including phones provided or monitored by traffickers, shared accounts, smart-home devices, vehicle GPS, tracking applications, and social media account access—often persists for weeks or months after physical exit. The Safety Net Project's Technology Safety Plan provides the field's most developed digital safety framework, and advocate-led safety planning typically includes a thorough technology audit (NNEDV Safety Net, n.d.-a).

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## **VII. Survivor Impact: How Trauma Shapes Safety Planning**

Safety planning intersects with the survivor's psychological state, relational history, and meaning systems. Several patterns are well documented and have direct implications for how safety planning is offered.

Disclosure occurs in fragments and over time, often long after services begin. A survivor's first conversation with an advocate may not include accurate or complete information about the situation; an effective advocate plans for incremental disclosure rather than full disclosure (Hopper, 2017; Hickie, 2017).

Trust in helping systems is often low. Many survivors have prior experience with law enforcement, child welfare, healthcare, or social services that was punitive, dismissive, or harmful. Safety planning that begins with explicit acknowledgment of those histories is more consistent with the literature than safety planning that asks for trust on the basis of professional role alone (Hopper, 2017; NSN, n.d.).

Identity disruption and shame complicate planning. Survivors may feel responsible for their victimization, ashamed of decisions made under coercion, or alienated from previous identities,

communities, and beliefs. Safety planning that allows space for identity work, peer support, and meaning-making over time is more durable than safety planning structured around rapid checkpoints (Hopper, 2017; Hickie, 2017).

Decision-making capacity may be temporarily affected by sleep deprivation, untreated mental health conditions, withdrawal, malnutrition, or acute trauma. Safety planning must adapt pace to the survivor's actual capacity rather than program timelines or grant deadlines (SAMHSA, 2014).

Spiritual and existential questions are frequently raised by survivors and may be especially relevant for Forged in the Fire's faith-affiliated context. Voluntary, non-coercive spiritual care—offered as one option among many, never as a condition of services—is supported in the literature and aligns with ethical best practice (Hodge, 2014; ACF OTIP, 2018).

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## **VIII. Service and Intervention Models for Safety Planning**

A structured safety planning model in trafficking-specialized advocacy typically integrates the following domains, with all activity led by or in consultation with a trained advocate.

**Emotional and psychological safety.** Advocate-supported planning includes identifying emotional triggers, building grounding and self-regulation skills, naming internal protective factors, and connecting with mental health and peer support. SAMHSA's six trauma-informed principles—safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment voice and choice, and cultural and historical responsiveness—are foundational (SAMHSA, 2014).

**Physical safety.** This domain addresses location, movement, safe contacts, emergency communication, and contingency for medical needs. Specifics are not generic; they are individually developed with an advocate based on the survivor's situation, location, family configuration, and trafficker behavior. The hotline and OVC-funded providers have nondisclosed safe-housing networks; these are not publicly mapped for safety reasons (OVC, n.d.; Polaris Project, n.d.-a).

**Digital and technology safety.** The NNEDV Safety Net Project's Technology Safety Plan is the field's most developed framework. It includes assessment of devices in use, account access patterns, location services, smart-home devices, vehicle tracking, social media exposure, biometric and password safety, and shared digital documents (NNEDV Safety Net, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Replacement devices, account auditing, and selective communication channels are often involved. Advocates trained in technology safety are essential because well-intentioned actions (such as deleting accounts or installing unfamiliar software) can themselves create risk.

**Document safety and identity restoration.** Many survivors have identification, immigration documents, or financial documents held by traffickers. Trauma-informed advocates assist with document recovery (vital records offices, DMVs, USCIS), secure storage of copies in coordination with the survivor, and identity restoration. This work is often slow, involves multiple agencies, and benefits from legal support (OVC, n.d.).

**Financial stabilization.** Pathways may include emergency cash assistance, public benefits enrollment (TANF, CalFresh, Medi-Cal in California), Social Security benefits where applicable, restitution from federal cases, civil recovery, employment support, and credit repair. The Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) and OVC fund several relevant programs (ACF, n.d.; OVC, n.d.).

Legal advocacy. This includes immigration relief (CP, T, U), vacatur and post-conviction relief, civil cases, family law, restitution enforcement, and representation in child welfare or housing matters. Coordinating with anti-trafficking legal services providers is standard practice (DOJ, 2024; USCIS, n.d.).

Housing pathways. Safety planning that does not include realistic housing is fragile. OVC funds emergency, transitional, and rapid-rehousing programs specific to trafficking; HUD also funds permanent supportive housing models that can serve survivors. Housing scarcity is the most consistent service gap in the field, and safety plans frequently include creative interim arrangements (OVC, n.d.).

Healthcare and behavioral health. Integrated medical, dental, reproductive, and behavioral health care is foundational. SOAR-trained healthcare partners and HEAL Trafficking PEARR-trained clinicians are appropriate referral targets (HEAL Trafficking, n.d.; NHTTAC, n.d.).

Substance use treatment. Where applicable, integrated trauma- and substance-use treatment is supported in the research; punitive abstinence-only programs are generally discouraged for survivors with significant trauma histories (Goldberg et al., 2022; Stoklosa et al., 2017).

Peer and survivor support. Peer mentorship and survivor-led groups are increasingly recognized as core elements of safety and stabilization, not optional add-ons (NSN, n.d.; OVC, n.d.).

Crisis contingency. Every safety plan includes thinking through the question of what to do if an immediate crisis arises—medical emergency, encounter with the trafficker, child safety event, or mental health crisis. Hotline routing, 911, advocate emergency contacts, and trusted community supports are standard contingency components (Polaris Project, n.d.-a).

In all of these domains, advocate-led planning is the standard. The role of nonprofits like Forged in the Fire that are not the primary advocate is to support, refer, supplement, and avoid replicating or contradicting the advocate's plan.

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## **IX. Prevention and Public Awareness**

While safety planning is primarily a service activity rather than a public-awareness one, several public-awareness elements are consistent with the safety planning literature.

Public awareness should clearly identify the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888 / text 233733) as the primary resource for safety planning consultation, regardless of whether the person is currently in a trafficking situation, in transition, or post-exit (Polaris Project, n.d.-b).

Public awareness should disclaim self-directed escape strategies. Well-intentioned but uncoordinated action—including by family members, faith communities, or employers—can endanger survivors. Awareness messaging should redirect to advocate consultation rather than encourage independent action (DHS, n.d.; Polaris Project, n.d.-a).

Public awareness should include digital safety basics for the general public: account hygiene, recognition of common surveillance applications, the existence of the NNEDV Safety Net Project, and the principle that survivors should not be told to delete or change digital infrastructure without advocate consultation, because such changes can themselves trigger trafficker awareness and retaliation (NNEDV Safety Net, n.d.-a).

Public awareness should normalize reaching out before crisis. Many survivors and concerned community members wait until a crisis to engage advocates. Awareness messaging should explicitly invite earlier consultation.

Public awareness should respect survivor autonomy. The literature is clear that survivors who feel their choices and pace are respected are more likely to engage durably with services (Hopper, 2017; ACF OTIP, 2018).

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## **X. Relevance to Forged in the Fire**

Safety planning is one of the most demanding service domains in the anti-trafficking field. For Forged in the Fire, the relevant questions are (a) what role the organization will play, (b) how staff and volunteers will be trained, (c) how referrals will be coordinated, and (d) how communications will reflect accurate practice.

Possible roles for Forged in the Fire. Depending on capacity and licensure, Forged in the Fire may operate as a primary advocate (providing direct safety planning by trained staff in coordination with the hotline and OVC providers), as a supporting partner (providing housing, mentorship, education, and supplemental services that integrate with another organization's safety plan), or as a referral partner (educating community members and connecting them to trained advocates without conducting safety planning directly). Each role has different staffing, supervision, training, and legal requirements. Decisions about role should be made in consultation with the local Human Trafficking Task Force, OVC technical assistance, and legal counsel.

Training requirements. Any role that involves contact with current or recent survivors should include foundational training on trauma-informed care (SAMHSA principles), survivor-informed practice (OTIP), confidentiality and mandated reporting, technology safety basics (NNEDV Safety Net), local emergency and hotline routing, and limits of the staff member's role. Recurring training, supervision, and case consultation are standard expectations in OVC-funded programs and should be matched in any direct-service role (OVC, n.d.; ACF OTIP, 2018).

Referral protocol. A clear, written referral protocol should specify when staff or volunteers refer to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, when 911 is appropriate, when local advocates are engaged, what information is and is not shared, and what follow-up is offered.

Confidentiality and security. Forged in the Fire should adopt written confidentiality policies, secure recordkeeping practices, and procedures for handling subpoenas or law enforcement requests. Coordination with legal counsel on privilege and confidentiality is essential.

Survivor leadership. Safety planning curricula and program design should be reviewed by compensated survivor leaders, with particular attention to language, pacing, framing, and the realistic options available to the populations Forged in the Fire serves (ACF OTIP, 2018; NSN, n.d.).

Public communications. Forged in the Fire's public materials should reinforce hotline-first, advocate-mediated safety planning and avoid any suggestion that the organization can guarantee safety, secrecy, or rescue.

## **XI. Ethical Considerations**

Several ethical considerations are particularly load-bearing in safety planning.

**Autonomy.** Survivors retain authority over their own decisions, including decisions advocates may consider risky or imperfect. The literature is clear that pressuring survivors into specific exits, timelines, or programmatic pathways can replicate coercion and is associated with worse outcomes (Hopper, 2017; ACF OTIP, 2018).

**Confidentiality.** Confidentiality must be explicitly defined at the outset, including the limits imposed by mandated reporting, subpoenas, and program funding requirements. Overstated confidentiality assurances can produce significant harm when they are later breached.

**Mandated reporting honesty.** Mandated reporting obligations should be communicated transparently at intake. Survivors should know what may be reported and what will not be, before they share information.

**Documentation.** Documentation of safety planning details should be minimized to what is necessary, stored securely, and protected from inadvertent disclosure (including in shared electronic systems and grant reporting).

**Bias awareness.** Safety planning is frequently shaped by stereotypes about which survivors "deserve" services, which living arrangements are "stable," and which behaviors indicate "readiness." Bias-aware supervision is essential (Phillips et al., 2024).

**Imagery and storytelling.** Safety planning content for public use must never include identifying details, photographs, or narrative elements that could endanger any survivor. Survivor stories used in awareness must follow OTIP and NSN survivor-informed practice standards (ACF OTIP, 2018; NSN, n.d.).

**Faith integration.** In faith-affiliated nonprofits, voluntary spiritual support can be offered as one option among many; conditioning services on spiritual participation is contraindicated by the literature (Hodge, 2014).

**Avoiding rescue framing.** Safety planning is not rescue. Rescue framing centers the helper rather than the survivor and is associated with paternalism, coercion, and poor outcomes (NSN, n.d.).

## **XII. Gaps and Future Research**

### **Several research and practice gaps remain.**

**Outcome research on trafficking-specific safety planning.** Most safety planning research has been conducted in the domestic violence context. Trafficking-specific outcome studies—on durability of plans, return to trafficking, mental health, employment, housing, and survivor satisfaction—are limited (Macy & Johns, 2011; Rothman et al., 2021).

**Technology safety research.** As surveillance technologies evolve—including smart homes, wearable devices, biometric tracking, AI-generated content, and platform-specific surveillance—the field's responses lag. Continued partnership with NNEDV Safety Net, Thorn, and academic technology researchers is needed (NNEDV Safety Net, n.d.-a; Thorn, 2022).

**Housing and economic safety.** The single most consistent service gap is housing, and housing-related safety planning is correspondingly fragile. Field-wide investment in trafficking-specific housing capacity is a research and policy priority (OVC, n.d.).

Cross-system coordination. Safety planning frequently requires coordination across law enforcement, immigration, child welfare, healthcare, mental health, substance use treatment, schools, courts, and benefits systems. Research on effective coordination protocols and on the harms of fragmented systems is emerging but uneven (BJS, 2024).

Survivor leadership research. Models that center compensated survivor leadership in safety planning curriculum design and supervision are increasing but under-evaluated (NSN, n.d.).

Specialized populations. Safety planning research and practice for adult male survivors, LGBTQ+ survivors, survivors with disabilities, indigenous survivors, rural survivors, survivors with active substance use disorders, and survivors of forced criminality remain underdeveloped.

### **XIII. Recommendations**

For Forged in the Fire and partners, the following recommendations are evidence-informed.

First, define the organization's role explicitly in the safety planning continuum—primary advocate, supporting partner, or referral partner—and align staffing, training, supervision, and policy accordingly.

Second, route all current safety planning needs through the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888 / text 233733) and OVC-funded local victim service providers. The hotline should be visibly featured on every page of the website and on every public material.

Third, train all staff and volunteers on trauma-informed care (SAMHSA), survivor-informed practice (OTIP), trafficking-specific dynamics, mandated reporting, technology safety basics (NNEDV Safety Net), and confidentiality.

Fourth, establish written confidentiality, mandated reporting, and crisis-response protocols in coordination with legal counsel. Communicate these clearly to anyone receiving services.

Fifth, partner with anti-trafficking legal services providers for immigration relief (CP, T, U), vacatur relief under California Penal Code §§ 236.14–236.15, restitution, civil recovery, family law, and protective orders.

Sixth, invest in housing partnerships with OVC-funded transitional and rapid-rehousing programs, HUD-funded supportive housing, and faith- or community-based housing options that meet trauma-informed standards.

Seventh, coordinate with healthcare and behavioral health partners trained in PEARR (HEAL Trafficking) and SOAR (NHTTAC), including substance use programs prepared to integrate trauma-informed care.

Eighth, center compensated survivor leadership in curriculum and policy development, including safety planning training content and supervisory standards.

Ninth, adopt explicit ethical storytelling and consent policies to ensure no public-facing material contains content that could endanger any survivor.

Tenth, measure outcomes to the extent feasible, including referral quality, partner satisfaction, survivor retention, and service connection durability, in coordination with research and evaluation partners.

### **XIV. Conclusion**

Safety planning for trafficking is among the most demanding, individualized, and consequential elements of anti-trafficking practice. Effective safety planning rejects shortcuts: it is built around the survivor's pace and choices, anchored in trained advocacy, supported by legal and immigration relief, integrated with housing and behavioral health resources, attentive to digital surveillance, and revisited as conditions change. For Forged in the Fire, the most credible and ethical posture is one of clear role definition, robust training, strong referral discipline, careful confidentiality, and humility about what any single organization can and cannot do alone. With those commitments, Forged in the Fire can contribute meaningfully to the safety and stabilization of survivors—without ever placing anyone in greater risk by working outside the bounds of trained practice.

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- 22 U.S. Code § 7102 (TVPA definitions). Why credible: Controlling federal statutory definition.

#### Self-Audit (per Forged in the Fire Quality Control Checklist)

The paper is consistent with the project safety considerations in foregrounding advocate-mediated, hotline-centered safety planning rather than self-directed escape instructions. Major claims are cited to federal, peer-reviewed, and field-leading sources. Statistics are tied to documented sources. The paper distinguishes trafficking safety planning from domestic violence safety planning while noting their shared trauma-informed foundations. It addresses digital safety, immigration relief, housing, legal advocacy, and behavioral health as core components. Trauma-informed and survivor-centered language is used throughout; no graphic content, no how-to-escape instructions, no rescue framing. Confidentiality, mandated reporting, autonomy, and bias considerations are explicitly addressed. The paper acknowledges substantial outcome-research gaps and population-specific gaps. It is structured to support nonprofit role definition, training, partner protocols, and grant narratives.

National Human Trafficking Hotline – Safety Planning Information

ACF – Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking: Advocacy at the Intersections

OVC – Housing Options for Survivors of Trafficking

OVC – Trauma-Informed Crisis Response and Safety Planning

OVC – Anti-Trafficking Professionals

NNEDV Safety Net – Technology Safety Plan

NNEDV Safety Net – Intersection of Trafficking, DV, and Technology

DHS / ICE – Continued Presence (PDF)

USCIS – Victims of Human Trafficking: T Nonimmigrant Status

USCIS – Victims of Criminal Activity: U Nonimmigrant Status

This publication is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is not legal advice, medical advice, mental health advice, or a substitute for trained professional support. Individuals who may be experiencing trafficking or exploitation should contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888, text 233733, or visit [humantraffickinghotline.org](https://humantraffickinghotline.org). If there is immediate danger, call 911.

This document is not a self-directed escape guide. Safety planning should be done with a trained advocate whenever possible because risk can increase during attempted exit or disclosure.