



## Human Trafficking Awareness Month

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. To promote awareness about human trafficking, the Illinois Human Trafficking Task Force is offering a free education series this month. The first part of the series is a free webinar that takes place online on Tuesday, January 11th from 9:30am to 11:30am. The webinar will include a survivor's personal story, a panel of experts from Illinois, and training that will allow participants to better understand the signs of human trafficking. Register for the webinar:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8121212121?pwd=ZlZURZpWfwx>

**Prevent Child Abuse Illinois**  
**Trafficking Webinar Series**  
**PART I**

Join us as we explore the fundamentals of youth sexual exploitation and human trafficking. This training will include a survivor's compelling personal story as well as information from a panel of experts from across the state. Participants will be able to better identify potential human trafficking victims, better understand the scope of the issue in Illinois, and become familiar with tools for program development if they are interested in a focus on human trafficking at their agency.

**MEET OUR SPEAKERS**

**Patricia (Trish) McKnight | Founder/CEO, Butterfly Dreams Alliance (BDA)**  
Trish McKnight is the Founder & CEO of Butterfly Dreams Alliance (BDA), a nonprofit which provides advocacy, peer support, assessment, and assistance. BDA focuses on family violence, sexual abuse, human trafficking, recovery and rebuilding, awareness/prevention, and community outreach, especially in the rural Midwest regions. She is also the author of her memoir-style novel, which is based on her sexual and physical abuse and trafficking that were hidden in her family and from the community for more than a decade. It is also a story of Trish McKnight's resilient journey to overcome adversity and how she has used her experiences to guide her anti-child trafficking advocacy work to change the intergenerational traumatic cycle often hidden in rural America.

**Sara Seifried | Central Illinois Human Trafficking Task Force**  
Sara Seifried is the coordinator of the Central Illinois Human Trafficking Task Force, employed through a collaboration between the Illinois State Police and Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. Sara is assigned to the Division of Criminal Investigations within the Statewide Terrorism and Intelligence Center.

**Laura Ng, MSW | Chicago Children's Advocacy Center**  
Laura Ng joined Chicago CAC in 2019 as the agency's Human Trafficking Specialist. With over ten years of experience fighting human trafficking, she has helped Chicago CAC expand and increase its focus in this area over the past few years. Laura received a Master's in Social Work at the University of Illinois-Chicago in 2015 with a concentration in Community Health and Urban Development. In 2018, she was recognized with the Rising Alumni Award.

**PANELISTS**

**Patricia (Trish) McKnight | Founder/CEO, Butterfly Dreams Alliance**  
**Panel Sponsor:** Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation  
**Detective Amy Robinson** | Sangamon County Sheriff's Office  
**Victoria Davis-Jones** | Illinois Department of Children & Family Services  
**Dr. Kisha Roberts-Tabb** | Girls' Night Out, Roberts-Tabb and Associates, LLC, Cook County Juvenile Court  
**Karetha Balagopal** | United States Attorney's General Office, Southern District of Illinois  
**Margaret Conway** | Lincolnwood Police Department  
**Daisy Gomez** | Hartgrove Behavioral Health System, Garfield Park Behavioral Hospital  
**Ashley Kizler** | Federal Bureau of Investigations, Chicago Division

**Tuesday, January 11, 2022**  
**9:30am-11:30am**  
**FREE**

The following CEUs will be offered:  
Social Work, Domestic Violence\*

**TO REGISTER:**  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8121212121?pwd=ZlZURZpWfwx>

**Thank you to our partners:**  
Central Illinois Human Trafficking Task Force  
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois  
Chicago Children's Advocacy Center  
United States Attorney's General Office - Southern Dist.  
Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force

\*Domestic Violence credit will cost \$5 and will need to be paid for by the participant.

For any questions, please email Jennifer Samartano at [jsamartano@pcaillinois.org](mailto:jsamartano@pcaillinois.org).

## Energy Assistance for Winter

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Citizens Utility Board are reminding residents to apply for \$200 million remaining in utility assistance under Gov. JB Pritzker's Help Illinois Families initiative – an expansion of the Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program under the American Rescue Plan. Designed to support Illinois' most vulnerable families, the program will help cover the cost of heating and energy bills, including expanded benefits provided this year from \$750 to \$1,000, on average per household. To learn more and to fill out a new remote application, visit [helpillinoisfamilies.com](http://helpillinoisfamilies.com).

## Illinois Rental Assistance

Vulnerable renters and landlords have already received \$505 million of emergency rental assistance, as Illinois leads the nation in distributing this federal funding faster than any other state to help more than 57,000 households. The Illinois Housing Development Authority opened a new round of assistance Dec. 6, and the Illinois Department of Human Services is currently accepting applications for rental assistance. Struggling households can find resources [here](#). The application will close on January 9th!

## Grants Available for Community Projects

The Federal Economic Development Administration's Economic Adjustment Assistance program will help hundreds of communities across the nation plan, build, innovate and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs. \$500 million is available to fund an estimated 300 projects. There is a rolling deadline with a suggested submission date of March 31, 2022. Webinars and more information can be found [here](#).

## What's Next?

Our office partners with State Representative Maura Hirschauer and co-runs four advisory committees: Environmental and Agriculture, Mental Health, Seniors, and Education. These committees are a limited public forum led by volunteer chairs and seek to create compassionate conversation among the voices of the 25th/49th districts in order to help build our legislative agenda and grow our knowledge in these areas. Our Senior Advisory Committee will meet on January 14th at 10am. Please email [seniors.49th@gmail.com](mailto:seniors.49th@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending.

My staff and I look forward to hearing from you. I encourage you to reach out to us at 630-326-9319 (English), 630-326-9419 (Spanish) or [constituentservices@senatorvilla.com](mailto:constituentservices@senatorvilla.com).

Be well!

Karina Villa, MSW  
State Senator, 25th District