

BRUNCH & BRAINSTORM

June 18, 2026

Takeaways

Building Capacity to Combat Labor Trafficking

Using Workforce Systems: WIOA and America's Job Centers

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and America's Job Centers are underused partners for survivor-serving organizations. Many centers may not recognize labor trafficking in their communities or understand how to serve survivors in a trauma-informed way. What can you do?

- Connect with the local America's Job Center and Workforce Development Board.
- Start a conversation about a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or other structured partnership.
- Clarify what the survivor-serving organization provides and what the workforce partner provides.
- Offer cross-training on labor trafficking, trauma-informed engagement, and appropriate referrals.
- Create a two-way referral process: workforce staff can recognize and refer potential trafficking survivors, while survivor-serving organizations can connect survivors to workforce services.
- Seek representation from the anti-trafficking community on local workforce boards, where local policies and funding practices may be shaped.

Trauma-Informed Workforce Reentry Practices

Labor trafficking recovery should not be treated exactly like other forms of violence. Workforce reentry may require specialized support because survivors may associate employment, work history, supervision, or wage-related issues with trauma.

- Do not treat resume writing as a simple administrative task. Reviewing work history, explaining job gaps, and responding to standard interview questions can be retraumatizing.
- Assess readiness before beginning employment activities. A survivor may need time, stabilization, or therapeutic support before engaging in job search activities.
- Offer survivor choice and pacing throughout resume development, job search, interviewing, and onboarding. Use career planning conversations to identify work that feels safe, realistic, and sustainable for the survivor.
- Use joint support when helpful. A survivor advocate, workforce professional, and therapist or financial therapist may be able to work together.
- Help survivors prepare for difficult interview questions, including questions about job history or reasons for leaving prior employment.
- Build safety planning into job search and mock interview activities.

Financial Stability Is Workforce Readiness

- Address coerced debt, wage garnishment risk, criminal record clearing, and access to legal assistance early. These issues can undermine employment, housing, and income stability later.
- Consider financial therapy and financial planning as part of recovery support. The presenter described trafficking as an economic crime that may require deeper support around money, financial decision-making, and future independence.
- Partner with local credit unions or community financial institutions that offer accessible financial education or planning support.
- Use the MIT Living Wage Calculator to help survivors and case managers compare wages with local household needs and plan for sustainable work.

Workplace Accommodations and Job Retention

- Use a rights-based and accessibility-focused approach. Reframe job difficulties as potential barriers that can be identified and addressed, not as evidence that a survivor is "difficult" or unable to work.
- Discuss reasonable accommodations that may support safety and job retention, including accommodations related to supervision and communication style. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a great resource for this.
- Educate survivors about possible accommodation requests during the interview process, onboarding, and employment. Encourage consultation with qualified legal or disability resources when needed.
- Consider referral to the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR may offer workforce inclusion services, job coaching, and coordination with employers and supervisors for people with disabilities.

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Supportive Services and Career Preparation

- Explore whether supportive services connected to training or career development are available through local workforce systems, your organization, or other partner organizations.
- Plan for the period before a survivor can lawfully begin paid work. Some workforce development and training services may be available before job placement or other earned-income services.

Preparing for Employment

This [takeaways sheet](#) highlights main ideas from the March 31, 2022 training led by Carolyn Ouya on labor trafficking survivors' post-trafficking employment needs, barriers to employment connection, prioritizing survivor goals, employment readiness conversations, and elements of employment success. You can also watch the full event [HERE](#).

Comining Soon at Framework

Join us in July for our next Brunch & Brainstorm! We will be joined by a Survivor Speaker subject matter expert who will lead a discussion on labor trafficking in sports, including how exploitation risks can emerge across recruitment, major events, staffing, and related systems.

 [July 16th at 1 p.m. ET — Register here!](#)

Miranda Pond

“There is no survivor freedom without financial inclusion” - Miranda Pond, Human Trafficking Subject Matter Expert Consultant. A huge thank you to Miranda, who joined us to discuss economic empowerment, employment, and unlocking WIOA for labor trafficking survivors. Her PowerPoint can be accessed [HERE](#) and other resources she mentioned or wanted to share out are below!

Resources Shared

- [CareerOneStop](#): your source for career exploration, training, and jobs - and how to access WIOA!
- [The Financial Therapy Association \(FTA\)](#) exists to unite professionals from multiple disciplinary backgrounds to foster the financial therapy profession, disseminate cutting-edge research, best practices, and training that enhance client quality of life, and shape public policy and practice management standards within financial therapy
- [The Living Wage Calculator](#) helps individuals, communities, employers, and others estimate the local wage rate that a full-time worker requires to cover the costs of their family's basic needs where they live.
- [Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed - ALICE](#): wage tools for case, benefits, and career planning, and working with employers to increase job quality for ALICE workers
- [DOL Education & Training Administration's Anti-Trafficking Response and Role in Eradication](#)
- [Job Applicants and the ADA](#) and [Enforcement Guidance on Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship under the ADA](#)
- [JAN Network](#) and understanding how employment supervision accommodations can increase survivor employment retention rates
- [CSAJ's Coerced Debt, Direct Cash & Flex Funding](#) launch webinar
- [NCLC's Surviving Debt](#): more consumer-facing than for advocates, but it provides a thorough background of the issue and outlines steps consumers and advocates can take. [Chapter 21](#) is about dealing with debt from an abusive partner.
- [NCLC's Assisting Survivors of Domestic Violence with Coerced Debt](#) article on helping victims of coerced debt.
- [NCLC's Coerced Debt topics page](#)