



S.1446, SOAR to Health and Wellness Act

Background

Victims and survivors of human trafficking suffer from a wide-range of physical and psychological health concerns stemming from inhumane living conditions, inadequate nutrition, brutal physical and emotional attacks, dangerous workplace conditions, severe trauma, and a lack of quality health care. Many trafficked persons present to an Emergency Department or interact with other health care professionals during the course of their exploitation. Health care professionals thus have a unique opportunity to intervene in the human trafficking cycle of exploitation and should be equipped to respond. These professionals are critically positioned to help identify patients who are being trafficked, provide appropriate care, and connect them with services and supports¹.

The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) "Stop, Observe, Ask and Respond" (SOAR) to Health and Wellness Training has been implemented on a pilot basis as part of a Federal Strategic Action Plan to address human trafficking. The objective of the SOAR Training is to equip providers in health care settings to identify potential human trafficking victims or survivors and provide appropriate care.

About the Bill

The SOAR to Health and Wellness Act would authorize funding to ensure the pilot work already underway at HHS continues and evolves to maximize the number of well-trained providers. The bill authorizes HHS to:

- Establish a training program to enable providers in health care settings to:
 - identify potential human trafficking victims or survivors;
 - implement protocols to empower victims or survivors to report and communicate with law enforcement;
 - implement protocols for referring to appropriate social or victims services;
 - provide care that is coordinated, survivor-centered, culturally relevant, comprehensive, evidence based, gender responsive, age appropriate, and trauma-informed.
- Engage stakeholders, including victims or survivors, and federal, state, local or tribal partners to develop flexible training modules adaptable to various settings and population needs;
- Provide technical assistance for health education programs to implement a nationwide human trafficking protocol and/or incorporate the SOAR Training into Continuing Education (CE) opportunities;
- Develop a federal strategy to incentivize the implementation of human trafficking training and healthcare protocols;
- Collect and report data on the number of facilities and providers utilizing the training and develop a method for collecting data on the number of human trafficking victims or survivors identified and served.

HEAL Trafficking

HEAL Trafficking² (HEAL) is a national interdisciplinary network of over 600 professionals. HEAL has been at the forefront of informing the public health response to trafficking in the United States. In particular, HEAL's members have been present both on the HHS/ACF SOAR National Technical Working Group and the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Children in the United States. Along with other leading anti-trafficking and health care professional organizations,³ HEAL supports S. 1446.

¹ <http://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/2015/10/medu1-1510.html>

² <http://healtrafficking.org>

³ THORN, ATEST, Polaris, American Nurses Association, American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN), National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Nursing Centers Consortium, National Gerontological Nurses Association, American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association, American Psychological Association, National Association of Community Health Centers.