



Cast

COALITION TO ABOLISH
SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING

CAST is one of the only legal service providers in the U.S. that comprehensively assesses and serves the full spectrum of legal services trafficking survivors need as a result of their trafficking experience. This is done through a CAST-developed model, which assesses the wide-range of legal needs faced by trafficking survivors.

○ COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL ASSESSMENT

CAST believes that all victims of human trafficking, regardless of age, gender or country of origin, need a comprehensive legal screening to determine impeding legal barriers and/or beneficial legal remedies. This intensive screening covers criminal-victim witness advocacy, immigration assistance, criminal re-entry services, civil assessments and advocacy, family law, educational advocacy, housing and benefits. Assessments are conducted for all cases prior to acceptance into CAST programs.

○ VICTIM-WITNESS ADVOCACY

CAST provides criminal victim-witness advocacy to survivors of human trafficking to ensure their rights are protected throughout the criminal justice process. The legal services team supports clients in reporting the crimes against them to law enforcement; upholds the clients' interests as their traffickers are investigated; ensures that survivors understand the criminal justice process, are able to have their voices heard by the court and can access restitution for the crimes committed against them; and advocates with law enforcement for "Continued Presence" for foreign national clients to ensure prompt access to certification for federal public benefits.

○ CLEARING CRIMINAL RECORDS

Many victims of human trafficking are arrested and prosecuted for crimes their traffickers forced them to commit. These criminal records create barriers to employment once they escape. CAST's provides legal assistance for survivors who face difficulty accessing employment and professional licenses because of criminal convictions connected to their trafficking, so they are able to move towards economic self-sufficiency. Services included helping survivors receive dismissals of prior convictions (sealing of juvenile records or expungements), certificates of rehabilitation and licensing approvals.

○ VICTIM COMPENSATION

CAST's legal team works to ensure clients receive greater access to compensation benefits from the California Victim Compensation Program. This includes advocacy in law enforcement interviews to ensure victims are identified as victims in police reports and therefore have greater access to compensation benefits and file appeals when cases are denied.

○ IMMIGRATION ASSISTANCE

Immigrants within the U.S. are often vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Traffickers use lack of immigration status to instill fear in their victims. By helping trafficking survivors successfully receive their lawful immigration status and accompanying work authorization, CAST helps trafficking survivors become less vulnerable to re-exploitation.

CAST helps clients apply for and receive T Visas and other forms of immigration relief from U.S. Immigration and Citizen Services. CAST also obtains derivative visas for qualifying family members, so survivors may be reunited with their families. In addition, CAST's legal program supports foreign national survivors with access to state and federal benefits, including providing an attorney letter of support attesting to the application for a T visa, which under California law allows trafficking survivors immediate access to state benefits. After a survivor's T visa is approved, CAST ensures clients are federally certified for benefits, if they have not been certified previously through the Continued Presence process. Foreign national cases remain open until survivors receive lawful permanent resident status, ensuring they are able to live and work permanently in the U.S.

For child victims of trafficking, CAST ensures immediate access to federal benefits by assisting in the application for interim and long-term benefits through the process mandated by the Trafficking Victims Protections Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) within the Department of Health and Human Services.

○ CIVIL REMEDIES

Civil remedies are an under-utilized legal approach to achieving protections and justice for victims. CAST conducts civil assessments for trafficking survivors and works closely with our partner organizations to ensure that survivors are able to seek civil remedies against their traffickers. Civil remedies are often an important step for trafficking survivors as they seek to rebuild their lives and pursue justice against their trafficker.

○ FAMILY LAW

CAST assists trafficking survivors with family law cases connected to their trafficking, including clients who have children with their traffickers and whose traffickers have used their children as a means of power and control. The legal team also provides expert testimony in family court, so judges better understand the dynamics of trafficking.

○ TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CAST provides technical assistance on individual cases of human trafficking. The legal team also trains and supervises pro-bono attorneys to enable more survivors to access critical legal services. All pro bono attorneys are required to attend a comprehensive training provided by CAST before they take on a case.

In 2014, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office honored CAST for its dedicated service in advancing victims' rights.

“CAST provides an essential network of support services to assist victims in the transition out of forced labor and slavery-like conditions. I commend CAST for its leadership in the effort to end these inhumane criminal practices.”

~ District Attorney Jackie Lacey

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