

YWCA NorthEastern NY to Begin Servicing Human Trafficking Victims in Coming Months

Schenectady, NY, DATE – YWCA NorthEastern NY was awarded the Office of Victims of Crime’s Human Trafficking Grant to help build capacity to serve victims of human trafficking. The grant will allow YWCA NENY to hire a full-time Human Trafficking Counselor who will provide individual and group counseling to those who have experienced human trafficking. Additionally, the Human Trafficking Counselor will conduct trainings on how to properly identify victims of trafficking and refer them to the correct services for all YWCA NENY victims' services staff and other community agencies.

Justice.gov states that human trafficking is a “crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor, services, or to engage in commercial sex acts.” Coercion can be physical or psychological, subtle or overt. Schenectady County is a hub of human trafficking due to its central proximity to various high-traffic areas such as Saratoga, Albany, and New York City, yet there is a significant gap in the county for counseling tailored to victims of trafficking.

“Our hope is to be able to provide a safe space to support victims of human trafficking including labor and survival sex work.”, said **Sarah Caterina, YWCA NENY’s Director of Clinical Services & Community Engagement**. “We are passionate about helping people get back on their feet, develop healthy coping skills, get medical and mental health care, and develop employment skills. We are thankful to OVC and the partnerships we have in the community to help support our mission.”

Other trafficking programs in the region focus on individuals who are 21 or younger therefore, little support exists for older victims. While the most vulnerable populations for trafficking include high school-age girls and youth aging out of foster care, this program will focus on all survivors of trafficking regardless of age.

YWCA NENY will work closely with community agencies that work to combat trafficking in the Capital Region including SAFE Inc., CAPTAIN Community Human Services, and Safe Harbour. YWCA NorthEastern NY is currently working to hire a Human Trafficking Counselor to begin offering these services in the coming months.

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YWCA NorthEastern NY has been supporting women, children, and families in Schenectady County for 135 years. YWCA NorthEastern NY is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. For information on programs serving infants to seniors, please visit www.ywca-neny.org.