

CARES serves over 180 survivors in first year

Drop-in center will expand next month

January 11, 2019, Austin, TX - In January 2018, The SAFE Alliance launched CARES, a program specifically designed to support youth survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation. One year later, CARES has provided crisis response, advocacy, counseling, case management, and other support services for over 180 survivors of sex trafficking in Central Texas.

January is also human trafficking awareness month, which provides the opportunity to educate the public about the realities of sex trafficking in our community. According to The Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, there are approximately 79,000 minors and youth victims of sex trafficking in Texas.

The average age of clients served through CARES is about 18 years old, although the program serves survivors of all ages. Through the CARES drop-in center, survivors are able to connect with others with similar experiences and develop a sense of community through a peer support group.

"In having a specifically designed program for survivors of sex trafficking, we're really able to be survivor-focused and centered and allow them to speak to what they want and what they need," Kari Hamilton, senior director of CARES, said.

Next month, the CARES drop-in center will move to a larger location generously provided by Seton Healthcare. The drop-in center will operate with extended hours and will also serve as a comfortable, home-like location for CARES staff to meet law enforcement when recoveries of minors occur. With extended hours and a coordinated city-wide response, CARES hopes to reach many more survivors.

"Having a physical space where survivors know they can come in, get a meal, meet with a case manager or therapist, and meet other peers is so important. So many survivors have told us that this is what they've needed," Hamilton said.

If you or someone you know may be a victim of trafficking, please contact our SAFEline by phone at 512.267.SAFE (7233), by text at 737.888.7233, or by online chat at safeaustin.org/chat.

About SAFE

At SAFE, we strive to provide safety, stability, and healing for children, adults, and families that have experienced violence and abuse. We do this by providing shelter and housing, support services, and prevention programs to stop the cycle of violence. Learn more at safeaustin.org.