

# CASA ACT KEY TERMS

Within the anti-child trafficking community, many key terms are used. To better understand this program guide, it will be helpful to understand and know the common phrases, key terms and acronyms that may be encountered in anti-trafficking work.

## **Care Coordination Team (CCT):**

The Office of the Governor’s Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) and local communities are establishing CCTs to implement the Texas Model for Care Coordination, which creates a commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY) care continuum. The Texas Model for Care Coordination Model is a consensus-driven, collaborative approach to identifying and recovering youth who have been trafficked and facilitating tailored, accessible, trauma-informed and holistic resources through a network of providers. The goal is that every identified child survivor of sex trafficking and exploitation has access to non-punitive, responsive, high-quality, community-based services that meet their unique short-term and long-term needs. CCTs may receive referrals from both non-investigatory entities, such as CCT partners, and from investigatory partners, such as law enforcement and DFPS. Community members seeking resources for a young person can utilize CCT partners to make a referral to care coordination. CCTs are overseen by care coordinators who could be CSEY Advocate Agencies, CACs or other nonprofits. Any agency can be a care coordinator if they meet requirements set forth by the Texas Model for Care Coordination.

Members of the CCT may include Children’s Advocacy Centers, community stakeholders, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), CSEY Advocate Agencies, Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), medical providers, service providers, Juvenile Probation Department, law enforcement, county and district attorneys, legal service providers, prosecutors and sexual assault programs. CCTs build trust, transparency and solutions with team members to mitigate duplication of work, ensuring that local and statewide partners are bridges instead of barriers to services for children, youth and families. CASA volunteers and staff are essential in care coordination meetings, as they work alongside care coordination partners and CSEY Advocates. Many decisions are made in CCT meetings, and it is imperative that the CASA volunteer be present whenever possible. To better understand Care Coordination, read the [Texas Model for Care Coordination Overview](#), [Endorsement Process](#) and [Care Coordinator Responsibilities](#).

A local CCT often has existing relationships. Introduction into the local CCT is usually done through the CSTT Regional Advisor. Discuss your local program’s desire to engage with CCTs, explain CASA ACT and the extensive training CASA volunteers receive. CASA staff will reiterate that CASA volunteers will participate on a case-by-case or topic-specific basis. As described above, CASA staff and volunteers are never involved in criminal cases of the youth they serve.

*(continued on next page)*

### **Care Coordination Team (CCT) Continued:**

Some areas of Texas do not have CCTs established. If there is no CCT in your area, the human trafficking protocols revert to the Children's Advocacy Center Multi-Disciplinary Team process established within the local CAC (see definition below). In these cases, CASA volunteers are even more vital. Without a CCT, the CASA volunteer can fill the gap and advocate for the youth's best interest. CASA staff and volunteers can discuss the process in their area with CSTT Regional Advisors.

### **Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT):**

A division in the Office of the Texas Governor (OOG), the CSST mission is to build sustainable capacity, enhance expertise, promote policies, create new and leverage existing collaborations to protect children from sexual exploitation, help the public recognize signs of sexual exploitations, help victims/survivors recover, support healing and bring justice to those who exploit children. CSST divides Texas into five regions and provides a Regional Advisor to each area to support communities in building a response to child sexual exploitation. Additionally, CSST leverages funding through grants from the Office of the Governor to advance efforts across Texas.

### **Children's Advocacy Center Multi-Disciplinary Team (CAC MDT):**

Created through statute in accordance with Texas Family Code 264.403 Local Children's Advocacy Center Multi-Disciplinary Teams (CAC MDTs) support and coordinate the efforts of professionals consisting of law enforcement investigators, prosecutors, Child Protective Service workers, medical professionals, mental health professionals and victim advocates, which can include CASA. Other local service providers may also serve on the CAC MDT in many communities. In the neutral setting of the CAC, CAC MDT members can collaborate on strategies that will aid investigators and prosecutors without causing further harm to the child. The CAC MDT increases the likelihood of a successful outcome in court and long-term healing for the youth. CAC MDTs collaborate to coordinate investigations; limit, when possible, the number of times each child is interviewed; provide comfortable, child-friendly settings for interviews; reduce the child victims' travel to investigative agencies; and coordinate medical and mental health services.

CAC MDTs receive referrals from an investigative partner, either law enforcement or DFPS. A CAC MDT cannot respond to situations outside of these parameters. Therefore, CCTs and CAC MDTs serve the same population, but in different capacities. While both CCTs and CAC MDTs provide therapeutic services, only CAC MDTs are involved in the criminal investigation process. CAC MDTs play a vital role in CCTs. They focus on situations with an active investigation to secure safety, justice and healing for youth who have been trafficked.

### **Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT):**

A research-based screening tool that helps improve early identification of commercially sexually exploited youth (CSEY). The tool was developed by West Coast Children’s Clinic and is currently used in Texas and multiple other states and across various sectors, including juvenile justice, education, advocate agencies, runaway/homeless youth agencies and limited areas of child protection. The CSE-IT has eight key indicators: housing and caregiving, prior abuse and trauma, physical health and appearance, environment exposure, relationships and personal belongings, signs of current trauma, coercion and exploitation. Many of the questions relate to the last 90 days. The results of the screening are no concern, possible concern or clear concern.

In Texas, a CSE-IT score of clear concern for a minor means that a child/youth is a Presumed Victim for mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and service delivery. If a CASA staff completes the CSE-IT and a score of clear concern is received, the CASA staff should notify the youth’s caseworker, who will then refer for services. Local law enforcement and DFPS Statewide Intake should be called. CASA programs should not report trafficking suspicions to the DFPS Statewide Intake online option. A phone call is required to report suspicions of trafficking. More details can be found in the [CSE-IT Resource Guide](#).

### **Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY):**

While not best practice to refer to children or youth as an acronym, sometimes CSEY is used to refer to youth who are confirmed or at-risk of sex trafficking, prostitution, sex tourism, pornography, early marriage, performance in sexual venues, online or electronic transmission of youth engaged in sexual activities, among other crimes.[4] For the purposes of this program guide, CSEY also includes children.

### **Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth Advocate Agencies (CSEY AA):**

CSEY AAs are nonprofits that employ staff (known as advocates) to provide individualized 24/7 crisis response and ongoing trust-based relational support to the child, youth and young adult survivors until the age of 21. CSEY AAs may also provide robust case management that is flexible to support and not duplicate, replace or interfere with the efforts of other service providers. CSEY AAs work collaboratively with other stakeholders to support the victim-centered goals pursued by the survivor and their family, law enforcement, prosecutors, child welfare, juvenile justice, healthcare and other partners. They help survivors gain the strength and empowerment needed to participate in the investigation and prosecution of exploiters.

A child or youth in DFPS conservatorship who is a Presumed, Suspected-Unconfirmed or Confirmed victim of trafficking can have both a CASA volunteer as well as a CSEY advocate. DFPS and CSEY advocates have approved MOUs guiding their work together.

[4] Clayton, E.W., et al. (2013). *Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States*.

## **Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS):**

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) conducts civil investigations of child abuse or neglect in coordination with law enforcement and, when appropriate, takes necessary actions to protect the child/youth from further abuse/neglect. DFPS investigates allegations of abuse or neglect, including sex trafficking and or labor trafficking, when the alleged perpetrator is traditionally responsible for a child's care, custody or welfare in accordance with Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code. The decisions made concerning protecting a child/youth shall be based upon the professional judgment of DFPS staff in conformance with current DFPS policy, statutory law and placement factors.

## **Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation (HTCE):**

A division of DFPS established in 2017, the HTCE Division/HT Division serves all 254 counties, and all child welfare stages to:

- Strengthen continued compliance with all federal and state human trafficking mandates,
- Develop policy, practices and service identification to address and/or prevent trafficking, and
- Improve DFPS's capacity to identify, report, recover and support victims of trafficking in their restoration journey.

To accomplish this work, the HTCE Division collaborates with DFPS staff, partners and community stakeholders, including but not limited to law enforcement, city/county/state government, advocacy agencies and faith-based organizations. The HTCE also provides technical assistance, training and case consultation. The HTCE is the main point of contact for local, regional and statewide trafficking matters (at a local CASA program level) even when the community is involved in community-based care.