

# Dept. of Justice: AG Kaul, State Patrol, & DCF announce partnership with convenience store industry to combat human trafficking

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COTTAGE GROVE, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul, Wisconsin State Patrol, and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) today announced that the state agencies will be working with the Wisconsin Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association (WPMCA) to increase understanding within the convenience store industry about human trafficking. January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

“By identifying suspicious activity and reporting it to law enforcement, convenience store and gas station employees can help law enforcement fight human trafficking,” said Attorney General Kaul. “This partnership will help more people know the signs of human trafficking and what to do when they see those signs.”

“WPMCA is proud to partner with DOJ, DOT, and DCF to help combat human trafficking in Wisconsin”, said WPMCA Chairman Andrew Bowman of Stop-N-Go of Madison. “Our industry employs over 50,000 people and operates nearly 3,000 convenience stores across the state and we are constantly interacting with the motoring public. We are excited to join the fight to prevent this horrible crime.”

“Human trafficking is a growing challenge across the nation including here in Wisconsin,” State Patrol Superintendent Tony Burrell said. “All Wisconsin State Patrol officers have received training related to human trafficking. We’re working

closely with the state Department of Justice, our partner law enforcement agencies and private-sector groups to raise awareness and provide the necessary training to help combat this serious issue.”

“The only way we are going to succeed in eradicating human trafficking is through a collective effort to connect the dots in service to prevention, training, and most importantly, to ensuring survivors thrive. It is also critical to recognize that youth of color, LGBTQ youth, and youth involved in the child welfare system are more vulnerable to trafficking,” said DCF Secretary-designee Emilie Amundson.

The state agencies will provide WPMCA and its members with training and materials to raise awareness about human trafficking and what convenience store managers and employees can do if trafficking is suspected.

Partners will be available at WPMCA’s annual conference and DCF will distribute materials at the WPMCA trade show. Seminars on recognizing and reporting human trafficking will also be held in four regions of Wisconsin with store owners and employees. Information will include specific human trafficking indicators that could be seen in convenience store and gas station settings and how to report actionable leads to law enforcement. WPMCA will also provide its membership with electronic updates and information throughout 2020 to increase the industry’s overall understanding of human trafficking.

The partnership is being managed by the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

### **Additional Resources:**

For more information about human trafficking, including victim services, statutes and industry specific materials, visit the Wisconsin Department of Justice website at [www.BeFreeWisconsin.com](http://www.BeFreeWisconsin.com).

Visit DCF’s “WI, We Need to Talk” website for resources to promote dialogue between adults, parents and children about youth sex trafficking at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/wisconsintalks>.

Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline for help or to report a tip 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1 (888) 373-7888.