



Just Exits for Survivors of Exploitation Competitive Solicitation for Technical Assistance

Announcement Date: November 23, 2020

The Initiative

The Just Exits initiative is a partnership between AEQUITAS and a Survivor Advisory Council comprised of women with lived and professional expertise. The Initiative will transform justice by closing **ON RAMPS** to and building **OFF RAMPS** from sexual exploitation. We will do this by:

- **Educating** prosecutors and law enforcement about how exploiters force, manipulate, brainwash, and otherwise coerce victims to engage in illegal activity;
- **Supporting** prosecutors in their efforts to identify wrongful arrests and charges and to remedy wrongful convictions of exploited persons;
- **Collaborating** with communities to ensure that survivors can access services that offer meaningful life opportunities; and
- **Measuring** meaningful prosecution outcomes to ensure a just response.

The Issue

Sexual exploitation of women and girls involves myriad complex crimes and demands an informed justice system response—one that prioritizes survivor and community safety along with offender and institutional accountability.

Survivors who actively seek out the justice system's intervention, as well as those who intersect with it collaterally as victims, witnesses, or as defendants charged with a crime, must be identified as such. The ability of prosecutors and allied professionals to do so is paramount for survivor empowerment, community safety, and prevention. Identification is the first step to creating **exit ramps** from exploitation.

Prosecutors can also help close **on-ramps** by identifying individuals intersecting with the system who are potentially vulnerable to exploitation and to factor that vulnerability into their interactions with them, directing them to appropriate resources and support.



Prosecutors are uniquely positioned to make these changes and to achieve justice for survivors. By identifying sexually exploited women and girls as survivors when they make contact with the system, making fair charging decisions, facilitating criminal record relief, and linking these survivors with services and support, prosecutors can clear the way to a different life path.

Overview of the Pilot Site Project

AEquitas is seeking pilot sites to implement a model response to sexually exploited women and girls. These survivors come into contact with the system as victims, witnesses, or defendants charged with a crime arising from their exploitation. At the foundation of this model response is the prosecutor's ethical responsibility not only to apply the laws on the books, but to achieve justice.

Every site will adapt the Model Response to Sexually Exploited Women and Girls to respond to the unique issues it faces, but it will be informed by the following principles/best practices:

1	Survivor-centered: Appreciate the central role that survivors play in the criminal justice system. We ensure that survivor needs, safety, privacy, and autonomy are paramount throughout the process and that their voices are central in formulating proper responses to exploitation.
2	Trauma-informed: Fully acknowledge that trauma has wide-ranging effects. While responses to trauma are individual, we can strive to better understand common traumatic responses and implement practices that minimize re-traumatization and maximize engagement with the criminal justice system.
3	Multidisciplinary: Engage in collaboration, which enables prosecutors and allied professionals to share resources, educate one another, evaluate and refine their practices on a continual basis, adapt their response to emerging issues, and ensure the sustainability of their practices. Collaboration, however, must be meaningful and incorporate candid feedback on practices and the outcomes they produce.
4	Research-informed: Make prosecutorial decisions driven by the most current and accurate scientific, sociological, and legal research. Decisions must also be driven by an assessment of a jurisdiction's own meaningful data, enabling prosecutors to understand the scope of sexual exploitation in their jurisdictions and formulate effective responses.
5	Justice-centered: Determine appropriate charging decisions after a careful assessment of culpability, recognizing the ultimate goal is to achieve justice.
6	Performance-driven: Develop a system for prosecutors that captures case characteristics, tracks the implementation of best practices, encourages victim feedback, analyzes and reports data, and measures meaningful case outcomes to ensure that prosecutors' offices are meeting victim and community needs and achieving justice.

Length of Technical Assistance

The anticipated timeline for technical assistance is February 2021 to October 2022. This solicitation is for jurisdictions to receive technical assistance. **There are no financial awards made to jurisdictions.**

Deadline

All applications are due by 11:59PM on **Wednesday, December 23rd**. Decisions are expected to be made by Friday, January 15th.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants are limited to state, local, and tribal prosecutors' offices in the United States, including those in U.S. territories.

Technical Assistance

AEquitas will coordinate all technical assistance provided to the selected jurisdictions, which will be provided at no cost. For each jurisdiction, AEquitas and the Survivor Advisory Council will:

- Assess the current response to sexually exploited women and girls by analyzing available data.
- Analyze existing policies and practices and assessment of their alignment with best practices, including arrest, charging, and plea policies as well as any policies related to criminal record relief.
- Advise on the formation of the local leadership team that will oversee the project. This team is expected to include key leadership personnel who are regularly engaged in the process — which can include police, prosecutors, victim advocates, court personnel, corrections, medical providers, probation/parole.
- Help the leadership team form a strategic plan, *i.e.*, a high-level document that explains project objectives and intended outcomes.
- Facilitate roundtable discussion(s) to identify the foundation for decision-making in cases where sexually exploited women and girls are charged with crimes.
- Recommend improvements to the response to survivors of exploitation. These recommended improvements will be specific, measurable, and reflective of best practices.
- Develop a plan to support implementation of best practices, which may include: 1) selecting performance metrics; 2) collecting and analyzing data; 3) delivering specialized training; 4) assistance in development and implementation of specific policies and practices; and 5) legal and social science research.

Project Narrative

- To apply, please provide a project narrative, not in excess of 4 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with letter size page layout and one-inch margins. Send responses to justexits@aequitasresource.org.
- The narrative should answer the question: **Why do you want to be a Just Exits pilot site?** Helpful information in the answer could include:
 - Brief description of the problem, including the scope of exploitation and/or trafficking in the site's jurisdiction;
 - Jurisdiction's most recent crime data on issues pertaining to trafficking and/or exploitation, if available;
 - Description of data generally available to the site for the purposes of identifying vulnerabilities and/or evaluating success through performance management;
 - Description of current efforts that exist to combat trafficking and exploitation in site's jurisdiction (including any evidence of the success of/gaps in those efforts);
 - Description of how selection as a pilot site will advance and expand the jurisdiction's local work; and
 - Identification of the leadership team that will guide and monitor this effort and how will it ensure system-level engagement.

Selection Process

- AEquitas is committed to ensuring a fair and open process for awarding technical assistance. Applications will be reviewed and scored based on the content of the Project Narrative.
- Reviewers will focus on the following criteria in the selection process:
 - **Need for targeted interventions** on the system's response to exploitation and trafficking.
 - **Strength of partnerships with allied agencies**, as evidenced by project narrative or Letters of Support.
 - **Capacity to successfully implement the interventions** through an interdisciplinary approach (e.g., financial and human resources, level of support across system leadership and stakeholders, understanding of gaps in current practice). Sources of financial and human resource support should be clearly described, as no funds will be provided directly to sites selected by this Initiative.
 - **Likelihood that interventions in this area will be sustained** beyond the period of training and technical assistance provision.

- **Availability and integrity of data necessary to monitor progress** of the efforts to improve the response to exploitation through means like reducing unjust arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of survivors; and an increase in just criminal records relief. Data must be sufficient to evaluate these outcomes.

About AEquitas

Named after the Roman goddess of equity and fairness, **AEquitas** strengthens prosecutors' skills, knowledge, and approaches, enabling them to more effectively handle cases of sexual and gender-based violence and human trafficking. We help end impunity for offenders while enhancing support of victims through our trainings, customized assistance, and expert resources.

Through our broad network of 11,000 professionals and our staff of former specialized prosecutors, we serve as a go-to source of concentrated expertise on gender-based violence and human trafficking cases for all levels of prosecutors' offices, in the United States and internationally.

For additional information on AEquitas work, please visit: www.AEquitasResource.org and our affiliated websites: www.innovativeprosecutionsolutions.org and www.stalkingawareness.org.

About the Survivor Advisory Council

The Just Exits Survivor Advisory Council is comprised of survivor-advocates who have intersected with the justice system and are committed to improving the system's response to survivors of sexual exploitation.

As key stakeholders in the project, members of the Survivor Advisory Council contribute to the vision and the implementation of the project as a whole, participate in the development and peer review of the Model Response to Sexually Exploited Women and Girls, and co-facilitate training events in partnership with AEquitas staff and other national experts.

The Council is comprised of:

- Wendy Barnes — Human Trafficking Response Program Coordinator, Dignity Health
- Rebecca Bender — Founder, Rebecca Bender Initiative
- Joy Friedman — President, Joy Friedman Consulting; Advocate, Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
- Keisha Head — Lead Case Manager, Haven ATL
- Beth Jacobs — Founder, Willow Way
- Shamere McKenzie — CEO, Sun Gate Foundation
- Jeri Moomaw — Founder & Executive Director, Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative