

**Meeting of the
Commission on the Prevention of
Human Trafficking
Tuesday, September 30, 2008**

Members present:

Delegate Adam P. Ebbin, Chairman
Delegate H. Morgan Griffith
Delegate Thomas Davis Rust
Delegate Jackson H. Miller
Senator Ken T. Cuccinelli, II (by phone)
Steve Witmer, Attorney General's Office
Karen L. Remley, Department of Health
Lynette Isbell, Department of Social Services
C. Ray Davenport, Department of Labor and Industry
Lt. Col. H. C. Davis (representing John W. Marshall and W. Steven Flaherty)

Staff present:

D. Robie Ingram
Jessica D. French
Lori L. Roper

Chairman Ebbin gave opening remarks and Commission members introduced themselves.

The first speaker was Karen Rotabi, PhD, speaking on the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. She said that the 70 nations, including the United States have signed the Convention. The United States signed it in 1994 and it was fully ratified and implemented in 2008. The priorities of the convention are first to keep the family and the child together, then to attempt domestic adoption and, if that is not possible, to determine if the child is appropriate for intercountry adoption.

She said the Convention is important because since 2000, more than 200,000 children have been adopted by United States citizens, with the top sending countries being China, Guatemala and Russia. The Convention helps prevent theft and trickery in sending children overseas and deters "child laundering" -- the changing of the identity of children to orphans for U.S. Visa purposes.

In a case study concerning a Cambodia/Seattle connection, 700 Cambodian children were adopted by United States residents for a \$3,500 "donation" each. Children were given up by their parents for about \$250 and parents were led to believe that the children would have prosperous American childhoods and return at age 18. The Cambodian parents often signed documents in a non-native language.

Guatemala is a Hague signatory and adoption of Guatemalan children by United States citizens has been suspended because of orphan/visa problems. Vietnam (a problem country) is still adopting out children because it is not a Hague signatory. Dr. Rotabi added that, unfortunately, an adoption agency that deals with Russia does not have to be accredited because Russia is not a Hague signatory but that the State Department is promoting Hague signing in other non-Hague countries.

The next speaker was Dr. Louise Shelley, a professor and Director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center at the School of Public Policy at George Mason University.

Dr. Shelley reported that there is considerable sex trafficking in Virginia, and that the FBI has identified the Washington, D.C. area, including Northern Virginia, as one of the 14 major child sex trafficking centers in the U.S. Other problems are child porn on the web, labor trafficking, mail order brides and trafficking for adoption.

She discussed some cases: In 2005, Indonesians attempted to bring women into Northern Virginia between ages of 16 to 23. In 2007, three trafficked servants of a Kuwaiti diplomat fled the country and sued him.

She said that the Chinese, Indonesians, and Vietnamese are primarily responsible for international trafficking, as well as gangs such as MS-13 (in Maryland), and American pimps with American girls. Trafficking in Virginia is primarily in Northern Virginia in ethnic communities - both suburbs and exurbs.

She said a helpful resource is the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). Delegate Rust added that a multi-jurisdictional gang task force is following trafficking in Northern Virginia.

She said one of the many problems in addressing trafficking is that migrant workers who are exploited won't cooperate with police; they are afraid and they don't know what, if any, rights they have. She added that there are not enough resources to combat organized trafficking at either state or federal level. She said that trafficking cases are deep underground – need training to find cases; and community cooperation with landlords – apartments are used as brothels.

She said that there are not too many migrant slave labor cases in Virginia.

She added that the Homeland Security Institute (research agency affiliated with the Department of Homeland Security) might be able to provide research and

guidance on trafficking. She said that her students are energized and willing to help.

Chairman Ebbin added that the Commission should get NCMEC and other organizations involved and that grants are available.

There was no further business. The meeting was adjourned.