

DARYL FOX: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's webinar, "OVC Materials for Trafficked Youth: A Journey Through and Beyond the Legal System," hosted by the Office for Victims of Crime. This time, it's my pleasure to introduce Sasha Rutizer, Chief of Staff with the Office for Victims of Crime for some welcoming remarks and introductions. Sasha?

SASHA RUTIZER: Good morning or good afternoon, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. We—I can't even tell you how excited we are for the release of these publications today. I'm Sasha Rutizer. I am Chief of Staff here at OVC. And we're overwhelmed today to bring this material to you. And the first thing I'm going to do is introduce the Director of OVC, Kristina Rose, who is going to make some introductory remarks. So before I do that, I do want to mention that Director Rose was appointed to be the Director of OVC by President Joe Biden and she was sworn in on July 12th, 2021. Ms. Rose has spent nearly 20 years in the Department of Justice, serving in numerous roles including as Deputy Director here at OVC, as Acting Director and Deputy Director for the National Institute of Justice and as Chief of Staff for the Office on Violence Against Women. In 2016, Ms. Rose was detailed as a Senior Policy Advisor on violence against women in the office of then Vice President Joe Biden. And in 2013, Ms. Rose spent eight months as a victim advocate in the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington D.C., working hands-on with victims of all violent crimes, and she holds an MS in Criminal Justice from Northeastern University and a BA in sociology from George Mason University. So with that, let's turn it over to Director Rose to make some opening remarks.

KRISTINA ROSE: Thank you so much, Sasha, for that introduction, and good afternoon everyone. Thank you for joining us today for this very exciting publication launch. Before we begin, I want to thank a number of people who have made this event possible. First, I want to thank OVC staff Rick Donohue and Lindsay Waldrop for their passion and dedication to this project. Next, I'd like to thank all of the staff at the Center for Court Innovation who brought this project to life, especially Kathryn Ford and Shashika Peeligama. They are presenting for us today. I'd also like to thank Melanie Thompson, a Lived Experience Expert who worked with CCI on the development of the graphic novels. And finally, thank you to my dear colleague Melissa Milam from DOJ's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit, also joining us today as a panelist.

As you all know, human trafficking is vastly unreported and it exploits people for compelled labor, services or commercial sex acts. And it's achieved through manipulation, lies, threats, and deceptions. And while anyone can be a survivor of human trafficking, we know all too well that young people, persons of color, LGBTQ are particularly vulnerable to being preyed upon, which is why we tailored these materials to

reach these populations. Taking a whole government approach to combating and responding to human trafficking is the only way that we are going to be able to stem the tide. OVC is the largest federal funder of anti-trafficking programs and we play a large role in combating and responding to trafficking through our grant programs, like the one that allowed for these incredible publications to be developed. Like many of our grantees, CCI worked with those who know best what they need, those with lived experiences. And created—they created a project that is genuinely for survivors. And one of OVC's priorities is to center the voices of survivors, including young people, in conversations about human trafficking and development of programs and products. These graphic novels are not just about how young people are trafficked. They are for young people with contributions by young people who have actually experienced human trafficking. Their participation and their engagement were central and necessary to the development of these graphic novels.

And if you've heard me speak before, you know that my three priorities while serving as Director of OVC are providing options, access, and information for crime victims. What I have learned over a career working with victims on—I mean, working on issues related to crime victimization, but also working directly with crime victims and survivors is that these three things are what survivors tell us that they want, and they need in order to heal, and really take back control of their lives. So very quickly, I want to talk about options. We know that one size does not fit all, so not all remedies and responses are going to fit all survivors. We have to make sure there are enough options in place to give victims a choice of what will work for them. An access, it doesn't matter how amazing the program or the option is if victims can't get to them. We know that many people who experienced crimes in under heard and underrepresented communities have no idea that help is even available to them. And information, when it comes to information, victims should be given the choice to opt in or opt out of receiving information about their case, including decisions about who, how, and when information is delivered.

This is something our criminal justice system struggles with ensuring that survivors, and this includes young people, receive information about their case, about their options, about how services can help them. The graphic novels that you're going to hear about today are at the intersection of these three priorities. And they are also incredibly engaging. I have read them all and I love them. The work that CCI, the Center for Urban Pedagogy, and Alternate History Comics put into these graphic novels reflects their tremendous talents, their creativity, and mission to create a more effective and humane justice system. And also ensure that those who are historically underrepresented can better participate in the criminal justice system by really understanding the process. The stories of Sergio, Zoe, and Jamie are reflective of so many. In fact, one of the

characters in the stories identifies as non-binary. As mentioned earlier, we know that LGBTQ plus persons are vulnerable to trafficking and are historically unrepresented in the outreach material that is available. We also know that when you see themselves represented in materials, they're more likely to engage. This is another reason why the format, a graphic novel, is particularly compelling. Each of these graphic novels provide a ton of information in a very easily digestible format that is both inclusive and nonjudgmental.

Young trafficking survivors may blame themselves or simply not understand that there were crime victim. And to that end, it's imperative that they understand their rights as a victim. Even if and we know this is sometimes the case, they are also the defendant. Likewise, understanding how the system works, and what professionals they should expect to encounter along the way, is vital to making informed choices and being able to self-advocate. Speaking of access, we are pleased to tell you that these graphic novels are being translated into five different languages, Spanish, French, Mandarin, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Portuguese, and will also be available in audio format. Before I turn this over to Sasha and the rest of the group, I want to leave you with a quote that comes from a survivor that you can find at the end of Zoe's Story. "I know it's tough, but anything in life worth having is tough. Sometimes you have to go through things to get to where you want to be. I became what I needed as a child. I became an advocate. I became this person full of love, and hope, and joy. I didn't have that as a youth. I became the safe person that I deserve to have. I became a safe person for my daughters. I became a wife, which I never thought I would become. I became a good friend. I became everything that I needed. And you can too." Oh, my goodness, I have goose bumps. We are so pleased to watch these materials today. And after this call, we hope you will download them, read them, and share them wisely so that they can support the communities that you serve. Thank you so much for joining us today and for what you do every day on behalf of crime victims everywhere. Thank you.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thank you so much. So at this point, what we're going to do is transition over to the Center for Court Innovation so they could tell us how these materials came to be. And before we do that, I want to introduce two people who are here from CCI with us today, joining us as panelists, and that's Kathryn Ford, the Director of Child Witness Initiatives for CCI and Shashika Peeligama, Senior Program Manager at CCI. So, if you don't know about CCI, the Center for Court Innovation is a nonprofit organization that works to create a fair, effective, and humane justice system through research, training and technical assistance, and implementation and evaluation of innovative justice system and community building practices through dozens of operating programs. The center's Child Witness Materials Project, which is funded by a cooperative agreement with OVC seeks to empower and support child victims and

witnesses as they navigate the justice system through the creation of developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, educational materials about the criminal legal and child welfare systems. Kathryn Ford, as I mentioned, is the Director of Child Witness Initiatives at the center and oversees the Child Witness Materials Project. And Shashika Peeligama is a Senior Program Manager who coordinates this project. Thank you and I'll turn it over to CCI.

KATHRYN FORD: Thank you so much Sasha for the introduction. We're very happy to be here today and thank you as well, Director Rose for your introductory remarks. So just as Sasha mentioned for those who aren't familiar with the center, our three—our work really falls into three main buckets. So research, we proved it, for example done a community-based research on commercial sexual exploitation of children in the past. Our operating programs, which include the Bronx Child Trauma Support Program, the Hidden Victims Project, the Strong Starts Court Initiative, and work with the Human Trafficking Intervention Courts throughout New York City, all of which inspired this project, and expert assistance, so today, Shashika and I are representing the gender and family justice team at the center, which provides national training and technical assistance on gender-based violence, crimes against children and child welfare.

So as Sasha mentioned, I'm going to kind of give you an orientation to the materials and talk about their origin story. So as many of you are probably well aware, children and teens who experienced violence and victimization have to often interact with systems that are adult-oriented. And that can cause re-traumatization, it can cause distress, it can compromise their ability to participate in the criminal legal system and child welfare system, investigations and prosecutions as a witness, because of their distress, and overwhelmed and confusion. So this really speaks to the need for trauma-informed and child-friendly support and education for this population, which is very vulnerable, having already experienced violence and victimization. And that really led to this project, which was conceived up by OVC and we were really very honored to be chosen by OVC to do this work in creating these materials. And it really coincided as well with OVC's Vision 21 initiative, which really envisioned transforming the victim services field, and integrating services and strengthening them, including services for children and teenagers. And as well, another piece of the origin story is that OVC was receiving frequent requests for a very old publication of theirs, called "BJ Goes to Court," which was actually published in the late '90s. But the fact that it was the most frequently requested OVC publication even 20 years later really spoke to the profound need for trauma-informed developmentally appropriate supportive materials for child victims and witnesses. So based on OVC's general—generous funding, we were able to create a package of general child witness support materials, which were actually published by OVC in June 2021.

So as Sasha mentioned, we created materials about the criminal legal system and materials about the child welfare system. And for each system, we've created products publications for three different age groups, which are ages two to six, seven to twelve, and thirteen to eighteen. And these are all available on OVC's website and have also been translated into five additional languages, which is very exciting. But as a part of the really extensive needs assessment that we did for the project in the early stages, we discovered that trafficking survivors really have unique needs that we weren't able to address via the general child witness materials, the dynamics and experiences of exploitation that they've had can be somewhat different than children who've experienced other types of violence and victimization, including the dynamics of their relationship with their exploiters. And as Director Rose mentioned, sometimes not seeing themselves as crime victims, depending on the stage of where they are in their healing process. And as well as Director Rose mentioned many young people who've experienced trafficking actually interact with the criminal legal system as a victim defendant, rather than as an identified crime victim or witness.

Even with Safe Harbor Laws, hopefully, very few teens these days are being arrested for prostitution-related offenses as they were in the past, but teens are still being arrested for other charges like assault, shoplifting, drug possession and sales, that kind of thing that actually directly relate to their trafficking victimization. So it's really imperative that we identify that they've experienced trafficking and provide appropriate trauma-informed support.

So just to talk a little bit about how the materials were developed to give you a sense of what the process looked like. We first formed a trafficking specific stakeholders group, comprised of national and local experts on trafficking and working with survivors, and that included Lived Experience Experts. We also conducted a specialized national needs assessment. And then we utilize the findings from the needs assessment to develop the content and style of the materials. And once they were drafted, we pilot tested them with both practitioners and young survivors that included an expert peer review process and the materials have been reviewed by OVC, the human trafficking team at OVC, as well as reviewers from several other federal agencies at multiple points along the process. And then we're going to be talking about each of these steps in a little more detail.

So just starting with the partners and stakeholders who have been involved, you can see their names on the screen, but I just want to point to the incredible diversity of partners and stakeholders that we've had participating in the project really, since the very beginning, which include prosecutors, organizations, criminal defense, service

providers, national training and technical assistance providers, etcetera. So it's been really a wonderful honor and pleasure to work with all of these folks on creating these materials. And their role has really been very essential. As I mentioned since the very beginning, they've advised us in terms of conducting the needs assessment. They've actually participated in the needs assessment. They've advised us and provided feedback on draft storylines and character sketches. They've helped us arrange pilot testing, and they've conducted expert peer reviews of the materials. And now they're assisting us with promoting them and disseminating them to the anti-trafficking fields nationally since OVC has now published them.

So as I mentioned, we conducted a specialized needs assessment about young trafficking survivors to specifically inform what these materials should look like in terms of format, in terms of illustrations, and characters, and storylines. What would really be most helpful to this population and most engaging and informative? So the needs assessment involves reviewing existing publications and materials for young trafficking survivors, facilitating thirty-three interviews and three focus groups with expert practitioners who work with trafficking survivors, conducting an online practitioner survey, and then we utilize all that data to compile a report with findings based on what we learned, as well as specific recommendations for the materials that we were going to create.

We then partnered with two design agencies which Director Rose mentioned, The Center for Urban Pedagogy helped us create Zoey's Story and Jamie's Story and Alternate History Comics or AH Comics helped us create Sergio's Story and my colleague Shashika later on in the presentation today will be actually talking with you about those storylines and characters and showing you some of the illustrations.

So, as I mentioned to develop the content, it can be multiple discussions with our stakeholders, partners, expert practitioners, including a specific focus group on labor trafficking and supporting foreign national young trafficking survivors. And we really engaged survivors and lived experience experts throughout the entire process because we really wanted to center their voices and experiences, again, to ensure that what we were creating is really responsive to their needs. So they really helped us with creating the content and reviewing the character sketches and draft storylines at multiple stages in the process. Once we drafted the materials which were the three graphic novels, we pilot tested them, both with young survivors in one-on-one sessions and with practitioners and focus groups. And really—we really had representation from—throughout the United States and the purpose of these sessions was to show them the draft materials and to really get their feedback generally and also very specifically their suggestions for having—make them even stronger, and more supportive, and engaging,

and informative for young survivors. And just lastly simultaneously with the pilot testing process, we did conduct an expert peer review process, wherein expert practitioners from all over the United States completed an online review of the graphic novels via an online survey. And the materials even in draft stage were rated very highly with 82 percent saying they would recommend the materials to colleagues and peers, but they really provided various specific suggestions again for strengthening materials and all the feedback from pilot testing and expert peer review has been incorporated into the final materials that my colleague Shashika will be sharing with you in a bit. So that's the origin story of the materials, again we're very honored to have been chosen by OVC to do this work and very pleased with the result of all of our collaborations and with that I'll turn it back over to Sasha to introduce our next speaker.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thank you, Kathryn. So as Kathryn just mentioned this project was really the culmination of a lot of help from a lot of different people including those with lived experiences and so at this time, I'm going to invite Melanie Thompson to speak. She was a reviewer of these materials and is currently the Youth Outreach Coordinator at the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and is separately a speaker, activist, and leader in the global fight to end prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation, was self-trafficked and sold into prostitution in New York at the age of 12, she was later arrested and placed into foster care. She became an activist at the age 14. Ms. Thompson has testified before numerous legislative bodies about the need to pass strong anti-trafficking laws and ending the arrests of sex trafficked and prostituted children and people in the sex trade. She is a student at the City University of New York and plans to open a non-profit organization to assist victims of trafficking and foster care. Melanie, I'll turn it over to you, thank you.

MELANIE THOMPSON: Thank you so much, Sasha. And I just want to start by saying thank you to OVC for allowing CCI to do this project and CCI for having me come on and assist them. So really I'm going to make very brief remarks just highlighting three main points, but before I do I just want to say that this experience and this project is super, super important to me and I know that it is extremely impactful for survivors, children, and anybody really affected by the child welfare system that have been victims of trafficking themselves. With this project I have been able to have really open and honest discussions about not only my experience, but also the experiences that I've had going in—going through and navigating through the child welfare and justice system. There's so many—and we all obviously know this. There are so many laps and gaps in services and often times we as people that have gone through with the children, we are not necessarily asked about how we're feeling through these different stages nor are we having open and honest discussions about how we are impacted. Through this project I have had questions asked of me about what I've been through and was offered a

platform in the open and honest forum to be able to speak what I felt as a 12 year old, 13 year old girl going through these systems.

Additionally I have been able to interview other survivors who have gone through the child welfare system and justice system through a podcast where we have more platforms and more safe spaces to talk about these things. So through this project, I wanted to highlight these three points.

The first one being that we need to collectively create materials for youth not just about youth, often times and I've seen this at my experience and many survivors have experienced this. We find reports, we find surveys, we find interviews, we find articles, all of these different things, there's so much material out there that talks about the numbers, the statistics, any type of information about us. The numbers that come from court, those types of cases, but there's nothing that helps us go through the system, there's nothing that helps us understand it and if there is, it's very little and very far and few.

For me personally, I feel that if I would have had some type of material, like, the one that we have worked on for this project at the time that I was navigating through the court system, it would have been extremely, extremely helpful for me not only to understand where—what I was going through and what that process looked like, but also to understand that I wasn't by myself in this—in this process and that there were so many other youth that looked like me, talked like me, sounded like me that were also navigating this. And for me not knowing necessarily step-by-step what was going on. Me not having a team of experts that could help me fully understand what I had to do for court, how I had to prepare for it. To help me process what actually happened to me. I feel impacted me in the negative way going through the court system and made it extremely difficult for me to navigate it through the time that I did.

Secondly, I want to highlight navigating the justice system as a child especially is extremely scary and overwhelming. As you heard when Sasha read my bio, I have gone through the foster care system shortly after my arrest when I was 12 and being 12 and 13, being arrested alone is extremely scary. For me I didn't have any support or any help from the individuals. The only people that were on my team at the time were the folks that were working in court. And as we know many of the court system or much of the court system focuses a lot on the numbers and trying to prosecute a case. There were no reading materials, there were no interviews, or talks, or open discussions about how I might be feeling through that process. There was nothing that related to me which is why going back to my first point, it's extremely important that I want to—I want to emphasize the importance of having materials for young people not just about us. There



were plenty of papers and pamphlets about the numbers of folks that enter the foster care system, there were plenty of numbers and pamphlets and articles about the percentage of people that go through that court system or get arrested or the recidivism rates for many of us that have gone through it. But there was nothing that spoke to me at 13 saying “This might be scary for you or this is a process that is extremely complicated, that has so many different components.” There was nothing that I could read, or see, or touch that was tangible. That said “You are not alone in this process.” So I want to emphasize the importance of having those materials for survivors, by survivors, ideally, but something that is relatable and engaging. They’re—the few publications, products, materials that I’ve seen personally that do currently exist for youth like me that were going through the system. They’re either not a hundred percent engaging, they’re not as easy to understand. They’re not as graphic in terms of they’re not animated. They’re not extremely colorful. They don’t really grab the attention. And some of the materials can make it actually a little bit more scarier to navigate the system, but with this project, because it was so open, the discussions are real and honest. They’re direct and they incorporate more survivor input including from myself to all of the survivors that we’ve interviewed, that we’ve talked to, that we’ve done one-on-one sessions with, it became extremely relatable. And even as an adult that has not been navigating through the court system, it’s extremely engaging to go through.

So that’s going to bring me to the last point that I want to highlight. And I think that when we talk about collectively creating materials for youth that are navigating the trafficking—their trafficking experience and the child welfare system and justice system, I want to talk about how it takes intentionality on behalf of the organizations that are creating the programs to be inclusive and flexible. And really include survivors and child input when they’re making their materials. We need more organizations, grantees, whoever is creating these programs to really put the child that’s going through the system first. And in doing so it’s not just interviewing the child to use for their reports. It’s not just having survivors talk about their stories, it looks like actually creating content and materials that we can use, that we can touch, that we can see, when we’re going through the system, we need something that’s easy to read, we need something that is extremely relatable, and that may look like tailoring whatever the materials are to different cultures, different religions, different experiences.

One of the things I loved about the project that we were working on and that CCI was working on is that there were not only different language translations, but also it catered and tailored their materials to different age groups of children that were going through these systems. That’s extremely important because something that I’ve known at 16 going through the life as I call it, my trafficking experience is not the same for somebody who’s six years old, seven years old. So it really does take a level of intentionality by the

organizations, it takes coming together as a grantee, as an org. And sitting together and saying that we are going to make it our priority to prioritize the youth that we are serving, to look at it from their perspective. It is—it's—to me it's extremely imperative to have both, we need the reports and the articles that discuss the statistics, and the numbers, and the results, and the outcomes of us going through this system. But we need more materials that are tailored to and catered to folks like me who could have extremely benefited from having a material like this when I was going up against grand jury, and when I was in handcuffs, and then when I was going through different foster care programs. Every survivor that I've come into contact with doing advocacy work now in my adulthood, that have gone through some type of child welfare system or have been trafficked as children all had a very similar experience where court was extremely overwhelming and scary. And they didn't have any type of materials to help them navigate through that system. So again, I just wanted to reiterate those three things. I want to thank CCI and OVC for this opportunity. And I'm going to pass it back to my colleague that worked with me on this Shashika.

SHASHIKA PEELIGAMA: Hi, everybody, thank you so much for that, Melanie. So hi. As Melanie mentioned, my name is Shashika and I'm at the Center for Court Innovation. And I'll just be walking us through the actual materials and what they involve and what they're about, and providing a brief overview.

So basically, as Kris Rose also mentioned in her introductory address, we have three graphic novels Zoey's Story, Jamie's Story and Sergio's Story. And they all focus on a particular type of trafficking experience. Now I'm sure I don't need to inform all of you, but there are a vast variety of different trafficking experiences that a young person may experience. And so it was impossible for us to be able to capture all of that and portray all of them very neatly into three separate stories. But what we tried to do was to provide some essence of some typical experiences that a young person may go through as well as really focusing on diversity, so diversity was really important for us, as well as the young survivors that we worked with and helped us along the way. They really wanted us to make sure that we were portraying diversity in terms of the characters, in terms of their experiences, and in terms of their everyday language and the way they interact with practitioners, or even their own colleagues and peers. And so they really wanted to make sure that we were being diverse across many factors such as age, racial background, gender identification, and a host of many other things. And so we did try our best to make sure we were being diverse not only in terms of the main characters, so Zoey, Jamie, and Sergio, but also their background characters that you'll see throughout the stories. So another big feature of all of the materials is making sure that they are trauma-informed, as Kathryn also mentioned in her earlier remarks that we wanted to make sure that the materials are validating, don't pass on any blame to the

young person, and really seek to understand and validate what they're going through, so another thing that we wanted to make sure was included, was making reference to coping activities. So each of the stories have a range of coping activities, that the character themselves also demonstrates and dives themselves. And we're hoping that that can be a way to demonstrate to other young people that this could be something that they could do when feeling a little bit overwhelmed, or when going to court, as Melanie mentioned, can be really scary and overwhelming, not just for young people, but even for adults. So we're hoping the coping activities that are weaved in throughout the stories can act not only as a natural stopping point for the story, but also as something that a young person can engage with whenever they're feeling a little bit overwhelmed or a little bit stressed.

In each of the stories, we also pull quotes from survivors that we interviewed, and that worked with us throughout the process. The survivor quotes are a really unique and important feature of the materials, because we're really hearing messaging and encouragement from people that have had these lived experiences. And I will showcase some of these examples that they go through. And then not just with the graphic novels, we also have an accompanying booklet titled "What's Going On?" And in that booklet, we highlight really important information about a young person's rights as they go through the justice system, and the different roles of practitioners that they may interact with as they're going through the system. And then we also have accompanying practitioner and caregiver guides that will help any type of practitioner or a caregiver to really utilize the materials as effectively as possible.

So I just wanted to highlight a few quotes that we received, and you'll see them as we go through the presentation. But as Kathryn mentioned and as my colleague Melanie also mentioned, we wanted to make sure that we received input from young people throughout the whole development process. And just really ensuring that the stories that we're creating, the materials that we're creating are relatable and are on point to what are the real life experiences of young survivors today. And so we will be sharing a few quotes from some of that feedback and one of them here is really encouraging to hear but one of them shared that I was able to relate to all three stories surprisingly a lot like whether it was now or back when I was younger, and I wasn't expecting that.

So now we'll take a look at each of the stories in a little bit more detail starting off with Zoey's Story. Zoey is a 14 year old female young person. She has been sex trafficked by Danny and she identifies Danny as her boyfriend. As Kathryn mentioned in her earlier presentation, we do recognize that sometimes young people have a very complicated relationship with the exploiter. So we're wanting to make sure we're respectful of that and mirroring some of the language or experiences that they're

having, but at the same time, also not calling the person the boyfriend on our end. So we always use the language. It's the person that Zoey identifies as her boyfriend.

Zoey, so she was arrested and she was arrested for an associated crime related to her trafficking experience. She's arrested for shoplifting and for assault, and she's placed in a juvenile detention facility. And as a result of that she interacts with probation, with a lawyer, Alicia, who acts as her defense attorney and a social worker. She ends up going to a support group at the end with other young survivors and she shared her experience of what happened to her and that's how we learned Zoey's story and really unpacks what happened to her. And Zoe's Story includes three really critical coping activities. One is a breathing activity, take a breather. A second one is a grounding activity called making some space and the third is taking care of me checklist which highlights a range of different coping activities that a young person might be able to try.

So I'll just go through a few examples of the story. And you may have noticed even in Melanie's presentation that we did show some scenarios and samples of the materials. Any images that you see throughout this presentation are coming directly from the materials. We're really hoping that we can highlight the art, and the colors, and the illustrations. And we really hope that you'll find them as engaging as we have found them to be.

So here we can see that we've got Zoe and it starts with the beginning of her story. She's in a support group with other young people. She's feeling really nervous as you can see in the opening slide at the top. But with the support of her mentor and the support group leader, Van, you can see the male figure in the second panel, he supports her and helps her to share her story and her experience with the rest of the other group members. So here we can see that Zoe's relaying her story, what happened to her. That she was arrested and placed in a juvenile detention facility. Here we can see that Zoe had to attend court. She has the support of her lawyer, her defense attorney, Alicia. But the court has decided, due to Zoe's background and history, that they will keep her in the court's custody for another three days until her next hearing. And, understandably, you can see that Zoe's very upset and shocked by this.

So the story progresses and we see Zoe interacting with her social worker. And her social worker is really trying to understand what's going on with Zoe, and in particular what her relationship is with Danny, the person that she identifies as her boyfriend. Through interactions and communication, we can see that Zoe is, in fact, a victim of trafficking. And here we can see that Alicia, her lawyer, is explaining that to her and really trying to explain it in accordance with the law but also trying to unpack it in a youth-friendly way that Zoe understands and that it makes sense to her. Then we cycle

back to the end of the support group with Zoe reflecting again on her experiences. And we can really see that the other support group members also chime in a little bit about their experiences and really seek to validate what Zoe has been through.

And this is just a quick example of Zoe and Alicia doing a quick breathing activity. Again, as I mentioned, these forms a natural pause moment or stopping moment in the stories, so if—for any practitioners on the line, we encourage you to do these activities with the young people that you're working with or the young person can do it themselves in their own time.

So I'll move on to Jamie's story now. Jamie is a 16-year old non-binary young person. They are living in a group home, and a new group home for that fact, and they are connected with a therapist. They were peer recruited into sex trafficking by another young person living in the group home named Gigi. Jamie ends up interacting with police, the prosecutor, and a victim advocate because they end up becoming a victim-witness in a criminal case. And as you read the story, you'll see what happens and how that's unpacked. Again, there are three main coping activities. Getting it out is about journaling. So writing down your thoughts and your feelings and using that as a tool to unpack how you're feeling and processing any thoughts that you may have. Moving your body, which is about, you know, sensory motions and releasing tension and getting it out through a physical means. And, again, the "taking care of me" checklist. The "taking care of me" checklist are in all of the graphic novels, and that was actually an idea that we received from one of the young survivors that reviewed the materials as she mentioned that, you know, breathing exercises and journaling are all fantastic but it doesn't work for everybody. So she suggested that we have a list of different activities and different suggestions of something that a young person might be able to try, and one of them might resonate with some more than others. So we're really grateful for those suggestions and we wanted to make sure we were responsive to all of the feedback that we received.

So just to show some samples from Jamie's story, here we can see them engaging with their therapist, Patricia. And at the beginning of the story, they're talking about how they've just moved to a new group home. You know, understandably, they kind of feel a little isolated, not really connecting with the other young people there. But they have found this one girl named Gigi who they think is pretty cool and they start to form a friendship with. We learn throughout the story that Gigi herself is being trafficked by her cousin and then Gigi is being made by her cousin to invite other people. So she's asked Jamie to also join her to go to these parties and—as a way to kind of please her cousin, Bobby. So you can see that, here in the picture, Gigi is really trying to persuade Jamie to help her because she's also in a very difficult situation.

Here we can see Jamie talking to another young person in the group home named Marcus. Marcus as well is friends with Gigi and he also has been invited to go to the parties. But we can see that Marcus and Jamie are feeling really conflicted and have a lot of conflicting feelings and thoughts about going to the party and so they discussed that with each other. A lot of time passes and then we see that Bobby and Gigi end up getting arrested. And so the police open up a criminal case and they bring in Jamie for an interview to gather some of their information. A criminal case ends up opening against Bobby in adult criminal court. He is an adult. He's the adult trafficker. And so Jamie is linked with a victim advocate named Kareem, and Kareem really helps to prepare Jamie to testify in court and explain the court process and brings them to court to kind of practice-run what testifying might look like as we can see in the pictures here.

And then, finally, from Jamie, we can see Jamie reflecting on their overall experience, and they've really utilized journaling as a tool that they learned from their therapist, Patricia, as a way to really process their thinking and their thoughts and their feelings. And so you'll see that the dialogue here—over here is written on more handwritten paper.

So as part of our pilot-testing and engaging with the young survivors, we really wanted to make sure that these little things that we were adding in the stories actually felt relatable. So one of the questions that we were repeatedly asking young people was what do you think about the coping activities and the references to therapy and therapeutic activities? Does it feel relatable? Is it useful? Is it something that will go over a young person's head or do you think it's really important information to capture? And they all said that it is really important to feature. And this is one quote that we wanted to make sure that we shared with you all from a young survivor. "I've always been the one growing up that's like, oh, deep breathing doesn't help, therapy doesn't help. So when I finally did get into, like, the residential and stuff and my therapist, she taught me things like breathing, grounding, and those are things that actually help. So it would've been beneficial to learn it at a younger age."

So now we'll move on to Sergio's story. Sergio is about 15/16 years old and he is a male. He is also a foreign national and he experiences familial labor trafficking by someone that he identifies as his auntie and his uncle. He interacts with teachers and a victim advocate. We chose a school setting for Sergio's story and chose to focus on that a lot. Based on our research and engagement with our stakeholders, we learned that for a lot of young trafficking survivors, some of them are not engaging with mainstream services and some of them may not be going through formal court processes, in particular foreign national minors. And so a school setting was encouraged to be the

main focus of this story as it would seem a lot more relatable and be a means in which, hopefully, some young survivors can get information or encourage teachers to also be on the lookout for some young people that maybe experiencing something similar to Sergio.

So in his story, he becomes a victim-witness in a potential criminal case. We say potential because in the story, we don't see the full outcome of the court case, but we do see that Sergio is going through the process of potentially being a formal victim-witness in a criminal case against his auntie and his uncle. And then similar to the other two stories, we have a mindfulness meditation activity, a breathing activity as well, and the same "taking care of me" checklist.

Then moving on to show a few samples of Sergio's story. Here we can see that, you know, he's really tired and he's falling asleep in class and his teacher, Ms. Fisher, is wondering what's going on and how come he's still falling asleep and she's really worried about him and she tries to ask him some questions. But, understandably, Sergio is very worried and doesn't really want to disclose too much to her so he just kind of brushes it off and goes away. Here we can see Sergio bumping into his friends in the hallway and they're also wondering, "Where have you been Sergio? We haven't seen you in a long time." And here we learn that Sergio's been working at a restaurant and he's actually been working a lot there so that's why he's been quite absent from school and from his friends as well. Here, again, we can see Sergio talking to his coach. He has a very good relationship to his coach, and his coach is also really worried about him and tries to ask questions about Sergio, "What's happening? What's going on?" But, again, Sergio is very reluctant to tell him and he's actually starting to get really upset by all the questions coming from everybody. After some time, Sergio decides that it might—you know, it's very difficult but he might start to talk about what's going on, and he eventually does disclose to his coach what's happening in his situation. A lot more time passes that we'll see through the story and things have changed for Sergio. He's now living in a different home. He's not with his auntie and uncle anymore, and a criminal case is actually opened up against his auntie and uncle. And he's linked in with a victim advocate named Ms. Maya. She's the female figure in this image, and she's explaining the court process to him and what could potentially happen in his case.

And here's towards the end of the story, Ms. Maya is really reiterating to Sergio that no matter what happens with the case or what the outcome may be, there are plenty of people and services available to help him and that they're all there to help him throughout his journey beyond this particular experience.

And then here I just wanted to show a quote. So as I mentioned earlier, we do have survivor quotes that are woven in throughout each of the stories. This quote actually comes from my colleague, Melanie Thompson, who you all just heard from, and it's a beautiful quote speaking about the importance of speaking out and although you feel uncomfortable, you do have a right to ask questions and to let people know that it—that, you know, you need a break, you want to ask something, or that you are scared, and that is okay.

And so similar to the coping activities, we ask the young people that were reviewing the materials and working with us what they felt about hearing from other survivors and reading their quotes and the stories. And, overwhelmingly, that was received with positivity. They all loved seeing that on there. They felt it was really affirming and validating. And here's one quote that we wanted to share with you from a young survivor, and they state, "I liked them, the quotes, because, you know, reading a story is one thing, but you can't just say that the story is real. But to have a quote from somebody saying that, hey, it's going to be okay, pretty much, and that I've been where you're at, that feels good. That is reassurance."

So now I'll just move on to the supplementary booklet titled What's Going On? So these form supplementary to the graphic novels and focuses on more information about legal systems and trafficking in general. We include definitions of sex and labor trafficking. We define it according to federal law but we also break it down into really youth-friendly language so that it is easily digestible and understandable. We explain the different court systems that a young person may go through whether it be as a defendant through juvenile court or as a victim-witness in adult criminal court, and also the intersection with the Child Welfare System. We talk about rights. We're really wanting to use these materials to empower young people to know that they do have rights as they go through these systems, not just as a victim-witness but also in case, unfortunately, they may be going through as a defendant. And they should know that they also have a number of rights that they are entitled to. We also explained different practitioners that they may interact with as they're going through the system, whether it would be a judge, a prosecutor, law enforcement, or a victim advocate. We break it down again in youth-friendly language what the limits of the role is, what they do, and also what the limits of confidentiality are. When we spoke to young people, they really wanted to make sure that they understood what each person did and what they would do with their information. And that is something they're entitled to know, so we wanted to make sure that we really touch upon that in the role definitions of each of the practitioners. We also include information about resources and support that might be out there. And then we also make sure that we point out that for any young person, irrespective of their status in the United States, are entitled to the same range of supports and services that are



available here. But we also make sure that we do illustrate that for foreign national minors, there might be some immigration pathways that they may be entitled to. So we mention that in this booklet as well.

Now, when we were doing pilot-testing, we actually didn't have the What's Going On? booklet ready to be pilot-tested. We just have the raw content. But what was very interesting and also very encouraging was that when we asked the young people, "What do you think needs to be added to this graphic novels, what will make it stronger, what would you like to see in here," they all overwhelmingly said that we needed to include more information about resources and support and services that are out there for young people so that a young person can refer to them at any time and utilize those services if need be. And as one person quotes, "At the end of the books, putting in, like, hotlines or resources to call when you're in trouble. I think that would be a good thing to put in your book." And so to be responsive to that really essential feedback, we did just that. So as you can see in the sample from the "What's Going On?" booklet, we do have a section on supports that are available, the people and places that can support you along your way. We do not try—we're not sending the message that a young person themselves has to contact these services but they could speak to any of the adults that are working with them to perhaps get connected to any of these services and just feel empowered and know that there are these supports available to them should they wish for them.

Here is an example of rights that we have in the book. So here in the image on the right, you can see that we're talking about victim rights. So you have the right to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. And we explained what that means as you're going through the justice system. And, as I mentioned, we also have a separate section on defendant rights. Something I also wanted to mention is that compared with the graphic novels, the "What's Going On?" booklet is quite text heavy because it is very information-based. However, the whole booklet is hyperlinked, so a young person can literally just click on any section that feels most relevant to them and go straight to that section without having to navigate through the entire booklet.

Here is an example of the practitioner role section. As you can see, we're explaining the jury. We have a picture or an example of what that role might look like and then we explain in youth-friendly language underneath what that role is all about. And then this, lastly, is an example of the different court systems. And here we're explaining the role of crossover or dual status cases. So if a young person has cases in both Juvenile and Child Welfare Courts at the same time, what that might look and what they could possibly ask for in terms of having a combined case. So that pretty much ends it there. I'll just end up by saying, again, thank you to OVC for this opportunity. And here are our details in case anyone wants to learn more about our project. Thank you.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thank you, Shashika. And, again, thank you, Kathryn. So what we're going to do now is we're—I'm going to introduce our final panelist who's going to talk to us about the use of these products in field and then we'll launch the materials and get in to your questions and answers. So I want to introduce Melissa Milam. And Melissa is here with us today from DOJ's Civil Rights Division, the Criminal Section's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit where she is Victim Services Program Manager. Melissa has 25 years of experience advocating for justice. She spent seven years working with youth and county government. Eleven years as a Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Victim Advocate with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington D.C., and has been the Victim Services' Program Manager with the Civil Rights Division's Criminal Section's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit for almost seven years. Her current work focuses, on large parts, on federal prosecutions, human trafficking, and hate crimes, and how do effectively meet the needs of the survivors of these crimes. She's received numerous awards over the course of her career in Victim Advocacy, but she's most proud of her two Attorney General awards. Melissa's bachelors and masters are in Social Work. She's a licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and is a certified Clinical Trauma Professional with specialized training in psychiatric conditions, substance use disorders and trauma. She's fluent in Spanish and in a part-time capacity provides pro bono therapy to under-resourced residents of the District of Columbia. So, Melissa, thank you so much for your time today, and I'm going to turn it over to you.

MELISSA MILAM: Thank you so much, Sasha. Good afternoon, everyone. I first wanted to start by giving my deepest thank you to OVC Director Kris Rose for—and, obviously, the rest of OVC for including me in today's launch of these graphic novels. I feel very, very privileged to be here and to say that I'm excited about their publication and how much they will enhance the work of victim advocates and really quite frankly anybody else doing this work of working, you know—these professionals working with human trafficking survivors is an understatement. So when I was asked to give the perspective of a practitioner on how these particular support materials for child victim and witnesses can help us provide better services, I started to think about the many cases over the course of my career and victim advocacy and how few tools there are for young people which led me to think about how incredibly timely these graphic novels are for the field. Having had the opportunity to, you know, really review and examine all three novels and then be here to talk about their tremendous value, what I really had hoped to do was find some way to describe and capture that value in words. And what comes to mind for me as I think about them is that our field now has something that has moved from less defined and gray to literally full color. And, oh, my God, full color—this full color product is amazing to me. So, anyway, a trip to court for someone, as all of the other panelists have acknowledged, anyone really, can be really daunting, and a visit to court can mean a million different things. And that number, a million, is also, you know,

representative of all those people going to court who will all be having different experiences. Those experiences will be impacted by their personal circumstances, previous experience with law enforcement and the court system, race, gender, their support system or lack of a support system, and, of course, prior trauma to name a few. So the expression I'm going to court, you know, what that means to me is that people will have widely divergent experiences and that—well, it is my job to help usher survive—I'm sorry. To—survivors to—you know, usher the survivors through that. And that's where I think these beautiful graphic novels really come into play for me as a practitioner. Finding a text that is sophisticated enough and yet also age-appropriate to represent a broad sample of human trafficking experiences is really an exciting implement to add to our services in victim advocacy. You know, one of the things most unwelcomed about court and being involved in the court system is the mystery of the unknown, and the unknown will differ from person to person and community to community.

I remember my first federal prosecution of human trafficking 18 years ago where I was the victim advocate on the case. I had just started at the U.S. Attorney's Office in D.C. And this case involved a 14-year-old young woman who had survived horrific abuse at the hands of her boyfriend who, you know, she identified as her boyfriend and, of course, was her trafficker. I was new to federal cases only having worked at the local level before. And sitting with her, and all of that trauma was scary for the both of us. All I can say is what I wouldn't have given to have the story of Zoe to share with her. You know, these publications could have given us both the words that we needed to get her through that process, and I'm so happy they're available now.

So all I have to say that I truly believe that these graphic novels will demystify a lot of the questions, worries, and concerns of the young people reading them. In thinking about using these publications, I'm grateful because I know they go much further in recognizing the idea that one thing we all have in common is that going to court under these circumstances is an ordeal. Thankfully, these novels take it a step further in recognizing that we are diverse in who we are and how we experience things and they clarify that for the reader. To me, having these guides insist on the dignity that survivors deserve, and educating through these publications is a key element in our strategy of being survivor-centered.

So pivoting just for a moment, I wanted to circle back to something brought up earlier in this presentation. We learned that part of the inspiration for these graphic novels are the stories of Jamie, Zoe, and Sergio was—you know, from a much older publication called "BJ Goes to Court" and I have used "BJ Goes to Court" often. BJ was an archetypal, most common case scenario for going to court manual. I would describe BJ as sort of a

one-dimensional character, but he gave us practitioners a guide to help children. Youth understand what was generally going to happen, and then, you know, as victim advocates, we would kind of fill in the gaps.

With these new graphic novels, we will have to fill in these gaps far, far less, if at all. Of course, there is value in, you know, the story of BJ, the generalizable, but these are tailored to human trafficking. And because we all know that this nefarious crime has many nuances, many varieties, we need to have, you know, a specific text for the various manifestations of human trafficking. Sergio, Jamie, and Zoe make the many facets of the human experience come to life in a way that we haven't had before. I love these novels and I look forward to their use because they bring richness to the relationship of the victim witness coordinator and the survivor. They offer more points of connection to the survivor, and it's on those points of connection, I think, that comfort is found. And on the strength of that comfort, a relationship between the victim witness coordinator and survivor is made. This is what is exciting for me as a practitioner who will use these in the field.

Going to court is disorienting. One feels out of their element. And for many survivors, it's a scary experience as we've heard. I think many can feel adrift during the court experience and these novels, I think, really can serve as an anchor for the survivors.

So just one more thing before I turn this back over to Sasha that I'd like to highlight is that I love and truly value the parts of the graphic novels that give young people the language and vocabulary to describe their emotions. The novels do it expertly well. They provide real techniques for how to manage anxiety and stress, how to normalize their feelings. You know, it introduces concepts like self-care, breathing techniques, mindfulness. You know, there's literally a short practical guide that one can use to relax themselves and cope. And, honestly, I don't think there is anyone that doesn't benefit from this. And so I guess I'll sign off by saying that the publications for human trafficking survivors close a gap and they promote a coordinated and meaningful response to what survivors need during the court process. They help practitioners build trust and rapport. They promote sensitivity and understanding. And with our job being—you know, being to commit to helping survivors of human trafficking crimes to feel safe, secure, and stable, I can't think of a better tool and resource to have than these human trafficking graphic novels. So back to you, Sasha, and thank you.

SASHA RUTIZER: So thank you everybody for your time today. And I particularly want to thank the panelists for everything you've done to bring these to fruition. We're at the point where you can go download these products. And as we mentioned earlier,

they're—they are currently being translated into five different languages, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, into African, French, Brazilian, Portuguese, and Vietnamese.

There was a question in the Q&A as I was monitoring, "Will they be in any other languages?" These are the ones we're starting with for now. We'll continue to evaluate if there are needs for other languages. We welcome your input, so do let us know if there are other languages you believe are helpful. We are also going to have this produced in an audiobook recording for that purpose. And I want to go through a couple of questions that we got in the Q&A that I was able to get to, but I'm not sure everybody was able to see them so I want to just highlight them. First, I'll also note that the slides, transcript, and recording will be posted on OVC's website in about 10 days. So you can come and access that. And so, panelists, I'm going to throw a couple of questions at you. And the first one is, "Do you adjust the materials based upon some minority groups or cultures?" And, Kathryn, if it's okay, I'm going to toss that one over to you.

KATHRYN FORD: Thanks, Sasha. And thank you for that important question. So as, hopefully, you've seen throughout the presentation, we've tried to be really mindful of diversity in the illustrations and diversity in the discussion of trafficking experiences, but certainly there may be elements of the materials that don't resonate for a particular survivor or family that you're working with or don't accurately reflect the legal system process in your community. So we definitely encourage practitioners to adapt the materials in any way that they see fit, whether that's adding things about how your specific justice system works or a changing of elements of the story, whatever you think would be most helpful to that survivor.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thank you. Okay. So I've got another question. "When will the translations be available?" We anticipate in the winter of 2022 getting them all completed. Another question was "Can the publications be printed and/or ordered?" Right now you can print them on our website. They're available for printing in two different versions. The first one is the classic PDF and the second one is a professional print. So if you wanted to go bring this to a professional print shop, the instructions are there and you can do that. We are looking into options for printing but those are the two that are available right now and immediately for you.

The next question, Melissa, I'm going to ask you to answer. And then I also like Melanie to follow up if you're comfortable doing that. And the question is "How can law enforcement contribute with assisting victims at our level, law enforcement level?"

MELISSA MILAM: So I want to make sure I understand the question. Do they want to know how law enforcement can contribute to what exactly? Do you have any more clarification on the question itself? Just so that I make sure I get the right answer.

SASHA RUTIZER: If it comes up in the chat with some clarifying information that—but the question is “How can law enforcement contribute to assist victims at their level?”

MELISSA MILAM: So I think that—I mean, again, hoping that I’m understanding the question correctly, I think that, you know, law enforcement obviously one of the biggest things, and certainly right now, is having better relationships with the community. And so that’s going to mean a lot of—a lot of work to have community engagement, to do a lot of trainings and give opportunity for people to be able to have exposure to law enforcement in a better light. And so I think that I would answer that question by saying that, you know, training would probably be the biggest thing for law enforcement to understand how to, you know, work better with community members and, obviously in this context, victims of crime.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thanks, Melissa. Melanie.

MELANIE THOMPSON: Yeah. Sorry. No, I was just going to say I’m just going to echo Melissa. I think training is the biggest thing. I know many of the trainings that I’ve seen with law enforcement that I’ve worked with, they’re very generalized or very broad and oftentimes don’t include some type of inclusivity or flexible component working with survivors or young people. They’re usually based on the stats and the outcomes of cases, not so much more of interpersonal feeling aspect, and I think that that’s where the gap is. So I would say in whatever trainings you either improve or come up with for this, to include more survivor input from folks themselves about what their experience was with the systems in a—in an interpersonal level. I think that would make the difference.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thanks, both of you. So the next question was somebody thought that ninety minutes and six people might be too much to take this show on the road, and so the question was about an abridged training for smaller components, and that is a great question because ninety minutes is probably too long for a lot of people. So—yeah. Yes. You can reach out to CCI, specifically Katherine Sicchio on that. I have pasted their information in the chat. Directly responding to that question, their information is also within the PowerPoint and you can reach out to them on that.

So the next question is—and anybody who wants to take this, please go ahead. “I’m curious,”—this is the question. “I’m curious about the idea of having advocates stationed

in law enforcement agencies. Do you believe this would be more helpful for victims?" And, Melissa, if you want to start with that.

MELISSA MILAM: Sure. Yeah. Absolutely. I know for a fact that here in Washington D.C. and, obviously, Maryland and Virginia, there are a lot of local police departments who do, in fact, have victim advocates in their local police department offices. And so, generally speaking, I think that anybody who is specifically trained and sensitive to the needs that a victim of a crime may have being placed in a police department is going to be a better thing. Now, I will say that I think that there needs to be, you know, emphasis on specialized training so that that person is aware of all of the dynamics of the specific community that they're working in, et cetera, but I have seen that—let's say in Fairfax County, Virginia here in Washington D.C., there are several victim advocates that I know of that work in local police departments in Maryland, and they are wonderful at sort of bridging the gap between law enforcement and victims of crime. And I think that it is—it's extremely beneficial to have it. So, yes, I would say that I think it's more helpful for victims.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thanks, Melissa. Anybody else want to respond to that?

MELANIE THOMPSON: I was just going to say absolutely like 110 percent. I think that the issue is—that arises when dealing with law enforcement for many of us is that oftentimes the lack of trust is there. As many of us know, law enforcement could—or has in the past negatively impacted situations for some of the folks that have gone through this, and I think that having, like Melissa said, somebody who's specifically trained and sensitive in this—in this—in this topic is extremely helpful to have it. It also alleviate some of the stress or the concerns around your first point of contact being someone that's a police officer or somebody that potentially has the authority to, in some cases, say, deport the person or arrest them. So I think having somebody there that—that's not their first initial job to do something like that, I think that's extremely helpful. And, in many cases, I think the victim advocate being the survivor's first point of contact before the police might actually be more helpful.

SASHA RUTIZER: Thanks, Melanie. So I do have one more question and that was related to a truncated version of this, similar to a poster or something you would see, like the Department of Labor have required to post in the different offices and whether or not we can create a flyer of sorts. So we will look into some version of a flyer or a postcard and get back to you on that, but we do not have one in the works right now. I think I got to all of the questions that were in here and if I don't, someone's going to pop up here and we'll have a minute and tell me but I think that's it.

So what I want to do now is welcome everybody to go to OVC's website, download these, to read them, to share them, and—so that everybody can benefit from these—the tremendous efforts of everybody. So, again, they are currently being translated and we'll see if we can work on some additional translations. Thank you to the panelists who are here with us today for all of the work that you did. We're so proud of these materials. And thank you for everybody who came on today and stuck it on today and, most importantly, for all the work that you do.