

## Understanding the Trafficking of Children for the Purpose of Labor in the United States

The human trafficking of children into various forms of labor or services is a particularly egregious offense and is recognized by United States federal anti-trafficking statutes. While we know child labor trafficking exists, there have been no empirically sound attempts to understand the nature or scope of child labor trafficking in the US. Child labor trafficking cases have occurred in most states, and include industries such as domestic servitude, peddling, forced labor/services in restaurants, factories and agriculture. In order to develop capacity within systems to identify minor victims of labor trafficking and to develop adequate responses to their needs, we must fill gaps in our knowledge about the experiences of children who are trafficked for labor in the US, and how they are identified.

This project seeks to answer three main questions that will enhance our understanding of child labor trafficking:

1. What is the nature of child labor trafficking in the US and how is it distinct from other forms of labor abuse involving children?
2. Who are the perpetrators of child trafficking crimes (e.g. individuals, organized syndicates, families, etc.) and how do they operate?
3. How are cases of labor trafficking involving minors being identified and what are the challenges facing first responders, including child protection and law enforcement in identifying and responding to these cases?

Data will be collected in four research sites in the US where multiple child labor trafficking cases have been identified. Information from client case records in each study site will be coded to systematically identify demographic information about child labor trafficking victims, information about recruitment, movement, exploitation, and perpetrators. Interviews with victim service and legal providers will supplement the information in the case records and provide a broader picture of the nature of child labor trafficking victimization and the experiences of victims in the local area. Finally, working with providers in each of the four study sites we will interview adult survivors of child labor trafficking to learn about their experiences and needs.

This study will provide foundational information about the nature and characteristics of labor trafficking involving minors. The project will provide insights into the key service needs of this population, how this population may come into contact with first responders, including child welfare agencies and justice systems, and the degree to which existing services can assist these child victims.

### Principal Investigators

Amy Farrell, Ph.D.  
Northeastern University  
School of Criminology  
and Criminal Justice  
617-373-7439  
[am.farrell@neu.edu](mailto:am.farrell@neu.edu)

Meredith Dank, Ph.D.  
John Jay College of  
Criminal Justice  
[mdank@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:mdank@jjay.cuny.edu)

Katherine Walts, JD  
Center for the Human  
Rights of Children  
Loyola University  
Chicago, School of Law  
[kkaufkawalts@luc.edu](mailto:kkaufkawalts@luc.edu)

### Research Assistants

Taylor Robichaud  
Northeastern University  
Institute on Race and  
Justice  
[robichaud.t@husky.neu.edu](mailto:robichaud.t@husky.neu.edu)

Chlece Neal, MSW, JD  
Loyola University  
Chicago,  
School of Law  
[cneal2@luc.edu](mailto:cneal2@luc.edu)

Andrea Hughes, LMSW  
John Jay College of  
Criminal Justice  
[ahughes@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:ahughes@jjay.cuny.edu)

### Funding

National Institute of  
Justice  
NIJ-2019-15231