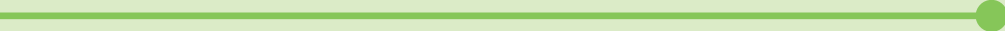


Thomson Reuters Institute

# Houston Area Council on Human Trafficking



# Council By-Laws

Adopted on: November 6, 2018

## Article I. Name of Council

The official name of this organization is the Houston Area Council on Human Trafficking. It is also known by the acronym HAC-HT or referred to as the Council.

**Section I.** HAC-HT was formed in 2012 based on the political will of the Houston Mayor.

**Section II.** HAC-HT is independent from all other external task forces in the Houston area or nationally.

**Section III.** All HAC-HT Executive Board members and members are Mayoral appointees.

## Article II. Mission of the Council

To execute a community-based response to human trafficking at scale by supporting the vision and goals of the Mayor as expressed in the City of Houston's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan.

## Article III. Goals for the Council

HAC-HT's goals are to:

- i. Work together to end sex and labor trafficking in Houston.
- ii. To advise Mayor on recommended institutional changes for City Departments.
- iii. Research and analyze city department policies and ordinances and advocate for legislative changes at the state level where applicable.
- iv. Raise community awareness and provide data driven information to catalyze members to action and address identified gaps.
- v. Facilitate member coordination and collaboration to increase service networks and institute screenings to increase victim identification.
- vi. Provide resources, trainings, and materials to Council members and invited guests.
- vii. Empower law enforcement to increase victim identification and be trauma-informed.

## Article IV. Council Structure, Leadership, and Duties

### Section I. Council Structure

The Council includes the Chair, the Executive Committee, Committee Chairs, and Council Members. Only Council Members may serve in these roles. In addition, the Council hosts Yearly Attendees to share updates once a year with non-Members on Strategic Plan implementation.

### Section II. Chair, Executive Committee, Committee Chairs

**Chair:** The Special Advisor to the Mayor on Human Trafficking serves as the Chair. The Chair is the official Mayor's Office representative at meetings and in the community. The Chair is responsible for designing, facilitating, running general Council meetings.

**Executive Committee:** Executive Committee Members serve in an advisory role to the Mayor and are responsible for Council governance, appointing Committee Chairs, strategic direction, and making membership and termination recommendations.

**Committee Chairs:** Committee Chairs will chair each of the Council Committees for a term of two years, thereby leading the activities and operations of the Committees.

### Section III. Appointing the Executive Committee

**Appointing:** The Mayor appoints three individuals to the Executive Committee not counting the Special Advisor. Members on this Committee serve two year terms, which may be renewed upon approval by the Mayor.

### Section IV. Member Committees

**Coordinated Screening, Referral, and Services:** Supports, strengthens, and continues to bring to scale the Mayor's coordinated screening and services platform, which enables public health front door partners to screen and make needs-based referrals to our case managers at the shelter- and hospital-level.

**Education:** Raises awareness of labor and sex trafficking, including all underrecognized forms of trafficking, at scale by leveraging Houston's existing Watch for Traffick materials, finding new venues and spaces to feature these materials, and propose creative new ways to extend the Watch for Traffick concept into new mediums and areas.

**Law Enforcement:** Collaborates on and implements victim-centered strategies of identifying potential victims in the field, formalizing needs-based referrals to service providers, and determining ways of diverting victims towards rehabilitative services in order to mitigate recidivism.

**Policy:** Enables members to keep abreast of local, state, and federal legislative updates, provides technical expertise on proposed policies and procedures, and conducts research for potential use by the Chair in advancing local policy.

**Incubator:** Understands the needs of members, conducts research on cutting-edge solutions, proposes those solutions for implementation to members, and prepare briefings for presentation during every meeting on the latest practical research and technological innovations.

### **Section V. Committee Placements**

The Executive Committee shall determine the member's placement on a Committee. Committee members will not be rotated annually, unless deemed necessary by the Chair to meet a specific meeting goal. A member organization may have representatives on two different committees.

### **Section VI. Yearly Attendees**

Representatives from select organizations in the anti-trafficking field who are not otherwise Members will be invited once a year to hear updates on Strategic Plan implementation. Yearly Attendees do not hold any advisory or participatory function on HAC-HT. Members may recommend individuals to attend, but only the Chair and Executive Committee shall make formal invitations.

## **Article V. Meetings**

HAC-HT's meetings shall be structured accordingly:

### **Section I. General Council Meetings**

General Council meetings shall be held every 2–3 months, or at least 4–6 times per year. General meetings are typically held on the third Thursday of a given month, but are subject to change.

### **Section II. Committee Meetings**

Committee meetings shall be held as often as the Committee Chair and Committee members deem necessary to complete required tasks.

### **Section III. Special Projects Meetings**

Special Projects meetings shall continue to be held as often as the Special Projects Chair and members deem necessary to complete the required activities or operations.

### **Section IV: Meeting Locations**

All meetings will be held within the Houston area.

## **Article VI. Membership**

Members are Mayoral appointees and shall be individuals, agencies, or organizations that agree to

- i. the terms of membership detailed in the sections below and in the Membership Application and
- ii. have been approved for membership by the Executive Committee.

### **Section I. Membership Expectations**

- i. Support the mission of HAC-HT.
- ii. Use your diverse expertise to lead and innovate where efforts are additive to systems change envisioned by the Mayor's Office.
- iii. Participate on one of the Council committees and attend at least 75% of meetings and/or not miss more than three consecutive meetings.

- iv. Members may designate a temporary agency representative no more than three times if they are going to be absent with prior approval.
- v. For Council continuity, the member needs to attend all meetings whenever possible.
- vi. Adhere to the Council's policy regarding confidentiality about victim information.
- vii. Members may concurrently serve on another task force and agree not to represent or otherwise advance the interests of external task forces when serving in their capacity as HAC-HT members.
- viii. Members may not engage in activities in which they are subject to conflicts of interest.
- ix. If a general member of the Council wishes to represent HAC-HT, either in a public or private forum, the member must gain permission in advance to do so from the Executive Committee.
- x. Abide by Sections VI, VIII, and IX of Article VI.

## **Section II. Membership Qualifications**

All members are appointed by the Mayor. Due to the nature of this Council and the sensitivity of the population that HAC-HT serves, membership is primarily for organizations that identify and assist potential human trafficking survivors and effect systems change at scale. HAC-HT also welcomes trafficking survivors and/or potential others that have the ability to effect systems change.

Determination for membership will be made on a case by case basis. The Executive Committee determines the benefit of their collaboration and makes a membership recommendation to the Mayor.

The Council encourages and invites member applicants who serve and/or represent U.S. Citizens/Legal Permanent Residents, foreign nationals, adults, minors, LGBTQ persons, sex trafficking survivors, and labor trafficking survivors.

## **Section III. Membership Acceptance**

If selected for membership into the Council and appointed by the Mayor, the organization will be placed on a two meeting introductory period. If the Executive Committee deems the membership acceptable, the member will receive a New Member Orientation Packet.

## **Section IV. Membership Terms**

Members serve for a period of two years, after which the Mayor will consider re-appointments based on the merits and contributions of each member.

## **Section V. Membership Dismissal**

If the Executive Committee deems a member in noncompliance of the membership requirements, the Executive Committee will notify the member of such in writing and will temporarily suspend the member. The member will then have the chance to meet with the Executive Committee to discuss the circumstances for temporary suspension. The Executive Committee reserves the ability to dismiss the member by a simple majority vote and by making a recommendation to the Mayor for final determination.

### **Section VI. Membership Termination**

Membership may be terminated and revoked by the Executive Committee for the following reasons. However, reasons for termination are not limited to this list:

- i. Violation of the Council's Confidentiality Policy regarding victim information.
- ii. Misrepresentation or false representation of HAC-HT or their role therein.
- iii. Violation of the Council's membership requirements.
- iv. Activities carried out by the member that undermine the Council's ability to function, such as, but not limited to, disorderly conduct, criminal activity, or lack of support for and undermining of new initiatives.
- v. Activities that damage the reputation and integrity of the Mayor's Office.
- vi. Displaying a lack of integrity or failure in judgment in their professional capacity.
- vii. Failure to treat members with respect and professionalism.

### **Section VII. Executive Board Termination**

An Executive Board member's membership may also be terminated if they have violated the above items and for violations other than those listed above. In this instance, the Executive Board member in question must recuse themselves from the vote regarding their possible termination for final recommendation to the Mayor.

### **Section VIII. Non-Discrimination Policy**

The Council and its members do not discriminate against anyone for reasons of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, nationality, ethnicity, citizenship, legal status, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.

### **Section IX. Confidentiality Policy**

All members and guests must sign the Council's Confidentiality Policy prior to attending general Council meetings. By signing this Policy, members and guests agree to maintain strict confidentiality regarding sensitive information shared during meetings. Sensitive information includes details regarding human trafficking victims, survivors, or the activities of law enforcement or social service agencies engaged in interventions and restoration.

### **Section X. Conflict of Interest Policy**

Members agree to disclose any and all affiliations or material interests beyond their immediate organizational affiliation that may impair their impartial judgement while serving on HAC-HT. Examples of conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Steering committee members towards vendors with whom the member has a material interest.
- ii. Advancing policy changes through HAC-HT whose outcome materially benefits oneself.
- iii. Any action whose advancement a member during her or his course of service stands to materially or tangibly benefit from.

This policy shall not be construed as meaning that members are expected to shed their organizational affiliation, except where their affiliation is a precondition of materially benefiting from their actions while a member. Members faced with such a conflict must disclose to the Chair and Executive Board and abstain from all decision-making around the item with which a material conflict exists.

Members with knowledge of violations of this policy by other members are expected to promptly notify the Chair and Executive Board. The Chair and Executive Board will look into all instances and perceived instances of violations of this policy. Those found to have violated this policy will have their membership revoked. Depending on the nature and severity of the violation, the Chair and Executive Board may be obligated to notify the appropriate authorities.

## Article VII. Guests

### Section I: Invited guests

Invited guests (persons who are not an alternative representative of a member agency or organization) must be approved by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee requires one week notice for requests. Invited guests must be accompanied by the member the first time they attend a general Council meeting. In addition, guests must sign the Council's Confidentiality Policy. Due to safety and security concerns, the meeting invitation and location should not be forwarded to anyone without prior approval of the Executive Committee.

## Article VIII. By-Law Amendments

### Section I. Amendment Proposal Procedure

Only members are eligible to propose an amendment to the Council's By-Laws. If a member chooses to propose an amendment, the proposal must first be presented to the Executive Committee, which will review it and decide whether to approve or deny the proposed amendment.

## Article IX. Council Dissolution

If Executive Committee members decide that the need for a Council no longer exists the Executive Committee can advise the Mayor to dissolve the Council. The authority to dissolve the Council rests with the Mayor alone.

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