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A STUDY IN SUPPORT OF THE NYS GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON MISSING WOMEN & GIRLS WHO ARE BIPOC [BLACK, INDIGENOUS, OR PEOPLE OF COLOR]

FINAL REPORT

A STUDY IN SUPPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON MISSING WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO ARE BLACK, INDIGENOUS, OR PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC)

Final Report

This report was prepared by the NYS Youth Justice Institute's staff in partial fulfillment of MOU # UCGF2380 (DCJS) / 00744 (UAlbany). This report is final and supersedes the draft reports submitted in December 2025 and April 2026. Revisions in this version are limited to clarifications and minor edits requested by DCJS and reflect feedback by the *Guiding Council*; no substantive changes to findings or conclusions have been made. This report also includes an expanded appendix on *New York State's Ongoing Efforts* provided by the Task Force.

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Acknowledgements

From the Executive Director, New York State Youth Justice Institute

The New York State Youth Justice Institute (YJI) extends our sincere gratitude to the individuals, organizations, and government agencies across New York State whose insights and commitment made this report possible. This work reflects a shared dedication to advancing the safety and wellbeing of Black, Indigenous, Latina, Asian, and other Women and Girls of Color who go missing.

We are deeply grateful to the survivors, family members, and lived-experience experts who candidly shared their stories with us. Their voices are foundational to this work and will continue to inform future steps in this work through the *Guiding Council*. We also acknowledge the system allies, practitioners, community advocates, and media scholars whose contributions through listening sessions, interviews, and consultation strengthened the Study's depth and relevance.

We thank the members of the New York State Governor's Task Force on Missing Women and Girls Who Are BIPOC for their thoughtful engagement and leadership over the past year. Their guidance has been central to shaping this Study and grounding it in equity-centered and culturally honoring practices.

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Finally, I extend my thanks to the YJI's research and facilitation teams, especially Dr. Subhajit Pal, Dr. Alysha May, and Dr. Toni Cela, for the rigor and commitment to excellence they brought to this Study.

It is our hope that this report honors the knowledge shared with us and contributes meaningfully to strengthening safety, justice, and visibility for BIPOC women and girls across New York State.

Giza Lopes, PhD.

Overview

Defining the Issue

Black, Indigenous, Latina, Asian, and other Women and Girls of Color go missing at disproportionately high rates in the United States.[1] For example, data from the National Crime Information Center indicate that in 2024, approximately 45% of the 262,447 new female missing-person entries involved Black, Indigenous, and Asian females, despite these groups comprising only about 26%[2] of the U.S. female population in the same year.[3] Besides their disproportionate disappearance, their cases are also often underreported, misclassified, or deprioritized.[4]

The nature of BIPOC women and girls' disappearances reflects patterns of exploitation, violence, and systemic neglect that shape whether cases receive timely and consistent attention.[5] For many BIPOC families, the experience of reporting a missing loved one includes delays, disbelief, unclear processes, and limited access to information or support.[6] These

[1] NCIC, *2022 NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics*; Ritter, "Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains."

[2] The National Crime Information Center does not explicitly report 'ethnicity' and therefore we cannot estimate the numbers of missing women who are Latina in the same way that we report here the numbers for Black, Indigenous and Asian females. Population data in this paragraph comes from the US Census. (2025). Annual State Resident Population Estimates for 5 Race Groups (5 Race Alone or in Combination Groups) by Age, Sex, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2024. Downloaded from https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html on December 5th, 2025.

[3] U.S. Census, 2025

[4] Richards et al., *On Assessing the Scope of Missing Native Americans in Nebraska*.

[5] Richards et al., *A Descriptive Analysis of Missing and Murdered Native Women and Children in Nebraska, Barriers to Reporting and Investigation, and Recommendations for Improving Access to Justice*; Smith-Escudero et al., "Conceptualizing Missingness."

[6] Sleigh-Johnson et al., "An Exploration into Why There Is an Overrepresentation of BAME People in Missing Person Cases." Sleigh-Johnson et al., 2024. Additional source: https://childidprogram.com/missing-and-minority-report/

patterns demonstrate that their disappearance is not an event, but a process shaped by structural and institutional conditions.[7]

Seeking Solutions at Every Level

New York State's creation of a Task Force on Missing Women and Girls who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) reflects the state's clear commitment to further understanding and addressing this issue. The Task Force's goals include assessing the scope of this issue; identifying possible disparities in how cases are reported, investigated, and supported; and developing recommendations to strengthen community awareness, institutional responses, and statewide coordination.

First established through legislation in 2023 (S.4266-A/A.5088-A),[8] the Task Force's mandate was expanded in 2024 (S08026/A08545) to require a commissioned study designed to support the Task Force's efforts by collaboratively uncovering root causes and advancing lasting solutions through coordinated policy, practice, and research.[9]

Evidence-Based Contributing Factors

Sex Trafficking and Exploitation:

Heightened risk due to social and economic vulnerability, systemic inequities, and inconsistent responses from authorities and media.

Misclassification and Systemic Bias:

Cases are frequently labeled as "runaways," reducing urgency and visibility. Data gaps and misreporting contribute to their erasure from official records.

Social and Structural Challenges:

Poverty, generational trauma, limited social supports, fear of law enforcement, and the lasting impacts of colonization
increase vulnerability and limit access to help.

[7] Whitehead, "On the Poetics of Violence."

[8] See the amended legislation here: https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2023/S4266/amendment/A

[9] See the 2024 amended chaptered law here: https://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&leg_video=&bn=A08545&term=2023&Summary=Y&Text=Y

About this Study

To support the Task Force's efforts, in December 2024 the New York State Youth Justice Institute (YJI) proposed a Two-Phased Plan laying out the following activities:

- **Phase One**: Design and execute a *Study* in support of the Task Force that included the following activities: hosting listening sessions with families, advocates, and key stakeholders; identifying common themes from these conversations to highlight challenges and opportunities; producing a brief report on current data systems – what exists, where gaps remain, and what can be improved; reviewing media coverage across New York State to examine patterns in visibility and reporting.

- **Phase Two**: Building on the activities of Phase One, support the Task Force in issuing and adopting recommendations that reflect short-, medium-, and long-term priorities, incorporating study findings, associated research and analysis, and the feedback of individuals with lived experience and/or their families.[10]

This Plan was approved by the Task Force in April 2025 and formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) in July 2025. Among other activities, the MOU commits the YJI to conduct a Study grounded in an approach that is trauma-informed, culturally honoring, and participatory.

The Study and related technical assistance efforts focus on the following areas: root causes, prevention, prevalence, policy, and awareness of the issues raised in the Chapter 12 of the Laws of 2024 and any other pertinent themes that may emerge during the evidence gathering activities.

This report presents the findings and recommendations emerging from YJI's work to date as it relates to Phase One, above. It is intended to support the Task Force's forthcoming reporting obligations. It documents the full range of study activities conducted, provides a detailed account of the evidence gathered through qualitative and quantitative methods, and synthesizes the integrated findings that may guide New York State's future strategies.

[10] Given the established project timeline and the Task Force's conclusion in July 2026, the scope outlined in MOU# UCGF2380 (DCJS) / 00744 (UAlbany) will be refined in 2026 to ensure alignment with achievable deliverables within this period.

Core Insights & Recommendations

The core insights presented below reflect what we learned from all components of the Study conducted during Phase One. They emerge from a multi-method, statewide evidence-gathering process that included listening sessions and in-depth interviews with lived experience experts, families, community advocates, and system allies; an asset mapping process with Task Force members; a data assessment of Integrated E-Justice Portal/National Crime Information Center data provided by the Missing Persons Clearinghouse[11]; and a media review informed by case-level analysis and expert perspectives. Additional context was drawn from national testimony, federal initiatives, and reports from other state task forces. By bringing these qualitative, quantitative, and comparative sources into conversation, the Study identifies patterns that consistently surfaced across different forms of evidence gathered. The insights that follow summarize these points of convergence and provide a foundation for the strategic recommendations to be developed in Phase Two.

1. The experience and prevalence of missing BIPOC women and girls are shaped by longstanding structural inequities across systems.

Across national testimony, other state task force reports, New York State's data assessment, and community-engaged evidence, a consistent picture emerges: systemic racism, gender bias, historical dispossession, jurisdictional barriers, and under-resourced safety nets shape both risk of disappearance and the speed, seriousness, and quality of institutional response. These dynamics appear at every stage: from reporting to investigation to media visibility and require sustained and intentional structural reform rather than isolated procedural fixes.

2. Data systems are fragmented, inconsistent, and insufficient to fully shed light on the problem.

Whether at the federal level, in other states, or in New York, data limitations undermine visibility and impede comprehensive understanding of this issue. In New York State, data regarding missing individuals is entered by the investigating law enforcement agency on the local level. New York State's dataset provided by the MPC shows high levels of missing demographic information (especially ethnicity), racial misclassification as reported by Subject Matter Experts, and a binary sex field that obscures gender-diverse individuals. Data entry practices may also impact the reliability of the data and contribute to likely "undercounting" of specific populations. These findings are not unique to New York; they mirror gaps identified across

[11] The Missing Persons Clearinghouse (MPC) is housed in the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The MPC is a central repository for reports from local law enforcement but does not initiate reports.

states and reinforce the need for coordinated, accurate, culturally grounded data practices that enable better decision-making and accountability.[12]

3. Lived experience and community expertise are indispensable and must be positioned as leadership rather than consultation.

Listening sessions, interviews, asset mapping, and models from other states all point to the same conclusion: survivors, families, Tribal communities, grassroots organizations, and system-embedded practitioners hold essential knowledge about risk, safety, and system failures. Their insights highlight gaps invisible in administrative data, challenge assumptions (e.g., about "runaways"), and provide direction for prevention and response. Effective solutions require meaningful, compensated, and sustained leadership roles for people closest to the issue.

4. Media visibility is a critical determinant of public urgency and institutional response and it is racially patterned.

National scholarship, expert interviews, and New York's case-level media review converge on the same finding: White women and girls receive disproportionate attention, more sympathetic framing, and more sustained coverage compared to Women and Girls of Color. Newsroom gatekeeping, reliance on law enforcement as the primary source, and narrative framings (e.g., the "runaway" label) collectively shape which cases receive public mobilization and which remain invisible.

5. New York's expansive mandate presents both opportunities and operational challenges.

Unlike many states that focus narrowly on one racial group, New York's Task Force includes Black, Indigenous, Latina, Asian, and other Women and Girls of Color. This breadth creates a unique opportunity for a holistic statewide approach, but it also exposes significant gaps in current data systems, uneven access to services across urban/rural contexts, and the need for

[12] Issues related to underreporting and miscounting are well documented in the literature and are not unique to New York State. Richards, Wright, and Ali (2025) highlight significant challenges in accurately counting Native American missing persons across federal datasets such as the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), as well as broader limitations in using these systems to capture missing women and girls. At the federal level, reporting requirements further contribute to inconsistency: under Title 34 U.S.C. § 41307(a), only individuals under age 21 are required to be entered into NCIC, resulting in substantial variability for adults 21 and older. Additionally, only 16 states mandate law enforcement reporting to NamUs, limiting its completeness as a national data source.

culturally grounded, multilingual, trauma-informed strategies that reflect the diversity of New York's communities.

To build a more accurate, equitable, and prevention-oriented strategy, Phase Two should engage the problem from multiple vantage points that together illuminate both the structural conditions and lived realities shaping these disappearances. The following three perspectives, systems, community, and cultural awareness, offer a foundation for designing interventions that interrupt pathways earlier, improve accountability, and strengthen trust across agencies and communities.

1. Systems Vantage Point: Understanding and Interrupting Pathways to Missingness[13]

Across New York State, the most visible pathways into "missingness" are overwhelmingly framed through two dominant systems-level discourses: sex and labor trafficking (human trafficking), and youth who have run away or are experiencing homelessness (often referred to as "runaway or homeless youth," or RHY). Here, RHY is used to describe population status, rather than service systems (e.g., shelters), which typically serve as resources when youth are already disconnected from home or other care.

Phase Two should therefore examine how existing initiatives in the trafficking and RHY spaces are currently funded, identify needs or obstacles that limit their ability to interrupt these pathways, and explore how additional resources could better support existing efforts. Additionally, we recommend undertaking a *Missingness Mapping process* to surface less-recognized pathways, particularly those that disproportionately impact BIPOC women and girls but remain invisible within existing system categories. Such Mapping process would help the Task Force understand where additional support for early disruption is best invested or should be considered/planned.

[13] Under New York State Executive Law (§§ 837-e, 837-f-1, 837-f-2), "missingness" is defined through a combination of absence from a normal place of residence, inability to determine whereabouts, and the presence of risk factors such as danger, vulnerability, or suspicious circumstances. These definitions require interpretation—particularly where "reasonable concern for safety" is involved—resulting in variation in how cases are classified and reported in practice. Consistent with research (e.g., Richards, Wright, & Ali, 2025), this highlights that "missingness" is not a fixed category but one shaped by statutory frameworks, data systems, and discretionary decision-making, thereby complicating the scope of the Task Force's work beyond enumeration to include how cases are defined and operationalized across systems. Thus, we note that, "missingness," as used here, is not simply defined by law, but produced through the interaction of legal definitions, institutional practices, and data systems, all of which vary across contexts and shape who becomes visible as missing.

Limitations in data infrastructure, training, and related practices make it difficult to rely on quantitative measures to accurately reflect prevalence or guide decision-making. A dual approach—strengthening data quality in the mid- to long-term while centering the qualitative experiences of survivors and their families in the immediate term—offers a more practical course of action and fosters timely, actionable, and deeper understanding of the issue, particularly as the Task Force moves into Phase Two. Additionally, since there appears to be a high rate of youth going missing from the child welfare system, data directly from social service agencies should be considered to look at the rate of BIPOC women and girls who are in the care of social services and the rate of missing out of those populations. That might have an impact on paths to missingness and where system issues lie *outside* of reporting to law enforcement and law enforcement's response.

Finally, because law enforcement remains a critical point of entry in how cases are initially recorded and framed within systems and to media actors, targeted training and intentional partnership with police agencies could yield meaningful change. Media experts, data systems experts, and community participants described law enforcement as *gatekeepers* whose decisions about categorization, urgency, and information-sharing significantly shape public narratives and responses. Strengthening training around bias, data practices, and culturally informed approaches could help shift how disappearances are understood at their earliest touch points.

2. Community Vantage Point: Building Trust, Accountability, and Ongoing Dialogue

Community voices, especially those of families, advocates, and directly impacted individuals, are essential to generating a fuller and more accurate understanding of missingness. Quantitative data alone cannot adequately capture risk or structural inequity, particularly given its limitations around race, ethnicity, and cross-system consistency. Qualitative strategies such as listening sessions must therefore remain central.

In Phase Two, this engagement should not only continue but potentially deepen. The Guiding Council offers a mechanism for bringing findings back to communities, validating interpretations, and ensuring that lived experience meaningfully shapes both problem definition and proposed solutions. This iterative “return and refine” process helps build trust, ensures transparency, and reinforces that system redesign is being undertaken *with* communities rather than *to* them.

A further step can be taken to move communities from passive providers of knowledge to active, institutionally supported changemakers. We suggest exploring the creation of peer navigation roles and clear opportunities for co-designed and cross-connected initiatives and programs that

involve survivors and their families at the inception of planning and throughout the whole process.

The microsite created for this project can also be leveraged as a platform for sharing the Task Force's work, its recommendations, and any resources that can be helpful to the community at large.

3. Cultural & Awareness Vantage Point: Shifting Narratives and Public Understanding

A third vantage-point involves the broader cultural context: how the disappearance of BIPOC women and girls is talked about, who is believed to be at risk, and whose stories receive visibility. Public awareness campaigns, language shifts, and media partnerships and journalist trainings can help challenge harmful stereotypes, including the overuse of the "runaway" label and narrow portrayals of trafficking. Reframing these narratives is crucial for generating broader recognition of the multiple pathways into missingness and for validating the experiences of BIPOC women and girls, whose cases are often deprioritized or mischaracterized. For instance, standardizing definitions of "missing" across child welfare, law enforcement, and related systems to ensure quicker, more coordinated responses might have a non-negligible impact and is in line with best practices outlined elsewhere.[14]

By aligning cultural messaging with system reforms and community-led insights, New York State can cultivate a more accurate, empathetic, and prevention-oriented understanding of missingness to support earlier intervention and more equitable outcomes.

[14] Strengthening the Response to Children Missing from Care: Key Insights from ACF Listening Sessions | The Administration for Children and Families

In Context

To understand New York State's efforts, it is important to consider both the national context and the State's unique circumstances. This perspective clarifies how the Task Force's mandate developed and why its scope differs from other jurisdictions.

National Efforts

Across the United States, the issue of missing women and girls who are Black, Indigenous, Latina, Asian, or otherwise part of communities of color has gained momentum through a series of federal actions, public hearings, and landmark studies. This national arc gained impetus in 2015 and 2018, when the *United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs* held hearings on the need for victim services in Indian Country.[15] These hearings were followed by studies conducted by different institutional bodies, such as the National Institute of Justice and the Urban Indian Health Institute, that documented serious gaps in victim services, underreporting, racial misclassification, and jurisdictional failures that affected Indigenous communities.[16] These early efforts created the first wave of federal momentum toward framing missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls as a "crisis".

Between 2019 and 2021, federal engagement with this issue deepened. Two landmark laws, the *Not Invisible Act* and *Savanna's Act*, formalized government to government collaboration and strengthened systems intended to support Indigenous families. Executive Order 13898 also established *Operation Lady Justice*, a presidential task force tasked with improving the criminal justice response to missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native persons. These actions elevated national visibility, increased interagency coordination, and provided a clearer mandate for states to act.

In 2022, the *U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform* held a hearing on the "neglected epidemic" of missing BIPOC women and girls. This hearing broadened national attention beyond Indigenous communities to include Black, Latina, and immigrant women and girls.[17]

[15] *Missing and Murdered: Confronting the Silent Crisis in Indian Country*.

[16] Lucchesi and Echo-Hawk, *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*; Rosay, *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men*.

[17] We note that Chairman Jamie Raskin included immigrant women, and he said, "These numbers don't even reflect the full extent of the epidemic. According to the GAO, the total number of missing and murdered indigenous women is still unknown. Federal data bases do not contain comprehensive nationwide data. The data that is collected includes Hispanic and Latino women among white women,

Testimonies highlighted delays in law enforcement response, misclassification of cases as runaways, gaps in media attention, and systemic barriers during the critical first hours after disappearance. These concerns added a human centered grounding to federal reviews and reinforced the need for structural and culturally informed responses across all levels of government.

During this same period, Tribal leaders, families, and advocates drew on this emerging evidence to call for structural reforms and greater federal accountability, which helped lay the groundwork for the establishment of state-level task forces.

Today, at least seventeen states and the federal government have (or had) task forces or councils dedicated to understanding and addressing missing persons cases, with varying approaches to race, ethnicity, gender, and age. Some states, such as Arizona, Hawaii, and Montana, focus primarily on Indigenous populations, while others, including Missouri and Minnesota, have centered their efforts on missing Black women and girls. Minnesota is unique in that it maintains separate task forces for Indigenous and Black women and girls. Other states employ more inclusive models. Washington and Minnesota, for example, consider boys, men, and Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ individuals within their scope.[18] Louisiana concluded its task force work by recommending the creation of a permanent council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. New Jersey has passed multiple resolutions related to missing persons since 2022, including one model that mirrors New York's focus on BIPOC women and girls. Most recently, North Carolina also introduced a bill (awaiting voting) that aims at creating a Task Force similar in scope to New York's.[19] Alaska was scheduled to launch a new task force in 2025 while continuing to support related initiatives under *Operation Lady Justice*. It established a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP) Review Commission instead,

leaving their numbers also mysterious. Missing women from immigrant communities also go unreported and uncounted out of fear of deportation." *The Neglected Epidemic of Missing BIPOC Women and Girls*, 02.

[18] While the Task Force's mandate does not specify the inclusion of gender-expansive identities, this is important to note given the sexual orientation gender identity/expression (SOGIE) diversity that is increasingly found in the under 25 years old population as discussed by Ghorayshi, "Report Reveals Sharp Rise in Transgender Young People in the U.S."; and with the knowledge that SOGIE minority and LGBTQ+ youth are at higher risk of homelessness due to parental rejection as discussed by DeChants et al., "'It Kinda Breaks My Heart.'"

[19] Taskforce on Missing BIPOC Women.

charged with reviewing unsolved cases and submitting a report to the legislature every three years with its recommendations and findings.[20]

Concomitantly, public awareness also expanded through the creation of new alert systems, including the *Feather Alert* and *Ebony Alert*, which supplement but do not replace existing *Amber Alerts*. These alert systems specifically focus on Indigenous and Black individuals who are missing and have helped elevate cases that might otherwise receive less public attention. Across states, task forces have also undertaken public-awareness efforts that elevate visibility and community engagement. These initiatives range from cultural campaigns such as Hawai'i's *Red Dress Day* ceremonies and Minnesota's Gaagige-Mikwendaagoziwag—a reward fund for public outreach—to media, art, and community-based projects in Washington, Montana, and Wyoming that honor missing relatives, support families, and strengthen public understanding of the issue.

What Makes New York State's Mandate Unique

According to the 2020 Census, New York State is home to about 20.8 million people.[21] Roughly 10.6 million of them are females. Of those, about 2.2 million are girls aged 17 or younger. Of all women in NYS in 2020, approximately 1.7 million are Black, one million are Asian, 14,600 are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 72,000 are American Indian/Alaskan Native and 5.7 million women are White. There are nearly 2.1 million women in New York State who identify as Hispanic, regardless of race.

This demographic landscape reflects a broad range of racial, ethnic, cultural, and migration histories. These communities live in neighborhoods that reflect New York's urban centers, small cities, reservation territories, rural regions, and suburban corridors. As established later in this report, demographic diversity often shapes how families encounter systems of safety, response, and support.

New York's Task Force is unique because, unlike many other task forces that narrow their focus by race, New York's model has an expanded focus. While it narrows the scope on gender by

[20] https://gov.alaska.gov/mmip-legislation-signed-by-governor-dunleavy/

[21] U.S. Census. (2025). Annual State Resident Population Estimates for 5 Race Groups (5 Race Alone or in Combination Groups) by Age, Sex, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2024. Downloaded from https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html on December 5th, 2025.

focusing specifically on women and girls who are missing, it has broadened the scope on race and ethnicity to include Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latina, and other communities of color.

The implications of this expansive scope are at least twofold. First, these issues must be addressed through a cultural awareness lens that is multidimensional. BIPOC communities are not homogeneous, and each group within this category may have different histories, needs, and experiences with state systems. As one NYS Task Force member put it, "BIPOC is a fluid topic within an ongoing scholastic endeavor which requires constant learning in every area." Second, on a more practical level, the wide range of racial and ethnic groups included in this work exposes real challenges in data collection and the consistent measurement of race and ethnicity across agencies. Engaging with these communities requires recurring learning, reflection, and collaboration.

Building on this broader scope, New York's context means that the problem of missing BIPOC women and girls does not manifest uniformly across the state. Urban Indigenous communities often remain statistically invisible. In rural areas, long distances between agencies and limited availability of services affect the types of support families can obtain. Immigrant and refugee communities encounter additional challenges related to language access, documentation status, and concerns about interacting with institutions. These intersecting conditions create distinct pressures for different communities and influence how institutions respond across regions of the state.

Furthermore, Black women are overrepresented in missing persons data relative to their share of the population.[22] Additionally, missing persons statistics are shaped by racial misclassification. For example, throughout traditional and well-established criminal justice statistics, Latine individuals are often categorized as White, in part due to data entry decisions made by system actors rather than individual self-reporting.[23] Similarly, anecdotal accounts by Subject Matter Experts interviews in this study suggest that individuals from South Asian communities may be routinely misclassified as Native American (i.e., "Indian").[24] These inconsistencies complicate both data accuracy and public understanding of who is missing.

[22] Seabrook, "Shining a Light on the Crisis of Missing or Murdered Black Women and Girls.

[23] León and Gómez Cervantes, "Techno-Bureaucratic Race-Making."; Finlay et al., "Race and Ethnicity (Mis)measurement in the U.S. Criminal Justice System"; McCormack et al., "The (Mis)measure of Race and Ethnicity in Crime Data.

[24] See, for example, https://www.nydailynews.com/2013/09/13/nypd-commissioner-kelly-issues-memo-to-clarify-indians-are-asian/#ixzz2f3yf6oQv

As a whole, these underscore why New York requires a state supported, community centered, and community grounded approach.

A description of New York State's ongoing efforts to address these issues can be found in Appendix A.[25]

[25] The content in Appendix A was developed by the Division of Criminal Justice Services based on input from Task Force members and is included in this report for reference. It outlines current initiatives and system-level responses across New York State and is intended to provide additional context for the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

Building an Evidence Base

Lessons from Other States

Examining how other states have confronted similar challenges offers valuable insight into emerging practices, policy approaches, and system-level lessons relevant to New York State. An analysis of testimonial concerns raised at the federal level, as well as other state task force reports and materials reveals several instructive patterns. Families consistently reported delayed or insufficient law enforcement responses, including long waits before reports were filed and recurring assumptions that missing girls had voluntarily run away. Advocates described how racialized stereotypes influence institutional urgency, limiting media coverage and reducing access to tools such as *Amber Alerts*, *Feather Alerts*, or *Ebony Alerts*. Tribal representatives emphasized jurisdictional barriers that restrict Tribal authorities' ability to fully investigate or prosecute cases, as well as gaps in victim services for rural and reservation communities.

These concerns highlight the need for structural reforms that prioritize timely, culturally grounded, and survivor-centered responses. Despite differences in geography, population size, and the racial and ethnic composition of the communities served by New York's Task Force, the following themes offer important lessons for the State's ongoing work.

How We Gathered This Information

YJI staff reviewed twelve reports coming out of eight Task Forces across seven U.S. states (Arizona, two from Minnesota, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) along with the Urban Indian Health Institute's landmark report.[26] These were all of the publicly

[26] Fox et al., *Reducing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Arizona's Statewide Study in Partnership with the HB2570 Legislative Study Committee*; Martin Rogers and Pendleton, *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force: A Report to the Minnesota Legislature*; Squires et al., *Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force: Final Report*; Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force, *2022 Interim Report of the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force*; Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force, *2023 Interim Report of the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force*; Austin et al., *Murdered and Missing Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) Task Force for the Utah Legislature*; Grant et al., *Missing and Murdered Indigenous People: Statewide Report Wyoming*; Grant et al., *Wyoming Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Task Force: 2023 Update*; Bowman Performance Consulting, *Knowledge Gatherers & Caretakers: A Research Guidance Document for MMIW/R*; New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force, *New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force Report: Report to the Governor and Legislature on the Task Force Findings and Recommendations*; MMIWR Task Force, *New Mexico State Response Plan*; Austin et al., *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives: Report on the Implementation of the Missing*

available reports accessible during the timeframe of our activities in support of the Task Force. YJI also reviewed publicly available information for the jurisdictions where similar initiatives were in place but no report accessible, as well as federal-level materials, including recordings of hearings, legislative texts, and related media articles.

Key Findings

1. Disparities are substantial and persistent.

   Black and Indigenous women and girls experience higher rates of violence, homicide, and missingness than White women. In many states, these disparities have remained unchanged or have worsened over time. States repeatedly find that BIPOC cases receive less urgency, fewer investigative resources, and slower responses from institutions.

2. Systemic causes are central.

   Task forces emphasize that these disparities are shaped by historical and ongoing factors that include colonization, racism, gender-based violence, poverty, housing instability, and limited access to services. These factors intersect to create cumulative risk. State reports stress that without addressing these systemic drivers, improvements in investigative procedures alone will not close the disparity gap.

3. Data limitations undermine visibility.

   Many state reports highlight racial misclassification, incomplete ethnicity fields, inconsistent case categorization, and limited interagency data sharing. These gaps obscure the true scope of the problem. Some states have proposed Tribal data agreements, centralized data hubs, or new research institutes to improve accuracy, transparency, and sovereignty over data.

4. Lived experience is essential to problem diagnosis and solution building.

   States such as Minnesota and Washington have developed advisory councils or community tables composed of survivors, families, and community advocates. These structures elevate

and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force Mandates; Lucchesi and Echo-Hawk, *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

voices that have historically been excluded from policy design and ensure that recommendations reflect realities on the ground.

5. Media representation plays a powerful role in shaping urgency.

   Task forces consistently document racial bias in news coverage, often referred to as "missing White woman syndrome." Many states have responded by developing journalist partnerships, awareness campaigns, and narrative change strategies. These efforts underline that public visibility is closely tied to institutional response.

6. Sustainable infrastructure is necessary to maintain progress.

   States frequently emphasize that task forces alone cannot solve a multi-generational problem. As a result, several have recommended or created permanent state offices, cold case units, or interagency working groups to continue the work beyond the lifespan of the task force. These structures help formalize commitments, clarify responsibilities, and ensure accountability.

Caveats

A few considerations should be kept in mind when interpreting the lessons drawn from other states. The task force reports and federal testimony reviewed vary in depth, scope, and methodological approaches, which may influence the types of findings and recommendations they present. In addition, states differ significantly in their demographic composition, legal frameworks, Tribal jurisdictional structures, and available alert systems, meaning that not all strategies or conclusions are directly transferable to New York's context. For these reasons, the themes summarized here should be understood as informative rather than prescriptive, offering a set of reference points that can guide, but not determine or prescribe, New York's ongoing efforts.

Noteworthy

Other states' reports and related documents contain many insights that illustrate common patterns throughout other jurisdictions, but which are also instructive of some of the takeaways gathered in this report. Below is a selection of quotes from these reports to contextualize a few of the issues discussed in this section.

Selected Quote: "[Many] Native Americans adopted Hispanic names back during colonial times…Our crime systems are not flexible enough to pick out Native Americans from others in

the system…it would be impossible to compile any statistically relevant information for you." (Representative from Santa Fe Police Department)[27]

Selected Quote: "[Regarding the difference] the Homicide unit found that 'N' was being used in the 60s up through the late 70s and early 80s – meant Negro not Native American." (Representative from Seattle Police Department)[27]

Selected Quote: "Documentation needs to come with training, oversight, and accountability for the way investigations are carried out that minimizes personal bias and definitions of what constitutes, for example, "foul play," "missing". Standardization would ensure a tiered approach that clearly illustrates how cross-systems, jurisdictional collaborations would happen. Investigators need to be highly trained to work collaboratively with social workers and tribal liaisons during an investigation, to recognize trafficking situations, and center prevention and trauma informed responses to investigations…Securing and implementing training for standardized state and tribal-wide missing and murdered investigations and crime scene documentation has many benefits including building systems capacity…A permanent MMIWR state office or other agency lead, would be a critical part in the implementation of statewide standardized documentation of cases." (New Mexico 2022 Response Plan)[28]

Figures, Tables & More

Table 1: Other States with Related, Publicly Available Task Force Reports

State	Task Force Names	Reports Reviewed
Arizona	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	1
Minnesota	Missing and Murdered *African American* Women and Girls	1
Minnesota	Missing and Murdered *Indigenous* Women and Girls	2
New Mexico	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	2
Utah	Murdered and Missing Indigenous Relatives	1
Washington	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People	2
Wisconsin	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women / Relatives	1
Wyoming	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons	2
TOTAL		**12**

[27] Lucchesi and Echo-Hawk, *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, 16.

[28] MMIWR Task Force, *New Mexico State Response Plan*, 42.

Learning from the NYS Task Force: Asset Mapping Process

To understand the Task Force's collective strengths, perspectives, and areas of needed support, the YJI conducted an Asset Mapping process. Through a structured questionnaire and follow-up discussions with Task Force members, this process provided an initial picture of the expertise, lived and professional experience, and priority concerns represented within the group. These insights formed the foundation for identifying emerging priorities and guiding the direction of the Study.

How We Gathered This Information

The YJI conducted an *Asset Mapping questionnaire* distributed to all statutory members of the Task Force, agency designees, and legislative or executive appointees. Eighteen members submitted responses in time for inclusion in the analysis. The questionnaire asked participants to identify their expertise, geographic areas of work, available time and resources, and views on the systemic and historical factors contributing to the disappearances of BIPOC women and girls. It also invited members to rank challenges, strategic or practical entry points where the Task Force can intervene to make a difference, and priorities for the Task Force. Findings were further explored during breakout discussions at the September 2025 Task Force quarterly meeting, allowing members to elaborate on themes emerging from the questionnaire. Together, these inputs formed the initial foundation for understanding member perspectives and organizational capacities.

Key Findings

1. Composition and Representation

   The Task Force includes a broad range of racial, cultural, and geographic (i.e., urban, rural, regional, and national) perspectives.

   Membership spans community-based organizations, judicial actors, and Tribal Nations, contributing to a multidimensional understanding of the issue.

   Although the Task Force meets its statutory membership requirements, the Study shows key gaps. Adding education experts and line attorneys would strengthen the group by bringing in frontline perspectives on school-based vulnerabilities and the legal realities survivors face.

2. Baseline Knowledge and Expertise

Members demonstrate a balanced distribution of knowledge about missing BIPOC women and girls: half identify as newer to or moderately familiar with the issue, while the other half report substantial expertise.

This variation presents strong potential for peer learning and building shared understanding.

3. Capacity-Building Needs

Respondents identified three core areas where additional training or support would enhance their effectiveness as Task Force members:

- Research and data capacity
- Trauma-informed practices
- Policy, media, and systems knowledge

These needs point to gaps that, if addressed, could strengthen the group's collective understanding of systemic issues related to missing women and girls who are BIPOC. We suggest designating subject-matter "anchor points" within the Task Force (e.g., a data anchor, a trauma-informed practice anchor, a policy anchor) who can field questions, offer guidance, and curate relevant materials for the broader group.

4. Identified Causes of Missingness

Members emphasized interconnected drivers of disappearance, centering on everyday vulnerabilities such as unmet social, emotional, economic, and structural needs.

Systems' breakdowns, weakened safety-nets, and elevated risks of harm, violence, and exploitation were also highlighted as central contributing factors.

We recommend creating a cross-system "risk map" that brings together members' insights on unmet needs, system gaps, and points of harm to pinpoint where coordination failures are most acute. This shared map can guide future efforts stemming from this Task Force.

5. Ranked Causes: A Shared Framework

When ranking causes by importance, members emphasized:

- Systemic racism

- Gender bias
- Colonial legacies
- Inequitable resource distribution
- Insufficient awareness and prevention efforts

This reflects early consensus that systemic racism and historical dispossession must be treated as foundational to understanding issues related to the disappearances of women and girls who are BIPOC. We suggest hosting a "deep dive" session led by members with expertise in racial and ethnic equity, gender justice, or Indigenous histories to strengthen the group's shared understanding of the ranked causes and support discussion about how these systemic drivers can inform coordinated action.

6. Barriers, Challenges, and Opportunities

Barriers/Challenges that Hinder Action:

Rank 1: Resource deficits, including funding limitations and institutional resistance, could slow or obstruct implementation.

Rank 2: Fragmented or inconsistent data systems, coupled with gaps in law enforcement resources, training, and specialized units needed to respond effectively, impede effective case tracking and response.

Rank 3: Broader contextual barriers such as community mistrust of state systems and difficulties elevating public awareness in a highly saturated, yet fragmented, information environment.

Practical Entry Points for Intervention:[29]

[29] Specifically, before asking respondents to rank their answers, we asked: (a) *We are trying to find opportunities and/or practical entry points that are immediately available that can help facilitate the work of the Task Force... From your vantage point, what do you see as the key opportunities or practical entry points where the Task Force can intervene to make a difference?* and (b) *Challenges or barriers can prevent the Task Force from achieving its goals …From your vantage point, what challenges or barriers (internal or external) may prevent the Task Force from achieving the short- and long-term goals you've identified?*

Rank 1: Advance structural reform and statewide capacity.

Need for long-term policy and funding commitments, expanded mandated training, stronger first response and rapid response protocols, and enhanced specialized units dedicated to missing persons. Strengthen internal accountability and invest in systems that serve vulnerable youth, including Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) programs, foster care, and juvenile justice.

Rank 2: Invest in community partnership and survivor-centered support.

Expand survivor-centered supports by embedding trauma-informed services, safe housing, and culturally grounded interventions within community spaces. Strengthen partnerships with grassroots organizations, Tribal governments, advocacy groups, and survivor networks. Provide coordinated support for families of missing individuals, building allies and champions across systems, identifying individuals at elevated risk, and addressing social determinants such as housing instability and trafficking vulnerabilities, with particular attention to youth in schools, foster care, and institutional settings.

Rank 3: Elevate *public understanding of the issue* through awareness, education, and communication strategies.

Strengthen public understanding through statewide awareness and prevention campaigns, improved media education, and coordinated use of agency communication channels. Educate youth, communities, professionals, and law enforcement with consistent statewide messaging, while tailoring outreach for urban, rural, and Indigenous communities. Sustain public attention to bring in political will, raise funding, and drive action.

Additionally, during the *Asset Mapping* process, Task Force members were asked to share one or two words (or a short phrase) that embodies a value or guiding principle they wanted centered throughout the Task Force's work. The values they shared align around five central pillars:

- Dignity and Humanity emphasize respect, safety, and honoring the inherent worth of those who are missing and those searching for them.
- Empathy, Compassion, and Cultural Humility speak to the need for approaches grounded in understanding, care, and responsiveness to diverse cultural experiences.
- Equity and Inclusion reflect a commitment to fairness, nonjudgement, reducing stigma, and ensuring that lived experience meaningfully informs decision-making.

- Healing, Recovery, and Wellness highlight the importance of supporting emotional and communal restoration for families and communities affected by disappearance and systemic harm.
- Finally, Engagement, Trust, and Clarity underscore the importance of transparent communication, attentive listening, informed participation, and ensuring that communities have the resources and agency they need to be true partners in this work.

These five pillars form a strong value foundation for the Task Force's efforts that were used to guide the YJI's approach in this Study, including methodological choices.

Caveats

When interpreting the findings from the *Asset Mapping* process several considerations should be kept in mind. Not all Task Force members submitted responses in time to be included in the analysis, which may limit the completeness of the perspectives represented. In addition, multiple respondents came from the same state agency (though from different offices) which may have unintentionally concentrated viewpoints aligned with that agency's mission or priorities. The level of detail provided across questionnaires also varied, with some members offering extensive reflections and others providing more cursory input. Finally, the compressed timeline for this phase limited opportunities for additional facilitated discussions that could have deepened or contextualized the questionnaire findings.

What We Heard

Task Force members' responses to the questionnaire included many insightful suggestions, answers, and more. Below are a few that exemplify or support some of the takeaways described in this section.

Selected Quote: "I think it is important to have training/refreshers on how to interact with folks experiencing trauma - how to engage, respond, signs and symptoms, etc. It is especially important when engaging with people experiencing trafficking - you don't want to re-traumatize someone because of a lack of experience in working with this population." *(Task Force Member*)

Selected Quote: "Center the voices of families and survivors by using culturally responsive facilitation and language access (Spanish, Haitian Creole, etc.). Disaggregate data to reflect the unique experiences of Afro-Latinas, Indigenous women, trans women, non-binary and non-gender confirming folx, and immigrant communities. Include storytelling, art, and community-based testimony as part of the listening process to create trust and validate lived experiences…". (*Task Force Member*)

Selected Quote: "Instead of only asking about "race" or "gender" separately, ask: "How have different parts of your identity (race, gender, culture, faith, sexual orientation, etc.) shaped your experience with safety, visibility, or being taken seriously?" This gives space for layered answers. Use Storytelling – Encourage participants to share personal stories. Intersectionality comes alive through lived experience more than through labels…" (*Task Force Member*)

Figures, Tables & More

Table 2: Asset Mapping Questionnaire – Number of Responses by Agency/Organization

Agency / Organization	Number of Responses
Project Mona's House Inc.	1
New York State Police	1
NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services	3
NYS Department of Health	1
NYS Office of Children and Family Services	3
NYS Department of Transportation	2
DLT Consulting	1
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance	1
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Department	1
NYS Judicial Institute	1
Girl Vow, Inc.	1
NYS Department of Labor	1
Office of a NYS Assemblywoman	1
TOTAL	**18**

Seeking Knowledge from Lived Experience Experts and System Allies: Listening Sessions and In-Depth Interviews

To ensure that the Study was grounded in the expertise of those most directly affected, the YJI carried out a structured, statewide process of *listening sessions* and *in-depth interviews* with lived experience experts, system allies, and other professionals involved in missing persons work. This approach was designed to ensure that the perspectives of survivors, families, grassroots organizations, and practitioners informed the Study's understanding of how BIPOC women and girls experience risk, interact with systems, and navigate the aftermath of disappearance. By creating accessible entry points for participation and prioritizing trauma-informed, culturally honoring practices, these engagements provided essential qualitative

context, and participatory guidance, that complemented the Study's quantitative and institutional sources of information.

How We Gathered This Information

Outreach for the listening sessions began in September 2025 using a multi-layered strategy that included flyers, a dedicated microsite, Task Force networks, community-based organizations, and YJI's public communication channels. This approach relied on trusted messengers and relationships within BIPOC communities to support broad and informed participation.

Seven virtual sessions were held across October and November 2025, with 124 individuals registering and 56 attending. Participants self-identified as *system allies* or *lived experience experts*, though many system allies also shared personal histories of trauma, disappearing, or surviving exploitation, adding depth and dual vantage points to their contributions.

The listening sessions were facilitated using a *trauma-informed and culturally honoring approach*, emphasizing safety, consent, dignity, and anonymity. Facilitators provided pre-session communication, opened with grounding practices and positionality statements, and organized breakout rooms that aligned with participants' self-identified roles to create safer, more focused spaces for discussion. Each session concluded with intentional off-boarding practices, emotional check-ins, resource sharing, and direct communication channels for continued engagement. The microsite also served as a place for ongoing updates and later became a point of contact for families and individuals who sought additional opportunities to share their experiences.

Following the listening sessions, the YJI conducted in-depth interviews to clarify themes that emerged in group discussions. Interviewees included Task Force members identified through the *Asset Mapping* process, retired NYPD detectives, individuals affiliated with FBI Task Forces, staff connected to DCJS' Missing Persons Clearinghouse, professionals from agencies such as the New York State Education Department, and several lived experience experts who had participated in the listening sessions and expressed the desire to continue the conversation. These interviews provided detailed insight into investigative practices, system coordination challenges, and the lived realities of those navigating the disappearance of BIPOC women and girls. In total, nine individuals were interviewed between November and December 2025.

Together, the listening sessions and interviews created a multi-perspective evidence base that elevated community expertise, institutional knowledge, and the lived realities of those closest to the experiences and practices.

Key Findings

Several cross-cutting themes emerged across the listening sessions and in-depth interviews involving individuals with lived experience, survivors, frontline practitioners, community advocates, and systems professionals.

1. Structural racism shapes every stage of vulnerability and response

   Participants described a pattern of racialized visibility: hyper-surveillance when girls or women of color are suspected of wrongdoing and invisibility when they are harmed or go missing. Race, disability, adoption experiences, gender identity, and immigration status intersect to influence how quickly cases are escalated, how families are treated, and how systems mobilize.

   Supporting Quote: "People saw her picture and immediately said she must have run away. Because she's a Black girl. When they saw the White girl's photo next to hers, the tone changed immediately. Suddenly people cared." *(Lived Experience Expert)*

   Supporting Quote**:** "White girls get resources while Black girls get the sentences…" *(System Ally, in the context of trafficked women being rescued while busting prostitution rings)*

   Supporting Quote**:** "We had one participant who kept running away from her ACS placement sites, and she was put in detention for it. She was 12, turning 13 that year. It made her very reluctant to trust people or engage with anyone, because she felt, 'Well, no matter what happens, if I don't do what you say, you're going to lock me up again'." (*Lived Experience Expert)*

2. Family, community, and culture can be sources of both protection and risk

   While cultural connection and community grounding offer vital support, conditions such as intergenerational trauma, gender norms, community violence, and family conflict often increase vulnerability. Participants cautioned against assuming that "the village" is uniformly safe.

   Supporting Quote**:** "[Growing up] We knew the safe houses. We knew where not to go… (but often in societies with historical trauma) People harmed those closest to them because they couldn't say anything to the white man. That's what oppression did." *(Lived Experience Expert)*

3. Lived experience must be centered as leadership, not just as consultation

   Survivors described longstanding patterns of tokenization, where their insights are collected but do not shape decisions. They emphasized that meaningful involvement requires compensated leadership roles, decision-making authority, and sustained engagement.

   ***Supporting Quote*:** “We need action, not awareness. Let the voices of those harmed be centered.” *(Lived Experience Expert)*

   ***Supporting Quote*:** “Center lived experience. Don’t tokenize us. We have our own tables, combine them. Too many people leading this work haven’t been affected by it.” *(Lived Experience Expert)*

4. Systems are often experienced as punitive rather than protective when girls seek safety

   Participants described situations in which young people who leave unsafe or unstable environments may encounter responses that feel restrictive or disciplinary, such as placement in secure settings or delays in receiving timely mental health support. They also noted that certain commercial establishments, especially hotels, can become locations where girls and women are vulnerable to exploitation with little accountability.

   Supporting Quote: “A lot of people who went missing can be children who ran away because they felt safe unsafe at home. They can be found in the system. But when they are found, they may be sent back to home (where they felt unsafe).” *(System Ally)*

   Supporting Quote: “I see from our participants, when young people are dealing with that much trauma, and when the only available sources are to put them in detention, it only adds to their traumas with not much real resources. And when they are running away due to their trauma, that is punished as well. I remember one girl who was young with parents being incarcerated – it made her really reluctant to trust people. She felt that whatever happens, they were just going to lock her up again.” *(System Ally)*

   ***Supporting Quote*:** “I am currently seeking justice. I filed a lawsuit against the hotel where I was trafficked. This hotel has profited from trafficking for decades—women murdered, minors exploited. Corporations turn a blind eye.” *(Lived Experience Expert)*

5. Prevention depends on meeting material, emotional, and informational needs early

   Participants identified consistent early-warning signs: withdrawing from programs, unexplained money or gifts, older partners, family tension, and social media grooming.

Prevention requires coordinated action and material supports that stabilize families and reduce vulnerability.

***Supporting Quote*:** “When a girl who always shows up suddenly becomes inconsistent from programming, that’s the first red flag: not when she’s gone missing.” *(System Ally)*

6. Healing and safety must be holistic, culturally grounded, and tied to real action

   Participants described healing as multidimensional: spiritual, emotional, communal, and land based. They emphasized that awareness campaigns are insufficient unless paired with visible, structural action and sustained investment.

   ***Supporting Quote*:** “We must move beyond Western care models. CBT is not enough. We need traditional care: ceremony, land-based healing, water-based retreats, talking circles, beading circles, art therapy.” *(Lived Experience Expert)*

Caveats

Several considerations may affect the interpretation of input gathered through the listening sessions and interviews. Attendance was lower than the number of registrants, which may be related in part to the compressed timeline for organizing and holding the sessions; extending the engagement period in future efforts may help support fuller participation. The virtual format enabled broad outreach, though a combination of virtual and in-person options could offer additional avenues for engagement. While participants were directed to the simultaneous translation tools available in the meeting platform, sessions facilitated by live interpreters (particularly in Spanish) may improve accessibility for some participants. These factors should be considered when planning future community engagement activities.

We note that one of the Task Force’s mandates is to "identify major traffic hubs, highways, and resource extraction sites that lead to or are responsible for the facilitation of the abduction of women and girls who are BIPOC." While the Asset Mapping Questionnaire incorporates input from two NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) staff, additional targeted research and/or engagement with DOT on this issue specifically would better capture the intent of this mandate.

Convening a Guiding Council

To ensure that the perspectives of survivors and family members directly inform the work of the Task Force, the YJI initiated the development of a Guiding Council composed of individuals with lived experience as missing persons or as family members of missing persons. The purpose of the Guiding Council is to embed lived expertise into policy discussions, reporting and program

development, and the design of interventions that support the safety, wellbeing, and visibility of BIPOC women and girls across New York State.

To establish the Council, YJI implemented a structured recruitment process targeting adults aged 18 and older who had previously engaged with the Task Force's evidence-gathering activities—including listening sessions, interviews, or other structured conversations. Eligible applicants were required to commit to a one-year term of service, including participation in one to three hours of virtual meetings per month. Members are compensated through an honorarium recognizing the value of their time, expertise, and emotional labor. To avoid conflicts of interest, individuals currently employed by or representing agencies responsible for investigating or prosecuting missing persons cases were deemed ineligible to serve.

Interested individuals were invited to submit an application through an online portal, where they could access additional information about the Council's purpose, expectations, and compensation structure. The Council, currently composed of four lived experts, convened in March 2026 to discuss the findings of this Study. This report's version includes their comments.

What (Else) We Heard

The listening sessions and interviews surfaced several important participant insights. While some extend beyond the Study's core findings, the team felt they were valuable to include in this report.

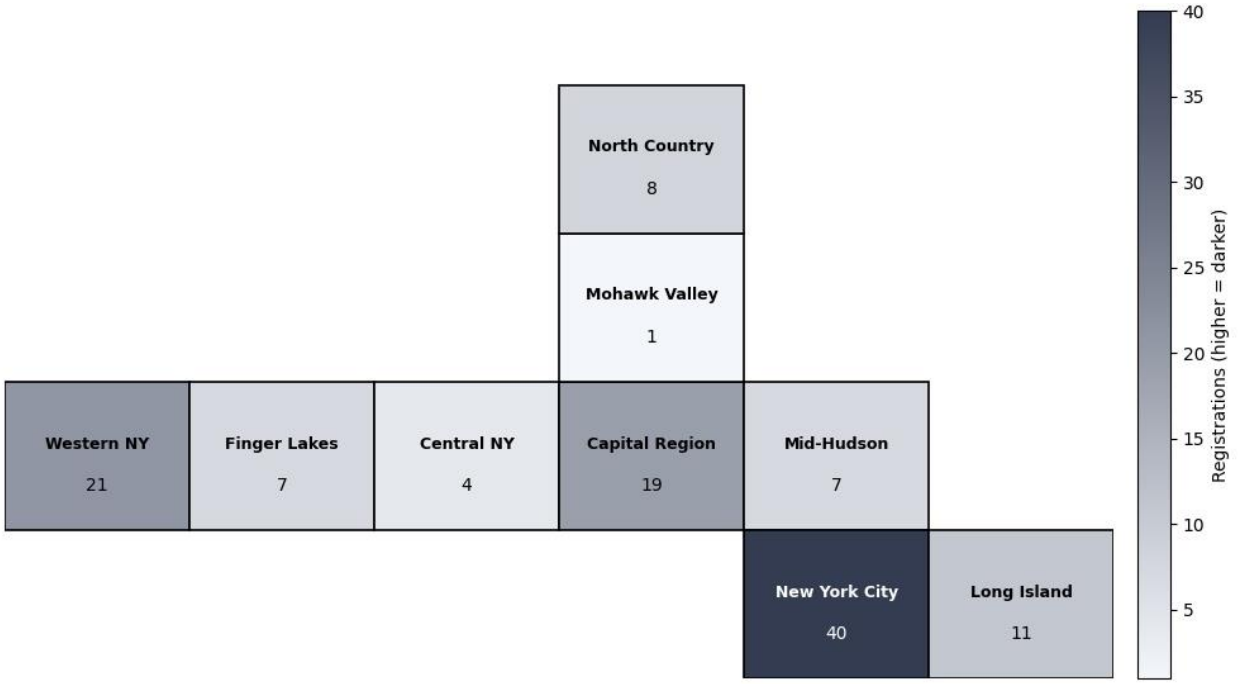
Additional Quote: "Black girls are highly visible while being invisible at the same time… people are always finding reasons to criminalize you, but when harm happens to us, no one is rushing to help." *(System Ally, on their experience of working with survivors of sexual violence)*

Additional Quote: "For families, the crisis continues long after someone returns or someone's body is returned. Reuniting isn't the end—it's the beginning. Families need financial, spiritual, emotional support." *(Lived Experience Expert)*

Additional Quote: **"**Law enforcement training strips away individuality, everything becomes about the act and the law. But policing is mostly human work. Responding to someone lonely or scared requires compassion, not just procedure. We're not trained to balance protection with servitude. The 'sexy' part of the job is the power; the forgotten part is humility. Officers bring their own trauma, biases, and burnout into the work. Many don't realize how that affects the way they talk to victims." *(System Ally, in the context of what kind of training is needed for law enforcement agencies)*

Figures, Tables & More

Figure 1: Number of Listening Sessions Registrations by Region (Schematic)



Note: This schematic representation depicts listening session registrations aggregated at the NYS regional level. Tribal Lands and "Other" categories are not shown, as registrations could not be reliably assigned to specific geographic regions. Darker shading indicates higher registration counts.

Understanding Missingness Prevalence: Data Assessment

To examine statewide patterns in missing persons reports involving women and girls, the YJI conducted a data assessment using information provided by the NYS Missing Persons Clearinghouse (MPC), maintained by DCJS' Office of Public Safety. The dataset provided for these analyses covers two decades of missingness episodes, offered the most comprehensive statewide picture available and allowed YJI to explore broad trends while also recognizing the limitations and constraints of the underlying data regarding reporting, data entry, and classification.

While the dataset was curated by the MPC staff, it is critical that we clarify the process by which the data therein is collected. Law enforcement officers enter and submit information on missing

episodes to the Integrated E-Justice Portal (state level) and National Crime Information Center (NCIC; federal level) simultaneously. The MPC has access to these data for analysis purposes, but it does not have oversight or controls of data quality.

How We Gathered This Information

The YJI obtained a statewide data export from the MPC. The export included all data entries provided by local law enforcement for women and girls who went missing between 2005 and 2025, resulting in a dataset of 245,742 'missingness' episodes. Each entry represents an episode rather than a unique individual, meaning people who went missing multiple times were counted each time they were reported.

The dataset included required fields, such as race, sex, and missingness circumstance, and optional fields, such as ethnicity, which were frequently left blank. As part of the assessment, the YJI also reviewed qualitative input from MPC staff, who described challenges related to underreporting, inconsistent data entry, classification issues, and jurisdictional ambiguity in law enforcement reporting. These insights helped contextualize the patterns observed in the data and shed light on structural constraints shaping data accuracy.

Despite these limitations, the dataset furnished by MPC from these Integrated E-Justice Portal and NCIC reports remains the most complete statewide source for examining patterns of missingness among women and girls in New York. Descriptive statistics were generated to provide an initial picture of trends over time, demographic patterns, and the distribution of conditions and circumstances associated with missing persons reports.

Key Findings

1. The dataset provides broad statewide coverage but contains notable gaps or limitations that affect interpretation.

Comprehensive but episode-based scope

- The MPC provided a statewide dataset of 245,742 missingness episodes involving women and girls from 2005-2025.
- Episodes represent incidents, not unique individuals, meaning a person who went missing multiple times appears multiple times in the dataset.

- As the State's central repository, the MPC is a central repository for reports from local law enforcement and collaborates with national databases[30], making it the most comprehensive source available for this population.

Underreporting and structural barriers to inclusion

- The true extent of missingness is likely unknown due to underreporting by both law enforcement and communities.

    - Lack of clarity in jurisdictional responsibilities and incomplete data entry by law enforcement may contribute to missing records. For instance, if a report was made to law enforcement, but not entered into the Integrated E-Justice Portal and NCIC by the law enforcement personnel that information will be absent, and
    - Community mistrust of law enforcement may affect whether missing persons cases are reported. When families or loved ones choose not to file a report with law enforcement, those cases are not captured in Missing Persons Clearinghouse (MPC) data. This limitation is significant for two reasons: (a) community members cannot submit an initial missing person report directly to the Clearinghouse without a law enforcement agency report having been filed, and (b) Clearinghouse staff cannot take further action until a law enforcement agency takes an initial report and enters the missing person entry into the Integrated E-Justice Portal and NCIC. As a result, any incident not reported to law enforcement will not appear in the dataset.

High levels of missing or inconsistent demographic data

- Optional fields such as ethnicity are frequently left blank, with ethnicity missing in 77% of reports, preventing any meaningful analysis of this dimension. Given the Task Force's scope as inclusive of all BIPOC women and girls, this inconsistency disproportionately affects our ability to assess the prevalence of missing episodes involving Latina women and girls using this data.

[30] The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has a standing agreement with the MPC that when reports for NYS-based cases come to NCMEC they forward this information along to the MPC. These NCMEC reports are sourced from law enforcement, social services, family members, and others. The NCMEC is similarly a repository of information and does not have control or oversight into the quality of the data reported. Additionally, the NCMEC combines the race and ethnicity fields (e.g., Black-Hispanic, Black, White-Hispanic, White, etc.), preserving the information for both race and ethnicity, but not mapping directly to the separate fields that exist in the Integrated E-Justice Portal/NCIC.

- Racial categories (“Asian,” “Black,” “Indian,” “Unknown,” “White”) in the Integrated E-Justice Portal and NCIC are inconsistently applied by state and local law enforcement officers entering the data, particularly the “Indian” category, which is intended for Indigenous/Native American individuals but is often used for people from the Indian subcontinent. This poses accuracy challenges for Asian and Native American counts.
- Indigenous individuals are sometimes misclassified as “Unknown” or “White,” affecting accuracy and visibility.

  Supporting Quote: “I think… there are the quick… changes, and if we're talking data, it's identifying the fields and looking at enhancing the race codes, looking at combining maybe ethnicity into that, or making ethnicity a requirement, and having more training and explanation, even if it's little help bubbles on those fields, and how to accurately input that. That has an immediate impact on accuracy of data.” *(System Ally)*

Data entry variability and potential errors

- Even with validation measures, human error remains possible.
- Reporting law enforcement officers’ knowledge, time constraints, and judgment influence how fields are completed, contributing to inconsistencies across records.

  Supporting Quote: “A person will go missing. And before paperwork is finished, and before entries are done… that person's located. The best practice is continue to make that entry and then cancel it to mark, hey, this person was missing. Data-wise, let's record it. But that does not happen all the time.” *(System Ally)*

  Supporting Quote: “The issue with trust in law enforcement and how they're going to handle the missing person case… [For example] being out in [the community], listening to a community member say ‘when a kid goes missing around here, we handle it as a community, we're not going to [the police department] with it’. Well, that is a challenge.” *(System Ally)*

2. Missing persons reports among women and girls have generally decreased over time.

   Statewide reports peaked in 2007, 2012, and 2014, followed by a decline reaching a low in 2021. Reports increased slightly in 2022-2023, then decreased again in 2024 and early 2025. Reporting lags may affect the most recent counts.

3. A large share of reports involve Black girls and young women.

   Across the dataset, 50.3% of reports were coded as Black and 44.4% as White, with small proportions marked as Asian, Indian (representing Indigenous individuals), or Unknown. The racial distribution highlights longstanding concerns about racial disparities in missingness patterns.

4. Young individuals account for the overwhelming majority of cases.

   The age distribution is heavily concentrated among youth ages 10-20, with a median age of 16. More than 80% of all reports involve individuals under 21, and over 70% involve youth ages 13-17.

5. Most cases are coded as “juvenile” and described as “runaway.”

   Approximately 75% of all reports list the missing condition as “juvenile,” and among juvenile cases, 95.6% are classified as “runaway.” This pattern is consistent across racial groups. Other classifications, such as “endangered,” “disabled,” or “involuntary,” appear far less frequently.

6. Data limitations affect interpretation but highlight clear structural issues.

   Underreporting, inconsistencies in race and ethnicity data, and binary sex categories all constrain the accuracy of the dataset. At the same time, these issues emphasize the need for improved training, standardized reporting requirements, and more accurate demographic classification to support better decision-making.

   Supporting Quote: “Until you have the evidence of [an issue] and the accuracy, you really don't know how big of a problem [you have] … Until we have the most accurate data we feel like we can get, what are we basing our decisions on [for these] solutions and issues?” *(System Ally)*

Caveats

The findings from the data assessment should be interpreted with caution. The dataset reflects missingness episodes rather than unique individuals, which may overrepresent individuals who experience repeated disappearances. The extent of underreporting is unknown, as cases must be reported to law enforcement to be included, and reporting practices and capacity vary across jurisdictions. Key demographic fields, and most notably ethnicity, have high rates of missing or inconsistently applied entries, and racial misclassification remains a documented issue. Data entry practices and levels of detail also vary, creating potential for human error despite existing

validation measures. While the dataset remains the most comprehensive source available for identifying broad statewide trends, these limitations affect accurate counts or prevalence of the issue of missing women and girls who are BIPOC. Overreliance on these data for policy decisions by the Task Force risks obscuring gaps and misclassifications that shape the true scope of the issue; complementary investment in qualitative approaches, such as interviews, listening sessions, and community-engaged research, can inform needed structural improvements to the data collection and entry processes by local law enforcement while also providing the contextual and experiential insights necessary to guide effective and equitable policy development.

Examining the Role of the Media in Shaping Awareness and Policy

To better understand how visibility and invisibility shape public awareness of missing women and girls, particularly Women and Girls of Color, the YJI carried out a media review informed by both *expert interviews* and *case-level analysis*. This approach helped shed light on structural factors, newsroom practices, and narrative patterns that influence which cases receive attention and how they are portrayed, offering critical context for addressing disparities in public response.

How We Gathered This Information

The YJI undertook a *multi-step media review process* to examine disparities in media visibility and the dynamics shaping reporting on missing Women and Girls of Color. First, a *literature review* was conducted to identify leading scholars in sociology, media studies, criminal justice, and communication fields, followed by *in-depth interviews with two media experts and written input from a third.* All three media experts have published substantively on these issues in their respective fields. These interviews explored reporting mechanisms within news organizations, the role of law enforcement as information gatekeepers, and the influence of narrative framing on public perception.

In parallel, YJI analyzed a *random sample of twelve missing persons cases* drawn from the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) database (2014–2024) involving women and girls from New York State. Subsequent systematic online searches identified available print, broadcast, and law enforcement media coverage for selected cases. Once media coverage was identified, all articles were read, and all television episodes were viewed. All media items were coded to track differences in how cases were framed. In addition to identifying reporting outlets, YJI tracked whether dates of disappearance, victims' ages, race or ethnicity, physical descriptions, and/or photos were included in their stories. To examine how narratives of their disappearances were framed, YJI coded and documented supporting quotes

for each media item, including positive and negative references to socioeconomic status (e.g., class, living conditions, etc.), physical appearance, and character attributes, as well as instances in which missing women and girls in NYS were depicted as victims or blamed for their victimization. Together, the expert interviews and case-level media analysis were triangulated to elucidate patterns of visibility, invisibility, and bias in coverage of missing women and girls in New York State.

Key Findings

Several overarching themes emerged across the media review, drawing on insights from the literature scan, interviews with media experts, and the analysis of selected missing persons cases. Taken together, these sources offer a layered interpretation of how media practices, structural dynamics, and narrative framing shape the visibility of missing women and girls, particularly Women and Girls of Color.

1. Media coverage is unequal and shapes both public understanding and policy

   Research consistently shows that White women and girls are disproportionately covered in missing persons reporting compared to BIPOC women and girls.

   Academic literature on *crime and media* consistently shows disparate portrayals of White people as victims and persons of color as perpetrators of crime. However, the focus on victims in the media coverage of missing persons is distinct, as White women and girls are not only *overrepresented* but also portrayed as weak, vulnerable, and in need of saving. By contrast, Women and Girls of Color are more often depicted as perpetrators or treated as less sympathetic. This pattern contributes to “Missing White Woman Syndrome”, where race, class, age, and appearance influence which cases receive intense, sustained coverage and which remain largely invisible.

   Policy responses (e.g., named statutes and alert systems) overwhelmingly honor White victims, reinforcing a hierarchy of victims and shaping public fear and legislation around relatively rare “stranger danger” scenarios. Overall, approximately 86% of named statutes passed in the U.S. between 1990 and 2016 honored White victims of crime[31]. This trend is also evident among missing persons cases, as a disproportionate number of White female

[31] Kulig and Cullen, “Where Is Latisha’s Law?”

victims have been memorialized through statutes such as Megan's Law 1994, Kristen's Act 2000, and the Amber Alert 2003, to name but a few.

2. Structural factors inside media organizations reinforce disparities

Media scholars interviewed for this study describe gatekeeping practices inside newsrooms where reporters "triage" missing persons cases, deciding who is newsworthy, which stories are aired, which stories are relegated to social media, and who receives no coverage.

Lack of diversity in newsroom ownership and staff, combined with financial incentives for high-click stories, helps perpetuate greater coverage for missing White women and girls and less for Women and Girls of Color.

Supporting Quote: "I've had many reporters tell me that they can't cover everyone. So, journalists are put into the situation of having to make decisions as to which missing people are newsworthy, who will make it to the newscast, who will be relegated to the Facebook page, and who gets little to no attention at all." (Professor Carol M. Liebler)

Supporting Quote: "…there's an issue where the stories of missing White women get a lot more traction and attention, and so from a financial standpoint [media companies] feel like they have to keep covering those cases, because it's getting the clicks and shares." (Professor Danielle Slakoff)

3. Law enforcement acts as a crucial gatekeeper to media attention

Reporters often rely on law enforcement as their primary source for missing person cases. If police do not view a case as serious or urgent, they may not alert the media at all.

Law enforcement officials' decisions about whether to classify someone as "missing" or a "runaway" shape which cases are shared with the media and how they are perceived.

Supporting Quote: "My research shows that law enforcement is a big part of the problem. Police see themselves as gatekeepers, deciding which missing persons they will alert news media about…[reporters] are not even going to be aware that a person has gone missing if police don't deem a case worthy of attention." (Professor Carol M. Liebler)

Supporting Quote: "…reporters have told me that if a family member alerts them to a missing loved one, they check with the police to see if it's a legitimate case... [this is] giving way too much power to the police to decide the news agenda." (Professor Carol M. Liebler)

4. The “runaway” label diminishes urgency, especially for youth of color

   Media experts describe the “runaway myth” as the assumption that a young person who has left home voluntarily is safe and will return on their own.

   This label is disproportionately applied Women and Girls of Color, who are allocated fewer investigative resources, experience slower responses, and receive less media coverage.

   Families’ efforts to seek coverage can be undermined when reporters defer to police judgments about whether a case is “legitimate,” further concentrating decision-making power in law enforcement.

   Law enforcement’s labeling of a youth as a ‘runaway’ may exacerbate historic mistrust between communities of color and police agencies

   Supporting Quote: “The label runaway is a stigma and leads people to believe the child left under their own volition and therefore will not come to harm; this is the runaway myth. Yet, runaways may be very much in danger, especially in relation to trafficking, and they may have run from untenable circumstances.” (Professor Carol M. Liebler)

   Supporting Quote: “…anecdotally, it certainly seems to be the case that police assign the label runaway in very different ways, depending on who was involved….if you talk to Indigenous populations, they will tell you that [they] call the police and they say, ‘Oh, well, I’m sure…your 16-year old just is unhappy and went to a friend’s house and will be back in a couple of days. (Professor Zach Sommers)

5. YJI’s media analysis shows an overall low coverage, with uneven visibility

   From the NamUs sample of 12 NYS cases spanning 2014–2024 and involving women and girls, half were White and half were Women and Girls of Color.

   Most cases (~58%) had no identifiable media coverage at all. Among those with no coverage, both White women and girls and Women and Girls of Color were represented.

   Across all 12 cases, only 31 media reports were found, and nearly two-thirds of all coverage centered on a single White woman, Corinna Slusser. Overall, White women and girls received almost three times as much coverage (~74%) as BIPOC women and girls (~26%) despite representing only one-fifth of all female victims between 2014 and 2024.

The case with the second-highest coverage, Kassandra Ramirez, a Latina woman of color, still received far fewer reports, and some of that coverage focused only briefly on her or mentioned her in the context of broader topics.

When Corinna's and Kassandra's cases are removed, coverage of the remaining 10 cases drops to 5 print reports total, underscoring that limited media attention is a systemic issue, though one that is also shaped by race and narrative framing.

6. Framing of missing Women and Girls of Color differs from their White counterparts

The analysis suggests that how cases are framed differs: White women may be portrayed as innocent, vulnerable, and "out of place," while Women and Girls of Color are more often framed through a lens of personal troubles, system involvement, or past adversity.

This framing reinforces existing stereotypes and can subtly signal whose victimization is seen as tragic and whose victimization is treated as expected or less urgent.

We illustrate this point in the two vignettes below.

Vignettes

A vignette is a brief, research-informed narrative used to illustrate a real or representative case in a concise, focused way. Vignettes highlight key contextual details, patterns, or dynamics without attempting to provide a full case history, allowing readers to engage with complex issues through a clear, accessible example.

Vignette 1. Corinna Slusser: The Small Town Girl in the Big City

Corinna Slusser is introduced in media coverage as a 19-year-old from Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, a small-town teenager whose life takes a devastating turn when she left home for New York in 2017. Stories about her disappearance emphasize that she was once a good student, cheerleader, and track runner, someone invested in her appearance, often seen getting her hair and makeup done. Photos used in coverage consistently show her as a young, smiling, blond-haired, blue-eyed girl, reinforcing an image of innocence and vulnerability.

Raised by her single mother alongside an older brother, Corinna is described as having had a happy childhood and a parent who tried to ensure she "never wanted for anything." Media reports also highlight a turning point: during her senior year in high school, Corinna's behavior changed. She dropped out of school, began underage drinking and using drugs,

and attempted suicide. As her relationship with her mother deteriorated, she sought to leave home, eventually for New York City. Her mother knew she was in the city and remained in touch. Less than two months after her arrival in NYC, Corinna told her mother she wanted to return home, but contact stopped shortly after. It was then that her mother filed a missing persons report.

Investigators and reporters describe Corinna as being groomed by “pimps” and drawn into a sex trafficking ring in New York, where she was seen staying at a “seedy motel” in the Bronx. Corinna remains missing. Two men have been convicted in connection with her case; one serving a two-year state sentence for prostitution and drugs, and the other a federal sentence of 15 years for sex trafficking Corinna and other victims.

Corinna’s story has received extensive media attention. Her case has appeared in major outlets such as the New York Post, The Guardian, CBS, NBC, ABC, the New York Daily News, People magazine, and numerous local outlets. Her mother has been featured on the Dr. Phil Show, and Corinna’s case is the focus of an episode of *Missing*, an ABC Eyewitness News investigative true crime series.

In this media ecosystem, Corinna is consistently framed as a small-town girl lost to the dangers of the big city, a young woman who was groomed and exploited, and whose disappearance demands public concern and institutional response. The narrative foregrounds her innocence and victimization, amplifying her visibility and reinforcing her status as a sympathetic, high-profile missing person.

Vignette 2. Kassandra Ramirez: A Woman of Color Whose Struggles Shape the Story

Kassandra Ramirez’s story is also featured on *Missing*, the ABC Eyewitness News investigative true crime series. Yet, the framing of her life and disappearance is notably different from Corinna’s.

Kassandra, a Latina woman of color from New York, is introduced primarily through the lens of trauma, loss, and struggle. The episode and related coverage highlight that she became a teen mother at 17, giving birth to a son who died twelve days later. The profound grief of that loss is presented as a turning point, leading her to self-medicate with drugs. Later, she gave birth to another son, who was placed in the care of his paternal grandmother against Kassandra's will. Her relationship with her child’s father ended, and in 2017 she was stabbed in an altercation involving him and his new girlfriend.

At the same time, the narrative notes Kassandra's efforts at rebuilding her life: she completed training in culinary arts and secured employment. But in 2018 she reported being raped by a family friend and pursued criminal charges, testifying before a grand jury. One week after that testimony, Kassandra disappeared.

Her family describes an initially dismissive response from law enforcement. When her mother attempted to file a missing persons report, she recalls being told things like Kassandra may have "run away with a boyfriend" or "fallen off the wagon." In the *Missing* episode, Kassandra's mother recounts being told by an officer: "Your daughter has a record." That phrase becomes central to how Kassandra is framed: her history with the legal system and substance use is foregrounded in discussions of her disappearance.

Media coverage of Kassandra is comparatively limited and fragmented. While she is featured on *Missing*, the print pieces identified in the analysis rarely center her story alone. One online article is a promotional piece for a new season of the *Missing* series, briefly summarizing multiple cases, including Kassandra's. Another article, from ABC7, reports on a summit held in the Bronx for missing Women and Girls of Color; it mentions Kassandra's mother as a speaker and quotes her but offers no substantive detail about Kassandra's unsolved case. Her disappearance was not posted on the NYPD's missing persons Twitter account until January 2022, years after she went missing in September 2018.

Taken together, the media narrative surrounding Kassandra emphasizes her hardships, her "record," and system involvement, while giving relatively little sustained attention to her disappearance and unsolved case.

Although both Corinna and Kassandra are featured on the same ABC investigative series, *Missing*, the way they are portrayed diverges sharply:

- Corinna is framed as a *small-town, all-American girl* who fell prey to traffickers in the big city. Her story is centered on innocence, vulnerability, and victimhood.
- Kassandra, a woman of color, is presented through the lens of personal struggle and prior system involvement, with her trauma, substance use, and "record" often foregrounded and less sustained focus on the disappearance itself.

This contrast illustrates how race, narrative framing, and perceived respectability shape visibility: both young women are missing, both deserve answers, yet their stories are told differently in the same media outlet.

Caveats

A few limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings from our media review. The analysis was based on a random, yet small sample of twelve cases drawn from the NamUs database, which is voluntary and does not capture all missing persons cases; therefore, the sample is not representative of all missing women and girls in New York State. Media coverage was identified through online searches, which may not reflect archived or unavailable reporting and may underestimate total coverage. In addition, the distribution of media reports within the sample was heavily influenced by one high-profile case, which limits the ability to draw broader conclusions about overall coverage patterns. For these reasons, the findings provide illustrative insights but are not generalizable to all missing persons cases or media outlets.

Figures, Tables & More

Table 3: Randomly Selected NYS NamUs Cases

	Race / Ethnicity	
By age group	White	BIPOC
Women (18 years old +)	3	3
Girls (<18 years old)	3	3
TOTAL	6	6

Table 4: Missing White Females Media Reports

Media Reports	Print	Mainstream TV	Law Enforcement	TOTAL
18 years old or older				
White Woman 1	16	3	2	21
White Woman 2	0	0	0	0
White Woman 3	0	0	0	0
Younger than 18 years old				
White Girl 1	2	0	0	2
White Girl 2	0	0	0	0
White Girl 3	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**18**	**3**	**2**	**23**

Table 5: Missing BIPOC Females Media Reports

Media Reports	Print	Mainstream TV	Law Enforcement	TOTAL
18 years old or older				
BIPOC Woman 1	4	1	0	5
BIPOC Woman 2	0	0	0	0
BIPOC Woman 3	2	0	0	2
Younger than 18 years old				
BIPOC Girl 1	0	0	0	0
BIPOC Girl 2	1	0	0	1
BIPOC Girl 3	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**7**	**1**	**0**	**8**

Methodological Notes

Our Approach and the ROSE Framework

For this Study, the YJI has grounded its methodological approach in decolonial research paradigms developed by scholars such as Smith, Kovach, and Hart.[32] These frameworks emphasize relational accountability and reciprocity in knowledge production, grounding research in connections among people, land, ancestors, and beyond. Drawing on this approach, our study treats members of the BIPOC community not as "subjects" to be studied, but as rightsholders and primary knowledge holders whose teachings have guided the ethical terms of this work. This orientation is particularly critical given that the Task Force is engaging communities who have experienced ongoing harms rooted in racialized violence, disappearance, and intergenerational trauma.

To mitigate the longstanding harms that extractive research practices have brought to these communities, YJI adopted this decolonial approach across all stages of inquiry: what we ask, how we learn, and how we represent what we hear. Rather than rely on conventional methodologies that risk flattening or individualizing experiences, we chose a framework grounded in plurality and difference, reflecting the many histories and cultural traditions within New York's BIPOC communities.

The Study's methodological foundation draws from Dr. Nicole Bowman's Indigenous research principles and the *Seven Directions Medicine Wheel* (2024), which emphasize relational accountability, community sovereignty over knowledge, and holistic inquiry.[33] Because New York's mandate spans a wide range of racial and ethnic communities--far broader than Indigenous-specific models traditionally encompass--the Study team adapted these principles into what we have termed, the ROSE Framework: Rooted, Observant, Supported, and Engaged. The name "ROSE" was chosen not only to reflect the framework's grounding in community-centered research values but also because the rose is New York State's official flower, symbolizing the Study's commitment to approaches that are culturally honoring *and* distinctly tailored to New York's identity.

[32] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples*; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*; Hart, "Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research."

[33] Bowman (Lunaape/Mohican), "Continuing the Evaluation Journey."

In this way, the framework preserves the core commitments of Indigenous methodologies (honoring community expertise, centering cultural context, and avoiding extractive practices) while expanding its reach to reflect the diverse histories, identities, and lived experiences of BIPOC communities across the State. ROSE therefore serves both as a symbolic and methodological bridge, enabling us to engage stories in their relational depth while ensuring accountability to those whose knowledge anchors the study.

Table 6: The ROSE Framework, adapted from Bowman (2024)

Element		How it Frames this Research	Source of Knowledge and Drivers of Change
ROOTS	**Cultural Content & Community Context**	Begin with community voices, lived experiences, and culturally relevant content that reflects the diversity of BIPOC women and girls. Ensure accuracy and representation across Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and multiracial communities.	**Sources**: Oral histories, listening sessions, cultural traditions and archives. **Drivers of change**: Based on the sources the following can be developed: visual/digital storytelling, ethical protocols for engagement, and trauma-informed orientation materials.
STEM	**Policy, Infrastructure, and Resources**	Build strong policy frameworks and infrastructures that respond to systemic racism, jurisdictional gaps, and inequalities. Center intersectionality and cross-system knowledge in design.	**Sources**: State and federal legislation, civil rights frameworks, policy analysis, and hearing from law enforcement, service providers, and other 'system allies.'
THORNS	**Implementation and Supports**	Ensure fidelity in carrying out research methods. Adapt practices in response to challenges, centering survivor and family needs. Avoid re-traumatization in testimony and data collection.	Participatory action research, survivor testimony protocols, and cross-sector partnerships (courts, health, media), to develop and co-create outreach practices.
LEAVES	**Evidence Base & Knowledge Sharing**	Synthesize lessons into an evidence base that benefits both policy and community. Highlight promising practices and amplify culturally grounded models.	Best practices, intergenerational teachings, community-based evaluations, critical race feminist research, and dissemination through accessible formats.
SEEDS	**Grounding in Lineage and Material Conditions**	Root research in the realities of communities, environment, and socio-economic conditions that shape vulnerability (e.g., housing, migration, extractive industries).	Environmental justice, Indigenous data sovereignty, Black and heritage migration geographies, place-based analysis, and sustainability frameworks.

Element		How it Frames this Research	Source of Knowledge and Drivers of Change
FRAGRANCE	**Ancestors, Futures, and Collective Vision**	Honor ancestral struggles while envisioning futures free from racialized and gendered violence. Use collective dreaming and creative practices to reimagine safety.	Diasporic memory, ancestral practices, art, music, cultural healing, seven-generations thinking, visionary activism.
PETALS	**Reflexivity and Care**	Researchers, task force members, and partners practice reflexivity, addressing their own positionality, biases, and responsibilities. Commit to self-care, healing, and humility to sustain long-term work.	Trauma stewardship, cultural humility, professional development, reflective journaling, support systems for advocates and families.

Confidentiality and Ethical Representation

Kovach's and Hart's articulations of decolonial and Indigenous epistemology also guided how we listened to and interpreted the knowledge shared with us throughout the study.[34] These paradigms emphasize that knowledge is fluid, relational, and carried through teachings and storytelling: expressions of collective experience shaped by community, history, and place rather than any one individual. For communities that have long faced historical harm, generational trauma, and systemic marginalization, this understanding of knowledge as shared rather than individually owned is essential. It affirms that stories live within communities, shaped by multiple voices, and must be treated with relational accountability.

To operationalize this methodology, throughout our activities we were led by four groups of research partners whose insights illuminate different dimensions of the causes behind the disappearances of BIPOC women and girls. The first group, Lived Experience Experts, includes individuals with direct personal or familial experience of disappearance, violence, exploitation, or systemic neglect. Their knowledge offers grounded insight into the human impact of this issue and the conditions that shape vulnerability, risk, and resilience. The second group, System Allies, consists of practitioners, service providers, Tribal leadership representatives, and governance actors embedded within state and non-state institutions whose practices and decisions shape responses to missing BIPOC women and girls. The third group, Task Force members themselves, many of whom have contributed directly by sharing their insights and creating access to both quantitative and qualitative data. And, finally, the fourth group

[34] Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*; Hart, "Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research."

comprised Media Experts whose scholarship and insights have added depth to this study.[35] Together, these groups form the core of our collaborative research community, and their contributions required an approach to confidentiality and representation that honors relational accountability and protects individuals within the collective narratives they shared.

This epistemic grounding also shaped our approach to confidentiality and representation. Rather than relying on conventional practices critiqued in the qualitative research literature, approaches that often depend on disguising or altering narrative details and risk distorting meaning or enabling deductive disclosure, YJI adopted an alternative model aligned with both our decolonial methodology and our ROSE framework. Drawing on critiques raised by Tolich and other scholars cited by Kaiser, we recognized that traditional anonymity techniques are insufficient for research involving small, interconnected, or historically harmed communities, and that these practices expose research partners to well documented risks, including identity disclosure, attribute disclosure, and reverse engineering through linkages, as demonstrated by Guo et al.[36]

To mitigate these risks, all listening sessions and interview insights were synthesized at the group or category level, reflecting shared experiences without attributing narratives to any individual research partner. We also treated community members and Task Force contributors as research partners and the first intended audience of this work. This was operationalized through a two-stage consent and accountability process. First, during listening sessions, partners were informed that their contributions would be grouped, anonymized, and interpreted.

Second, we relied on expert advice from the members of our Guiding Council to ensure that our analytic choices remained accountable to those who shared their knowledge and allowed us to actively uphold the epistemic commitments that ground this study. Task Force members who contributed through questionnaires or interviews were also given opportunities to review how their perspectives had been represented.

Together, these practices operationalize a confidentiality model that protects individuals while keeping stories meaningful and “alive” in their relational context. They reflect a commitment to

[35] A caveat, not all of our research partners exclusively belong to only one group; some members represented multiple groups such as lived experiences and current professional capacities.

[36] Tolich, “Internal Confidentiality”; Kaiser, “Protecting Respondent Confidentiality in Qualitative Research”; Guo et al., “A Qualitative Analysis of Practical De-Identification Guides.”

ethical storytelling, participant centered knowledge production, and accountability to the communities whose experiences and insights shape the Task Force's work.

These practices also extended through our approach to media review strategies, particularly the interviews with media scholars. We took care to seek their final consent on using their names. Given that dissemination in reports and other manuscripts like this is a practice that carries weight in academic circles, we wanted to ensure that we were not disadvantaging these experts by obfuscating their names and credentials.

Interpretation and Analytical Strategy for Qualitative Data

Following the framework, the YJI sought to design the process of interpretation and analysis as dynamic and relational. We also aimed to uphold the Task Force members' commitment to a participatory approach. We therefore adapted our analytical strategy from Bosco Pinto, a Brazilian rural sociologist who carried forward Paulo Freire's foundational participatory approach into a working praxis.[37] Stemming from their work—and informed by decolonial thematic inquiry approaches outlined by Silva and Wanderley—we structured our listening session questions to allow themes to emerge organically from research partners rather than imposing predetermined categories.[38] During these sessions, community members articulated broad ideas about how the issue of missing BIPOC women and girls shapes their daily lives. In addition, they discussed the conditions that give rise to vulnerability, and the strategies they use to navigate or resist these harms. We then aggregated and codified these community generated themes from the listening session into smaller analytic units to support clarity and coherence in this report, following a hybrid inductive thematic strategy consistent with Fereday and Muir. The purpose of this thematization was to identify the terms, concerns, and patterns that were most meaningful to partners—those expressed with emphasis, repetition, or collective resonance.[39]

This analytic process unfolded in three interconnected stages: first, grounding all interpretation in an understanding of BIPOC communities within their historical and cultural contexts; second, drawing thematic clusters directly from the language and priorities voiced during listening sessions; and third, returning these interpretations to partners through the Guiding Council for relational validation and refinement.

[37] Bosco et al., "Metodologia Da Investigação Temática: Pressupostos Teóricos e Desenvolvimento."

[38] Silva and Wanderley, "Alignment between Thematic Research Methodology and the Decolonial Approach."

[39] Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, "Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis."

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Appendix A: New York State's Ongoing Efforts

The following section, "New York State's Ongoing Efforts," was developed by the Division of Criminal Justice Services with input from the Task Force members and is included in this report for reference. It outlines current initiatives and system-level responses across New York State and is intended to provide additional context for the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

New York State's Ongoing Efforts

New York State continues to be a leader in working missing persons cases. Various state agencies provide support to law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and/or members of the public. This non-exhaustive list highlights the efforts of several state and local agencies, including certain members of the Task Force on Missing Women and Girls who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.

Missing Persons Clearinghouse (MPC)

Established pursuant to Executive Law sections 837-f and 837-f-1, the Missing Persons Clearinghouse (MPC) resides within the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The MPC provides assistance to law enforcement agencies investigating missing persons cases of children, college students, and vulnerable adults. Upon request by a law enforcement agency, the MPC activates three types of alerts, which include a range of demographics:

- Missing Child Alert: Activated when a child younger than 21 years old is missing and believed to be in danger due to special circumstances, such as a cognitive impairment or medical condition, that place them at serious risk of harm or death.
- Missing College Student Alert: Activated when a college student of any age is missing and is deemed to be at credible risk of harm or death.
- Missing Vulnerable Adult Alert: Activated when an individual, who is 18 years of age or older has a cognitive disorder, brain injury, or mental disability, is reported missing and is at credible risk of harm. This includes individuals with autism, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease.

Once the MPC activates an alert, information about the missing person is distributed to law enforcement agencies, the media, New York State Thruway highway signs, plazas and toll barriers, New York State Department of Transportation highway signs, airports, bus terminals, train stations, hospitals and other locations. The MPC shares the information online and via social media. Individuals may also subscribe to NY-Alert to receive alerts immediately.

For missing persons cases that do not meet the alert criteria above, the MPC publicizes such cases through its website and other methods such as distributing missing person posters. The MPC publicizes cases at the request of family members and local social services districts, upon approval by a law enforcement agency, and at the direct request of law enforcement agencies.

Since 2024, the MPC has spearheaded, in collaboration with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, three successful Missing Child Rescue Operations to locate and recover missing youth throughout New York State. The MPC supported local law enforcement agencies to recover more than 160 missing individuals: 47 in Buffalo in October 2024; 71 in the Capital Region in March 2025; and 47 in Westchester County in February 2026. The MPC held these operations in partnership with the National Child Protection Task Force, bringing together local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, social services districts, nonprofit organizations, and other important stakeholders.

The MPC also coordinated the Runaway Intervention Program: Services, Training, Opportunity, Prevention (RIPSTOP), a collaboration between local, state, and federal agencies and organizations to address the problem of children who have multiple missing episodes. RIPSTOP worked toward reducing the number and length of missing episodes and creating opportunities to support youth who have gone missing, their caregivers, and professional stakeholders. RIPSTOP has published several guides, including for law enforcement agencies and professionals who come into contact with missing youth.

The MPC publishes guidelines for law enforcement agencies, including for investigating and collecting data for missing and unidentified persons. The MPC provides in-service training to law enforcement agencies and offers community education programs upon request. The MPC also offers assistance, services, and supports to local social services districts and families of missing individuals.

The MPC's hotline for case intakes and leads can be reached at 1-800-346-3543.

The New York State Police (NYSP) is the activating authority for AMBER Alerts, Abducted Adult Alerts, and Blue Alerts. The MPC and NYSP work closely together to share information and determine the appropriate response based on the circumstances of the missing person's case. Criteria for each of these alerts is as follows:

- AMBER Alert: Reasonable cause to believe that an abduction of a child (under the age of 18) has occurred, and the child is believed to be in danger of serious bodily harm and/or death, either due to the actions of another or due to a proven mental or physical condition.
- Abducted Adult Alert: Reasonable cause to believe that an abduction of an adult (age 18 or older) has occurred, and the adult is believed to be in danger of serious bodily harm

and/or death, either due to the actions of another or due to a proven mental or physical condition.

- Blue Alerts: To aid in the quick location and apprehension of suspect(s) who have seriously wounded or killed law enforcement officer(s), or when there is an imminent, credible threat to an officer, or when a law enforcement officer goes missing during the course of their official duties.

New York State Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking (ITF)

Missing persons intersect with human trafficking in some cases. Established pursuant to Social Services Law Section 483-ee(a), The New York State Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking (ITF) is a collaboration among more than a dozen state agencies and other members. DCJS co-chairs the ITF along with the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). The ITF is comprised of many of the same agencies as the Task Force on Missing Women and Girls who are BIPOC, including DCJS, OTDA, the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the New York State Police, the Department of Labor, the Department of Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Transportation, and others. A full list of ITF members can be found in Social Services Law section 483-ee(a).

ITF member agencies provide outreach and training on sex and labor trafficking to law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders. Additionally, the ITF publishes educational materials for public dissemination, including posters and palm cards on human trafficking.

Lastly, pursuant to Social Services Law section 483-cc, DCJS and OTDA jointly operate the New York State confirmation program, which allows law enforcement agencies (including district attorney's offices) and established social or legal services providers to refer trafficked individuals so that they may be connected to services and supports.

Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV)

The Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV), created in 1992, is the country's only Cabinet-level executive state agency dedicated to the issue of domestic and gender-based violence.

OPDV's mission is to improve New York State's response to and prevention of domestic violence with the goal of enhancing the safety of all New Yorkers in their intimate and family relationships.

OPDV's vision is to create a State in which communities and systems are committed to supporting and promoting equality, dignity and respect so that individuals can feel safer in their intimate and family relationships.

OPDV's role is to advise the governor and legislature on policies and best practices; train professionals across the state; facilitate coordination between state agencies and stakeholders on issues related to domestic violence; and serve as a resource on the issues of domestic and gender-based violence.

After reflecting on its mission, OPDV has expanded its work beyond domestic violence to include other forms of gender-based violence. Violence does not happen in a vacuum; we know that we cannot address domestic violence without confronting other forms of gender-based violence such as sexual violence, trafficking, and more.

Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) works to prevent missing youth episodes and to support healing responses when young people return. This work is guided by regulation and policy for young people involved in the child welfare and youth justice systems and is implemented through training and technical assistance. OCFS certifies residential runaway and homeless youth programs, which are available to support young people who have left home without permission or who do not have a home to which they can return. Together with DCJS, OCFS co-facilitates Missing Child Rescue Operations; in these operations, OCFS is responsible for coordinating a social services response for youth who are located.

OCFS is the New York State lead for the Interstate Commission for Juveniles (ICJ) as well as the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). OCFS plays an active role in recovering New York State youth when they are located out of state and returning out-of-state youth when they are located in New York State.

Additionally, OCFS leads the response to child trafficking and exploitation. This work includes supporting the screening of all youth in the care, custody, or supervision of OCFS and local social services districts, certifying specialized residential programming for youth in foster care who have been trafficked, implementing the Safe Harbour program, and providing extensive training and technical assistance. OCFS is an active member of the ITF and co-chairs the youth working group.

Resources for youth, caregivers, and professionals about missing youth, child trafficking, and runaway and homeless youth programs can be found on the OCFS website.

The OCFS Bureau of Native American Services works collaboratively with Tribal Nations, counties, courts, and state partners to support culturally responsive services for American Indian

and Alaska Native children, families, and communities throughout New York State. The Bureau provides oversight, technical assistance, and guidance on implementing the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), promotes government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations, and supports cross-system collaboration to address issues affecting Indigenous communities.

In addition to its child welfare and Tribal relations responsibilities, the Bureau has participated in statewide efforts related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP). Through participation in interagency and community-based workgroups, the Bureau has supported public awareness initiatives, cross-system dialogue, and collaborative conversations focused on the unique challenges impacting Indigenous individuals, families, and communities. This work includes supporting educational efforts, strengthening partnerships with Tribal Nations and state agencies, and promoting culturally informed approaches to prevention, response, and systems accountability.

Department of Labor (DOL)

The Department of Labor's Division of Compliance and Education (DOCE) houses the Labor Trafficking Unit, which provides direct services that intersect with the mission of protecting missing women and girls. Labor trafficking may be a hidden factor in some missing persons cases, particularly where individuals are controlled through employer-provided housing, threats, debt manipulation, document confiscation, immigration-related fear, transportation control, or isolation from family and community.

Key DOCE services include the following:

- Identification and screening of potential labor trafficking victims;
- Intake of labor trafficking-related complaints and reports;
- Referrals to victim service providers and community resources;
- Connection to no-cost immigration legal service providers;
- Support for eligible survivors through U and T visa certification processes; and
- Assistance for vulnerable workers impacted by exploitation and workplace abuse.

Department of Transportation (DOT)

<u>Overview of DOT's Anti-Trafficking Efforts</u>

Through strategic partnerships, employee training, industry engagement, and public awareness initiatives, the Department of Transportation (DOT) has emerged as a national leader in the fight against human trafficking.

By integrating anti-trafficking efforts into its operations and fostering strong partnerships with law enforcement and transportation officials, DOT has developed a comprehensive and proactive approach to combat trafficking across New York State's transportation network.

In recognition of this work, DOT was recently awarded the TAT (formerly "Truckers Against Trafficking") Champion Award in 2025. This award recognizes DOT for demonstrating the strongest state-level commitment to advancing awareness, training, and education.

DOT Implementation of the Iowa Model

DOT has fully adopted the "Iowa Model", which is the national standard of trafficking awareness participation. The Iowa Model directs law enforcement and state agencies to utilize entry points into the trucking and bus industries to spread TAT anti-trafficking awareness. DOT's use of the model has contributed to successful awareness, training, and education initiatives throughout New York State.

DOT Awareness, Training, and Education

A cornerstone of DOT's anti-trafficking strategy is its emphasis on providing transportation professionals and law enforcement the tools they need to recognize and respond to trafficking. Through targeted awareness, training, and education, DOT is building and strengthening a statewide network of partners.

In partnership with TAT, DOT conducted six anti-trafficking training sessions in 2022 for both the NYSP and DOT employees, strengthening cross-agency collaboration and preparedness. DOT also provides periodic live training to its Motor Carrier Safety Unit staff, NYSP, and local police partners, often in collaboration with TAT staff.

In addition to formal training, DOT's education and awareness efforts are also strong priorities. DOT has distributed thousands of trafficking awareness materials to commercial motor vehicle drivers to increase visibility and understanding of trafficking indicators for those on the frontline of this crucial issue. DOT has also delivered trafficking awareness presentations to industry organizations including the New York State Public Transit Association, helping broaden outreach throughout the state's transportation sector.

Coalition Builds Hosted By DOT

In 2025, DOT took the initiative to host two TAT coalition builds to create statewide networks to combat human trafficking in Brooklyn and Albany:

- The Brooklyn Coalition Build brought together 63 participants from across the transportation, government agency, and law enforcement sectors for a Coalition

Build focused on disrupting human trafficking within New York City and New York State. This event sparked critical conversations, strengthened partnerships, and equipped attendees with tools to take action. DOT hosted this event alongside the Kings County District Attorney's Office.
- The Albany Coalition Build brought 60 leaders to the capital of New York State to combat human trafficking. Albany was selected to deepen statewide engagement in New York State and extend Coalition Build impact to state-level leadership and agencies. DOT hosted this event alongside New York State Police, Albany Police Department, and Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center.

Other DOT Efforts

In addition to the various impactful efforts listed above, DOT has been involved in combatting human trafficking in New York State in several other ways, including:

- Installing trafficking awareness signage at DOT rest areas, including inside bathroom stalls.
- Participating in and being a member of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) Human Trafficking Committee.
- Partnering with TAT to develop an initiative focusing on youth anti-trafficking education.
- Presenting trafficking education at our industry outreach events and embedding trafficking awareness messaging within DOT presentations.
- Coordinating with all major New York State Motor Carrier organizations.
- Working with the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles to post trafficking messaging on television monitors in offices and in the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) manual.
- Assisting TAT with introductions to the New York State Department of Education and the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute to develop training for school bus drivers.

Law Enforcement Agencies

In New York State, police officers are required to complete the Basic Course for Police Officers (BCPO) or its equivalent, or comparable training, which includes specific training courses on missing persons and human trafficking. The training objectives for the missing persons course include identifying relevant state and federal law, listing elements for searches, identifying missing persons with special needs, and other components. Similarly, the human trafficking course requires officers to become familiar with sex and labor trafficking statutes, the New York State confirmation program, and available services among other training objectives. DCJS provides additional training to law enforcement agencies upon request.

Although not directly relevant to missing persons cases, several other mandated courses within the BCPO curriculum reference procedures related to vulnerable populations, which can include missing persons.

Immigration Protections for BIPOC Women and Girls

BIPOC women and girls who are missing and subsequently located, including trafficking survivors, may be eligible to apply for immigration benefits such as the U Nonimmigrant Visa and/or the T Nonimmigrant Visa. Currently, state agencies that certify or endorse an application for the U Nonimmigrant Visa and the T Nonimmigrant Visa, respectively, include DOL; NYSP; the New York State Division of Human Rights; and local departments of social services responsible for investigating child and adult protective matters, supported by the guidance and technical assistance of OCFS.

The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) within the New York State Department of State assists foreign-born individuals and their children, irrespective of immigration status, with accessing and navigating a variety of free services and supports. ONA operates a free hotline (1-800-566-7636) and provides legal assistance and referrals. Unstable or lack of immigration status is an additional layer of vulnerability for missing BIPOC women and girls and their families. Survivors are encouraged to seek legal assistance if applicable.

Youth Justice Institute

A partnership between the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services and the University at Albany.