



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA

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**ELEVEN ENDANGERED MISSING CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAFELY RECOVERED
ON O'AHU DURING MULTIAGENCY OPERATION SHINE THE LIGHT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 3, 2024

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General and the Hawai'i Department of Human Services today announced the results of a multiagency child recovery operation conducted over the past weekend, known as Operation Shine the Light. The state agencies worked jointly with the Honolulu Police Department, as well as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Susannah Wesley Community Center, to locate, recover and provide immediate services to endangered missing children and youth reported as "runaways" across O'ahu.

The operation resulted in the safe location and recoveries of 11 children and youth between the ages of 15 and 19. Investigations are ongoing.

"The ultimate goal of this program is to quickly find missing and vulnerable children and prevent them from falling into the hands of predators. I am proud of the work being done by federal, state and county law enforcement, in partnership with community agencies, to locate and protect our innocent young residents. We want keiki to know that we care, and we will do everything possible to make them safe," said Governor Josh Green, M.D.

The Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force and Missing Child Center-Hawai'i originally initiated Operation Shine the Light in 2020 as a cooperative effort between county, state and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations centered on the recovery and protection of endangered missing foster youth who are at high risk of abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

"The Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General is fully committed to working jointly with our law enforcement, social services and victim advocate partners to recover endangered keiki in our community, ensure their safety and well-being, and prevent

victimization,” said Hawai‘i Attorney General Anne E. Lopez. “The message to missing children and youth is that we will never stop looking for you.”

“The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates all the collaborative efforts made to locate endangered missing children and youth,” said Director Ryan Yamane. “This operation required quick action and decisions and DHS is thankful for all involved with the successful location of these 11 children and youth.”

“The Honolulu Police Department is committed to protecting our community and especially the young and vulnerable,” said acting Honolulu Police Chief Keith Horikawa. “We appreciate our partner agencies and are dedicated to working with them to identify and locate keiki in need of help.”

“No child should be left to fend for themselves on the streets or live in an unsafe environment,” said Amanda Leonard, Coordinator of the Missing Child Center – Hawai‘i. “Thanks to our partnership with the Honolulu Police Department and other key partners and stakeholders, we are able to get missing children off the streets, show them their lives and futures matter, and ‘shine the light’ on the real dangers facing our keiki through community awareness and education. Every Hawai‘i child deserves a safe childhood.”

“One in six of the more than 28,800 cases of children reported missing to NCMEC in 2023 were likely victims of child sex trafficking,” according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (“NCMEC”) website. “Of the children reported missing to NCMEC in 2023, who had run from the care of child welfare, 19% were likely victims of child sex trafficking.” See, <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking>

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 mandates state social service agencies to report immediately, and in no case later than 24 hours, after receiving information on a missing or abducted child or youth in state care to both law enforcement and NCMEC and remain in regular communication with law enforcement and NCMEC in efforts to provide a safe recovery of the missing or abducted child or youth. 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(35)(B). See, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title42-section671&num=0&edition=prelim>

Community members can help to combat child abuse/neglect and child trafficking by contacting the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services’ hotlines available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

- Child Abuse and/or Neglect: 808-832-5300 (O‘ahu)
- Child Abuse and/or Neglect: Toll-free 1-888-380-3088 (Hawai‘i Island, Maui, Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i, Kaua‘i)
- Child Trafficking: 808-832-1999 (O‘ahu)
- Child Trafficking: Toll-free 1-888-398-1188 (Hawai‘i Island, Maui, Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i, Kaua‘i)

Anyone with information regarding missing children or the exploitation of children is encouraged to contact your local police department or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).

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