



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU 'ĀINA O HAWAII

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**TEN ENDANGERED MISSING CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAFELY
RECOVERED ON O'AHU DURING MULTI-AGENCY OPERATION SHINE
THE LIGHT**

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HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General and the Hawai'i Department of Human Services today announced the results of a coordinated, multi-agency child recovery operation conducted over the past weekend, known as Operation Shine the Light.

The state agencies worked jointly with the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Secret Service, Army Criminal Investigation Division, Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) Sheriff Division, Hale Kipa Statewide Trafficking Victim Assistance Program, O'ahu First Circuit Family Court, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), and other community partners.

The operation's primary objectives were to recover endangered missing children and youth reported as "runaways" across O'ahu, provide them with essential services and care — and to deter bad actors from victimizing missing children.

The operation resulted in the safe location and recoveries of 10 children and youth between the ages of 13 and 18. Several arrests were made, child victims were identified and investigations are ongoing.

One in seven of the more than 29,000 cases of children reported missing to the NCMEC in 2024 were likely victims of child sex trafficking, according to the NCMEC website. Of the children reported missing to NCMEC in 2024, who had run from the care of child welfare, 18% were likely victims of child sex trafficking. See, <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking>.

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 requires state social service agencies to report any missing or abducted child or youth in state care, to both law enforcement and NCMEC. The law further mandates that such reports be made immediately — and no later than 24 hours — after receiving information regarding a missing or abducted child. Agencies must also maintain regular communication with law enforcement and NCMEC to support the safe recovery of the child or youth. See, [42 U.S.C. § 671\(a\)\(35\)\(B\) – State plan for foster care and adoption assistance](#)

The Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force and Missing Child Center-Hawai'i (MCCH) 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.

"Protecting our keiki is our highest priority in the Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force," said ICAC Commander Edward Arias. "Our goal is to make every child in the state of Hawai'i safe from predators who seek to harm them online or in person."

"Operation Shine the Light is a multidisciplinary task force model unique to our state where compassion, focus, attention, professionalism and preparedness all come together to bring endangered keiki home safely," said MCCH Coordinator Amanda Leonard. "There is no waiting period to report a missing, abducted or runaway child to your local police department."

"I want to acknowledge and thank all our dedicated federal, military, state and county law enforcement and community partners whose collaboration and tireless efforts made this mission a success," said Attorney General Anne Lopez.

“The Hawai‘i Department of Human Services is deeply committed to the safety and well-being of our keiki,” said Ryan Yamane, director of the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services. “Operation Shine the Light underscores the power of collaboration among federal, state, county, and community partners. Together, we are ensuring that vulnerable children are not only located and protected, but also connected to the compassionate, trauma informed care and support they need to recover and thrive.”

“I want to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of every child in our community,” said Interim HPD Chief Rade Vanic. “The Honolulu Police Department stands united with our partners at the Department of Human Services and other agencies to swiftly locate and protect endangered keiki from harm. Through collaboration, vigilance and compassion, we will continue to shine a light on the vulnerabilities facing our youth and work tirelessly to ensure they are safe, supported and given the opportunity to thrive.”

“Protecting our children is at the core of the FBI’s mission,” said FBI Honolulu Special Agent in Charge David Porter. “This operation — in close collaboration with our law enforcement and community partners — is just one example of the work we do around the clock to safeguard our keiki and their futures.”

“This targeted initiative aims to identify, disrupt and dismantle criminal networks that prey on the vulnerable. Our mission is clear: we will use every investigative resource, intelligence tool and interagency partnership to hold offenders accountable and safeguard our communities,” said DLE Director Mike Lambert. “I extend my gratitude to the state sheriffs and all our law enforcement partners for their unwavering dedication and vital contributions to this effort.”

“Operation Shine the Light represents the very best of what can be accomplished when state, local and federal partners come together with a shared commitment to protect Hawai‘i’s keiki and support those who dedicate their lives to keeping them safe,” said Justin Davis, U.S. Marshal for the District of Hawai‘i. “The efforts of investigators and officers over the past several days reflect an extraordinary level of dedication, compassion and teamwork and the U.S. Marshals Service is proud to stand alongside the Attorney General’s Office and our partners to locate missing children, hold predators accountable and create a safer future for all of Hawai‘i’s families.”

“The U.S. Secret Service was proud to work alongside our law enforcement and public safety partners during Operation Shine the Light,” said Glen Peterson, special agent in charge of the U.S. Secret Service’s Honolulu Field Office. “The U.S. Secret Service is committed to protecting our youngest and most vulnerable community members and we will continue to do everything we can to help keep them safe.”

“Every recovery is a life redirected and a chance to restore safety, dignity and hope. Working together with our law enforcement partners, we were able to bring these children home,” said Special Agent in Charge Ruben Santiago of the Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division Pacific Field Office. “For us, this isn’t just law enforcement, it’s a mission that directly impacts our communities and the readiness of our force.”

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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