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

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HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General, the Hawai'i Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) announced the results of a multiagency child recovery operation conducted over the past weekend, known as *Operation Shine the Light*.

The state agencies and FBI worked jointly with the Honolulu Police Department, Department of Law Enforcement, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, Hale Kipa, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), and other community partners to locate, recover and provide emergency services to endangered "runaways" across O'ahu.

The operation was conducted during National Human Trafficking Awareness Month (January) and resulted in the safe location and recovery of eight children between the ages of 13 and 17. Two children recovered in the operation had been reported as runaways over one year ago. Investigations are ongoing.

“Operation Shine the Light aims to proactively identify and recover endangered youth who are at an elevated risk of assault, kidnapping, exploitation and trafficking while missing and bring them to safety,” says Amanda Leonard, coordinator of the Missing Child Center-Hawai‘i and MAILE AMBER Alert Coordinator.

“The recent completion of our Shine the Light initiative marks a significant step forward in strengthening our collective ability to identify, protect and support our keiki at risk of trafficking. Through close collaboration between our agency and other partner agencies, this initiative demonstrates the power of coordinated action, shared expertise and unified commitment to child safety and well-being,” said Elladine Olevao, acting administrator for the DHS Social Services Division.

“The FBI is proud to stand alongside our state and federal law enforcement partners, to be the voice for those who cannot speak for themselves and the shield for those who cannot protect themselves,” said FBI Honolulu Special Agent in Charge David Porter. “While we are proud of our collective successes during this operation, our work to protect the vulnerable never stops. We remain committed to bringing light into the darkest places and ensuring every keiki in our community has the chance to grow up safe.”

According to NCMEC, one in seven of the more than 32,000 cases of children reported missing to NCMEC in 2025 were likely victims of child sex trafficking. Of the children reported missing to NCMEC in 2025, who had run from the care of child welfare, 17% 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.

Citation: 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>

The Hawai‘i Department of the Attorney General’s 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.

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).



Photo Courtesy: FBI Honolulu

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