



**KANSAS BUREAU OF
INVESTIGATION**
DEDICATION | SERVICE | INTEGRITY

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Before the
Joint Committee on Kansas Security
Bob Stuart, KBI Executive Officer
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Chairman Proctor and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The KBI appreciates the opportunity to provide a review of criminal justice matters which we believe are relevant to this Committee's oversight function as well as to all citizens of Kansas.

Crime in Kansas:

The KBI is statutorily required to collect and maintain all Kansas offense and arrest reports. The KBI publishes an annual report of criminal offenses reported and provides data on violent crime (Murder, Rape, Robbery and Aggravated Assault) and property crime (Burglary, Larceny/Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft and Arson)¹. These crimes are commonly referred to as index crimes. In 2024, there were 58,161 property crimes and 12,643 violent crimes submitted by Kansas law enforcement agencies to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI). Total index crimes decreased 16.7% from the 10-year average.

Crime Index Rate:

The crime index rate is the number of all index crimes per 1,000 people. This decreased from 27.0 offenses per 1,000 people in 2023, to 23.3 in 2024. The 2024 total was the lowest reported in over 20 years.

Violent Crime Index Rate:

The violent crime index rate was equal to the 10-year average, but decreased 6.7% from 2023. In 2024, the violent crime index rate for Kansas was 4.2 offenses per 1,000 people. These include: murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault/battery.

¹ [Blue and White Minimal corporate annual report cover](#)

Property Crime Index:

The property crime index rate was 21.3% below the 10-year average. In 2024, the property index crime rate was 19.2 offenses per 1,000 people. These offenses include: burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. In 2024, total property crimes decreased 12.9% from 2023. In 2024, there were 43,636 theft offenses, which accounted for 75.0% of total property crimes reported. There were 14,525 burglary and motor vehicle thefts, which accounted for the remaining 25.0% of the property crimes reported.

Murder:

There were 117 murders reported in 2024, which was 24.0% below the 10-year average, and 25.5% less than 2023. Finding a common circumstance for these murders is difficult, as 46.2% of the reports indicated “unknown circumstance.” Additionally, 9.4% of the reported murders listed an unknown suspect. Arguments, as a circumstance, accounted for 22.2% of murders; domestic violence murders accounted for 17.1%; illegal drug transactions totaled 2.6%; and gang activity and drive-by incidents made up 0.9%. All other circumstances totaled 20.5% of the murders in 2024.

Rape:

Rapes were 16.9% below the 10-year average. There was a decrease of 11.7% from 2023. This marks the second year of declines in this category.

Robbery:

Robberies saw a 31.6% decline from the 10-year average and a 14.3% decrease from 2023. The 2024 total was the lowest reported in over twenty years.

Aggravated Assault/Battery:

Aggravated assaults and batteries have been on the rise between 2015 and 2022 when it reached a twenty-year high. In 2024, they were still 7.8% above the 10-year average, but saw a 3.0% decrease from the 2023 totals. Notably, these numbers represent a 32.4% increase from the 2019 pre-COVID 10-year average of 8,005 per year.

Burglary:

In 2024, there were 7,118 reported burglaries, which was 36.2% below the 10-year average and 18.6% below 2023 numbers. This was the lowest number since 1966, when 10,712 were reported and was 53.1% less than the 2019 pre-COVID 10-year average of 15,164.

Theft:

Reported thefts (other than motor vehicles) were 18.1% below the 10-year average, and 12.3% below 2023 numbers. This was a 26.0% decline from the 2019 pre-COVID 10-year average of 58,942.

Motor Vehicle Thefts:

Motor vehicle thefts were 7.2% below the 10-year average. This statistic is notable because motor vehicle thefts tend to have a higher rate of reporting compared to other property offenses, suggesting they would be a more accurate barometer of the actual number of property offenses occurring in our state. In 2024, there was a 10.5% decrease from 2023, and a 3.6% increase from the 2019 pre COVID 10-year average of 7,149.

Arson:

Arsons were 22.4% below the 10-year average and decreased by 8.5% compared to those reported in 2023. Arson figures are intended to stand apart from violent or property indices and are not included within those statistics. In 2024, there was a 37.1% decrease from the 2019 pre-COVID 10-year average of 666. The 2024 total was the lowest reported in over 20 years.

Crimes Against Children:

One of the areas of criminality not well captured by statistics is crimes against children. Crimes against children include actual sexual and physical contact, online contact designed to entice or sextort and child pornography (referred to as Child Sexual Abuse Material, or CSAM). In Kansas, these offenses are tracked through the Kansas Incident Based Reporting System (KIBRS) for reported incidents of rape, criminal sodomy, and sexual battery, as well as through the state's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, which handles CyberTipline reports from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). While KBI data provides insight into reported sexual assaults involving minors, online exploitation and CSAM often go underreported, representing only a fraction of actual occurrences.

Definition and Scope of Online Enticement

NCMEC defines online enticement as “an individual communicating with someone believed to be a child via the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offense or abduction. This is a broad category of online exploitation and includes sextortion, in which a child is being groomed to take sexually explicit images and/or ultimately meet face-to-face with someone for sexual purposes, or to engage in a sexual conversation online or, in some instances, to sell/trade the child’s sexual images. This type of victimization takes place across every platform: social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, etc.”

The KBI through its Child Victim Units as well as the state ICAC Task Force, coordinated by the Sedgwick County Sheriff’s Office investigates these cases. In 2024, the Kansas received 6,196 CyberTipline reports from NCMEC, reflecting a high volume of suspected online child exploitation.

Nationally, NCMEC reported a dramatic increase in online enticement: from 186,000 reports in 2023 to over 546,000 in 2024—a 192-194% rise. This follows previous surges: a 97.5% increase from 2019 to 2020 (reaching 37,872), and a 300% rise from 2021 to 2023. These figures underscore that reported incidents are only the tip of the iceberg, with many Kansas cases likely unreported due to fear, shame, or lack of awareness.

Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM):

Criminal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor (under 18 years old). The preferred term, Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), is used to emphasize that these are records of actual crimes against children. CSAM extends beyond images and

videos to include any files depicting exploitation. While transmitted via technology, CSAM always involves real human victims and must be addressed with a focus on prevention and recovery.

In 1998, NCMEC established the CyberTipline for the public and electronic service providers to report suspected child sexual exploitation. In 2024, the CyberTipline received 20.5 million reports, involving nearly 62.9 million files (images, videos, and other materials)—a slight decrease from 36.2 million reports in 2023 but with a 1,325% increase in reports involving Generative AI Technology (from 4,700 in 2023 to 67,000 in 2024). In Kansas, these national reports feed into the ICAC Task Force, which processed thousands of tips in 2024, leading to investigations of online CSAM distribution and production. KBI data does not break out CSAM separately but integrates it into sexual assault statistics, where family and known relationships predominate.

Statistics on Crimes Against Children:

KBI's 2024 report on Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Sexual Assault² provides detailed data on reported sexual crimes, with a significant portion involving children. These offenses often overlap with online enticement and CSAM when digital elements are present, though KIBRS focuses on in-person reports. Key child-focused highlights:

Rape (K.S.A. 21-5503):

977 incidents reported statewide. Of 1,011 victims:

Under 18: 486 (48.1%), including 52 under 10 (5.1%), 171 aged 10-14 (16.9%), and 263 aged 15-19 (26.0%).

Relationships: 14.3% family members (e.g., 39 child-parent cases, 15 step-child, 7 foster child/sibling), with 79.6% known offenders. Arrest rate: 13.3%.

Criminal Sodomy: 314 incidents (down 4.0% from 2023). Of 340 victims:

Under 18: 207 (60.9%), including 56 under 10 (16.5%), 72 aged 10-14 (21.2%), and 79 aged 15-19 (23.2%).

Relationships: 23.3% family members (e.g., 14 child-parent cases, 5 step-child, 3 foster child), with 81.2% known offenders.

Sexual Battery: 1,233 incidents (down 10.5% from 2023). Of 823 victims:

Under 18: 632 (76.8%), including 234 under 10 (28.4%), 221 aged 10-14 (26.9%), and 177 aged 15-19 (21.5%).

Relationships: 24.8% family members (e.g., 89 child-parent cases, 40 step-child, 7 foster child/sibling/parent), with 43.0% otherwise unknown.

² kansas.gov/kbi/stats/docs/pdf/DVStalkingRape2024.pdf

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Overall, in sexual assault contexts, child victims under 15 faced 223 rapes (52 under 10), 128 sodomies (56 under 10), and 455 sexual batteries (234 under 10). These incidents often occur in residences (48-53%), involve no physical injury (73-93%), and peak on weekends. Family relationships dominate (20-24%), highlighting intra-household risks.

The surge in national online enticement and CSAM reports, combined with Kansas's high volume of ICAC CyberTips and persistent sexual assault rates against children, signals an urgent need for enhanced attention to the matter. Underreporting remains a challenge, as does the integration of online harms into state statistics. The Joint Committee should consider advocating for increased awareness of this terrible issue by expanding digital forensics training, and supporting public campaigns to educate Kansans and encourage reporting.

Child Homicides in Kansas: Insights from the 2025 SCDRB Report

The 2025 Kansas State Child Death Review Board (SCDRB) Annual Report³, analyzing 2023 data within a five-year context (2019-2023), reveals concerning patterns in child homicides, with 128 total cases over the period and 32 in 2023 alone, representing 8% of all 361 child deaths that year. The overall child homicide rate stood at 3.6 per 100,000 population for 2019-2023, rising to 4.2 in 2023, a 35% increase from 2022.

The SCDRB, which includes a representative from the KBI, recommends urgent legislative action to address these trends, such as expanding the Kansas Offender Registration Act (KORA) to include child abuse as a violent offense for public registration, enhancing prosecutorial expertise in child death cases, and mandating coordinated training for coroners, law enforcement, and DCF. For prevention, the board stresses reporting suspicions to the Kansas Protection Report Center (1-800-922-5330), education on child abuse signs, and interagency data sharing to bridge jurisdictional gaps.

Drug-Related Child Deaths and Illegal Substances

Drug-related deaths among Kansas children surged alarmingly, with fentanyl alone claiming 48 lives from 2020-2023 after zero in 2019, contributing to 17 such deaths in 2023 (ages 0-17). Over 2019-2023, toxicology on 50% of all child deaths (180 of 361 in 2023) showed 23% positive for substances, including:

- marijuana (7%),
- fentanyl (4%),
- alcohol (3%),
- methamphetamine (0.8%),
- benzodiazepines (0.8%), and
- cocaine (0.6%), with some multi-substance cases.

For ages 1-17 (586 tested), 29% were positive. These deaths spanned manners:

72% unintentional (51 poisoning/overdose cases total, 15 in 2023—12% of unintentional injuries for ages 1-17),

³ [2025 Kansas Child Death Review Board Annual Report](#)

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15% undetermined (10 cases),

8% suicide (5 cases), and

5% homicide (3 cases).

Teens aged 15-17 represented 69% of cases, males 66%; under-5s (20%, 13 cases) included homicides via illicit drug administration, accidental ingestions of unsecured drugs, and prenatal exposure complications, with 62% involving fentanyl.

High-risk factors tie closely to child welfare:

75% of drug-related deaths had DCF histories,

31% prior removals, and

8% were in state custody.

Parental substance abuse was documented in 50% of CPS-involved deaths overall, rising to 62% for infants, with 31% prenatally exposed (often to illicit drugs/alcohol), linking to unsafe sleep, impaired supervision (34% vs. 16% non-exposed), intimate partner violence, and health barriers. Trends show synthetic opioids like fentanyl driving the increase, often mixed unknowingly which exacerbates the crisis.

Domestic Violence

Kansas law enforcement reported 21,911 DV incidents, a slight decrease from prior years, resulting in 10,658 arrests. DV homicides trended downward: From 2005-2024, annual figures averaged around 20-30, with 17.1% of all 2024 murders (20 out of 117) linked to DV, often involving arguments or unknown circumstances.

However, early 2025 data indicates a concerning uptick: In Kansas City, KS, 12 DV-related homicides were reported by April 2025, matching the entire 2024 total, prompting local leaders to address the surge. Additionally, nationally aligned trend data show DV incidents peaking during evenings and weekends, with personal weapons (hands/fists) dominating the means of violence.

Total Incidents and Arrests:

There were 21,911 incidents statewide, down slightly from 2023. There were 10,658 arrests including dual arrests.

Victim/Offender Characteristics:

Of victims, approximately 70-80% are female. Offenders are predominantly male (80-90% in assaults).

Relationships (Victim to Offender):

36% spouse/common-law,

11% parent/child (including 6.4% child victims),

4% sibling, and

17% boyfriend/girlfriend or ex.

Family members account for 24-30% of relationships in related sexual DV offenses.

Offenses in DV Incidents:

Primarily battery/aggravated battery (70%), assaults (15%), with 5-10% involving sexual elements (rape/sodomy).

Location, Day, and Time:

77% in residences (single/multiple homes). Peaks on weekends (13-17% Saturdays/Sundays) and evenings (18:00-00:00, 30-40% of incidents).

Protection from Abuse (PFA) Orders:

9,587 filings (up 11.9% from 2023), with 2,349 violations. Many protect children, as filings can include minors.

Illegal Drugs

The United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) operates a federal program called High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The mission of HIDTA is to provide assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug trafficking regions of the United States. One of HIDTA's many objectives is to enhance law enforcement intelligence sharing. HIDTA accomplishes this by monitoring illicit drug activity in the United States. The HIDTA program separates states into different HIDTA regions. Each year, Midwest HIDTA, which includes Kansas, produces several reports to inform the public and law enforcement on the illicit drugs being transported and used throughout the six-state Midwest HIDTA region (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota). KBI internal data corresponds with that publicly available in these Midwest HIDTA reports.

The results of the Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) 2025 Threat Assessment⁴ revealed that fentanyl and methamphetamine remain the top two drug threats to the region. This is the third year in a row fentanyl was ranked as the number one drug threat. Fentanyl will likely continue to pose the greatest threat to the region as the supply is expected to increase. According to the DEA's 2025 National Drug Threat Assessment, synthetic opioids like fentanyl continue to drive overdose deaths nationwide, with Mexican cartels as primary suppliers. Attorney General Kobach has highlighted fentanyl as the leading cause of child drug deaths, with 48 fatalities between 2020 and 2023.

Fentanyl:

Fentanyl is expected to remain the greatest driver of drug poisoning deaths. Adulterants such as xylazine and medetomidine are of great concern and will continue to be, especially as it seems they have an increased impact on poisoning deaths. According to the DEA, Chinese syndicates have been the dominant suppliers of precursor chemicals used to produce fentanyl and other synthetic

⁴ [2025 Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment.pdf](#)

opioids. In Kansas, overdose data from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) shows a continued rise in fentanyl-related deaths, aligning with national trends where 7 out of 10 fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills contain a lethal dose.

The legislature appropriated \$6.9 million in FY 2025 for KBI's Fight Against Fentanyl effort. The KBI's Joint Fentanyl Impact Team (JFIT) is now fully staffed and producing notable results. In this FY 2025 approximately 150 JFIT investigations were opened. 94,515 fentanyl pills and more than a kilogram of fentanyl powder was seized.

Methamphetamine:

Methamphetamine will endure as a significant threat to the region with its high levels of availability, demand, use, and its transportation to and through the region. Low-cost, high-potency methamphetamine transported from the Southwest Border will continue to saturate both rural and metropolitan drug markets. The level of violence and crime surrounding methamphetamine production, trafficking, and use will remain a threat to both law enforcement and the public. KBI counterdrug operations seized more than 170 kilograms of methamphetamines in FY 25.

Cocaine:

Cocaine has seen a resurgence in the U.S., with consumption in the western region, including parts of the Midwest HIDTA, increasing by 154% since 2019, according to drug testing data cited by the Wall Street Journal. The drug is cheaper and purer than ever for retail buyers, driven by excess supply from Mexican cartels and record global production, particularly from Colombia. In Kansas, while not yet ranking as high as fentanyl or methamphetamine in HIDTA assessments, cocaine's increasing availability is noted in KBI seizures and overdose data, KBI counterdrug investigations seized 4.5 kilograms of cocaine in FY 25.

Kratom and 7-Hydroxymitragynine (7-OH):

Kratom, derived from the *Mitragyna speciosa* plant, is marketed as a natural remedy for pain, anxiety, and opioid withdrawal but poses significant risks due to its unregulated status in Kansas. Unlike states with bans or age restrictions, Kansas has no statewide regulations, allowing sales in smoke shops, gas stations, and online without oversight. A particular danger is synthesized 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), 7-OH is a potent alkaloid found in small amounts in natural kratom that exhibits substantially greater mu-opioid receptor potency (up to 10 times stronger) than kratom's primary compound, mitragynine.

There are now synthesized "kratom" products that have much higher concentrations of 7-OH. These synthesized (and legally sold) 7-OH products are extraordinarily powerful drugs. Laboratory testing indicates 7-OH has 13 times the potency of morphine. Ingestion leads to opioid-like effects, addiction, severe withdrawal, and overdose risks, including respiratory depression and death.

The Kansas Department of Health & Environment (KDHE) issued a warning in September 2025 about 7-OH products being unregulated, addictive and harmful even in small doses, urging consultation with healthcare providers. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is taking steps to restrict 7-OH as an illegal opioid, citing serious illnesses and toxicological concerns, while Midwest HIDTA released a 2025 bulletin on 7-OH raising the alarm⁵. In Kansas, emerging reports of adverse events align with national trends, emphasizing the need for criminal and regulatory action to protect public health. HB

⁵ PowerPoint Presentation

2230 is an active bill this session which attempts to address this issue. The KBI will work with the legislature, KDHE and other interested parties to ensure Kansans are properly protected.

Marijuana Legalization:

In addition to fentanyl, methamphetamine and the resurgence of Cocaine, Midwest HIDTA has studied and reported on the impact of marijuana legalization in the Midwest⁶. According to the 2025 Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment, marijuana is both the most widely available and commonly abused illicit drug in the AOR and is listed among the primary drug threats alongside fentanyl, methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine.

Midwest HIDTA continues to observe the collaboration between Mexican drug cartels and Chinese criminal organizations has allowed the cartels to tap into the Chinese criminal organizations' knowledge, financial resources, technological expertise, and strategic partnerships. The alliance between Chinese and Mexican criminal organizations has created a new, sophisticated financial system that has proven to be lucrative for the cartels and difficult for law enforcement to investigate. Mexican drug cartels have a long and complex history, dating back several decades. These criminal organizations, known for their ruthless tactics and sophisticated operations, have been involved in drug trafficking, extortion, money laundering, and other illicit activities. They have gained immense power and influence, posing significant challenges to law enforcement agencies and governments alike.

Chinese investors have financed illegal marijuana operations, purchasing large swaths of land for cultivation. These investments provide the necessary resources for the cartels to expand their operations and evade law enforcement scrutiny. The collaboration between Mexican drug cartels and Chinese nationals has also facilitated human trafficking and forced labor practices. Workers, often lured under false pretenses, find themselves trapped in exploitative conditions on illicit drug farms. It is commonplace for their passports and personal belongings to be confiscated, leaving them vulnerable to abuse and feeling as if they lack the ability to escape.

The alliance between Chinese and Mexican criminal organizations has created a new, sophisticated financial system that has proven to be lucrative for the cartels. This system involves the use of Chinese nationals living in the United States who act as intermediaries between the cartels and Chinese banks. These intermediaries transfer drug money to Chinese bank accounts, which is then converted into Chinese currency and transferred back to the cartels in Mexico. This partnership has allowed the cartels to bypass traditional money laundering methods, making their operations faster, cheaper, and more efficient. This has enabled them to expand their operations, increasing the availability of drugs in the United States and contributing to the ongoing opioid crisis.

The cartels have harnessed the power of modern technology to bolster their operations. Near the California border, they employ advanced Chinese-made aerial drones for reconnaissance, surveillance, and payload transportation. This has enhanced their smuggling operations and improved their ability to evade United States law enforcement. Social media platforms have also been exploited by the cartels for recruiting purposes. Platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, and WhatsApp have been used to

⁶ [Midwest HIDTA 2025 Marijuana Impact Report.pdf](#)

lure American citizens into their operations. Large sums of money have been offered for drug and human smuggling across the border.

In October 2025, the KBI, in coordination with local law enforcement and the Attorney General's office, conducted a statewide marijuana enforcement operation targeting illegal sales of marijuana and THC products at vape shops and CBD dispensaries. The operation involved executing search warrants at 18 locations across 11 communities, resulting in the seizure of thousands of illegal marijuana products:

43,867 pre-rolled marijuana cigarettes,
35,627 vapes
343+ pounds of THC Flower
95,686 packages of edibles (THC and Psilocybin)
\$35,435 currency seized (to date)

Attorney General Kobach highlighted the operation's focus on enforcement, noting, "These stores are brazenly selling illegal marijuana and THC products. We cannot continue to not enforce the law just because some people think it should be changed."

The illegal products being openly sold contain extraordinary levels of THC never before seen. High potency THC, often found in modern cannabis products like edibles, vapes, and concentrates (with THC levels exceeding 20-90% compared to 4% in traditional marijuana from decades ago), poses significant health risks due to its intensified psychoactive effects. These products can lead to rapid onset of severe intoxication, increasing the likelihood of acute issues such as anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, and even cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome (severe vomiting). Long-term, high potency use is linked to heightened dependency and mental health challenges, as the brain's endocannabinoid system becomes overwhelmed, altering reward pathways and potentially exacerbating conditions like depression or bipolar disorder. Research indicates that higher THC concentrations amplify these dangers, with users experiencing more pronounced cognitive impairments and a greater risk of transitioning to harder substances.

Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD)

Cannabis Use Disorder is a diagnosable condition characterized by problematic cannabis use that leads to clinically significant impairment or distress, as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Symptoms include using more than intended, unsuccessful efforts to cut back, spending excessive time obtaining or recovering from use, cravings, tolerance (needing more for the same effect), withdrawal (irritability, anxiety, insomnia, decreased appetite), and continued use despite social, occupational, or health problems. Risks are amplified with high potency THC, as it accelerates tolerance and withdrawal severity, potentially leading to addiction in about 9% of users overall and up to 30% of daily users. Vulnerable groups, including those with mental health issues, face elevated chances of psychosis, cognitive decline, and reduced life outcomes like poorer education and career achievement.

Effects on Young Brains

The developing brain, which continues maturing until around age 25, is particularly susceptible to high potency THC. Exposure during adolescence can disrupt neural pathways involved in learning, memory,

and executive function, leading to lasting deficits in attention, problem-solving, and IQ. Studies show structural changes, such as reduced gray matter in prefrontal regions, and functional alterations during tasks like working memory. Risks include a 1 in 6 chance of addiction for teen users, elevated schizophrenia odds (especially with high potency strains), and prenatal exposure impairing intellectual development in children. Immediate effects impair coordination and reaction time, raising accident risks, while long-term use correlates with mental health disorders and academic underperformance.

Human Trafficking:

Human trafficking remains a hidden yet possibly pervasive crime in Kansas. Human trafficking involves the exploitation of individuals, often vulnerable populations like minors, immigrants, and those in economic distress, for labor, services, or commercial sex through force, fraud, or coercion. Underreporting is a major challenge, as victims may fear retaliation, deportation, or stigma, meaning official statistics capture only a fraction of cases.

In Kansas, emphasis is placed on juvenile victims, with protocols to ensure protective custody and immediate response. Nationally, the Polaris Project (explained below) reported 9,619 potential cases in 2023 (latest full year), with Kansas contributing modestly but showing upward trends in tips and interventions. Since hotline inception, Kansas has seen 934 identified cases involving 1,761 victims, ranking it mid-tier among states with 59 cases per recent analyses.

Definitions and Statutes

Kansas law defines human trafficking under K.S.A. 21-5426 as the intentional recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through force, fraud, or coercion for involuntary servitude or forced labor. Aggravated human trafficking includes cases involving minors or severe exploitation. Human smuggling, per K.S.A. 21-5432, involves intentionally transporting, harboring, or concealing an individual into or within Kansas, knowing or should have known the person is entering or remaining illegally, with intent to exploit for financial gain. These statutes align with federal definitions under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

The Polaris Project, a leading nonprofit, operates the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888), providing 24/7 support and generating tips for law enforcement. In Kansas, the hotline has facilitated hundreds of contacts/reports, with 198 in 2023. The tips were predominantly sex trafficking (74%) but also labor (14%) and combined forms (5%).

Protocols and Resources

Effective January 1, 2024, Kansas enacted the Law Enforcement Protocol for Juvenile Victims of Human Trafficking/Commercial Sexual Exploitation Crimes, mandating specialized handling. Under K.S.A. 38-2231(b)(3), officers who believe a juvenile is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, or aggravated human trafficking must take them into police protective custody. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Immediate Response Team provides 24/7 statewide crisis intervention, evaluating youth for treatment and placement. Juvenile Intake and Assessment Centers (JIAC) uses the Human Trafficking Screening Instrument Tool during intake to identify risks.

Case Examples

A notable 2023 case in Finney County involved a landlord-tenant dispute revealing human trafficking and smuggling. Investigators discovered 16 individuals, including minors, unpaid and poorly cared for, with additional victims at other sites smuggled from foreign countries. A married couple was charged; the female entered a diversion agreement for human smuggling (K.S.A. 21-5432, level 5 felony) and interference with law enforcement, while the male's case was dismissed and is under appeal as of 2025. Minors were placed in DCF custody, screened via JIAC, and supported by the Immediate Response Team.

In 2025, key cases include: Butler County (October), where a man pleaded no contest in a multi-arrest operation, a multi-county effort (August), yielding 12 arrests, the sentencing in federal court of six former cult members for forced labor (August) and an HSI operation rescuing 31 victims, including 14 missing children (June). Finally, Garden City saw an aggravated trafficking arrest in April involving a forced marriage. These cases highlight labor and sex trafficking, often involving minors and immigrants.

Trends and National Context

Kansas trends show fluctuating but increasing tips: Polaris contacts rose from 22 in 2023 to 35 in 2024, with 20 as of October 2025. Local law enforcement tips surged to 61 in 2025 (from 6 in 2024), DCF call-outs to 50 (from 37), and JIAC assessments to 51 (from 54). Overall, DCF maltreatment reports include 0.1% labor trafficking and 0.2% sex trafficking in FY2025.

LINE OF DUTY DEATHS

In 2025, Kansas has experienced a stark and tragic increase in line-of-duty deaths among law enforcement officers, with four officers killed since mid-year compared to zero reported in 2024. The fallen officers are:

Phillips County Undersheriff Brandon Gaede on June 27,

Wyandotte County Deputy Sheriff Elijah Ming on July 26,

Kansas City Kansas Police Officer Hunter Simoncic on August 26, and

Hays Police Sergeant Scott Heimann on September 29.

Notably, two of these incidents occurred while officers were responding to domestic violence calls, underscoring the inherent volatility and danger of such situations. Domestic violence responses often involve unpredictable dynamics, including armed suspects, emotional escalations, and victims who may unexpectedly turn against responders, making them among the most perilous calls for law enforcement.

Beyond domestic violence, broader societal factors appear to be contributing to heightened risks for officers, including grievance-fueled violence stemming from political or personal animosities. Additionally, amid intensified federal immigration enforcement such as increased ICE

operations and state-federal partnerships, there has been discussion of a perceived new tendency for some undocumented individuals to flee or resist during encounters, potentially escalating situations into violence. While not directly linked to any of the noted 2025 fatalities, these trends align with national concerns over strained community-police relations.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the data provided underscores Kansas' progress in reducing overall crime rates through vigilance, enforcement, aggressive prosecution as well as proactive community and society measures, yet reveals persistent challenges in crimes against children, interpersonal violence, officer safety, drug threats, and emerging risks like high-potency THC's effects on youth brain development. This Committee should work to prioritize evidence-based policies, such as bolstering resources for child protection, officer safety training and provisioning while considering stricter controls on unregulated substances like kratom. The KBI thanks the Committee for its attention and oversight and once again commits to the continued protection of all Kansans.

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