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Fighting human trafficking in New York

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GUILDERLAND - Posters detailing possible signs of human trafficking are going up in rest areas along the New York State Thruway. There is also a toll-free hotline for free and confidential help.

"We all know the stories about the young woman who's told she's going to get a great job if she comes to the states and finds herself being caught up in prostitution," said New York Secretary of State Cesar Perales.

Representatives of different agencies came together to talk about the fight against modern-day slavery, including forced labor and sexual exploitation.

Experts say some are children trapped working in debt bondage at farms.

"Or the woman from Queens who found herself trafficked for sexual exploitation all the way in the North Country. She was identified and separated from her trafficker by a law enforcement agent doing a routine traffic stop," said Gonzalo Martinez de Vedia, a human trafficking specialist with the Worker Justice Center of NY.

The Annie George case was mentioned. She was accused of keeping an Indian woman a working prisoner for years at the Llenroc estate in Rexford, among other places. George was convicted two years ago of harboring an illegal alien.

As the multi-agency task force is trying to put a stop to human trafficking, it is also working to help victims.

"Over 400 survivors of human trafficking have been identified through New York State's confirmation process, an event that makes them eligible for services to help them try and get back on the path to healing," said NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Executive Deputy Commissioner Michael Green.

Experts say often, victims are reluctant to come forward out of fear.

The governor's office says many cases of human trafficking go unreported.

The toll-free hotline number is 1-888-373-7888. Authorities say help is available in 170 languages.