

The second session of *Uprooting Trafficking* focused on what happens after rescue, examining the realities of healing, reintegration, and long-term support for survivors. Facilitator **Tamara Doerksen** welcomed survivors, service providers, advocates, and community members, emphasizing that rescue is not the end point but the beginning of restoration.

Councillor Lily Cheng (Ward 18, Toronto) spoke about the role of municipal leadership in addressing human trafficking and gender-based violence. She highlighted the need for coordinated action across government, police, and community agencies, along with better local data to understand patterns of exploitation. She stressed that awareness and action must begin at the neighbourhood level, where signs of trafficking are often missed.

Ashley Gaudry, a survivor and advocate with **Fight4Freedom**, shared a first-hand perspective on recovery. She noted that leaving a trafficking situation does not guarantee safety or healing; survivors must navigate trauma, stigma, and systems that may not understand their needs. Ashley underscored the importance of empowerment, choice, and trauma-informed care that combines structure with empathy, and she stressed the need for consistent, long-term support rather than short-term “rescue and release.”

Jessica Ortiz, International Director with **Fight4Freedom**, provided a practical example of community care through a Pay It Forward café initiative that offers prepaid gift cards for single mothers and vulnerable families. She used this to illustrate how simple, local interventions can communicate care, reduce isolation, and support dignity for those at risk or in recovery.

Monica McIntyre, Founder and Director of **Aftercare International**, offered a trauma-informed lens on aftercare. She described healing as non-linear and emphasized that recovery requires both structured interventions and genuine human connection. She highlighted humility, consistency, and love as essential qualities in practitioners, framing aftercare as a partnership that blends evidence-based practice with emotional presence and accountability.

Jenea Gomez, Director of Anti-Human Trafficking Programs at **Salvation Army Illuminate**, focused on the practical and emotional challenges of reintegration. She described barriers such as stigma, legal issues, and difficulties obtaining identification, noting how these can retraumatize survivors. She emphasized that long-term support must include advocacy within legal and social systems, and that reintegration is about restoring dignity as well as stability.

Ishani Slocombe, working with **Aftercare International** and **Consider the Lily**, shared an operational model that includes a structured 3–6 month transitional phase. This approach prioritizes independence, financial literacy, and community belonging, recognizing that survivors need both practical skills and social support to sustain recovery. She underscored the importance of collaboration between service providers, employers, and community networks to prevent re-exploitation.

Across the discussion, panelists agreed that reintegration is a long-term, survivor-centered process that depends on coordinated systems, community partnership, and sustained compassion.

“Rescue saves a life — but reintegration helps it flourish.”