



ANNUAL **2** REPORT **24**

2024 IN REVIEW – A MESSAGE FROM CEO ISABELLE FINNEY

2024 was a year of progress and persistence at Special Operations Finding Kids. Every day, our team is on the front lines — searching, supporting, and standing up for children who are too often overlooked and unheard. This year, we expanded our tools, strengthened partnerships, and grew our capacity to meet the rising needs of families in crisis.

Out of 126 cases brought to us, we accepted 42 involving missing children that met our location parameters. Of those, 26 were found by year's end, with our investigators locating them in an average of 16.5 days. Twelve of these children had been trafficked — bought and sold for sex, often multiple times a night. What they endured goes far beyond what most people can imagine: coerced into silence, stripped of their sense of safety, and treated as commodities. Recovery is just the first step. Rebuilding a life — relearning trust, reclaiming agency, and reconnecting with family and school — is a long, fragile process. That's why our aftercare work is so vital. Our 16-week parent support groups achieved remarkable outcomes: **80% of youth whose families participate are reported as stable or thriving within one year.**

To reach more children, we must also become more visible. One of our key priorities in 2025 is to expand awareness in the communities we serve. This includes investing in marketing, social media, and our growing County Champion program. In the meantime, we've deployed a proprietary AI-powered tool that scans the internet daily for missing child reports — filling a critical gap, as no centralized repository currently exists publicly. We also deepened our partnerships with law enforcement and child welfare, signing MOUs with CPS and law enforcement agencies, enhancing our ability to collaborate with first responders.

Importantly, 2024 marked a significant expansion into disrupting the demand side of trafficking. In Q4, we launched a decoy pilot program with the Fresno Police Department to catch predators before they can harm a child. Our newly formed cyberintelligence team now supports our field investigators with lead packets, enhancing our ability to act swiftly.

In 2024, we hosted our first Nevada event, launched a landmark prevalence survey among 9th graders at a Bay Area high school, and shared our insights at the Shared Hope Juvenile Sex Trafficking Conference in Arizona. Behind the scenes, we strengthened our infrastructure by recruiting both a volunteer Internal Auditor and Technology Manager and welcomed four new Board Members. We raised over \$1.4 million, including a significant designated gift for aftercare services focused on residential care for boy victims.

People often ask me, "Do you see a common thread among missing and exploited youth?" The answer is yes — but it's not always what people expect. All children have immature and developing frontal lobes and therefore they are all vulnerable, but those with high ACE scores (Adverse Childhood Experiences), early exposure to trauma, or substance use are undoubtedly at greater risk. Predators are expert manipulators who know exactly which kids to target — and they operate within a culture of relative impunity. In 19 states, children are still arrested for their own exploitation, while buyers and traffickers face few meaningful deterrents.

We also cannot ignore the role of pornography, which fuels the demand for increasingly extreme and abusive content. With no age verification and easy access, pornography is shaping expectations and desensitizing a generation. **We cannot end the trafficking of children without reducing demand, and we cannot reduce demand without changing our culture and our laws.**

At Finding Kids, we believe in a world where every child is safe, seen, and supported. Thank you for standing with us as we continue this critical work.

With gratitude and resolve,

Isabelle
isabelle@findingkids.org
415.425.4967



WE NEED YOUR HELP

THE PROBLEM

CHILDREN ARE EASY PREY FOR PREDATORS.

In the age of the Internet, children are more vulnerable than ever to being victimized.

The FBI includes the San Francisco Bay Area in its list of the top areas for child sex exploitation in the nation.¹ In 2024, 63,126 reports of missing children were made in California (55% girls, 45% boys), of which 8,362 were from the San Francisco Bay Area.

Unless there is obvious evidence of nefarious circumstances (e.g. a kidnapping), resource and jurisdictional limitations prevent even the most dedicated law enforcement agencies from being able to respond to, or proactively search for missing children.

Most parents cannot afford the cost of hiring an investigator to help find their child, and are at a loss for who to turn to for guidance during their time of crisis.



WHAT WE DO

WE WORK TO KEEP KIDS SAFE.

We hire boots-on-the-ground retired police officers and licensed private investigators to find missing children and those most vulnerable to exploitation. We aim to find them before they come to any harm.

We share evidence of any nefarious activity with law enforcement to support their criminal investigations.

We assign Advocates with lived experience to parents and children to provide support and resources during their time of crisis, and walk alongside them on their journey to restoration.

Since 2018, Finding Kids' private investigators and aftercare advocates have provided assistance and support in over 220 cases in Northern California and Nevada.



Integrity



Empowerment



Collaboration



Tenacity

**THESE PRINCIPLES ARE OUR GUARDRAILS.
THEY GUIDE WHO WE CHOOSE TO WORK WITH AND HOW WE WORK TOGETHER.**

A SECOND CHANCE FOR ARI

On Valentine's Day 2024, Maggie* reached out to Finding Kids in desperation. Her 13-year-old daughter, Ari*, hadn't come home the night before. As a single mother of two teenage girls, Maggie feared the worst. A neighbor — another child — confided that Ari had been communicating online with an older man and may have met him at a nearby hotel. The man, they believed, intended to take Ari to Los Angeles.

With the help of our Spanish-speaking Parent Advocate, Maggie began to understand the resources and support we could offer. Our investigative team quickly mobilized. Although the early leads only pointed to potential locations and individuals, we were convinced someone knew where Ari was. We pursued every angle, reaching out to extended family and scouring social media for clues.

After several difficult months — and with support from the Los Angeles Human Trafficking Task Force — Ari was recovered in Los Angeles, a known trafficking hotspot. While the recovery marked a turning point, it was only the beginning of the family's long road to healing.

Through our Aftercare Program, Maggie received support in many forms: education about online safety, financial assistance to maintain stable housing, and the consistent guidance of her Parent Advocate. Rebuilding trust with Ari was not easy. The early stages of recovery were marked by emotional pain,

uncertainty, and hard conversations — especially about boundaries, safety, and what had happened.

Ari struggled, too. She had been gone for months, and returning home felt unfamiliar. One of her first questions was about when she could go back to school. That desire to return to a sense of normalcy gave us hope — and a starting point. With support from her Parent Advocate, Ari worked through an educational curriculum that validated her experiences and helped her feel less isolated.

Maggie also joined our Parent Support Group, where she found solidarity and strength. With time and effort, she and Ari were able to renegotiate phone use and rebuild trust — a daily challenge for any parent, made even more complicated by trauma.

Beyond emotional healing, we stood beside the family in the day-to-day: helping with gas money so Maggie could get Ari to counseling and safe social outings, supporting Maggie as she searched for steady work, and helping Ari set and achieve academic goals.

Recovery is not linear, and it doesn't happen overnight. But with the consistent support of Finding Kids, Maggie and Ari took real steps toward stability and hope. Their journey reminds us that even after the darkest moments, there is always a path to begin again.

* Names Changed for Confidentiality

A FATHER'S COMMITMENT: CARLOS AND JENNA'S JOURNEY TO HEALING

When 14-year-old Jenna* went missing, her father, Carlos, was terrified. She had never run away before, and after losing her mother years earlier, they had leaned on each other to get through this painful time. Carlos had begun to receive text messages from unknown numbers claiming that Jenna was safe. When he shared these with law enforcement, he was referred to Finding Kids for support.

Our team quickly stepped in to support Carlos, a single father doing everything he could to bring his daughter home. We began preparing to assign an investigator, but thankfully, Jenna was recovered by law enforcement the next day. Once she was safely back, our focus shifted to helping the family heal.

In the days that followed, Carlos admitted he was overwhelmed and even considered sending Jenna to live with extended family in Southern California. Our Parent Advocate encouraged him to try our virtual Parent Support Group. Though hesitant at first —

especially as the only father in the group — Carlos agreed to attend.

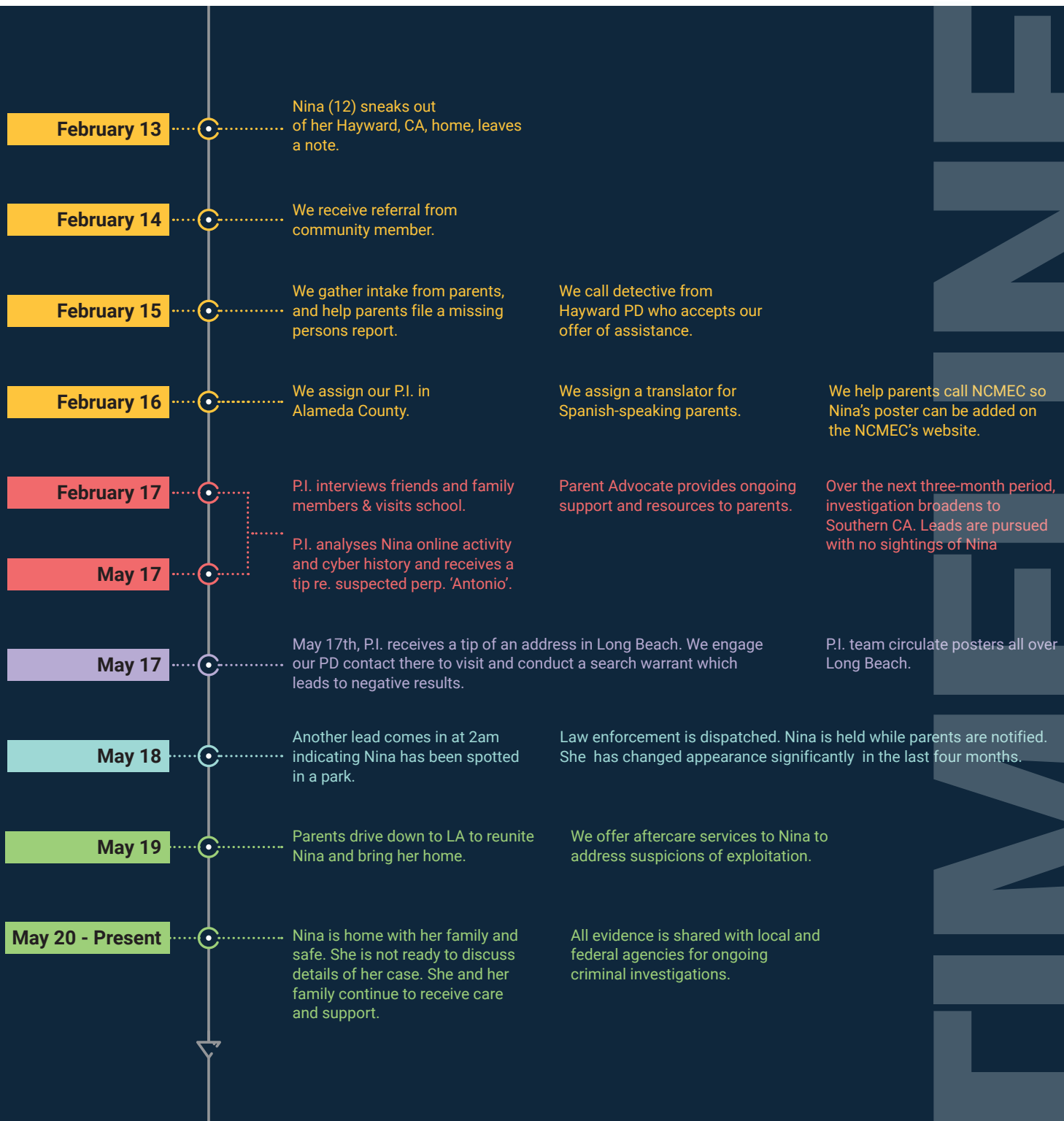
At first, it wasn't easy. But over time, the conversations with other parents helped Carlos feel less alone. He began to notice a shift — not just in himself, but in his children. Jenna and her younger brother saw his commitment and began to respond in kind. That encouragement helped Carlos keep showing up, week after week.

A few weeks into the group, Carlos shared something profound: **"This group changed my life."** He talked about how it improved communication at home, helped him feel more confident as a parent, and gave him the tools to better understand and support Jenna.

Carlos's willingness to seek help and stay engaged made a lasting difference. His story is a powerful reminder that healing takes courage — and that no parent has to face it alone.



WHAT WE DO – NINA’S STORY



HOW WE SUPPORT YOUTH AND FAMILIES

At Finding Kids, we believe that safety, stability, and healing are essential for both youth and their families. That's why our support goes beyond recovery — we walk with families through the rebuilding process. Our services are practical, responsive, and deeply personalized to meet each young person's and caregiver's needs. Here's what that looks like in action:

SUPPORT FOR YOUTH

Once recovered, we focus on helping youth feel seen, supported, and capable of rebuilding their lives after trauma. Our team provides direct support in areas that promote stability, self-expression, and long-term success.

Education & Personal Growth

GED/High School Equivalency Support: We help youth prepare for and pass their GED so they can continue toward college or career goals.

Incentives for Stability: For youth who maintain stability — staying in school, attending therapy, completing chores or avoiding high-risk behavior — we offer small but meaningful rewards to encourage continued progress.

Vocational & Creative Development: Our Advocates help to uncover each child's unique gifts and interests. We have provided support for a wide range of extra-curricular activities from vocal lessons to boxing lessons to help youth build confidence, discipline, and outlets for self-expression.

Daily Personal Needs

Personal Care Support: We provide clothing, hygiene items and other essential items to meet immediate needs.

Cell Phone Replacement: For youth who have had their phones removed or taken during a trafficking experience, we offer replacements so they can stay connected to safe people and opportunities. We also offer guidance on how to use the phone as a tool for education and safety, rather than an access point for predators.

Moments That Matter

We help youth reclaim their right to joyful, normal experiences, such as:

Prom photos to celebrate milestones

Athletic uniforms so they can participate in team sports

Furniture, like dressers, to create safe, dignified living spaces

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

When a child goes missing or is trafficked, it turns a parent's world upside down. In that moment, nothing else matters — not work, not bills, not even sleep. The fear and uncertainty can be paralyzing. At Finding Kids, we understand that parents in crisis need more than information — they need someone in their corner. That's why our Parent Advocates step in right away, offering both practical help and emotional support from the very first moment we accept a case. We walk alongside caregivers through every step, helping them stay grounded and supported so they can continue showing up for their child and begin the journey toward healing as a family once a child is recovered.

Financial & Housing Stability

Rental Assistance to prevent eviction and maintain safe housing

Support for Utilities, Gas, and Groceries to ease the stress of basic living costs

Security Cameras for families concerned about safety and ongoing threats

Family Bonding & Self-Care

Art Classes for caregivers, creating space for healing through creativity

Family Movie Nights and **Outings with Meals** to help families reconnect and rebuild joy together

Every Service Is a Step Toward Healing

Whether it's helping a teenager afford their prom dress or ensuring a mother has enough gas to get to work, our support is designed to meet families where they are — with dignity, compassion, and action. Together, these services create a foundation for long-term safety, recovery, and hope.

Virtual Parent Support Groups

In 2024, we saw a growing number of Spanish-speaking families reach out to Finding Kids for help locating missing children. After reunification, these families faced significant challenges rebuilding trust and stability at home. To support their healing, we launched small, virtual parent support groups. These 16-week groups created a safe, consistent space for parents to process trauma, share experiences, and receive targeted guidance on reconnecting with their children.

Parents often say a “different child” comes home after trafficking — changed by trauma and distrust. Our groups help caregivers rebuild attachment, restore safety, and regain a sense of control. Topics include trust after trauma, creative engagement strategies, and the power of consistency and reassurance.

One facilitator shared, “Parenting is the hardest, most important job — and it rarely comes with honest conversations when things get hard. This program changed lives because of the vision of this organization.

Parents echoed the impact:

“What I have liked is learning from others... we will always continue learning as parents.”

“Thank you for the opportunity to listen and be heard.”

These groups offer more than education — they create connection, hope, and a pathway forward.

ARE MISSING KIDS THE ONLY ONES VULNERABLE TO TRAFFICKING?

ABSOLUTELY NOT.

While missing children are at high risk for exploitation, research points to an often-overlooked reality: trafficking can — and often does — occur while a child is still living at home and attending school. Exploitation may be happening within families, schools, and communities, hidden in plain sight.

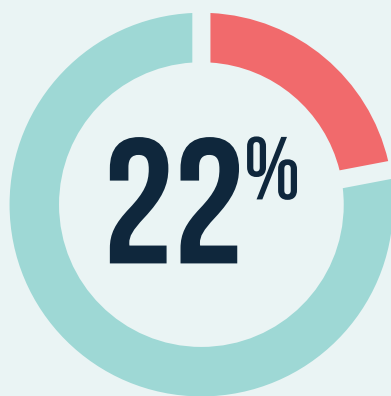
To better understand the scope of exploitation among youth living at home, Finding Kids conducted California's first anonymous high school survey on this issue in December 2024. The survey included 148 ninth-grade students at a Bay Area high school, with the goal of gaining insight into their awareness, perceptions, and personal experiences — and to guide those in need toward appropriate resources.

While most students were familiar with terms like “pimping” and “exploitation,” fewer recognized terms such as “sex trafficking” or “sextortion.” Alarming, **22% of students believed sexual exploitation**

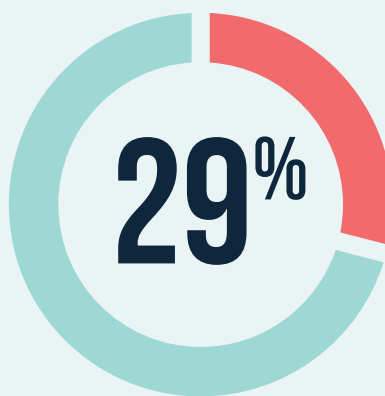
was happening to peers at their school or in their community, and 29% reported experiences consistent with grooming. Even more concerning, **8.1% shared personal experiences that meet the legal definition of trafficking**, whether or not they realized it.

When it came to reporting, students expressed mixed confidence. While many said they would report suspected abuse, others were hesitant or unsure. Two-thirds of students said they felt much more conversation and education needed to occur about this topic at home and at school.

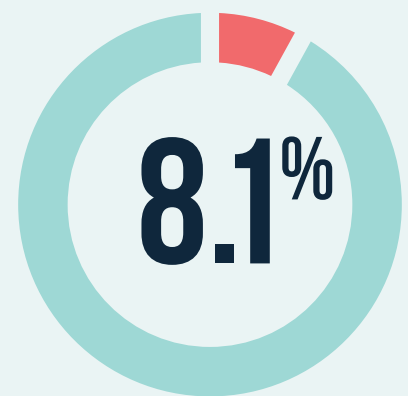
These findings underscore the urgent need for increased awareness, prevention efforts, and support services focused on youth — particularly those still living at home. Schools must play a central role in both prevention and intervention if we are to protect vulnerable children from being exploited in silence.



22% of students believed sexual exploitation was happening to peers at their school or in their community



29% of students reported experiences consistent with grooming



8.1% of students shared personal experiences that meet the legal definition of trafficking

MEET SOME OF OUR TEAM

We asked our three newest board members why they wanted to serve...



MARTA OBANDO

"As a mother, I believe every child deserves to be found, protected, and given the opportunity to thrive. I serve on our Board to help turn that belief into action. With a background in finance, risk management, and capital raising, I want to help secure vital resources and drive strategic growth. I am passionate about tackling challenges from different angles, ensuring we maximize our impact in finding and safeguarding vulnerable children, raising awareness and capturing predators."



AXELLE GIRARDOT

"I am deeply committed to the mission of helping vulnerable children and their families. The work Special Operations Finding Kids does is incredibly impactful, and I believe every child deserves the chance to grow up in a safe, supportive environment."



SANDRA ROBLES

"I joined the board of Special Operations — Finding Kids because their unwavering dedication to locating missing and exploited children, and their consistent success in doing so, deeply resonates with my personal values and inspired me to contribute. I'm eager to lead the technology committee, where I hope to implement strategic technological advancements that will significantly enhance our operational efficiency and expand our reach, ultimately helping us bring even more children to safety."



We also asked some of our staff and volunteers what they enjoyed the most about their role ...

MELANIE AMORIM

Graphic Designer

“Bringing the team’s vision to life through impactful visuals that support our mission. I love collaborating with the staff to create designs that effectively communicate information and ultimately help bring missing children home. Knowing my work contributes to such an important cause makes it incredibly fulfilling.”

BRIAN HOCK

Grant Writer

“I enjoy volunteering my time and hoping to help write some successful grants that help us partner with Foundations that will allow us to better help children and families in their time of need. I also enjoy working with everyone on the team.”

PENNY RUNION

Researcher

“The most meaningful part of being on this team, is knowing families have a place to turn where they feel heard and supported while they search for their loved one and have support upon return.”

**ELIZABETH
BRIESE-LUDWIG**

Internal Auditor

“I appreciate the opportunity to share my auditing experience and work with people dedicated to advancing the vision and mission of Finding Kids. Maintaining financial integrity is a cornerstone to establishing trust with our stakeholders and the community.”

JEFF SCHNEIDER

Treasurer

“Translating operational plans into financials allows me the chance to understand the methods and goals of those in our organization who are directly impacting the lives of the kids and their families who need our help. I am always impressed with the expertise and commitment of our team.”

MARLENE CAPRA

Marin County Champion

“Effectively meeting the needs of our youth and families by connecting them with support when there are signs of human trafficking, offering resources, assistance, and aftercare to help them rebuild their lives.”

“ANGELA”

Cyber Analyst

“The ability to locate missing and endangered minors via digital footprints and hopefully provide a 2nd chance for them. With the resources available to the families and the teens, often at a cross roads, it’s a moment in life that can be a stepping stone for their future.”

JULIA BREMER

Financial Controller

“What I enjoy most about my role as Financial Controller for SOFK is knowing that, in my own way, I’m helping support the real heroes – the dedicated investigators, caseworkers, and advocates who are out there finding and protecting missing and exploited children.”

GRANT CLARK

Strategic Partnerships
Manager

“The most meaningful thing about my job is making sure the donors know that they are the heroes. They are the one’s that make our organization run and why we can help so many kids. Additionally, I am really in a position to change the world. The more people know about us as a service, the more we can help those in need.”

NAF DALIM

Technology Manager

“What I enjoy most about my role is using my skills for a meaningful cause – helping find vulnerable and missing children. While technology isn’t the main focus, it serves as a crucial tool that enables our staff to work efficiently and effectively in their mission.”

INTRODUCING JEFF WALKER

DIRECTOR OF INVESTIGATIONS

“I wanted to join Finding Kids for the opportunity of intervening early in the life of a troubled child in hopes he or she never knows trafficking. In my previous work with LASD, by the time we got involved as police officers and detectives, it was often too late. Over the next few years, I’d like to see us expand across the western region and have decoys present in multiple law enforcement agencies.”

Sergeant Jeffrey Walker (ret.) joined Finding Kids in 2024 as its Director of Investigations where he oversees all investigations conducted by our cyber and boots-on-the-ground investigators, and our newly formed decoy program.

Jeff spent 35 years with the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD), where he held a range of assignments including with the Special Victims Bureau’s Child Abuse Detail and the Major Crimes Bureau. Jeff was a founding member of the Los Angeles Regional Human Trafficking Taskforce and led the law enforcement committee as a part of the LA County First Responder Protocol – one of the first of its kind in the nation. Jeff also served as lead coordinator for ‘Operation Reclaim Rebuild’, an annual statewide enforcement surge operation targeting traffickers and sex buyers. He currently serves on the Board of the California Human Trafficking Investigators and Prosecutors Association.



JAZMIN PELLEGRINI

HONORING A LIFE LOST TOO SOON

Jazmin Pellegrini, a 15-year-old from Bay Point, California, was reported missing on the night of April 17, 2024, after leaving her home without a phone or money. Tragically, her body was discovered three days later, on April 20, in the driveway of a home in San Francisco's Ingleside neighborhood.

Jazmin was not only a beautiful young soul full of promise, but also a daughter, a sister, and a friend who brought light to those around her. Jazmin's story is a reminder of why our work matters — because every child deserves safety, hope, and a future. We commit to honoring her life by amplifying the voices of at-risk and exploited youth and pushing for meaningful change.

“Jazmin had the biggest heart. She loved fiercely, especially her younger siblings. We are devastated by her loss, but we hope that by sharing her story, other families won't have to endure this pain. We thank everyone who is working to protect children like our Jazmin.”

— The Pellegrini Family



“Thank you again for checking in. What you all do is truly a blessing. I honestly can’t put into words how much love and appreciation I have for your team. From the bottom of my heart — thank you. What your organization has done for my daughter, and for us mentally and emotionally, has been life-changing. I love you guys. You are incredible. Without your support, I don’t know where I’d be as a father right now. It’s really, really hard. We’re working, we’re cooking, cleaning, just trying to hold everything together day by day. I wish I had more time to be involved, but even with everything going on, I can see the changes in my daughter — and it’s working. We’re growing as a family, and that’s because of the support you’ve given her. I don’t know how else to say it: you guys rock. Thank you, truly.”

Father of a 14 year-old girl

“Thank you for what you do... her story is heartbreaking ... so glad you were able to find her!”

Patrol Officers Rossi, Donahue, Matej, and Rantissi
Santa Rosa, CA

Thank you findingkids.org and investigators for assisting in the successful recovery of missing teen “N.M.”.

Ty Joyner
Lieutenant of the Lyon County Sheriff’s Office

“Our hearts are filled with so much appreciation for the things that you did and the time that you put in to help recover our daughter.”

Mother of a 15 year-old

DID YOU KNOW?

While there are public funds available to provide support to kids in the system (foster children and those on probation), **there are no such funds available for non-system kids.**

Any minor who exchanges sexual favors for cash, drugs or anything of value, is considered a victim of sex trafficking. In a three-year prevalence study in Washington DC, 7.4% of high school students said they had exchanged sexual favors for cash or drugs at least once. In a study of 9th Graders at a Bay Area high school, 8.1% reported being victims of exploitation.

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

REVENUE

Corporate Matching	\$ 9,298
Grants and Foundations*	\$ 939,500
Private Giving	\$ 459,585
Gifts-In-Kind	\$ 42,869
Total Donations	\$1,451,252
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 26,599
Total Funds Raised	\$1,477,851

EXPENDITURES

Investigations	\$ 206,550
Comprehensive Care*	\$ 1,059,303
Partnership Engagement	\$ 198,508
Mission Support	\$ 67,727
Direct Expenses	\$ 1,532,088
Other Program Expenses	\$ 72,011
Employer Taxes and Workman's Comp	\$ 26,213
Total Expenses	\$1,630,312
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (152,462)

* Includes designated \$850k gift towards aftercare for boys.

ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

13 private investigator firms	9 parent and coaching advocates
4 full-time staff	24 volunteers

204 CASES ACROSS 16 COUNTIES SINCE 2018

Alameda	35
Alpine	1
Calaveras	1
Camden	1
Carson City	1
Clark	1
Contra Costa	16
Fresno	1
Humboldt	1
Klamath	1
Lake county	2
Lakeport	2
Lyon	3
Maricopa	1
Marin	6
Mariposa	1
Mendocino	5
Monterey	1
Napa	3
Placer	4
Riverside	2
Sacramento	14
San Benito	1
San Bernardino	1
San Diego	1
San Francisco	6
San Joaquin	5
San Mateo	9
Santa Clara	14
Shasta	4
Solano	3
Sonoma	13
Tulare	3
Other	8
Washington	1
Washoe	32
Total Cases	204

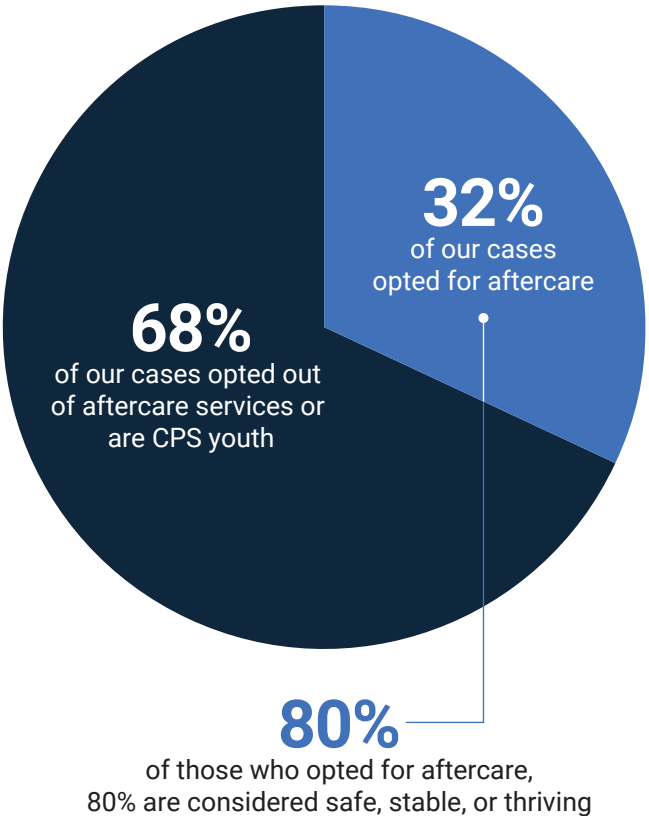
2018-24 CASE BREAKDOWN BY GENDER



AFTERCARE STATS IN 2024



AFTERCARE STATS IN 2024



AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS MISSING: 2018-2023



AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS MISSING: 2024



OUR MISSION

Find missing and exploited youth, help them heal and make our communities safer.

OUR VISION

To live in a society where every child is safe and thriving.

OUR PURPOSE

In a world where exploiters prey on vulnerable children, Special Operations | Finding Kids is the only organization in the region dedicated to hiring boots-on-the-ground retired law enforcement and private investigators — at no cost to parents — to find missing and exploited children.

We fill critical gaps in the system, including ensuring youth and families have the support they need, and passing information to law enforcement to hold perpetrators accountable.

OUR BELIEF

We believe that America's success depends on keeping our children safe,

That every child has value,

That we must proactively and with urgency find missing children,

That ridding our community of traffickers and buyers is imperative,

That law enforcement needs the community's help,

And that a safe America is everyone's responsibility.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Check in with us here:

findingkids.org/get-involved





PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Jose, CA
Permit No. 10

FOUNDERS

Katie Beers

Scott Vermeer

CEO

Isabelle Finney

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Lyn Miller

Sharmin Bock

Blair Maus

Victoire Reynal Brown

Marta Obando

Axelle Girardot

Sandra Robles

Runa Magowan

Steve Wagstaffe

ABOUT US

Founded in 2017, Special Operations is a non-profit dedicated to keeping kids safe from sex traffickers in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. The result is a safer community for us all.

Learn More: findingkids.org or email us directly at info@findingkids.org.

Special Operations Finding Kids is a 501(c)(3) Organization. EIN: 81-2874951
Stock images have been used to maintain privacy.