

**IAP Awards 2025**  
**Special Achievement Award Melissa Palepu, USA**

The IAP is pleased to present the Special Achievement Award to Melissa Palepu, Assistant Attorney General with the state of Michigan in the United States, and a specialist in managing Human Trafficking cases. In addition to human trafficking, Ms. Palepu works on complex child sexual abuse, and sexual assault files.

Dedicated to passing on her knowledge and increasing law enforcement skills in respect of investigating and prosecuting human trafficking, Ms. Palepu leads the Michigan Human Trafficking Commission, a body that brings together various government agencies who have a stake in eradicating human trafficking. She also liaises with school officials, and social service agencies, and lectures police and prosecutors in training on how to successfully investigate and prosecute human trafficking, all while maintaining a full caseload of her own.

Prosecutor Palepu is a fierce advocate for victims, both those of sexual violence and trafficking and those caught up in networks of labour trafficking. She utilizes a trauma informed approach to working with victims of human trafficking, sexual and child abuse, while remaining fair and impartial in dealing with defendants.

Recently, Ms. Palepu prosecuted a complex matter involving massage parlors. Such cases are often considered too difficult to prosecute, and focus is often placed on shutting them down, rather than assisting the often trafficked sex workers and bringing their traffickers to justice. Understanding how vulnerable the victims of this particular type of labour trafficking are, Ms. Palepu was able to charge those who prey on them.

Her dedication to bringing justice to victims of human trafficking is clearly meritorious of the IAP Special Achievement Award.

