



Texas Young Lawyers Association

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SLAVERY OUT OF THE SHADOWS:

SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN
TRAFFICKING

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCES
FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS
AND FIRST RESPONDERS



WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery.

Federal law defines human trafficking as recruiting, providing, harboring, transporting, or obtaining by any means, any person for labor or services in violation of laws prohibiting, among other things, forced labor, involuntary servitude, peonage, and slavery.

State laws vary slightly from this definition. In Texas, the crime of trafficking of persons is “the use of force, fraud, or coercion against an individual to receive or benefit from labor or commercial sex acts.”

Any person—male or female, young or old, US citizen or foreign national—can be a victim of human trafficking.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking affects both adults and children, men and women, and people from all parts of Texas, the United States, and around the world.

There are four major types of trafficking:

1. **Adult Sex Trafficking** - Trafficking of adults for sex by force, fraud, or coercion in strip clubs, brothels, massage parlors, street prostitution, or internet prostitution.
2. **Adult Labor Trafficking** - Trafficking adults for labor by force, fraud, or coercion into industries, such as agriculture, food service, manufacturing, domestic servitude, or hospitality.
3. **Child Sex Trafficking** - Trafficking children, under the age of 18, by any means into the commercial sex industry. It can include prostitution, sex tourism, pornography, and performance in sexual acts.
4. **Child Labor Trafficking** - Trafficking children, under the age of 18, by force, fraud or coercion into industries such as agriculture, food service, manufacturing, domestic servitude, or hospitality.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY

Identification

Research shows that up to 88% of trafficking victims have had some contact with the health care system during their trafficking situation. That means health care providers are often in the position to recognize that something is wrong and take steps to provide support. Potential red flags specific to a health care setting may include:

- A patient with reproductive or sexual health concerns and/or potential signs of sexual violence or reporting an unusually high number of partners.

- A patient with work-related injuries reporting that health and safety gear was not provided or conditions were otherwise unsafe.
- A patient who is unwilling or hesitant to answer questions about the injury or illness.
- A patient who is accompanied by an individual who does not let the patient speak for themselves, refuses to let the patient have privacy, or who interprets for them.

Many health care systems are adopting specialized screening tools or protocols to help properly identify victims.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND FIRST RESPONDERS

First responders can play an important role in the identification of those who may be experiencing human trafficking. First responders are out in the field and have access to information like the patient's living situation and can begin to foster the trust in the healthcare system that is necessary for any survivor to feel safe enough to disclose their situation.

Identification

Human trafficking victims often exhibit or live with one or more of the following:

- Mattresses on the floor as opposed to beds.
- Lack of personal space; too many people sharing the same living space.
- Few or no personal possessions.
- Sparse rooms with little furniture.
- No identifying documents, such as a driver's license or passport. They may not even know their address or be "just visiting."
- Unusual security, such as barred or locked windows, locked doors, covert video security, or even guards.
- Signs of physical abuse such as bruises, cuts, burns, scars, prolonged lack of healthcare, or malnourishment.
- Fear or paranoia of law enforcement. They commonly will deny that they are victims or need assistance.
- Avoiding eye contact with responders.
- Victims are often accompanied by their trafficker, who will speak for them, not let out the victim out of his or her sight, or attempt to control interactions with responders.
- Indicators of sex trafficking, such as condoms, service menus, or "trick books."

HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF SURVIVORS

Survivors of human trafficking often suffer from a wide range of health issues due to the nature of the work and their living conditions. For some survivors, health care is almost nonexistent and intentionally withheld, thus leaving survivors more vulnerable to illness.

Some common health issues (physical and behavioral) for victims are:

- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Pelvic pain, rectal trauma, and urinary difficulties
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Infertility from chronic and untreated STDs
- Infections or mutilations
- Chronic back, hearing, or other respiratory problems from long days in outdoor work environments
- Weak eyes or other eye challenges
- Malnourishment and serious dental health issues (more common in children whose dental growth is stunted due to malnourishment)
- Scars and bruising in shielded areas (such as the lower back)
- Concussions
- Substance abuse problems/addictions
- Phobias, panic attacks, and other stress related disorders
- Symptoms related to depression, severe anxiety, or PTSD

UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATING WITH THE VICTIM

Often, victims of human trafficking show an outward fear or distrust of any outside individual including health care providers. The individual may not believe he or she is a victim, so he or she will not openly discuss any trauma suffered. In order to identify and help these victims, health care providers need to work creatively to obtain necessary information in order to assist the victim in obtaining needed assistance.

First, one should attempt to secure a private setting for you (and potentially an interpreter) to question the victim. Often victims enter hospitals, ERs, etc. in the company of their trafficker. One example of a way to obtain privacy is to insist that hospital policy requires you to examine the patient alone.

Once a private setting is secured, you can begin by asking open-ended questions. Building a rapport is critical to engaging the victim and enabling him or her to feel safe enough to disclose their struggles. This may not happen in one visit, but if you can, secure a follow up visit with the person in order to continue the dialogue. Once trust is developed with the victim, begin to ask more specific questions as to their home and work environment. Do not use the specific phrase “trafficking” since this word will have no real meaning to them. If you hear information that matches many of the indicators highlighted earlier, then you have identified a trafficking victim and can begin the process of assisting them obtain the services they need.

COMMON NEEDS OF VICTIMS

Victims of human trafficking suffer from a variety of needs that include the following:

- Safety
- Emergency housing
- Basic needs for food and clothing
- Translation
- Legal guardianships
- Long-term or transitional housing
- Legal assistance
- Advocacy
- Medical care
- Counseling
- Substance abuse treatment
- Transportation
- Life skills
- Education
- Financial assistance
- Job training
- Child care

Collaboration is key to meeting these needs and helping survivors find true rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. This is often achieved through multiple agencies and service providers in a community.

TRAINING

Proper education and training on the identification and treatment of human trafficking victims is critical to combatting the problem. There are countless training programs available online for health care professionals such as:

- **HEAL—healtrafficking.org—has a “Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of Trafficking in Health Care Settings”**
- **The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services’ “SOAR to Health and Wellness Training” acf.hhs.gov/otip/training/soar-to-health-and-wellness-training**
- **CHAMP Child Abuse Medical Provider Program champprogram.com/trafficking/trafficking.shtml**

More states are requiring specialized human trafficking training for medical professionals as part of licensing requirements.

REPORT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline
toll free at

888-3737-888
or text **“Help”** or **“Info”**
to **BeFree (233733)**.

The hotline is staffed 24/7 with people trained in recognizing and identifying trafficking. They can help you make sense of the information you have and recommend next steps.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

U.S. Department of State
Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/office-to-monitor-and-combat-trafficking-in-persons

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office on Trafficking in Persons
acf.hhs.gov/otip

The Attorney General of Texas
Human Trafficking Initiative
texasattorneygeneral.gov/human-trafficking

The Polaris Project
polarisproject.org

Catholic Charities
catholiccharitiesusa.org

Children at Risk
childrenatrisk.org

Mosaic Family Services
mosaicservices.org



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