

**Traffacking.Tips**  
**A Guide for Healthcare Professionals**  
**Recognizing Victims of Human Trafficking**

- **Expect Encounters With Victims**
- **Be Vigilant**
- **Recognize Indicators That Distinguish Foreign From Domestic Victims**
- **Know What To Do:**
  - **Ask Questions**
  - **Build Rapport**
  - **Contact Intervention Professionals**
  - **Follow-Up**
- Because the patient will not likely self-identify her/himself as a trafficking victim, the provider needs to pay attention to subtle and nonverbal cues.
- Although these indicators can be used for multiple other situations (i.e., domestic violence, sexual abuse, etc.), they indicate the need for further investigation by providers.

**Medical Indicators**

**COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG TRAFFICKING VICTIMS**

- Chronic pain
- Changes in appearance
- Cigarette burns
- Complications from unsafe abortion
- Contusions
- Cutting
- Exhausted, uneven sleeping patterns.
- Fractures
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Headaches
- Oral health problems
- Pelvic pain
- Multiple Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Unhealthy weight loss
- Multiple pregnancies
- Vaginal pain
- Confusion/Disorientation – Time, Date, Location.
- Absence of antenatal care during previous or current pregnancy.
- Physical Enhancements: “brand” tattoos, augmentations, jewelry.
- Evidence of a prolonged infection that could easily be treated through routine medical care.
- Individual has no idea when their last medical exam was.
- No Health Insurance. (using cash)
- Evidence of Substance Abuse.
- No Substance Abuse in Younger Victims.
- Evidence of sexual activity during menstrual cycle. (i.e., use of cotton balls or other blockage methods/material.)
- Downplay existing health problems or risks.

Physical Abuse such as:

- Bruises
- Fractures (bones, teeth)
- Cuts
- Burns
- Multiple Scars (intentional)
- Malnourishment
- Evidence of previously untreated injuries
- Sexual Abuse
- Victims may be reluctant to explain or vague about how their injuries occurred.

Psychological conditions such as:

- Severe anxiety
- Depression
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Traumatic Bonding (Person Addiction)
- Hyper-vigilance
- Paranoia
- Panic attacks
- Submissiveness
- Indicators of early sexual trauma
- Flat affect
- Self-Loathing
- Self-Blame
- Signs of early or childhood betrayal
- Suicidal ideation
- Sexual dysfunction
- Higher risk behaviors
- Impaired judgment
- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Spiritual questions
- Feelings of being mentally or emotionally broken

**Other Indicators**

- Evidence of being controlled.
- Evidence of an inability to move or leave a job.
- Fear of deportation.
- Non-English speaking.
- Recently brought to US.
- Lack of passport, immigration, or identification.
- Victims will likely fear authority figures.
- Reluctant to provide personal information out of fear of criminal justice, social services, return to family, retribution from trafficker, arrest, etc.
- Interviewing the patient can be difficult.
- Someone claims to speak for, or on behalf of a victim – i.e. an interpreter, often of the same ethnic group, male or female; victim is not allowed to speak for him/herself.

- Individual claims to be “just visiting” an area but is unable to articulate where are staying or cannot remember addresses.
- Individual does not know the city or state of their current location.
- Individual has numerous inconsistencies in their story.
- Story is vague or scripted.
- Individual avoids eye contact.
- Individual is not in control of his/her own money.
- Unexplained absences - school, home, etc.
- References to someone taking care of them.
- References to unexplained sources of money.
- New “friends” are older and not available.
- Hyper sexually active.
- Seductive/Flirtatious behavior or communications.
- Individual reports an excessively large number of sexual partners, especially when it is not age appropriate (i.e. 15 year old reporting dozens of sexual partners).
- Individuals who are under the age of 18 who express interest in, or may already be in, relationships with adults or older men.
- Use of lingo or slang relating to the individual’s involvement in prostitution – (i.e. referring to a boyfriend as “Daddy” or talking about “the life.”
- Evidence of controlling or dominating relationships – i.e. repeated phone calls from a “boyfriend” and/or excessive concern about displeasing a partner.

#### Making Assessments

- Assessment should be made by gender appropriate staff member, whether a psychologist, physician, social worker or police officer not in uniform.
- Getting the patient alone is difficult, but essential.
- Find an interpreter if necessary.
- If possible, choose a comfortable space which is conducive to confidentiality.
- Utilize existing assessment and examination protocols for victims of abuse/sexual abuse.
- Inquiries about sexual history should distinguish between consensual experiences and non-consensual experiences.
- If appropriate, separate the Individual from his/her belongings and escort/interpreter.
- The victim may be wearing/carrying tracking/communication devices such as a GPS transmitter, cell phone, etc.
- Attempt to separate victim from by having them put on gown and moved to another room.
- **Be sensitive, every incident of human trafficking is different.**
- **Make sure you are not putting yourself or the individual in danger (i.e., take care to notice who is around when you are asking questions or providing resources)**
- **If you suspect that the victim is in immediate danger, notify the police or Child Protective Services. Duty to Report requirements are different with commercial sexual exploitation.**
- **Try to record as much information about the situation as possible – taking care not to put yourself or the individual in any danger.**
- **Provide hotline numbers for local anti-trafficking service providers or other anti-trafficking hotlines to suspected victims.**
- **Provide information directly to the victim and only when he/she is alone.**
- **Provide the Individual with the National Human Trafficking hotline number and encourage them to call if they need help or would like to talk to someone: 1-888-373-7888**

**Questions To Ask**

- **Why did you come here?**
- **Who arranged your travel?**
- **How did you get here?**
- **Do you owe money for your trip?**
- **What did you expect when you came?**
- **What did you end up doing?**
- **Were you scared?**
- **Do you have any papers?**
- **Who has them?**
- **Where do you sleep?**
- **Are you scared to leave?**
- **Has anybody threatened you to keep you from running away?**
- **Has anybody ever hurt you to make you stay?**
- **Has your family been threatened?**
- **Are you in school?**
- **Are you working?**
- **What kind of work do you do?**
- **Are you paid?**
- **Do you owe money to your boss or someone else?**
- **Can you leave your job if you want?**
- **Where do you live?**
- **Who else lives there?**
- **Are you able to enjoy/engage in sexual activity without using drugs or alcohol?**
- **How many pregnancies have you had?**
- **(Younger clients) How many sexual partners have you had? (bragging)**