

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)**