

What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Thousands of men, women, and children are trafficked into forced labor situations and into the sex trade. Many of these victims are lured from their homes with false promises of well-paying jobs; instead, they are forced or coerced into prostitution, domestic servitude, or other types of forced labor. Victims are found in legitimate and illegitimate labor industries, including sweatshops, massage parlors, agricultural fields, restaurants, hotels, and domestic service.

Human trafficking is different from human smuggling, trafficking is exploitation-based and does not require movement across borders or any type of transportation.

Who are the victims? Who is at risk?

Trafficking victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. Trafficking victims can be men or women, young or old, American or from abroad, with or without legal status.

Traffickers prey on victims with little or no social safety net. They look for victims who are vulnerable because of their illegal immigration status, limited English proficiency, economic hardship, political instability, natural disasters, or other causes.

The indicators listed are just a few that may alert you to a potential victim of human trafficking. No single indicator is necessarily proof someone is a victim of trafficking. If you suspect that a person may be a victim of human trafficking, please call the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip-line at 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423). You can also report online at www.ice.gov/tips.

To reach a non-governmental organization for confidential help and information, 24 hours a day, please call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-3737-888.

For more information and training, please visit www.dhs.gov/bluecampaign.

How do I identify human trafficking?

Human trafficking is often “hidden in plain sight.” There are a number of red flags, or indicators, which can help alert you to human trafficking. Recognizing the signs is the first step in identifying victims. As a first responder, you may be the victim’s only outside contact so it is important that you recognize the indicators and know how to report your observations and potentially save a life.

Common Indicators Found in Trafficking Victims:

- Does the victim exhibit bruises/wounds in various stages of healing or consistent with the application of physical restraints?
- Does the victim exhibit scars, mutilations or untreated infections?
- Does the victim have urinary difficulties, pelvic pain, pregnancy or rectal trauma (from working in the sex industry)?
- Does the victim suffer from chronic back, hearing, eye/eyesight, cardiovascular or respiratory problems?
- Does the victim exhibit signs of malnourishment, serious dental problems or a lack of healthcare?
- Does the victim exhibit disoriented, confused, depressed, submissive, tense or nervous/paranoid behavior?
- Is the victim accompanied by someone who is controlling, provides the victim’s information or who does all the communicating?
- Does the victim have trouble communicating due to a language/cultural barrier?
- Does the victim seem submissive or fearful, refuse to make eye contact or seem afraid to speak in the presence of others?
- Does the victim seem confused, claim to just be visiting or have difficulty identifying his or her location?
- Is the victim reluctant to discuss his or her injury(ies) or are there inconsistencies in his or her account/medical history?
- Is the victim inadequately dressed for the situation/work he or she does?
- Are there security measures designed to restrict victim movement (blocked/barred windows, locked doors, barbed wire, or security cameras)?
- Does the victim live in a degraded, unsuitable place or share sleeping quarters?

Report suspicious activity to local law enforcement or call the Tip-line at 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423).

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