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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 arts.
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 and reporting an unusually high number of partners.

- A patient with work-related injuries reporting that health and safety gear were 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 they will not openly discuss any trauma they have suffered. In order to identify and help these victims, health care providers need to work creatively to obtain necessary information in order to assist them in obtaining the assistance they need.

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](http://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](http://acf.hhs.gov/otip/training/soar-to-health-and-wellness-training)**
- **CHAMP Child Abuse Medical Provider Program [champprogram.com/trafficking/trafficking.shtml](http://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](https://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](https://acf.hhs.gov/otip)

The Attorney General of Texas  
Human Trafficking Initiative  
[texasattorneygeneral.gov/human-trafficking](https://texasattorneygeneral.gov/human-trafficking)

The Polaris Project  
[polarisproject.org](https://polarisproject.org)

Catholic Charities  
[catholiccharitiesusa.org](https://catholiccharitiesusa.org)

Children at Risk  
[childrenatrisk.org](https://childrenatrisk.org)

Mosaic Family Services  
[mosaicervices.org](https://mosaicervices.org)



[tyla.org](https://tyla.org)