

I recently attended a Human Trafficking presentation at PSU Hazelton campus.

The speakers for this presentation included, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sean Camoni, Jenny Roberts and Pennsylvania State Trooper Jessica Williams of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

Human trafficking is a crime where people profit from the exploitation of others. According to the law, human trafficking is the use or force, fraud, or coercion to compel someone to provide labor or sexual acts in exchange for something of value, which may include money, food, shelter, or drugs. Human trafficking is a highly profitable crime and a violation of human rights. It occurs in every part of the world and can happen to anyone.

There are different types of human trafficking including sex trafficking, forced labor and domestic servitude.

Sex Trafficking might use violence, threats, manipulation or the promise of love and affection to lure victims. Sex trafficking is found at truck stops, hotel rooms, rest areas, clubs, and private residences where victims are forced to sell sex. Potential human traffickers can be parents, guardians, pimps, gang members, drug dealers and employers and agencies such as job placement, adoption, and modeling agencies. Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, or gender, but one thing they share is that they are vulnerable to be exploited.

Forced Labor includes force, fraud, or coercion victims are made to work for little or no pay.

Domestic Servitude victims are forced to work in homes.

Trooper Williams stated that Police Officers on patrol play a big role in recognizing victims of human trafficking when they are on traffic stops or when they interact with a victim. Physical indicators may include tattoos, brands or scars indicating ownership, injuries from beating or weapons, signs of malnourishment, signs of torture and fear, anger, sadness, grief, humor, or no emotion. Trooper Williams also stated that the state of Pennsylvania ranks 9th in the nation for most reported cases of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a hidden crime. Victims might be afraid to come forward or we may not recognize the signs even if it is happening right in front of us. There is a lot of resources available to help a victim and if someone you know needs help, call The National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 to speak to a trained Anti-Trafficking Hotline Advocate.