



Recognizing the Signs and Indicators of Human Trafficking

A Guide for EMS and First Responders

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Organization: One Child At A Time

Objectives

- Define human trafficking (sex and labor)
- Understand how traffickers operate
- Identify key red flags during EMS calls
- Learn how to respond and report safely

What is Human Trafficking?

- Definition (TVPA): Use of force, fraud, or coercion for labor or sexual exploitation.
- Includes minors in commercial sex acts, no need to prove force, fraud, or coercion.
- Trafficking VS. Smuggling

Types of Human Trafficking

- Sex Trafficking: Minors or adults in commercial sex acts.
- Labor Trafficking: Forced work in homes, farms, restaurants, factories.
- Domestic Servitude.
- Organ Trafficking (less common in U.S.).

Various Forms of Exploitation



Domestic workers may be trapped in servitude through the use of force or coercion, such as physical (including sexual) or emotional abuse. Children are particularly vulnerable. Domestic servitude is particularly difficult to detect because it occurs in private homes.



One form of force or coercion is the use of a bond, or debt, to keep a person under subjugation. This is referred to in law and policy as “bonded labor” or “debt bondage.” It is criminalized under U.S. law and included as a form of exploitation related to trafficking in the UN TIP Protocol.



Some abuses of contracts and hazardous conditions of employment do not in themselves constitute involuntary servitude, through use or threat of physical force or restraint to compel a worker to enter into or continue labor or service many convert a situation into one of forced labor.



Most instances of forced labor occur as unscrupulous employers take advantage of gaps in law enforcement to exploit vulnerable to forced labor practices because because of unemployment, poverty, crime, discrimination, corruption & political conflict.

Trafficking vs. Smuggling

Human Trafficking

Unlike smuggling, which is often a criminal commercial transaction between two willing parties who go their separate ways once their business is complete, trafficking specifically targets the trafficked person as an object of criminal exploitation. The purpose from the beginning of the trafficking enterprise is to profit from the exploitation of the victim.

Human Smuggling

Smuggled persons may become victims of other crimes. In addition to being subjected to unsafe conditions on the smuggling journeys, smuggled aliens may be subjected to physical and sexual violence. Frequently, at the end of the journey, smuggled aliens are held hostage until their debt is paid off by family members or others. It is also possible that a person being smuggled may at any point become a trafficking victim.

Why EMS Personnel?

- First responders are often the first point of contact.
- Victims may not identify as victims.
- Many are afraid to speak up.

Signs of Human Trafficking

Living Conditions

Does the person lack personal possessions and appear to have an unstable living situation?

Does the person have freedom of movement? Can the person freely leave where they live? Are there unreasonable security measures?

Has the person been deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care or other life necessities?

Control Indicators

Is the person in possession of his or her identification and travel documents; if not, who has control of the documents?

Does the person appear to be coached on what to say?

Are they with someone who appears to be controlling the situation?

Has the person or family been threatened with harm?

Is the person fearful, timid or submissive?

Has the person been threatened with deportation or law enforcement action?

Is the person confused, afraid, or do they show signs of mental or physical abuse?

Can the person allowed to freely socialize or attend religious services?

Safety

Signs of Human Trafficking

Human traffickers will control victims by threatening potential victims or their families with harm.

Potential victims may have bruises or other signs of physical abuse.

Victims will also be threatened with deportation or arrest in order to control them.

If you find that potential victims appear fearful, this could mean a red flag should be raised.

Medical Indicators

Does the person have
scars, burns, mutilations,
or infections?

Is the person being prevented
from or limited in providing his
or her medical history?

Physical Indicators

The following possible indicators can help identify the signs of a human trafficking victim, and was adapted from information provided by the Polaris Project and its National Human Trafficking Resource Center:

Physical Indicators may include:

Excessive work-related injuries.

Bruises and other evidence of sexual assault, beatings, physical restraint or confinement.

Untreated sexually transmitted diseases.

Severe psychological distress.

Untreated critical illnesses such as diabetes or heart disease, malnourishment, ect.

Poor dental health

Under 18 and providing commercial sex acts.

Finally the provision is tangible in both physical acts that are documented and the product that is supplied to countless consumers across the world.

Travel Indicators



- Does the person know their final destination? How will they get there?
- Do they know whom they are meeting at the final destination?
- Are they traveling with someone who does not appear to be their real parent/guardian?

Other Indicators

Other Important Signs may include:

Inability to speak to someone else alone, or to speak for themselves.

Limited or nonexistent ability to speak English.

Evidence of being controlled.

Disoriented-lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or loss of sense of time or inability to clarify where he/she is staying.

Works excessively long and/or unusual hours; perhaps not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work.

Not in possession of passport or other forms of ID.

Not in control of his/her own money, have no financial records, or bank account.

Fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, nervous/anxious.

Has few or no personal possessions.

Unusually fearful or anxious behavior after bringing-up law enforcement.

Numerous inconsistencies in his/her story.

EMS-Specific Indicators

- Delay in seeking treatment for serious issues
- Patient unable to explain injury origin
- Multiple patients from same location with similar complaints
- Appears fearful or submissive, especially around companion
- Language barrier with no access to interpreter

Trafficker Control Tactics

- Threats to victim or family
- Emotional manipulation or romance
- Drug dependence
- Isolation or restricted communication
- Confiscation of IDs, phones, money

How to Respond

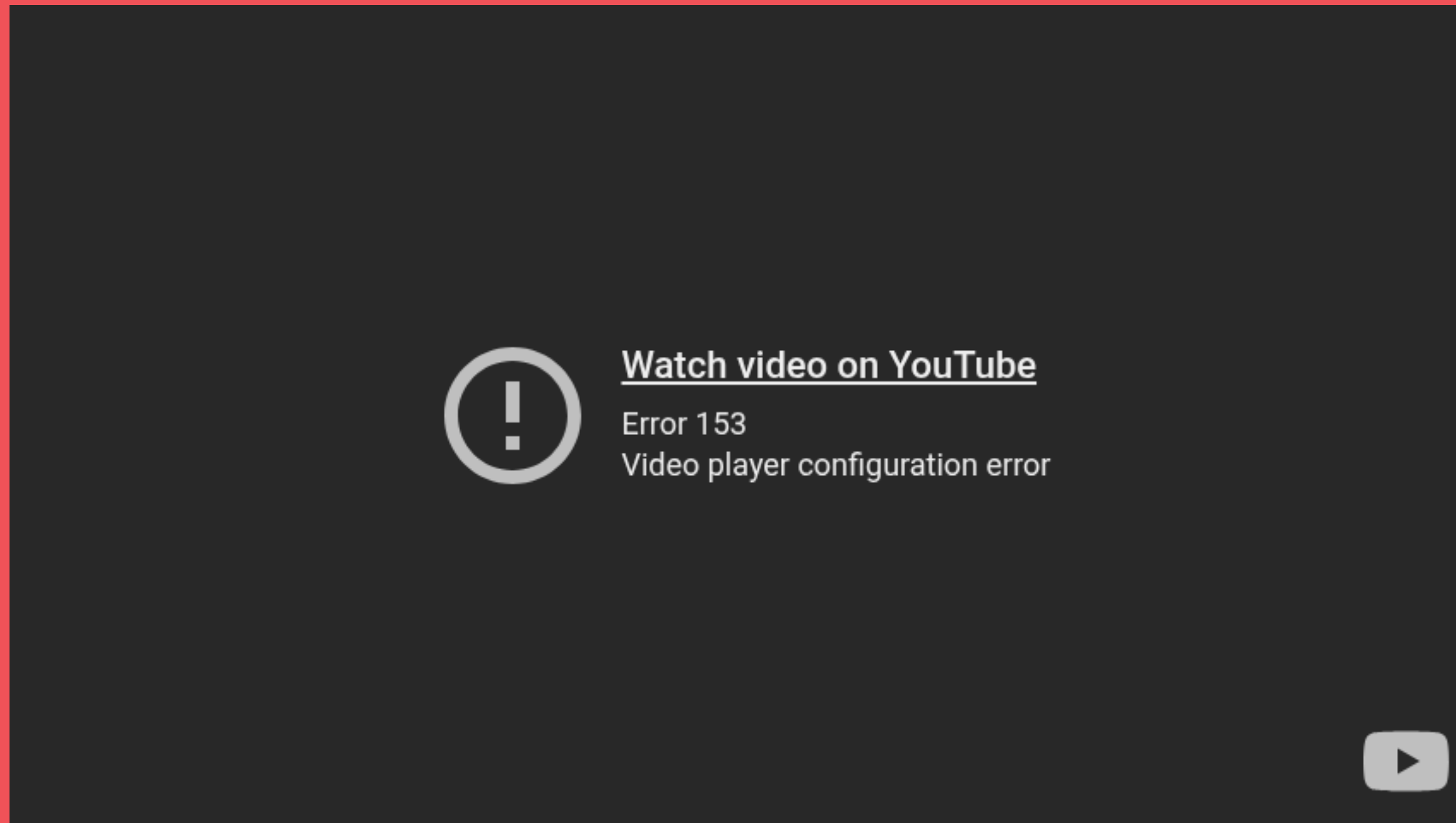
- DO NOT confront trafficker
- Use trauma-informed care: calm, patient, nonjudgmental
- Separate victim from companion if safe
- Document red flags objectively
- Report suspected trafficking to authorities

Your Role Can Save a Life



- You may be the only outside contact a victim sees.
- Awareness + Action = Intervention.
- Every call is an opportunity to recognize and report.

Scenario



National Human Trafficking Hotline

-  1-888-373-7888
-  Text “BEFREE” (233733)
-  www.humantraffickinghotline.org

Resources

<https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/human-trafficking>

<https://www.missingkids.org/home>

<https://polarisproject.org/love-and-trafficking/>

<https://www.scag.gov/human-trafficking>



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