HUMAN TRAFFICKING 101

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion in exchange for labor, services, or a commercial sex act.

Causing someone under the age of 18 to engage in a commercial sex act, regardless of using force, fraud, or coercion is human trafficking under U.S. law. Human traffickers use various forms of force, fraud, and coercion to control and exploit victims. These forms include imposing of debt, fraudulent employment opportunities, false promises of love or a better life, psychological coercion, and violence or threats of violence.

The crime of human trafficking hinges on the exploitation of another person. People often falsely believe "human trafficking" implies victims must be moved from one place to another to qualify as a victim. Human trafficking does not require transportation to be considered a crime. It is a crime that can be committed against an individual who has never left his or her hometown.

Who are the Victims?

Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, and socioeconomic class. In many cases, victims do not come forward to seek help because they are vulnerable, potential language barriers may exist, they have a fear of law enforcement, or they do not identify as a victim.

Human traffickers exploit many vulnerabilities to victimize people. Vulnerabilities for children can include a lack of safety at home from violence, abuse, and neglect; homelessness or runaway status; and a lack of proper care in the child welfare system. Other vulnerabilities for adults and children can include having a lack of trust in government institutions, economic hardship, isolation from family and/or community, and displacement from natural disasters.

Victims are found in legitimate and illegitimate industries, including primarily:

- **Sex Trafficking:** escort services, illicit massage services, outdoor sexual solicitation, residential brothels, bars and strip clubs, pornography production, personal sexual servitude, and livestreaming of sexual exploitation.
- **Forced Labor:** domestic work (such as housekeepers), traveling sales crews, restaurants, peddling and begging, agriculture (field/farm work), beauty services, construction, hotels, landscaping, entertainment, commercial cleaning services, manufacturing, fishing, mining, carnivals, forestry, healthcare, recreational facilities, and even criminal enterprises (such as illicit drug dealing).

DHS law enforcement alone identifies hundreds of girls, boys, women, and men as victims of human trafficking in the United States every year. The National Human Trafficking Hotline also receives thousands of contacts annually from people in areas all across the United States.

How Do I Identify Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is often "hidden in plain sight." Recognizing the signs is the first step in identifying victims. No single indicator is proof that human trafficking is occurring. The indicators listed below are a few examples that may alert you to a potential human trafficking situation:

WORK CONDITIONS

Does the potential victim:

- Experience verbal or physical abuse (particularly from a supervisor), prevented from taking adequate breaks, made to work in unsafe conditions, or forced to meet daily quotas?
- Work excessively long and/or unusual hours?
- Accept a specific job but feels coerced or forced into a different job?
- Appear to be living at his or her place of work?
- Receive paychecks with negative balances or unreasonably low amounts for the pay period?

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One CHILD AT A TIME

Is the employer or someone else:

- Creating debt for the potential victim or adding to a never-ending balance of debt?
- Processing payroll infrequently, not giving worker's compensation insurance outlays where mandated, or forcing the potential victim to transfer funds to an employer's account?
- Escorting the potential victim to the bank and/or using his or her banks accounts?
- Threatening the potential victim with deportation, arrest, or jail?
- In possession of the potential victim's identification, travel documents, money, or cell phone?
- Forcing, defrauding, or coercing the potential victim to engage in a commercial sex act?

BEHAVIOR OR PHYSICAL STATE

Does the potential victim:

- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous particularly around their work or someone they know?
- Defer to another person to speak for him or her and avoid eye contact?
- Show signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture
- Show signs of being harmed or deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, other life necessities, or personal possessions?

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF THE TRAFFICKER

Is someone else:

- Restricting the potential victim's contact with friends or family?
- Limiting the potential victim's social media use and/or stalking or monitoring their accounts?
- Preventing the potential victim from socializing or attending religious services?
- Preventing children from attending school and forcing them to work?
- Holding a large group in one place with poor conditions and limited space?
- Constantly watching or accompanying the potential victim?
- Threatening the potential victim or his or her family with harm if he or she leaves or quits work?
- Posting harmful content online about the potential victim to compel him or her to engage in a commercial sex act?

MINORS:

- Is someone under the age of 18 engaged in a commercial sex act?
  - Causing someone under the age of 18 to engage in a commercial sex act, regardless of using force, fraud, or coercion, is human trafficking under U.S. law.

What Should I Do Next?



If the answer is YES to any number of the above questions:

- Report suspected human trafficking to the Homeland Security Investigations Tip Line at 1-866-347-2423 or www.ice.gov/tips.
- Get help from the National Human Trafficking Hotline by calling 1-888-373-7888 or texting HELP or INFO to 233733 (BEFREE).
- If you have information on goods produced with forced labor destined for importation into the United States, provide it to CBP at https://eallegations.cbp.gov/s/report-trade-violations and HSI at investigations@ccht.dhs.gov.

Remember:

- Human trafficking victims have experienced significant trauma and harm. Victims may be unable or prevented from getting help due to existing vulnerabilities. It is important to treat victims with care and respect, and get immediate, professional support to ensure a victim-centered and trauma-informed response.
- Visit DHS.gov/BlueCampaign for additional resources to combat human trafficking.
- Read the DHS Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, the Importation of Goods Produced with Forced Labor, and Child Sexual Exploitation.

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