

***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?

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.

If a person is under 18 and involved in a commercial sex act, it is considered human trafficking under federal law. There does not have to be proof of force, fraud, or coercion.

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 Servants

Domestic workers may be trapped through force, threats, or abuse. Children are especially vulnerable, and domestic servitude can be difficult to detect because it often occurs behind closed doors in private homes.



Bonded Labor

Debt bondage occurs when debt is used to force or control someone into continued labor or exploitation. It is illegal under U.S. law.



Debt Bondage

Poor contracts or unsafe working conditions alone are not forced labor. Forced labor occurs when force, threats, or restraint are used to make someone work or continue working.



Forced Labor

Forced labor often occurs when employers exploit vulnerable people affected by poverty, unemployment, discrimination, crime, corruption, or 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

Signs of Human Trafficking

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

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.



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

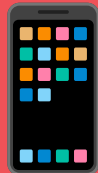
- DO NOT confront trafficker.
- Use trauma-informed care: calm, patient, nonjudgmental.
- Separate victim from companion if safe.
- Document red flags objectively.
- Report suspected trafficking to authorities immediately.

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.

National Human Trafficking Hotline

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

References

<https://www.onechildrescue.com>

<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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