



# **HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESPONSE GUIDE**

**for Campus Law Enforcement  
and Public Safety Officials**



## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

As a campus law enforcement or public safety official, you are in a unique position to reach students considered vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. You play an important role because you regularly interact with the same groups of students as part of your daily job duties and often gain their trust. You may also be able to recognize when something is wrong in a student's life.

The purpose of this guide is to inform campus law enforcement and public safety officials about human trafficking and its indicators so that you can be better prepared to recognize a potential victim at the college or university campus you serve. It also includes information about taking a victim-centered approach and how trauma can affect victim behavior that you may be witnessing.

## WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

**Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

**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.<sup>3</sup> It is a crime that can be committed against an individual who has never left their hometown.

**Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, gender identity, 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.

## Who It May Affect

Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. They may come from any socioeconomic group. College students may be particularly vulnerable to this crime for a variety of reasons:

### LIVING AWAY FROM HOME, OFTEN FOR THE FIRST TIME

Students may have to build new social and community connections, the lack of which could make them vulnerable to traffickers who may offer emotional support to gain trust.

### ECONOMIC INSTABILITY AND DEPENDENCE

Students may experience financial difficulties that traffickers can exploit by offering monetary support or false promises of jobs.

### COMMON USE OF ALCOHOL OR SUBSTANCES ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Taking advantage of students' potentially newfound independence, traffickers may use drugs and alcohol to lure potential victims.

### THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS

International students may be at even a greater risk because they are in a new country, further away from home, and may not know their rights. Traffickers could also potentially use their temporary residency as a way to manipulate them and build fear if they try to seek help. Human trafficking may also look very different in their home countries, so they may know even less about the signs to look for and how to protect themselves.

<sup>1</sup> See 18 U.S.C Chapter 77 for precise definitions

<sup>2</sup> See 18 U.S.C Chapter 77 for language on elements of the crime

<sup>3</sup> Learn more about the difference between human trafficking and human smuggling: [dhs.gov/bluecampaign](https://dhs.gov/bluecampaign)





## HOW TRAFFICKERS OPERATE

Traffickers often prey on individuals with few or no social support systems. College students may be away from home for the first time and trying to fit in with their new surroundings, making them potential targets for traffickers.



### Who are Traffickers?

There is no single face of traffickers, they can be any gender, age, or race. To victims, they can be:

- » "Pimps," "boyfriends," "girlfriends," or other romantic partners
- » Employers or other professionals
- » Community leaders or people of prominence
- » Family members or friends
- » Peers or other students
- » Strangers with no relation to the victim

## How Are Traffickers Reaching Victims?

Traffickers have increasingly turned to the internet to identify and lure victims, but they do still utilize physical meeting spaces for recruitment as well. Below are some examples of how traffickers may reach victims on college campuses.

### POPULAR MEETING PLACES

This can include places like student unions, bars, off-campus parties, or anywhere else large numbers of students may congregate regularly.

### SOCIAL MEDIA, ONLINE, AND DATING APPS

Traffickers often use the internet to reach victims because they can take advantage of personal information shared online to exploit perceived hardships or insecurities to gain trust.

### PEER TO PEER RECRUITMENT

Campuses have a large number of young people in one place, which can create opportunities for traffickers to coerce their victims into recruiting their peers. Victims that are made to recruit other victims are typically called "bottoms."

### DECEPTIVE OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT OR ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Traffickers can take advantage of the economic instability of college students by offering them jobs, such as modeling, that may be too good to be true. Entering into romantic relationships or providing emotional support are also common ways for traffickers to control and manipulate their victims.

### TAKING ADVANTAGE OF FINANCIAL INSTABILITY

Traffickers may take advantage of students by coercing them into opening up lines of credit and then running up their debt. Traffickers may then tell their victims the only way to pay off this debt is to engage in sexual acts for money.





# INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ON CAMPUSES

Understanding the indicators of human trafficking can help alert you to a potential victim of the crime in the campus or college community where you work. While no single indicator is necessarily proof of human trafficking, recognizing the signs is the first step in identifying potential victims.

## Physical or Behavioral:

Does the student...



- » Show sudden or dramatic changes in behavior? For example, if a typically mild-mannered youth begins acting out or a typically outgoing youth becomes reclusive and disconnected from peers.
- » Defer to another person to speak for them, especially during interactions with campus authority figures?



- » Suddenly have more (and/or more expensive) material possessions, like purses, clothing, and/or cell phones?
- » Have on-campus housing but is rarely staying in their dorm or apartment?
- » Appear to be deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other necessities?



- » Have tattoos or scars that would indicate branding by a trafficker?
- » Suddenly become extremely quiet and reclusive, and avoid eye contact?
- » Appear to be coached on what to say or responses seem rehearsed?
- » Have bruises or other signs of physical trauma?
- » Have a difficult time providing logical answers to basic questions?

## Social

Does the student...



- » Have a romantic partner who is noticeably older?
- » Engage in unhealthy sexual behavior or indicate they may be experiencing abuse from their partner?

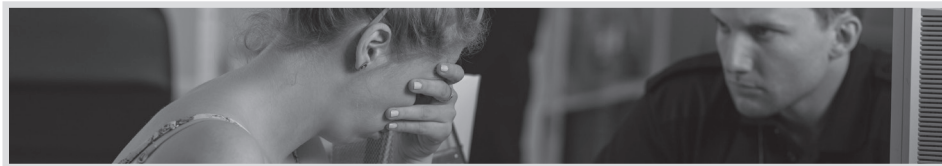


- » Engage in unhealthy coping behaviors (i.e. increase in use of drugs or alcohol, etc.)?
- » Seem restricted from contacting family or friends?
- » Have a large financial debt and is unable to pay it off?
- » Appear to lack control of their own money?



- » Lack control over a personal schedule and/or identification or travel documents?
- » Seem employed and have a work permit but is clearly working outside the permitted hours for students?
- » Live with an employer or have an employer listed as their caregiver or emergency contact?
- » Make references to frequent travel to other cities or towns?





## VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH

A victim-centered approach places a victim's priorities, needs, and interests at the center of law enforcement's work with the individual. While investigating trafficking crimes, law enforcement should always put the victim's needs first, regardless of whether they choose to participate in the prosecution of the case. Law enforcement should conduct various investigative approaches that do not focus solely on the victim being the key witness and implement all tools and skills available to continue building a case.

### Interacting with a Potential Victim

When encountering a potential victim, it is important to remember that victims may not be comfortable coming forward and working with law enforcement. They need help to feel stable, safe and secure. Trafficking victims may:

- » Fear law enforcement
- » Not identify themselves as a victim
- » Not tell a complete story or use rehearsed responses
- » Identify with the trafficker or express romantic feelings for them
- » Fear judgement from those in authority

### Effects of Trauma

Victims of human trafficking may be suffering from the trauma of their most recent experience and potentially trauma from past experiences. Trauma is severe emotional or mental distress caused by a single event (an intense one-time event, where there is serious threat of harm or death) or a series of events or situations that are long-term (witnessing or experiencing neglect, abuse, or other forms of violence). It is important to understand how trauma can impact brain function and result in behaviors that may not seem to match the situation, like:

- » Telling a fragmented story when recalling a traumatic event
- » Impaired memory
- » Inability to recall events in sequence and context
- » Lack of emotion
- » Non-responsiveness or lack of involvement with the external world
- » Laughing or joking inappropriately
- » Erratic behavior
- » Irritability or outbursts of anger
- » Feelings of detachment or estrangement of others

### Addressing Victim Needs

It is crucial to understand that these behaviors are indicative of the level of control traffickers exert over victims, and that victims need support and understanding in order to help make the case investigation—and subsequent prosecution of the perpetrator—a success.

When campus law enforcement or public health officials encounter a potential victim of trafficking in the course of their duties, it is critical that you begin to develop rapport and establish trust by:

- » **Immediately engaging a victim specialist** who can connect the victim to support services (which could include medical attention, emergency shelter, and/or legal services) emphasizing that assistance is available regardless of the outcome of the investigation and prosecution.
- » **Taking time to explain who you are**, answer questions they might have, and acknowledge and address their fears.
- » **Being sensitive to cultural differences** and language barriers and using an interpreter when needed.
- » **Conducting interviews in a neutral location**, only after the victim's needs have been assessed and any urgent needs have been met.
- » **Being patient** and giving the victim time to stabilize and begin their recovery process.







## SAMPLE TRAFFICKING SCENARIOS

The following examples are fictional but based on actual indicators that someone may be a potential victim of human trafficking.



### Victim Perspective

Taylor is the first in her family to attend college. She grew up in a small rural town and got into her dream school in a small city four hours from home. Taylor is excited to meet her fellow students, make new friends, and find her community. While eating lunch alone in the student union, another student asks to sit with her. Taylor likes Stacy right away, she's extremely nice and asks Taylor questions about her family and life at home and really listens as she talks about being excited and nervous about college. Stacy invites Taylor to an off-campus party that night, and she agrees to meet her there.

Taylor is excited to meet so many new people and have fun with her new freedom away from home. Stacy introduces Taylor to her friend, Mark, who is dressed really nice, seems a bit older than everyone else, and is socializing with a small group in a separate room of the house. Mark and Taylor talk for a while and he tells her he works in finance and is bragging a bit about his house and cars. Taylor thinks he is really impressive, she had never met anyone like him in her hometown.

Taylor and Stacy form a close friendship over the next few weeks. Stacy says Mark helped her make a bunch of money by setting her up with gigs to dance for paying clients, and he could help Taylor make money this way too. Taylor is really hesitant about this, but Stacy says it's really easy money, she does it all the time, and Mark is a really good guy. Taylor agrees to try it out. After making \$500 dancing, Mark offers to set up a bank account for Taylor. She agrees that would be a good idea and shares her personal information with Mark to start the account.

After a few weeks, Stacy and Mark's attitudes towards Taylor change. They tell her they have videos of her dancing and they'll send them to her family if she doesn't start doing more than dancing for her clients. Mark also points out that he opened up a credit card in her name and maxed it out, so unless she wants to have her credit ruined, she better get to work so he can pay it off for her. Taylor feels extremely trapped and scared and doesn't see a way out of this situation other than following what they say.



### Law Enforcement and Public Safety Perspective

Officers Williams and Fisher are conducting their usual midnight campus patrol. On a weeknight, the campus is usually extremely quiet at this time, they may see a few students coming and going from the library. While parking at an observation point near the student residence halls, they see two female students quickly get out of a car being driven by an older woman. As the car drives away one of the girls seems to start crying as the other consoles her.

Officers Williams and Fisher pull up to the girls to find out what is going on. Claire explains that Tamara's boyfriend just broke up with her and she's really upset. Officer Williams asks a few more questions like where they were coming from and who dropped them off? The girls provide a series of answers that don't seem to match or make sense. Officer Fisher can see that Claire has some bruises on her arm, but she says it is from playing softball. As the officers ask a few more questions to determine if the girls are in danger, Claire snaps at them for asking so many questions that aren't their business.


The officers are realizing there might be more than meets the eye here. They decide that rather than leave this as a contact in the dispatch system, to write a report for the behavioral intervention team on campus so that follow-up can be conducted with the two students.





# HOW TO REPORT HUMAN TRAFFICKING OR GET ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

**Please refer to your department's protocol** for reporting human trafficking crimes and engaging additional support resources. Also consider contacting your state or local human trafficking task force for support.



**Call 1-866-347-2423** to report suspected human trafficking to the **Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Highly trained specialists take reports from both the public and law enforcement agencies on more than 400 laws enforced by HSI, including those related to human trafficking. HSI agents responding to reports are specifically trained on a victim centered approach to stabilize victims and connect them with support services, including providing immigration relief<sup>4</sup> for qualifying victims. You can also **submit an anonymous tip online via the HSI Tip Form** at: [ice.gov/webform/hsi-tip-form](https://ice.gov/webform/hsi-tip-form).

**Call 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733)** to report suspected human trafficking to the **National Human Trafficking Hotline**, which takes calls from victims and survivors of human trafficking and those who may know them. The Trafficking Hotline can help connect victims with service providers in their area and assist in reporting their situation to trusted law enforcement contacts. The Trafficking Hotline is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in English, Spanish, and more than 200 other languages. The Trafficking Hotline is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a nongovernmental organization.

## Additional Law Enforcement Training Opportunities

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) offers an introductory Human Trafficking Awareness Training for sworn law enforcement nationwide, both virtually and in-person. More information can be found on FLETC's website: [fletc.gov/human-trafficking-awareness-training/human-trafficking-awareness-training](https://fletc.gov/human-trafficking-awareness-training/human-trafficking-awareness-training)

## ABOUT BLUE CAMPAIGN

Blue Campaign is a national public awareness campaign, designed to educate the public, law enforcement and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases. Blue Campaign works closely with DHS Components to create general awareness training and materials for law enforcement and others to increase detection of human trafficking, and to identify victims.

For additional human trafficking resources for law enforcement and public safety officials, visit Blue Campaign's website: [dhs.gov/bluecampaign](https://dhs.gov/bluecampaign).

### Contact Blue Campaign

[BlueCampaign@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:BlueCampaign@hq.dhs.gov)

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