

**Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking
What to Look for During a Medical Exam/Consultation**

The following is a list of potential red flags and indicators that can be useful in recognizing a potential victim of human trafficking. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list. Each indicator taken individually may not imply a trafficking situation and not all victims of human trafficking will exhibit these signs. However, recognition of several indicators may point toward the need for further investigation.

RED FLAGS AND INDICATORS

General Indicators that Can Apply to All Victims of Human Trafficking

- Individual does not have any type of legal documentation – i.e., license or state issued identification for US Citizens; passport, Green Card, or other identification for foreign nationals
- Individual claims to be “just visiting” an area but is unable to articulate where he/she is staying or cannot remember addresses; the Individual does not know the city or state of his/her current location
- Individual has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story
- Someone is claiming to speak for, or on behalf of a victim – i.e. an interpreter, often of the same ethnic group, male or female; victim is not allowed to speak for him/herself
- Individual exhibits behaviors including “hyper-vigilance” or paranoia, fear, anxiety, depression, submission, tension and/or nervousness¹
- Individual exhibits a loss of sense of time or space
- Individual avoids eye contact
- Individual uses false identification papers – may not be victim's real name
- Individual is not in control of his/her own money

Specific Health Indicators

The following indicators may present in the context of a physical exam or similar health assessment or treatment

- Malnourishment or generally poor health
- Signs of physical abuse – in particular, unexplained injuries or signs of prolonged abuse
 - Bruises
 - Black eyes
 - Burns
 - Cuts
 - Broken bones
 - Broken teeth
 - Multiple scars (including from electric prods)
- Evidence of a prolonged infection that could easily be treated through a routine physical/check up
- Addiction to drugs and/or alcohol
- Individual has no idea when his/her last medical exam was
- Lack of healthcare insurance – i.e. paying with cash

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Specific Indicators that Apply to Sex Trafficking Victims

Victims of sex trafficking may exhibit a unique set of risk factors and warning signs, including the following: **SOURCE: Girls Education and Mentoring Services (GEMS)**

- The age of a individual has been verified to be under 18 and the individual is involved in the sex industry
- The age of the individual has been verified to be under 18 and the individual has a record of prior arrest(s) for prostitution
- Discrepancies in behavior and reported age – i.e. clues in behavior or appearance that suggest that the individual is underage, but he/she lies about his/her age
- Evidence of sexual trauma
- Multiple or frequent sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially evidence of a lack of treatment for STIs
- Multiple or frequent pregnancies
- Individual reports an excessively large number of sexual partners, especially when it is not age-appropriate (i.e. 15 year old girl reporting dozens of sexual partners)
- Individuals who are under the age of 18 who express interest in, or may already be in, relationships with adults or older men
- Use of lingo or slang relating to the individual's involvement in prostitution – i.e. referring to a boyfriend as "Daddy" or talking about "the life"
- Evidence of controlling or dominating relationships – i.e. repeated phone calls from a "boyfriend" and/or excessive concern about displeasing a partner
- Individual is dressed in inappropriate clothing (i.e., lingerie or other attire associated with the sex industry)
- Presence of unexplained or unusual scar tissue – potentially from forced abortions
- Tattoos on the neck and/or lower back that the individual is reluctant to explain – i.e. a man's name or initials (most often encountered with US citizen victims of sex trafficking)
- Other types of branding – i.e. cutting or burning
- Evidence that the victim has had to have sexual intercourse while on her monthly cycle – i.e. use of cotton balls or other products which leave residual fibers
- Family dysfunction – i.e. abuse in the home (emotional, sexual, physical), neglect, absence of a caregiver, or substance abuse – these are major risk factors for sex trafficking and can be important warning signs that the individual might be a victim
- Individual may either be in crisis, or may downplay existing health problems or risks
- Individual may resist your help or demonstrate fear that the information he/she gives you will lead to arrest, placement in social services, return to family, or retribution from trafficker

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SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM HEALTH EFFECTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The following is a list of typical physical and mental health costs associated with all forms of human trafficking. This list applies to both US citizen/domestic and Foreign National victims.

Short term

- Higher risk behaviors (i.e., drug and alcohol abuse)
- Impaired judgment
- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Fear, anxiety, and nervousness
- Muscle tension

Long term

- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)ⁱⁱ
 - Persistent symptoms of increased arousal – i.e. difficulty falling or staying asleep, irritability or outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, exaggerated startle response
 - Intense distress/reactivity to internal/external cues that symbolize or resemble aspect of traumatic event
 - “Hyper-vigilance” or paranoia, fear, anxiety, depression, submission, tension and/or nervousness
- Trauma bonding
- Severe depression
- Suicidal ideation
- Spiritual questions
- Feelings of being mentally broken
- Multiple symptoms resulting from untreated STIs
- Sexual dysfunction
- Difficulty establishing/maintaining healthy relationships

VICTIM IDENTIFICATION

How do I conduct an assessment or exam with a potential victim of human trafficking?

- Utilize existing assessment and examination protocols for victims of abuse/sexual abuse
- Utilize existing culturally sensitive protocols
- Use age-appropriate language if working with minorsⁱⁱⁱ
- If you ask about sexual history, be sure to distinguish between consensual experiences and non-consensual experiences^{iv}
- If possible, choose a comfortable space which is conducive to confidentiality
- If appropriate, separate the Individual from his/her belongings and escort/interpreter
 - The victim may be wearing/carrying some sort of tracking/communication device such as a GPS transmitter, cell phone or other small device – you can separate the victim from these devices by getting him/her into a gown and into an x-ray room^{vi}
- If the Individual is a female, approach should be made by a female staff member, whether a psychologist, physician, social worker or female police officer not in uniform^{vii}

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What do I do if I think I have identified a victim of human trafficking?

- Be sensitive, every incident of human trafficking is different
- Make sure you are not putting yourself or the Individual in danger (i.e., take care to notice who is around when you are asking questions or providing resources)
- If you suspect that the victim is in immediate danger, notify the police
- Try to record as much information about the situation as possible – being careful not to put yourself or the individual in any danger
- Present outreach cards and/or hotline numbers for local anti-trafficking service providers or other anti-trafficking hotlines to suspected victims – give this information directly to the victim and only when he/she is alone
- Provide the Individual with the NHTRC hotline number and encourage him/her to call if he/she needs help or would like to talk to someone
- Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) to report the incident or locate local victims' services: **1-888-373-7888**
- Visit the Polaris Project website for more information on human trafficking: www.PolarisProject.org

As a health practitioner, you are in a unique position to recognize, identify, and reach out to victims. This list is intended to be a guideline only and should be adapted to fit existing organizational protocols for interacting with potential victims of child abuse, violence, sexual assault and other related crimes. Health practitioners should familiarize themselves with social service providers in their area working on the issue of human trafficking and work with these agencies to create a protocol for responding to victims of trafficking.

For More Information Contact:

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
24 Hour National Hotline: 888.3737.888
nhtrc@PolarisProject.org

ⁱ SOURCE: Girls Education and Mentoring Services (GEMS). Gems-girls.org

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} SOURCE: Dr. Juliette Engel, MIRAMED. www.miramed.org

^{vii} Ibid.



Human Trafficking of Children Indicator Tool

This tool is for Child Protective Investigators to assist them in understanding human trafficking and identifying children who are victims. It **does not** represent all instances of human trafficking or areas that may be explored to determine if human trafficking is present.

Florida and Federal law both define human trafficking. Trafficking of children is generally understood to be:

*The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a child for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Under federal law, sex trafficking (such as prostitution, pornography, exotic dancing, etc.) **does not** require there be force, fraud, or coercion if the victim is under 18.*

Trafficking victims may be smuggled into and within the U.S., arrive with a legitimate visa or be U.S. citizens.

Trafficking occurs in many different situations including domestic servitude, construction, landscaping, the sex industry, factories and sweatshops migrant farm work, service industries such as nursing homes, cleaning services, bars and restaurants and the food industry.

Possible indicators of human trafficking:

The child:

- Shows evidence of physical, mental, or sexual abuse
- Cannot or will not speak on own behalf and/or is non-English speaking
- Is not allowed to speak to you alone
- Is being controlled
- Does not have access to identity and/or travel documents
- Works unusually long hours and is unpaid or paid very little
- Will not cooperate, e.g., gives you wrong information about identity and living situation
- Is not in school or has significant gaps in schooling
- Lives at his/her workplace or with employer and/or lives with many people in a small area
- Has a heightened sense of fear and distrust of authority
- Has engaged in prostitution or commercial sex acts

Interview Considerations:

- Use an interpreter if the victim does not speak fluent English.
 - If you need an interpreter, contact an independent and trusted source for help in interpretation.
 - Do not use children, adults, neighbors, or friends who are present at the scene to interpret.

Mission of the Florida Department of Children and Families: Protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency.

- Make sure the interpreter is not allied with the trafficker.
 - Make sure the interpreter understands trafficking.
 - Understand how to work with interpreters and that it can be a slow process that requires word for word interpretation (not summaries).
- It is rare for child victims of human trafficking to identify themselves as being trafficked. More often than not, victims will present to the Department or Community Based Care providers due to another form of abuse, neglect, or abandonment.
 - If you suspect a child is a victim of human trafficking, it is important that the child be gently interviewed and that the suspected trafficker(s) not be present, because during interviewing process, the trafficker(s) may try to intimidate the child or not allow the child to speak for themselves. Question him or her from an unbiased and non-judgmental point of view. Doing otherwise could discourage them from being truthful or seeking help from the Department or Community Based Care, law enforcement or other providers.
 1. The child may be frightened of threats or retribution by the trafficker when the authorities get involved. The child may also fear being taken from familiar people or places.
 2. The child could be embarrassed and ashamed by the work s/he was forced to do and the abuse s/he endured.
 3. The child's cultural norms may make talking to you or about these experiences very difficult.
 - Know that it may take several interviews to establish trust and a long time to determine if a child has been trafficked.
 - Be sensitive to cultural and religious differences and seek help to understand them prior to the interview.
 - Be aware that the child's parent or caregiver may also be the child's trafficker and that the trafficker may lie and say s/he is the child's parent or caregiver.
 - Remember that every human trafficking case is different.
 - Do not ask about immigration at the beginning of the interview; this can be intimidating.

What to do if you suspect or discover that a child is trafficked:

1. **Call 911 if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency.**
2. **You must add Human Trafficking as a maltreatment along with any other alleged maltreatments before closing the case. If there is not an open investigation, call the Florida Abuse Hotline and report human trafficking. (800-96-ABUSE or 800-962-2873)**
3. **If you suspect human trafficking, contact law enforcement. You may call the U.S. Department of Justice at 888-428-7581 or the following local anti-trafficking task force Points of Contact at the three United States Attorneys Offices in Florida to report the crime:**

Northern District – 850-942-8439 ~ Middle District – 239-461-2225 ~ Southern District – 305-961-9001

4. **If you need more information concerning human trafficking, contact the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services: 850-488-3791. If law enforcement is not available, please contact the Anti-Trafficking in Person's Hotline at 202-401-4732.**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	INFORMATION TO BE ALERT TO
<p>Living Environment</p> <p><i>Asking where the child lives (bathes, eats and sleeps), as well as his or her family situation can reveal a great deal. Ask the child to show you where they sleep, eat, bathe, play, go to school, or work. In addition, the child's ability to leave the home and play, as well as visit friends will also indicate levels of control and possible trafficking.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child's "home" environment likely will lack personal effects, or the child's "room" will be shabby, small and different from the rest of the house. His/her bed may be crammed in small spaces with other cots or sleeping pallets. No or few toys will be present. • The yard may be fenced and access to phones denied. • The child may be forced to live in the same place s/he works (such as behind a restaurant, in a motel with other workers, etc.) • The child may not know where s/he is living because the traffickers might lie to the child about their whereabouts, move them around or may and isolate them so they cannot establish relationships and get help. • Traffickers severely restrict the child's movements and ability to contact anyone, play with other children and develop friendships or speak to anyone. Even if allowed to leave the home, the child is likely afraid to escape because of the trafficker's threats and control.
<p>State of Mind</p> <p><i>Asking about threats to the child or child's family can be important, as is determining if the child has been hit, or otherwise harmed as punishment or as a way to deter the child from running away and complying with the trafficker's demands.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffickers may threaten to have the child deported or arrested if s/he tries to leave, call the police or disobey the rules. • Traffickers often use violent retribution when a child disobeys. They may harm the child physically or mentally, e.g., by threatening to hurt them or their family members if they try to leave the trafficker. The child may be scared to leave because the trafficker has identification/immigration documents or the child knows s/he is not in the US legally. The child may also have been told by parents to obey the trafficker, to work and to send money home. • The trafficker may deny and minimize any information given by the child regarding harm or force. The trafficker may say that they have the child's or parents' consent to work or be in Florida.
<p>School and Work</p> <p><i>Asking questions about daily routines can help paint the picture – school, or in the alternative, work will help you to understand if the child is being trafficked. Asking about any money they owe the "boss" or if they get paid can also provide key information.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child victims of trafficking typically do not attend school. When they do go to school, they may appear underfed, may wear badly worn or dirty clothes, or may appear shy or frightened. They may also have a history of truancy or of acting out, be aggressive, depressed or have disciplinary referrals. • Child victims often are forced to work to pay off their "debt" rather than attend school. Any money that the child earns is usually deducted from the debt that the traffickers say they owe. This debt often includes payment for travel expenses, clothing, food, and/or rent.

<p>School and work (continued)</p> <p><i>Note: younger children may not understand issues like a debt or who their boss is – these areas may only be appropriate for older children.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of these items is usually exaggerated by the trafficker. Investigators should note how many hours per day or week the child works, how or if they are compensated, and if they receive their earnings directly or via their employer or someone else. • The trafficker may deny that the child is being forced to work, commit commercial sex acts or may claim that the child's wages are being sent home to help his/her family.
<p>Other considerations</p> <p><i>Where the child's family lives, their birthplace, how they arrived in the U.S. and/or Florida are ways to find out if the child has been tricked, sold or is being trafficked.</i></p> <p><i>Asking about immigration status can be threatening and is not recommended to do at the beginning. A child may not know details about passports and other identification papers either.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are often transported across international and/or state borders as well as within a state. • The child may be abducted but often is recruited with the promise of getting a job, going to school, reuniting with family or having basic needs met (such as shelter). Children come with the hope they can work to help their impoverished families. Parents may sell their children or unwillingly give them over to the care of a trafficker who promises to give the children an education, raise them and give them work. Once in the hands of the trafficker, children may be often forced or coerced into working or forced to work off a travel "debt". • Immigration and identification documents may be held by the child's trafficker or employer to deter escape. • Traffickers can be relatives, friends, or other individuals. They may also be from the same ethnic background. • There is always a risk that any adults present may be traffickers or allied with them. The trafficker may pose as a relative or may actually be related to the child. During interviewing process, they may try to intimidate the child or speak for the child. If trafficking is suspected the child should be interviewed without the suspected trafficker.