

# Identify and Assist a Human Trafficking Victim



- Victims may sometimes be kept behind locked doors, but are often hidden right in front of us.
- Traffickers' use of coercion is so powerful that even if you reach out to victims, they may be too fearful to accept your help.
- There are key red flags that could alert you to a potential trafficking situation.
- If you believe that you have identified someone still in a human trafficking situation alert law enforcement immediately. For urgent situations call 911.
- You can also call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center 1-888-373-7888 to report a tip and for other information.

## What Is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex.

The Trafficking Victim Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations define human trafficking as:

- a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.
- b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

## Human Trafficking Indicators

Everyone has the potential to discover a human trafficking situation. While the victims may sometimes be kept behind locked doors, they are often hidden right in front of us at, for example, construction sites, restaurants, elder care centers, nail salons, agricultural fields, and hotels. Traffickers' use of coercion – such as threats of deportation and harm to the victim or their family members – is so powerful that even if you reach out to victims, they may be too fearful to accept your help. Knowing indicators of human trafficking and some follow up questions will help you act on your gut feeling that something is wrong and report it.

While not an exhaustive list, these are some key red flags that could alert you to a potential trafficking situation that should be reported:

- Does the person appear disconnected from family, friends, community organizations, or houses of worship?
- Has a child stopped attending school?
- Has the person had a sudden or dramatic change in behavior?
- Is a juvenile engaged in commercial sex acts?
- Is the person disoriented or confused, or showing signs of mental or physical abuse?
- Does the person have bruises in various stages of healing?
- Is the person fearful, timid, or submissive?
- Does the person show signs of having been denied food, water, sleep, or medical care?
- Is the person often in the company of someone to whom he or she defers? Or someone who seems to be in control of the situation, e.g., where they go or who they talk to?
- Does the person appear to be coached on what to say?



Wheeler

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800.232.4424 (phone)

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[www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org)

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

- Is the person living in unsuitable conditions?
- Does the person lack personal possessions and appear not to have a stable living situation?
- Does the person have freedom of movement? Can the person freely leave where they live? Are there unreasonable security measures?

Not all indicators listed above are present in every human trafficking situation, and the presence or absence of any of the indicators is not necessarily proof of human trafficking.

### Questions to Ask

Assuming you have the opportunity to speak with a potential victim privately and without jeopardizing the victim's safety because the trafficker is watching, here are some sample questions to ask to follow up on the red flags you became alert to:

- Can you leave your job if you want to?
- Can you come and go as you please?
- Have you been hurt or threatened if you tried to leave?
- Has your family been threatened?
- Do you live with your employer?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Are you in debt to your employer?
- Do you have your passport/identification? Who has it?

### Where to Get Help

If you believe you have identified someone still in the trafficking situation, alert law enforcement immediately at the numbers provided below. It may be unsafe to attempt to rescue a trafficking victim. You have no way of knowing how the trafficker may react and retaliate against the victim and you. If, however, you identify a victim who has escaped the trafficking situation, there are a number of organizations to whom the victim could be referred for help with shelter, medical care, legal assistance, and other critical services. In this case, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center described below.

#### 911 Emergency

For urgent situations, notify local law enforcement immediately by calling 911. You may also want to alert the National Human Trafficking Resource Center described below so that they can ensure response by law enforcement officials knowledgeable about human trafficking.

#### 1-888-373-7888 National Human Trafficking Resource Center

Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, a national 24-hour, toll-free, multilingual anti-trafficking hotline. Call 1-888-373-7888 to report a tip; connect with anti-trafficking services in your area; or request training and technical assistance, general information, or specific anti-trafficking resources. The Center is equipped to handle calls from all regions of the United States from a wide range of callers including, but not limited to: potential trafficking victims, community members, law enforcement, medical professionals, legal professionals, service providers, researchers, students, and policymakers.

## Connecticut Resources

Emergency  
Call 911

Connecticut Coalition Against  
Human Trafficking  
[www.ctcoalitionagainstrafficking.org](http://www.ctcoalitionagainstrafficking.org)  
860.692.3085

## National Resources

National Human Trafficking  
Resource Center  
24/7 Hotline  
1.888.373.7888

Polaris  
[www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)

Office on Trafficking in Persons  
[www.act.hhs.gov/otip](http://www.act.hhs.gov/otip)