

IDENTIFYING INDICATORS OF **HUMAN TRAFFICKING**



Recognizing signs, or indicators, is the first step in identifying, serving, and supporting victims of human trafficking in reclaiming their lives and obtaining self-sufficiency.

U.S. Government Definition of Human Trafficking

In 2000, the passage of the Trafficking Victim’s Protection Act (TVPA) made human trafficking a federal crime. Force, fraud, or coercion are central in the TVPA Statutory Definition of Human Trafficking (22 USC § 7102 (9)&(10)).

Force

Physical assault
Sexual assault
Isolation
Confinement

Fraud

False employment offers
Sham marriages
Lying about work/living situation
Withholding wages
Taking documentation

Coercion

Threats of violence
Threats of arrest/deportation
Debt bondage
Withholding legal documentation and identification

Barriers to Identifying Victims

- Hidden crime
- Coached by trafficker
- Charged as a perpetrator
- Don’t always identify as a victim

Barriers Specific to Immigrant Victims

- Fear of deportation
- Language and economic barriers
- Lack of protection in home country
- Misinformation about rights and available services

WHO WE ARE

The Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center is a coaching and development hub assisting organizations and tribes with: (1) building their capacity to aid victims of all forms of human trafficking, (2) navigating the broad range of resources available to support their missions, and (3) strengthening human trafficking service networks.

Circumstances of Human Trafficking Victims

Victims of human trafficking often have limited freedom, lack control, and work in dangerous environments. Presence of one or more of the circumstances outlined below may indicate human trafficking.



Limited Freedom

The trafficking victims—

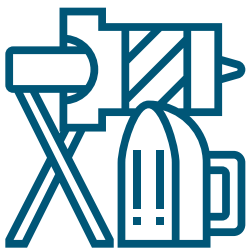
- Have high security measures in their work and/or living location; or
- Are not free to come and go as they please.



Lack of Control

The trafficking victims—

- Have few or no personal possessions;
- Are not in control of their own money, records, or bank accounts;
- Owe a large debt and are unable to pay it off;
- Are not in control of their own identification documents; or
- Are unable to speak for themselves.



Work Conditions

The trafficking victims—

- Are under 18 and provide commercial sex acts;
- Are in the commercial sex industry and have a manager;
- Work excessively long and/or unusual hours;
- Are not allowed breaks or suffer under unusual restrictions at work;
- Were recruited through false promises about the nature and conditions of the work; or
- Are unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips.

Identifying Victims

Questions to assist when determining if someone is the victim of human trafficking—

- Was the individual recruited, forced, or coerced into migrating?
- Has an employer, spouse, loan shark, broker, or smuggler threatened the individual or their family with serious physical harm?
- Has someone threatened the individual's immigration status to compel work?
- Does the employer exert substantial control over the individual's life outside of work (e.g. housing, relationships, communications)?
- Is the individual isolated?
- Is the individual not being paid directly or working to pay off a debt?
- Are there indications of severe labor law violations (e.g. safety, overtime)?
- Are there signs of abuse, either physical or psychological?
- Does the individual have legitimate identification? Has the individual been given fraudulent documents to use? Has the individual's passport been taken away or is it being held by someone else?
- Did the employer arrange or is the employer somehow connected to the individual's method of transport and migration?
- Is the individual always accompanied by another person who seems controlling?

Additional Information

OVC Faces of Human Trafficking [Video Series](#) and [Discussion Guide](#)

[Office on Trafficking in Persons, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[The Blue Campaign, U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)

Contact the Center at contact@ovc-htcbc.org or **1-844-682-0411**