



## RESOURCES: IDENTIFYING AND INTERACTING WITH VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



As a health care practitioner, you may have treated victims of human trafficking without realizing their circumstances, and therefore, have lost a chance to help them escape a horrific situation. The following provides a brief overview of the trafficking problem, as well as tips for identifying and assisting trafficking victims:

- Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, widespread throughout the United States. While trafficking is largely a hidden social problem, many trafficking victims are in plain sight if you know what to look for.
- Trafficking is not just forced prostitution. Victims of human trafficking may also be in forced labor situations as domestic servants (nannies or maids); sweatshop workers; janitors; restaurant workers; migrant farm workers; fishery workers; hotel or tourist industry workers; and as beggars.
- As a frontline health provider, you can help victims of human trafficking since you may be the only outsider with the opportunity to speak with a victim. There are housing, health, immigration, food, income, employment and legal services available to victims, but first they must be found.

### **Victim Identification**

- A victim of trafficking may look like many of the people you help every day. You can help trafficking victims get the assistance they need by looking beneath the surface for the following clues:
  - Evidence of being controlled
  - Evidence of an inability to move or leave job
  - Bruises or other signs of battering
  - Fear or depression
  - Non-English speaking
  - Recently brought to this country from Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, Canada, Africa or India
  - Lack of passport, immigration or identification documentation
- Traffickers use various techniques to keep victims enslaved. Some traffickers keep their victims under lock and key. However, the more frequent practice is to use less obvious techniques including:
  - Debt bondage – financial obligations, honor-bound to satisfy debt
  - Isolation from the public – limiting contact with outsiders and making sure that any contact is monitored or superficial in nature
  - Isolation from family members and members of their ethnic and religious community
  - Confiscation of passports, visas and/or identification documents
  - Use or threat of violence toward victims and/or families of victims
  - The threat of shaming victims by exposing circumstances to family
  - Telling victims they will be imprisoned or deported for immigration violations if they contact authorities
  - Control of the victims' money, e.g., holding their money for “safe-keeping”

The result of such techniques is to instill fear in victims. The victims' isolation is further exacerbated because many do not speak English and are from countries where law enforcement is corrupt and feared.



### Victim Interaction

- Asking the right questions may help you determine if someone is a victim of human trafficking. It is important to talk to a potential victim in a safe and confidential environment. If the victim is accompanied by someone who seems controlling, you should try to separate the victim from that person. The accompanying person could be the trafficker or someone working for the trafficker.
- Ideally, you should also enlist the help of a staff member who speaks the patient's language and understands the patient's culture. As an alternative, you can enlist interpreter services such as those provided by the ATT Language Line. If your patient is a child, it is important to enlist the help of a social services specialist who is skilled in interviewing minor trafficking or abuse victims.
- Screen interpreters to ensure they do not know the victim or the traffickers and do not otherwise have a conflict of interest.

### Victim Assistance

- If you think you have come in contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.3737.888**. This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit **[www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)**.
- If you think you have encountered a victim of human trafficking, it is important for you to collaborate among key service providers, including the Department of Health and Human Services, law enforcement and others at the local, state and Federal levels, to help the victim get the protection and services they need. Calling the Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline will provide important guidance to you on enlisting these support services.
- Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, victims of human trafficking in the U.S. who are non-citizens may be eligible for a special visa and comprehensive benefits and services. Victims who are U.S. citizens are already eligible to receive many of these benefits.