

From the Desk of
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Human Trafficking: What Every Healthcare Professional Needs To Know



Bella Care
HOSPICE
Because Every Life is Beautiful

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Introduction to the Problem

When asked "Are you familiar with human trafficking?" many people shake their heads "No". Those aware of it indicate that it's a problem in other countries. And a handful of individuals state that they are aware of this terrible problem that not only exists in other countries around the world, but right here, in our own backyards.

What is Human Trafficking?

Although there may be a few definitions of human trafficking in the literature, the following is one of the most widely cited: "Human trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transporting, obtaining, or maintaining of a person by means of force, fraud, or coercion for purposes of involuntary servitude, debt bondage, slavery or a commercial sex act in which the person performing the act is under eighteen years old" (Nita Belles, 2015).

Frightening Statistics

It is estimated that there are over 27 million slaves in the world today. The largest business in the world involves drugs, the second and third largest businesses involve human slavery and the sale of guns. Around 80% of all trafficked people are female and 50% are children.

In the United States, between 244,000 and 325,000 American children are at risk. These are indeed frightening statistics and it appears that year after year, the situation is getting worse. While human trafficking or slavery have been around for thousands of years throughout human history, there are more modern slaves around the world than at any point in history.

There are 200,000 incidents of sexual exploitation of minors annually in the U.S. and each year, human trafficking brings in \$150 billion. Over \$99 billion of that is from sex

trafficking alone. Every year, between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked into the U.S. from other countries. More than 45,000 children run away from home annually in the U.S., making them a particularly vulnerable group to be trafficked. In fact the average age for sex trafficked children is 12-14 for girls and 11-13 for boys and cases of human trafficking increase every year.

Identifying Trafficked Persons

A note of caution - most trafficked persons are being watched by their traffickers or pimps. Healthcare professionals who believe they are encountering a trafficked person must proceed with extreme caution and think of their own safety.

People are trafficked for many types of work in a multitude of industries including:

- Sex Work (Massage)
- Domestic Labor (Housekeepers, Nannies)
- Agricultural Work (Fruit Pickers, Gardeners)
- Restaurant Work
- Construction
- Debt Bondage
- Factory Labor
- Commercial Sex Acts (Prostitutes)
- Laundries
- Sweatshops
- Hospitality (Hotels, Tourist Industry)
- Street Beggars
- Janitorial Services
- Fishing Industry
- Logging Industry

As a healthcare professional, you are uniquely experienced to observe various signs or behaviors indicative of trafficking. If the individual seems fearful, anxious and paranoid of the environment, he or she may be a victim of trafficking. The individual may seem depressed

and provide little to no eye contact. Cuts and bruises may also be signs of physical abuse.

The individual may be with another person who appears to be dominating and overly controlling. The person may require a translator and is never alone. If the healthcare professional is able to speak to the suspected trafficked individual, does he or she have personal identification like a passport, driver's license or other identification documents?

Can the individual schedule appointments, or are they not allowed to leave their place of employment or residence? Are they inconsistent with their story? Are they allowed to handle money? Have they recently arrived to the United States and cannot speak English? Are they afraid of law enforcement and receiving any outside help or assistance?



Final Words

Human Trafficking has been around for thousands of years all over the world. Today, it is right here, in our own back yards. One never knows if or when you will encounter a trafficked person, but as a healthcare professional, it is important to know what can be done. Please learn more about human trafficking by visiting The Polaris Project and The National Human Trafficking Resource Center online.

The NHTRC is a national, 24-hour, toll-free hotline and can be reached by calling 1-888-373-7888 or, emailing NHTRC@PolarisProject.org. You can also visit www.polarisproject.org or www.traffickingresourcecenter.org.