

Study Guide 2

Course 8T - Human Trafficking of Adolescents in America

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This is Study Guide 2 of Course 8T, Human Trafficking of Adolescents in America - a Continuing Education Course sponsored online for CE Credit by CEU BY Net, LLC. The course is a compendium of 7 copyrighted, research-validated publications within the public domain, addressing important aspects of Human Trafficking of Youth in the United States. The material has been organized into 3 separate Study Guides, and each Study Guide has one quiz. There is inherently some overlap in the three Study Guides as to the nature of Human Trafficking, but each Study Guide offers a specific noteworthy perspective of the national strategy to support adolescent and young adult victims of Human Trafficking. Together, the 3 Study Guides address the following topics. This is the second of the three Study Guides in the course.

- **Introduction: US Department of Justice 2017 National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking**
- **Legal Definitions of Human Trafficking and How to Recognize It**
- **Etiology of Human Trafficking in Youth and Young Adults**
- **Characteristics and Methods of Human Trafficking Perpetrators**
- **Role of Drug Dealing and Smuggling, Homelessness, and Survival Sex in Human Trafficking**
- **Therapeutic Approaches to Communicating with and Assisting Trafficking Victims**
- **Comprehensive Trafficking Assessment**
- **Safety Planning and Prevention**
- **Crisis Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic upon Homelessness and Trafficking**

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FYSB Family & Youth
Services Bureau

Runaway and Homeless Youth
Training & Technical Assistance Center

Human Trafficking in Youth-serving Programs: A Blueprint for Organizations Working with Street Youth, Homeless Youth, and Youth at Risk



Human Trafficking in Youth-Serving Programs: A Blueprint for Organizations Working with Street Youth, Homeless Youth, and Youth at Risk

I. Introduction

Defining Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has been recognized as a federal crime since 2000 when Congress passed The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, also known as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). According to the TVPA, “severe forms of trafficking” are defined as:

Sex trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a [commercial sex act](#), in which the 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.¹

Labor Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.²

Essentially, *trafficking* is any compelled activity, whether commercial sex or forced labor. Force, fraud, and coercion are the methods used by a trafficker to compel a person to engage in such acts. The following section details examples of force, fraud, and coercion. These examples are not exhaustive but are meant to represent the “types” of coercion utilized to compel adults and children to engagement in sexual activity and labor which are not voluntary. It is also important to mention that human trafficking is not only a federal crime but also a public health issue that needs a community response.

The legal definition of human trafficking describes three facets of the crime: an ACTION, a MEANS, and a PURPOSE. The table below describes each of these facets:

ACTION	MEANS	PURPOSE
<p>Recruiting includes proactive targeting of vulnerability and grooming behaviors</p>	<p>(Does not need to be present in a situation of sex trafficking of minors)</p>	<p>Commercial Sex Act is any sex act carried out in return for anything of value given to or received by any person.</p>
<p>Harboring includes isolation, confinement, monitoring</p>	<p>Force includes physical restraint, physical harm, sexual assault, and beatings. Monitoring and confinement is often used to control victims, especially during early stages of victimization to break down the victim's resistance.</p>	<p>Involuntary Servitude is any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.</p>

¹ Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, 22 U.S.C. § 7102, 2000. A commercial sex act is defined as any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person
² Ibid.

ACTION	MEANS (Does not need to be present in a situation of sex trafficking of minors)	PURPOSE
<p>Transporting includes movement and arranging travel</p> <p>Providing includes giving to another individual</p> <p>Obtaining includes forcibly taking or exchanging something for ability to control</p> <p>*Soliciting includes offering something of value</p> <p>*Patronizing includes receiving something of value</p> <p>*Only for sex trafficking</p>	<p>Fraud includes false promises regarding employment, wages, working conditions, love, marriage, or a better life. Over time, there may be unexpected changes in work conditions, compensation or debt agreements, or the nature of a relationship.</p> <p>Coercion includes threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person, psychological manipulation, document confiscation, and shame and fear-inducing threats to share information or pictures with others or report to authorities.</p>	<p>Debt Bondage includes a pledge of services by the debtor or someone under a debtor's control to pay down known or unknown charges (e.g. fees for transportation, boarding, food, and other incidentals; interest, fines for missing quotas, and charges for "bad behavior"). The length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined, where an individual is trapped in a cycle of debt that he or she can never pay down.</p> <p>Peonage is a status or condition of involuntary servitude based on real or alleged indebtedness</p> <p>Slavery is the state of being under the ownership or control of someone where a person is forced to work for another.</p>

(Table courtesy of OTIP: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/about/what-is-human-trafficking>)

NOTE: There is only one exception to the requirement for PROOF of force, fraud, or coercion in the determination of sex trafficking: Any youth under the age of 18 involved in commercial sex activities where money or anything of value is given to or received by any person, is considered a victim of domestic sex trafficking under federal and most state laws. NO PROOF of force, fraud, or coercion is required. This includes runaway and homeless youth under the age of 18 who trade sex (also known as survival sex) with an adult for something of value or to meet their basic needs.

Youth experiencing homelessness have limited options for securing employment in the formal economy because of their age, lack of fixed or permanent address, little or no work experience, or because their financial needs are more significant than what they can earn to support themselves. If forced to live on the streets and facing diminished employment prospects and few options to earn money, many youth are compelled to trade sex to meet their basic needs. Supportive services and caring adults can make a difference through assistance and the offer of housing, educational and employment opportunities, as well as behavioral health services.

Youth-serving organizations are always encouraged to collaborate with community partners to ensure vulnerable and street youth receive assistance and support before being recruited or caught into trafficking or exploitative situations.

II. Common Misconceptions about Trafficking and Runaway and Homeless Youth

Service providers working with youth at risk or vulnerable populations should have a clear understanding of what human trafficking is and how it impacts the population they serve. When our understanding is clouded or biased by misconceptions, our ability to respond to this issue is reduced. It is important to learn how to identify and break down commonly held myths and misconceptions regarding human trafficking and its intersection with runaway and homeless youth as well as other vulnerable youth.

- **Myth 1: Human trafficking only happens to youth in metropolitan areas.**

Reality: Human trafficking occurs in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Sex and labor trafficking happens in every state — in rural and sparsely populated locations, small towns, suburban and bedroom communities, and major metropolitan areas.

- **Myth 2: Youth must be transported across state lines or international borders to be victims of trafficking.**

Reality: Trafficking does not require movement across state lines or international borders. Runaway and homeless youth can be trafficked in their own communities. Although

transportation may be involved as a control mechanism to keep victims in unfamiliar places, it is not a necessary element of human trafficking.

- **Myth 3: Human trafficking requires the trafficker to use physical force, such as beatings, chains, or handcuffs, to control the young person.**

Reality: Trafficking does not require physical restraint, bodily harm, or physical force.

Traffickers also use psychological means, such as threats, fraud, or abuse, to exert control over victims. Traffickers control their victims by removing all the opportunities for them to make their own choices.

- **Myth 4: Trafficked youth are always females.**

Reality: Trafficking victims are male and female — gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, and questioning.

In 2016, a study commissioned by the US Department of Justice found that males make up about 36% of children caught up in the US sex industry (about 60% are female, and less than 5% are transgender males and females).³ Another study in New York City reported that males account for about 45% of domestic minor sex trafficking victims in New York City. The problem of commercial sexual exploitation of young males is vastly under reported.

³ Swaner, Rachel, Labriola, Michael, Walker, Allyson, and Spadafore, Joseph. Youth Involvement in the Sex Trade: A National Study. (June 2016). Retrieved October 15, 2018.

<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/grants/249952.pdf>

- **Myth 5: Youth will tell you if they have been trafficked.**

Reality: Victims of human trafficking often do not seek help or self-identify as victims of a crime. Sometimes youth may not realize they are victims of human trafficking. When the trafficker is a relative or someone the youth knows well, it may be difficult for the youth to understand what is happening and even more difficult to ask for help. Youth may feel powerless, afraid, threatened, and, in some cases, may feel they will not be believed. There are many reasons youth may not self-identify or seek help. This makes it all the more important for providers to integrate human trafficking prevention and respond effectively to youth who may be a victim or those who are at risk of being recruited into trafficking.

- **Myth 6: Sex trafficking is the only form of trafficking that impacts runaway and homeless youth.**

Reality: Runaway and homeless youth can also be victims of labor trafficking — sometimes in legitimate businesses. A study conducted by the Modern Slavery Research Project interviewed 641 runaway and homeless youth and determined that:

- Of the respondents, 8% (51) were found to have been trafficked for labor.
- Of the respondents, 8.1% (52) said they had been labor trafficked in factories, domestic labor situations, agriculture, international drug smuggling, sex-trade-related labor, and commission-based sales.
- The vast majority (81%) of labor trafficking cases reported in this study were instances of forced drug dealing.
- Nearly 7% (42) of all youth interviewed had been forced into working in the drug trade. Forced drug dealing occurred through familial and cultural coercion, as well as through the violence of suppliers and gangs.
- Of the respondents, 3% (22) were trafficked for both sex and labor.
- Overall, 91% of respondents reported being approached by someone who was offering an opportunity for income that turned into trafficking as well as receiving offers for commercial sexual exchanges, fraudulent commission-based sales, credit card scams, stolen phone sales, and check fraud.⁴

- **Myth 7: Young people under the age of 18 who trade sex for food, clothing, or shelter are not trafficking victims.**

Reality: A young person under 18 who trades sex for anything of value is considered a victim of domestic minor sex trafficking. Force, fraud, or coercion do not need to be proven.

- **Myth 8: No one age bracket is more vulnerable to trafficking than another.**

Reality: New research suggests that although human trafficking spans all demographics, youth (especially runaway and homeless youth ages 16–21) are particularly susceptible to traffickers or trafficking situations. Runaway and homeless youth lack a strong supportive network and run away to unfamiliar environments, making them particularly at risk of trafficking. Vulnerable youth or RHY have experienced multiple traumas throughout their lives, and these life experiences will make them more vulnerable to traffickers.

- **Myth 9: The typical trafficker who preys on youth is an easy-to-spot “bad guy.”**

Reality: There is no typical trafficker. Young people can be trafficked by parents, family members, relatives, family friends, boyfriends, intimate partners, employers, labor brokers, smugglers, and friends. Traffickers come from all walks of life and can be men or women, old or young, any race or ethnicity, any sexual orientation, and from any economic or social bracket. They can be part of an organized enterprise, such as a street gang, or they can work alone.

- **Myth 10: Young adults who are experiencing homelessness want to be involved in the sex trade and, therefore, are not trafficked.**

Reality: Many runaway and homeless youth, between ages 18-22, who are involved in the sex trade or survival acts are forced by their circumstances due to their age, inability to secure employment, lack of stable housing, and mental health issues, among other things. These young people feel that they have no other option but to trade sex for something of value.

⁴ Murphy, Laura T. 2016. Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth: A 10-City Survey. New Orleans: Loyola University Modern Slavery Research Project.

III. Recruitment into Labor and Sex Trafficking

Traffickers use many methods to lure vulnerable youth into labor and sex trafficking. They manipulate and exploit youth vulnerabilities. They make false promises, such as high wages, better living accommodations, glamorous lifestyles, and exciting opportunities. Some traffickers may initially engage in romantic relationships with victims, leading them to believe they have found true love and emotional fulfillment.⁵

Traffickers also take advantage of social media to gain more points of access in recruiting youth. Social media provides easy, discreet, and consistent access to youth. One-fifth of youth report being online “constantly,” and 92% of youth report being active on social media at least daily, according to a recent study.⁶ Furthermore, depending on the site or app, communication through social media can remain largely anonymous and unnoticed by friends, family, and other adults who may otherwise intervene in a concerning situation.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline has identified other methods traffickers employ to recruit youth, including, but not limited to:

- Contacting youth via social media messaging or tagging them in photos.
- Contacting youth on a dating site or app.
- Providing cell phones to youth so they can access social media.
- Advertising jobs for sales crews, dance clubs, or modeling opportunities.
- Posing as potential romantic partners to gain trust.
- Forcing victims of trafficking to recruit other youth via social media.

Who Are the Traffickers?

There is no typical trafficker. Parents, family members or relatives, family friends, boyfriends, intimate partners, employers, labor brokers, smugglers, friends, or strangers can be traffickers.^{7,8} Traffickers exploit their relationship with their victims by providing a sense of belonging or self-worth. Because of this false sense of security, victims may confuse their traffickers with the friends and family they may desperately desire.

⁵ National Human Trafficking Hotline. 2018. The Victims & Traffickers. Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/victims-traffickers>.

⁶ Lenhart, Amanda. 2015. Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/#fn-13190-1>.

⁷ Lutnick, Alexandra. 2016. *Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: Beyond Victims and Villains*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁸ Dank, Meredith, Jennifer Yahner, Kuniko Madden, Isela Bañuelos, Lilly Yu, Andrea Ritchie, Mitchyll Mora, and Brendan Conner. 2015. *Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Engaged in Survival Sex (2015)*

What Industries Are Susceptible to Sex or Labor Trafficking?

Most people think trafficking occurs only in the commercial sex industry, but traffickers operate in agriculture, hospitality, food service, private residences, construction, carnivals and fairs, factories, and assisted-living facilities.⁹ Industries with high environmental dangers and risk, such as mining, fishing, and herding are also common places for trafficking.¹⁰

Traffickers can be part of an organized enterprise, or they can work alone. In the United States, criminal street gangs traffic youth into drug and sex markets that intersect with many of the industries mentioned above.

How are Youth Lured into Trafficking?

Several studies have been conducted to examine data from youth victims of sex trafficking as well as from social service providers. Researcher Alexandra Lutnick collected data from case managers from three nonprofit agencies located in New York, San Francisco, and Chicago who work directly with minors who trade sex.¹¹

Laura Murphy's study focused on runaway and homeless youth victims of labor trafficking. The study indicated youth were often victims of traveling sales, landscaping, and construction crews as well as traffickers who focus on restaurants, carnivals and fairs, and strip clubs.¹²

Runaway and homeless youth and other vulnerable youth are particularly at risk for recruitment by traffickers. Traffickers wait at bus stops, malls, movie theatres, school grounds, as well as gas stations, corner stores, nightclubs, and other places young people might hang out to recruit them into sex and labor trafficking. Traffickers also recruit youth through online job advertisements or social media as well as in-person contacts at government assistance offices, homeless shelters, and parks and bus stops — essentially anywhere vulnerable youth gather. In these settings, scam job recruiters will offer young people lucrative work opportunities in commission-based sales, modeling, domestic work, agriculture, and drug dealing.

Sometimes, traffickers promise \$1,000 a day for simple secretarial work, or they promise that youth can make \$100 for every cell phone they give away. Traffickers may tempt street youth with modeling, acting, or music industry jobs. In one study of more than 640 homeless youth in the United States and Canada, 91% of the youth interviewed had been approached by someone offering them lucrative job opportunities that were too good to be true and that the youth understood to be exploitative.¹³ These situations are not necessarily trafficking on their own, but when force, fraud, and/or coercion are used to compel youth to work against their will, these situations are considered trafficking (even if the work is in an illicit industry, such as drug dealing, smuggling, or cultivation, or in cases of labor trafficking, such as being a driver within the sex industry).¹⁴

⁸ LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Engaged in Survival Sex. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. ⁹ Owens, C., Dank, M., Farrell, A., Breaux, J., Banuelos, I., Pfeffer, R., McDevitt, J. (2014).

⁹ Understanding the organization, operation, and victimization process of labor trafficking in the United States. Washington, DC: Urban Institute and Boston, MA: Northeastern University.

¹⁰ Urban Institute (2014). *Hidden in plain sight: Labor trafficking in America*. Paper presented at the Urban Institute, Washington, DC. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/hidden-plain-sight-labor-trafficking-united-states>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Murphy, Laura T. 2016. Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth: A 10-City Survey. New Orleans: Loyola University Modern Slavery Research Project.

¹³ Murphy, Laura T. 2016. Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth: A 10-City Survey. New Orleans: Loyola University Modern Slavery Research Project.

¹⁴ Washington, DC: Urban Institute and Boston, MA: Northeastern University. Hidden in Plain Site. <https://apps.urban.org/features/us-labor-trafficking/lies.html> **Note: Multiple Chapters accessible.**

In the Urban Institute's 2014 study of the underground, commercial sex economy, interviews with sex traffickers and other pimps revealed that they target young women who are "damaged" and have experienced emotional and family issues. Traffickers often know that the young women they recruit tend to have histories of sexual assault. Traffickers use a wide variety of tactics, ranging from romance to physical violence, to coerce girls and women into engaging in the sex trade.¹⁵

In addition, some young victims may be trafficked by family members, including parents and extended family. In "Recognizing Human Trafficking among Homeless Youth," the data indicated 36% of victims were trafficked by family members. Victims in this study who reported being trafficked by family members stated the trafficker most often utilized coercion (e.g., telling the victim the family would be evicted if they did not engage in sexual acts with the landlord) to bring them into trafficking. Victims of familial trafficking also reported a sense of responsibility to protect younger siblings. Finally, victims of familial trafficking sometimes ran away from their family trafficker and were then targeted by non-familial traffickers once on the street.¹⁶

IV. Understanding Risk and Protective Factors

Risk Factors

Although there is no standard profile of a trafficking victim, several risk factors make certain youth more susceptible. Reports indicate that traffickers often target children and youth with a history of sexual abuse, poor family connections, substance abuse issues, history of running away, low self-esteem/self-worth, dating or family violence, unstable home life, involvement in the juvenile justice system or child welfare, and minimal social or community support.

Runaway and homeless youth — male, female, and transgender — and other vulnerable youth, are at a particularly high risk for becoming victims, although some trafficked youth continue living at home and attending school. There is also a strong correlation between sexually exploited youth and childhood sexual abuse, chronic maltreatment and neglect, and otherwise unstable home environments. Research findings estimate that between 33% and 90% of victims of commercial child sexual exploitation have experienced these types of abuses.¹⁷ Evidence also suggests that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth can be up to five times more likely than heterosexual youths to become victims of trafficking due to the increased susceptibility that accompanies feelings of rejection and alienation often experienced by LGBTQ youth.¹⁸

In summary, possible risk factors associated with trafficking include:

- Lack of personal safety
- Isolation
- Emotional distress
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Family dysfunction
- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Learning disabilities
- Developmental delay
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Promotion of sexual exploitation by family members or peers
- Lack of social support

¹⁴ Rizen, Christina M. 2015. "Are Juvenile Gang Members Victims of Labor Trafficking?" *Children's Legal Rights Journal* 35, no. 2 (January): 163–176.

¹⁵ Dank, Meredith, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, Deborah Mayer, Colleen Owens, Laura Pacifici, and Lilly Yu. 2014. *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*. New York: Urban Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/estimating-size-and-structure-underground-commercial-sex-economy-eight-major-us-cities>.

¹⁶ Makini Chisolm-Straker, Julia Einbond, Jeremy Sze, and Jim White, *Recognizing Human Trafficking Among Homeless Youth*, (Newark: Covenant House New Jersey, 2017). Access at: <https://nj.covenanthouse.org/traffickingrelease>.

¹⁷ Williamson, Celia, and Michael Prior. 2009. "Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: A Network of Underground Players in the Midwest." *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 2, no. 1 (March): 46–61k.

Protective Factors

Data on protective factors related to human trafficking is limited; however, a report published in January 2018 by the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice, & Research at the University of Pennsylvania has recently provided some insight. “Human Trafficking Prevalence and Child Welfare Risk Factors among Homeless Youth: A Multi-City Study,” identified two protective factors and several recommendations for reducing risks for these youth.

The two potential protective factors identified in the study are: (1) the presence of a caring adult, and (2) graduation from high school. The study provides recommendations for assisting youth-serving organizations in identifying and possibly predicting youth who are at greater risk of being trafficked and developing additional prevention and intervention approaches.¹⁹

The following chart contains recommendations included in the study referenced above. Policy recommendations follow increased awareness and understanding of the underlying and intersecting factors of populations, social indicators, and community responses. Which of these recommendations do you follow in your organizational or community responses to trafficking?

¹⁸ US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. 2014. *Guidance to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States*. Washington, DC: Author.

¹⁹ Wolfe, Debra Schilling, Johanna Greeson, Sarah Wasch, and Daniel Treglia. 2018. *Human Trafficking Prevalence and Child Welfare Risk Factors among Homeless Youth: A Multi-City Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research.

Policy and Practice Recommendations from the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research – University of Pennsylvania (2018)

1. Utilize data to identify populations at highest risk for human trafficking and create targeted prevention services.
2. Support continued and increased funding for programming for homeless youth at both state and federal levels.
3. Target street outreach services to newly homeless youth and support continued funding of this critical service.
4. Promote psychoeducational intervention and access to evidence-based treatment for victims of sexual abuse.
5. As LGBTQ youth are frequent targets, develop and implement victimization minimization services for this demographic.
6. Promote programs that encourage youth to remain in school and graduate from high school. Preliminary data indicate that being in school, as opposed to earning a GED, may be a protective factor.
7. Support policies that promote out-of-home-placement stability for youth in the child welfare system, as multiple moves place them at greater risk.
8. Assure that youth who exit the child welfare system are financially literate and are provided with transitional and after-care services to foster a successful transition to independence.
9. Identify and foster emotional attachments for vulnerable children and youth with both family members and other caring adults, including natural mentorship initiatives to help connect at-risk youth with caring adults in their lives. Early identification of and facilitation of such relationships can serve to both prevent youth from becoming victimized and to provide a resource should they end up needing support and assistance.
10. Services and interventions need to acknowledge that being trafficked does not define *who* youth are, but rather it is something that happened to them. This is likely one in a series of traumas they have faced throughout their lives. Therefore, all services must be trauma-informed.²⁰

V. Prevention and Intervention

Safety Planning

Safety plans cannot be solely focused on getting youth “out of the life,” helping them leave a “bad job,” or separating them from their traffickers. Instead, these plans should address the

long-term needs of all youth who are vulnerable to traffickers and assist them in identifying how to increase their safety in the present moment, as well as teach them skills for maintaining safety in the future. When serving trafficked youth, service providers should work closely with the youth survivor to develop a plan that includes their input and meets their unique needs.

Generally, safety planning refers to formal or informal risk assessments, preparations, and contingency plans designed to increase the safety of the youth at risk for human trafficking or trafficked youth. There are excellent resources for assisting youth who are vulnerable to trafficking in developing personal safety plans.²¹

When assisting vulnerable or trafficked youth, there are additional safety issues for the service provider, including protecting staff and other clients. The traffickers can pose significant threats to the safety not only of the victims, but also of the youth worker or organizations serving these youth. Below you will find some strategies to consider when developing safety plans in your programs.

Safety plans include five key components:

- Identification of support sources
- Identification, development, and practice of coping strategies
- Creation of detailed plans to respond to or plan for dangerous situations
- Identification of safer strategies for youth who are still being trafficked
- Development of mini-plans, with conversations and role-playing opportunities

Safety planning should include:

- Potential red flags of sex trafficking and labor trafficking
- Description of concerns surrounding trafficking, such as isolation and fear for safety
- Tips for youth when they are exploring “too good to be true” employment offers
- Tips for youth who are traveling out of state
- Ways to escape traffickers who use physical violence or coercion
- Places to call for help or assistance (i.e., hotlines)
- Recognizing danger signals in relationships and what to do when threats occur
- Identifying available resources for emergency shelter and basic needs

²⁰ Wolfe, Debra Schilling, Johanna Greeson, Sarah Wasch, and Daniel Treglia. 2018. *Human Trafficking Prevalence and Child Welfare Risk Factors among Homeless Youth: A Multi-City Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research.

Screening

First and foremost, it is important to remember that all screening questions need to be trauma-informed and should be asked in an appropriate setting. All processes and interactions with youth should be trauma-informed, and the goal should not be a full disclosure. Certain screenings may be conducted by any staff member, if the questions are only asked in a yes or no fashion. Youth service providers who are not trained in counseling or social work should refrain from engaging with youth in drawn-out conversations about these experiences of exploitation and reach out to appropriate personnel, if needed. Youth-serving organizations do not need to develop or adopt a formal human trafficking screening tool; however, the organizations do need to include questions at initial contact or intake that may determine if a youth is at high risk or is already a victim of trafficking. Once increased risk or probability is identified, partnering organizations or those with specific clinical training can complete more in-depth assessments. Organizations may also consider the inclusion of elements that can assist in understanding the youth's life experiences and help organizations build a rapport with the youth.

The purpose of a screening tool is to identify which youth may need to receive additional assessment(s) and make appropriate referrals. The youth may also be engaged in more in-depth assessment with a trained clinician or counselor where victimization may be confirmed. In job skills training and job placement settings, labor trafficking questions can be used as a point of entry into talking about safe job search practices and may also help to identify potential trafficking victims. The conversation about these issues should be nonjudgmental, and assessments should be offered to any youth who may be at risk of trafficking. Exploitative labor situations that are not tantamount to trafficking can also be traumatic or negatively affect youth. Youth in these situations should be assisted with services and counseling organizations can review and incorporate one or more of the questions in the Human Trafficking **Screening Tool – Short Form (HTST-SF)** into existing screening tools. These questions are:

1. Did someone you work for ever refuse to pay what they promised and keep all or most of the money you made?
2. Did you ever trade sexual acts for food, clothing, money, shelter, favors, or other necessities for survival before you reached the age of 18?
3. Were you ever physically beaten, slapped, kicked, punched, burned, or harmed in any way by someone you worked for?
4. Have you ever been unable to leave a place you worked or talk to people you wanted to talk to, even when you weren't working, because the person you worked for threatened or controlled you?

5. Did someone you work for ever ask, pressure, or force you to do something sexually that you did not feel comfortable doing?
6. Were you ever forced to engage in sexual acts with family, friends, clients, or business associates for money or favors, by someone you worked for?

²¹ Polaris Project, National Human Trafficking Resource Center. 2011. *Safety Planning and Prevention*. Retrieved from <http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/Safety%20Planning%20At%20A%20Glance.pdf>

Understanding the Needs of Youth Victims

Although many youth-serving organizations provide comprehensive services for specific subpopulations of youth, not all organizations provide services for victims of human trafficking, and even the most comprehensive of these organizations cannot work alone to meet the needs of youth and young adults accessing services. It is not uncommon for trafficking survivors to present with concurrent challenges, including:

- A history of complex trauma
- A need for safe and stable housing (emergency, temporary, transitional, and permanent)
- Physical health problems, including chronic and acute illnesses, injuries and impairments; untreated wounds; broken or poorly-set bones; and reproductive health issues, such as sexually transmitted infections, pelvic inflammatory disease, pregnancy, and complications related to pregnancy)
- Mental health issues, including trauma, post-traumatic stress, somatic complaints, depression, anxiety, self-harm, and so forth
- Substance use and abuse
- Emotional and behavioral issues, including struggles with trust and building healthy relationships as well as evidence of low self-esteem
- Substance use or abuse history and ongoing struggles with addiction

Trafficked youth often do not have their birth certificates, social security cards, driver's licenses, or legal photo identification. Many trafficking victims have never developed basic adult life skills, such as grocery shopping, budgeting, banking, financial planning, time management, and healthy personal hygiene.

Trafficking victims may also have serious legal issues. They may have outstanding warrants for crimes committed while they were being trafficked, such as prostitution, drug possession or distribution, or petty theft, and other criminal issues that need to be addressed.

To meet the complex needs of victims of human trafficking, it is imperative for youth-serving organizations to develop an extensive referral network. This referral network should include RHY programs in the organization's service area. Programs must link with other service providers that can help with specific kinds of problem-solving. Building cooperative and collaborative service models to help victims is critical.

Longer-term Interventions: Education, Vocation, and Employment Opportunities

Prevention also includes providing youth with opportunities and access to resources that can aid in improving their chances of obtaining and maintaining employment and safe and stable housing, as well as facilitating permanent connections to trustworthy adults. Providing these services can involve a wide array of tools, including life skills classes, assistance in re-entering the public school system for disconnected youth, providing mentors and tutors to assist them in the completion of their high school diploma or GED, providing opportunities to participate in vocational programs that allow them to earn a degree or certificate, apprenticeships that provide paid, on-the-job training and opportunities to start a career when said training is completed, and job skills coaching designed to ensure youth have a pipeline to positions that offer competitive wages and benefits.

Service Provider Collaborations

Your organization may already be working with local service providers who also include services to victims of human trafficking as part of their ongoing efforts. Connecting to potential community partners is key to developing a comprehensive and cohesive community response and to strengthening the impact of each participating organization. Possible collaborations include the following:

- Emergency department at a local hospital,
- Local urgent care facilities
- Community health care providers
- Legal services and pro bono lawyers
- Local anti-trafficking advocates
- Local housing organizations, including faith-based and nongovernmental organizations
- Local food banks
- County mental health services
- Local police and firefighter contacts

Some cities and states have anti-trafficking task forces. Youth-serving organizations should investigate how to join the nearest anti-trafficking task force.

Integrating Human Trafficking Prevention into Programs

Youth-serving organizations can integrate human trafficking prevention into existing programming.

For example:

- Organizations may include prevention discussions focusing on characteristics and factors that increase youth vulnerability to being targeted by traffickers as well as protective factors. These discussions can be held with other social service providers, hospital personnel, law enforcement, adult homeless providers, and other community collaborators who serve vulnerable youth. When the entire community is on the same page, it becomes easier to communicate using the same language.
- Youth-serving programs should foster discussions on key topics, such as consent, peer pressure, social media/online safety, fraudulent employment recruitment, as well as locations traffickers use to recruit youth (i.e., bus stops and stations, government aid offices, malls). Inherent in these discussions is the need to assist youth in increasing their self-esteem and to use strengths-based approaches to build youths' abilities to help them transition into healthy adulthood. These discussions may take place individually with a youth or as part of group life skill sessions. This level of prevention may result in life-long positive outcomes for each youth.
- Programs can partner with youth to learn about their lived experiences and develop strategies to reach other street or at-risk youth. Youth use different language and tools to connect with each other, and traffickers use these methods to target youth. Traffickers understand the social media doorways through which vulnerable youth may enter. By involving youth in program efforts to develop outreach materials, examples for discussion, and language to use on social media, prevention efforts can be more targeted and effective.

Making Effective Referrals

To establish an effective referral network with programs in the community, including runaway and homeless youth programs, organizations must develop collaborations with service providers, including RHY, and other non-traditional partners to ensure effective referrals. Youth-serving organizations and schools should not make referrals only for trafficked youth, but also for those youth who may be at greater risk for a trafficking situation. Some youth run away due to family conflict, being thrown out of the home by their parents or guardians, the family finding themselves homeless, and so forth. Youth in crisis are at a higher risk for trafficking, and youth service organizations are encouraged to address these situations before the youth encounter a

trafficking situation or leave home. Once on the street, youth are at risk of physical and sexual assault, addiction, increased mental health challenges, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking.

What to Do if You Suspect a Youth Has Been Trafficked

If you suspect a young person is a victim of sex or labor trafficking, observe the following guidelines:

- Know your role and request assistance if needed. (i.e., Does your program have an established protocol? Do you need to work closely with your supervisor in this situations?)
- Establish trust with and explain your role to the young person.
- Outline what will happen to the information he or she shares.
- Consider the following items:
 - Self-identification as a victim is not likely.
 - Multiple conversations with the youth may be needed.
 - Interrogation is not an effective method to learn about the youth's situation.
 - Sensitivity is critical to a successful screening or assessment.
 - Safety should always come first.
 - Coordination with other agencies benefits everyone.
 - Personal and cultural context must be considered to establish rapport.

Reporting

Youth-serving organizations should review their jurisdiction's reporting policies. If a suspected trafficker is a caretaker, child abuse and neglect laws will also be considered, which will trigger the mandatory reporting of suspected abuse and/or neglect. [Click here](#) to access state-specific information. ²²(<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>)

Coordination

Youth-serving organizations can coordinate responses by ensuring that there is protocol established and reaching out to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH/1-888-373-7888; <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>) to coordinate a response. The NHTH is available to assist in determining the best course of action for finding local anti-trafficking services. The hotline can recommend shelters, service providers, law enforcement assistance, translation assistance, and other services that may be necessary to best serve the victim.

Another source of help is the National Runaway Safeline. The Safeline can give guidance on potential runaway situations and help determine next steps if a youth is confirmed to have run away from home. The National Runaway Safeline number is **1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929)**. In addition, the National Runaway Safeline provides services to at-risk youth as well as prevention strategies and resources for youth-serving organizations, such as the evidence-based prevention curriculum *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention*. Youth-serving organizations and schools are encouraged to reach out to the National Runaway Safeline to connect youth with their services.

A community *multidisciplinary team approach* is another helpful resource that brings service providers and law enforcement together and is key to successfully assisting youth who have been trafficked, both in terms of protecting them from re-traumatization and ensuring that they receive comprehensive services. Youth-serving organizations can join such teams. Research your community to see if there is an already-functioning human trafficking task force or anti-trafficking multidisciplinary team.

Survivor-informed Services

Survivors can be a tremendous resource in all aspects of youth programs. They can assist in outreach, program planning, and much more. Youth-serving organizations can include survivors in programming because they have firsthand knowledge of human trafficking and youth programming. Including the modus operandi of traffickers, the harmful effects on victims, prevention efforts, possible outreach techniques to minimize trafficking, identify youth victims, and other valuable knowledge.

²² It is never a staff member or provider's responsibility to investigate and decide if, in fact, child abuse or trafficking has occurred. Service youth providers must work with key stakeholders to ensure the youth is safe and has the support needed.

Benefits to leveraging the expertise of survivors in programming include:

- Structured channels for receiving direct feedback from youth about programs
- Strengthened trust and connections to youth
- Insight to better direct outreach to other youth in need
- Culturally competent, trauma-informed, and youth-oriented approaches
- Unique solutions to complex problems faced by young survivors
- Expanded insight into the effect of trauma on young survivors' decisions
- Survivor empowerment by provision of leadership opportunities and financial empowerment through employment and/or professional experience

Youth-serving organizations should develop policies related to working with survivors, including establishing guidelines for protecting the health and well-being of survivors who work with service providers.

VI. Approaches to Work with Trafficked Youth

Understanding Complex Trauma

Each year in the United States, 46 million children are impacted by trauma.²³ Trauma can be the result of one horrific event or of years of abuse and/or deprivation. Complex trauma is the result of multiple or prolonged exposure to traumatic events or experiences, which can disrupt a young person's ability to form healthy attachments to other individuals.²⁴ Because vulnerable youth often have histories of abuse, poverty, substance abuse, family violence, and other adverse experiences, staff working with the population should be knowledgeable about trauma and its impact and should be skilled in working with traumatized youth in a way that does not re-traumatize them. It is likely that most young people experiencing homelessness have complex trauma. Youth who are trafficked also have complex trauma from force, fraud, and coercion, as well as from loss of control, victimization, sleep deprivation, hunger, fear of retribution, threats toward family and loved ones, acute and chronic illness, and injuries from violence.

Many homeless youth have had experiences throughout their young lives that have resulted in complex trauma. For many homeless youth and young adults, the traffickers were not their first abusers. Trauma impacts both mental and physical development, affects behavior, and interferes with a young person's ability to function and engage with other individuals.²⁵ The relationship between trauma and risk has been proven. The Adverse Childhood Experiences

Study recorded the effects of trauma on children since 1995 and has documented the relationship between childhood trauma and many negative behaviors and outcomes in adolescence and adulthood.²⁶ It is critical for youth-serving organizations to train staff to understand and recognize complex trauma.

²³ Listenbee, Robert L. Jr., Joe Torre, Gregory Boyle, Sharon W. Cooper, Sarah Deer, Deanne Tilton Durfee, Thea James, Alicia Lieberman, Robert Macy, Steven Marans, Jim McDonnell, Georgina Mendoza, and Antonio Taguba. 2012. *Report of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/cev-rpt-full.pdf>.

²⁴ Klain, Eva J. 2014. "Understanding Trauma and Its Impact on Child Clients." *Child Law Practice* 33, no. 9 (September): 181–186.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

Understanding Trauma Bonding (Stockholm Syndrome)

All staff working with vulnerable youth and runaway and homeless youth must also have a clear understanding of trauma bonding. Traumatic bonds can be formed when children and youth seek attachment in the face of extreme danger. This bonding with the perpetrator, sometimes called Stockholm syndrome, is common in human trafficking situations, particularly sex trafficking. As one expert noted, “When there is no access to ordinary sources of comfort, people may turn toward their tormentors.”²⁷ Traumatic bonding is the result of cognitive distortions, such as the equating of terror and love.²⁸ Two conditions must be present for the formation of traumatic bonds: (1) a marked power imbalance resulting in feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and vulnerability, and (2) intermittent abuse that alternates with positive or neutral interactions.²⁹ Traumatic bonding complicates victim identification because young people have formed attachments to their traffickers and do not recognize their own exploitation. For a young person who has been separated from an abuser (who is often seen as a love object), the concepts of safety and self-determination are challenging and may be frightening.³⁰ Understanding trauma bonding can help youth-serving staff comprehend a protective stance a trafficking victim may take toward his or her trafficker.

Trauma-informed Approach

Many programs have adopted a trauma-informed approach to working with trauma-impacted and trafficked youth. All staff working with trafficked youth (not just clinical staff) and vulnerable youth can and should use a trauma-informed approach. In fact, evidence suggests trauma-informed settings provide the foundation for more formal therapy and are an essential prerequisite for that clinical work.³¹

Implementing trauma-informed approaches will often require a philosophical and cultural change within an agency — at every level.³² Youth service providers and other professionals working with youth trauma survivors have identified common themes around which programs have been designed, including trauma awareness, an emphasis on safety, opportunities to rebuild control, and a strengths-based approach.³³

Victim-centered Approach

In a victim-centered approach, a youth’s wishes, safety, and well-being take priority in all matters and procedures. A victim-centered approach is defined as the systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim to ensure the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner. This approach seeks to minimize re-traumatization often

associated with health and human services and/or the criminal justice process by providing the support of victim advocates and service providers, empowering youth survivors to be engaged participants in the process, providing them with an opportunity to play a role in their own recovery and healing process.³⁴

Victim-centered approaches can bring a diversity of specialized service skills, social resources, cultural competence, and, ideally, a trauma-informed perspective. Organizations implementing survivor-centered strategies are able to assess survivor needs and provide critical support to victims. Such skills are imperative to building rapport and trust with youth survivors, meeting their needs, and assisting them in creating safety and security in their lives.

Adopting the following principles will assist organizations in maintaining a victim-centered approach:

- Victims are not only present at meetings — “nothing about me without me” — they also advise the organization when and where meetings are most beneficial/least stressful for them, and identify people they want to attend the meeting as advocates/supports.
- Victims determine who will facilitate the meeting — they may choose to facilitate or they may identify a trusted advocate to lead the discussion.
- Victims are the decision-makers in terms of what services and supports they will accept and when and how they will access them.
- Victims are valued members of the team and are engaged in the conversation versus being bystanders as professionals make plans for them.
- A victim-centered approach ensures a forward-looking stance versus focusing on past challenges — the discussion is focused on what the victim wants the future to look like and what they want or expect to achieve as a result of services and supports.

²⁷ van der Kolk, Bessel A. 1989. “The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma.” *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 12, no. 2 (June): 389–411.

²⁸ Reid, Joan A. 2014. *Trauma Bonding: Research, Theory & Practice* (National Webinar). Sponsored by the Family and Youth Services Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bath, Howard. 2008. “The Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care.” *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 17, no. 3: 17–21.

https://www.hope.ms.gov/sites/mccj/files/Hope%20training%20January%202021/read_3%20Pillars%20of%20TIC.pdf

³² Hopper, Elizabeth K., Ellen L. Bassuk and Jeffery Olivett 2010. “Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homeless Services Settings.” *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal* 3: 80–100.

³³ Ibid.

Strengths-based Approaches

Strengths-based approaches value the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections, and potential of youth and of youth in communities. One of the best known strengths-based approaches is Positive Youth Development (PYD). According to the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, PYD is an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to encourage and build on their leadership strengths.³⁵

Focusing on strengths does not mean ignoring challenges or spinning struggles into strengths. Instead, this approach is based on new research that determined that promoting positive asset building and considering young people as resources are critical strategies. As a result, the youth development field began examining the role of resiliency — the protective factors in a young person's environment — and how these factors could influence one's ability to overcome adversity. The factors include, but are not limited to, family support and monitoring; caring adults; positive peer groups; strong sense of self, self-esteem, and future aspirations; and engagement in school and community activities.

PYD has its origins in the field of prevention. In the past, prevention efforts typically focused on single problems before they surfaced in youth, such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency. When practitioners began encouraging youth to identify their strengths in the face of great difficulty, they noted that young people who possess a diverse set of protective factors can, in fact, experience more positive outcomes. These findings encouraged the development of interventions and programs that reduce risks and strengthen protective factors. The programs and interventions are strengthened when they involve and engage youth as equal partners, ultimately providing benefits for both the program and the involved youth.

The strengths-based approach to practice has broad applicability across a number of practice settings and a wide range of populations, but this approach is especially promising with youth. New evidence suggests that a strengths-based approach can improve retention in treatment programs for youth who misuse substances. There is also evidence that use of a strengths-based approach can improve social networks and enhance well-being in the face of great difficulty.

The following are few of the key principles of a strengths-based approach:

- Focus on strengths, abilities, and potential rather on than problems, deficits, and pathologies.
- Recognize the strengths and expertise of participants: everyone is a teacher and a learner.
- Focus on the whole person and recognize a positive social context rather than focusing on the “broken” part of participants. For example, in one group of young males from prison, the focus is on new fatherhood, not on coming out of prison.
- Use language that is strengths based, nonjudgmental, inclusive, and future oriented.
- Encourage experiences where youth can be successful.³⁶

³⁴ US Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime. *Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide: Strengthening Collaborative Responses (Victim-Centered Approach)*.

Retrieved from <https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eguide/1-understanding-human-trafficking/13-victim-centered-approach/>.

³⁵ PYD, youth.gov, <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>.

Developing Culturally Competent Programs

Cultural competence is based on a set of harmonious actions, approaches, and policies that come together and enable the people working with youth to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Culturally competent services refers to “understanding the importance of social and cultural influences on patients’ health beliefs and behaviors; considering how these factors interact at multiple levels of the health care delivery system (e.g., at the level of structural processes of care or clinical decision making); and, finally, devising interventions that take these issues into account to assure quality health care delivery to diverse patient populations.”³⁷

According to experts, creating a culturally competent organization requires the presence of five key components: valuing diversity, being capable of honest self-assessment, being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures intersect, having institutionalized cultural knowledge, and having developed approaches and treatment modalities that are adapted to diversity.

Having these five components in place at one level of an organization is not enough, though. In a culturally competent organization, there is commitment and involvement from every part of the organization. The three major factors impacting cultural competence are attitudes, policies, and practice. Organizations become more culturally competent as their attitudes become more diverse, their policies become more flexible and culturally objective, and their practices become more harmonious with the culture of youth and families.

³⁶ Sustaining Community. 2016. *Seven Principles for a Strengths-Based Approach to Working with Groups*. Retrieved from <https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2016/08/23/sba-groups/>.

³⁷ Betancourt, Joseph R., Alexander R. Green, J. Emilio Carrillo, and Owusu Ananeh-Firepong. 2003. “Defining Cultural Competence: A Practical Framework for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health and Health Care.” *Public Health Reports* 118, no. 4 (July–August): 297.

Creating Culturally Sensitive Programs and Services

Organizations are most successful when services are developed and delivered in culturally sensitive ways — demonstrating respect of cultural beliefs and practices improves engagement and retention of youth in program services and supports.

Developing culturally sensitive programming and services may include:

- Providing an environment in which youth from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds feel comfortable discussing culturally derived values, beliefs, traditions, and rites of passage.
- Incorporating traditional elements of the cultures of youth served (e.g., providing opportunities for Native-American youth to participate in traditional healing ceremonies; connecting African-American youth with opportunities to participate in a rites of passage program to address the cultural, career, academic, and social needs in culturally sensitive ways; and, providing male survivors with gender-specific services and supports to address the impact of trafficking).
- Networking with a broad range of organizations and faith-based communities to provide youth access to an array of services.
- Recruiting and retaining staff that are reflective of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the youth served by the organization.
- Displaying and disseminating materials and information that reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of youth accessing services.

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