

2026 Revised Course 7T - Human Trafficking of Adolescents in America - an Online CE Course Sponsored by CEU By Net, LLC



Photo attributed to the Family & Youth Services Bureau - Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center - National Safe Place Network in Louisville, KY.

INTRODUCTION to this course: This is the 2026 REVISED Course 7T, Human Trafficking of Adolescents in America, a Continuing Education Course sponsored online for CE Credit by CEU BY Net, LLC, in keeping with the requirements of the Texas Occupations Code. The clinical information and research-validated findings in this course are widely accepted as authoritative and consistent with current standards of legal, moral, and clinical practice - currently published and validated by multiple respected entities.

The public domain information found in this course pertains to effective interaction and intervention with youth who are homeless, are forced to live on the street or feel compelled to do so, and/or are subjected to abuse and neglect in many forms including sex trafficking and forced labor. *An understanding of this vulnerable adolescent population has evolved over the course of the past ten years - resulting in improved identification, intervention, and rescue of adolescent human trafficking victims. The knowledge gained herein also has heightened awareness that anyone can be a human trafficking victim.*

The concepts and interventions contained in this entire sponsored course are currently published online in numerous professionally validated clinical and training resource guides. The material contained in Study Guide 2 was originally publishing in 2016-2018, and the entire document was REPUBLISHED and remains sponsored online since 2022 by two nationally recognized organizations: 1) Children's Mental Health Matters and 2) the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the Children's Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The INTERVENTION techniques and the understanding of the IMPACT of human trafficking on victims as described in this course are recognized as 'current knowledge' in the study, identification, and rescue of youth who are victims of Human Trafficking in its various forms.

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NOTE: To ensure that material shared in this course has received significant input from trafficking victims, information included in the course includes data from organizations that have extensively involved young trafficking victims in the design of trafficking intervention and prevention activity. *The Polaris Project* has contributed a significant amount of the materials found in Study Guide 3. **Go here** to scroll the *Polaris Human Trafficking Survivors' page*.

This course has 3 Study Guides or chapters, and each Study Guide has a quiz. You must pass the quiz for each of the Study Guides, and must complete the Feedback Form, in order to earn your CE certificate for this course. The content of each of the three Study Guides appears on the following page.

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“Human trafficking is a devastating crime that threatens society’s most vulnerable members, exploiting them for sex, labor, and servitude of all kinds. It destroys families, shatters lives, and undermines our most fundamental beliefs about the dignity of all people. As a prosecutor in Brooklyn, I saw firsthand the consequences of this despicable crime, as well as the extraordinary strength of survivors as they worked to reclaim their lives and renew their hopeThe complex and pernicious nature of human trafficking requires a multifaceted and aggressive response. Trafficking and exploitation can take multiple forms and occur in various contexts. Collaboration at all levels is critical.”

- Loretta E. Lynch, Former Attorney General, 2015-2017

⁴This is Study Guide 1 of Revised Course 7T. The following is an excerpt from the US Department of Justice's 2025 - 2026 published 'National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking.' It serves as an introduction to this course.

National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking



Revised 2025-2026

I. INTRODUCTION

Human traffickers prey on some of the most vulnerable members of society. Human trafficking, as defined in federal law, includes sex trafficking, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the victim is under 18 years of age; and labor trafficking, i.e., the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Human trafficking of either type does not require movement, either within the United States or across a U.S. border.

Bringing human traffickers to justice and assisting trafficking survivors are therefore top priorities of the U.S. Department of Justice (the Department or DOJ). Responding to a crime as complex and as devastating as human trafficking is neither simple nor straightforward. The Department's anti-trafficking efforts involve numerous components engaged in a full spectrum of activities: investigations, prosecutions, services for victims, enforcement initiatives to strengthen antitrafficking partnerships, innovative prevention efforts, capacity-building programs to advance survivor-centered antitrafficking strategies, and grant funding to state, local, and tribal authorities and to non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The national strategy of the US Department of Justice has been revised, effective 2025. The initiatives of the DOJ are seen below.

The 2025-2026 National Strategy of the Department of Justice includes the following:

As of January 2026, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the US Department of Justice (DOJ) are surging resources to fight and raise awareness about human trafficking, including:

- Identifying ongoing investigations and prioritizing featured operations across 45 federal locations and 10 state locations with an emphasis on border states.
- Coordinating with FBI Human Trafficking Squads and multi-agency Human Trafficking Task Forces to conduct victim recovery.
- Partnering with AMTRAK and FAMS to increase law enforcement resources and distribute posters with QR codes for reporting human trafficking in all station bathrooms and trains.
- Running advertisements related to \$250 million recovery from Backpage to distribute to victims and additional victim restitution efforts by DOL-OIG.
- Organizing Human Trafficking seminars and outreach events with DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking at high schools and colleges to highlight the role of HSTFs in addressing human trafficking.
- On August 25, 2025, HSTF officially launched its effort to protect the Homeland with a September Surge encompassing 400 operations nationwide. In just 43 days, HSTF nationwide operations resulted in 3,266 arrests and seizures including:
 - 1,041 Sinaloa members,
 - 856 Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación (“CJNG”) members,
 - 641 MS-13 members,
 - 456 Tren de Aragua members,
 - 1,067 weapons
 - More than \$3,250,000 in currency
 - Approximately 91 metric tons of narcotics

Since January 20, 2025, the Department of Justice has:

- Secured substantial sentences and landmark convictions against sex traffickers and labor traffickers who used violence, addictive drugs, and psychological coercion to exploit victims in the following States: [Alabama](#), [Connecticut](#), [Delaware](#), [Florida](#), [Hawaii](#), [Indiana](#), [Kansas](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Ohio](#), [New Jersey](#), [New York](#), [North Carolina](#), [Texas](#), and beyond.
- Seized \$15 billion from a wire fraud and money laundering conspiracy originating from a [Cambodian forced labor scam center](#).
- Secured high-impact sex trafficking indictments in New York against an enterprise associated with the notorious Tren de Aragua Transnational Criminal Organization and in [California](#) against traffickers affiliated with local street gangs.
- Pursued extraditions of fugitive traffickers to permanently disrupt and dismantle [transnational labor trafficking](#) and [sex trafficking enterprises](#)
- Secured [sizable restitution orders](#), including [several](#) over [a million dollars](#), to aid victims in their recovery from the unspeakable losses they endured.
- Launched a [Remission Portal](#) for survivors of sex trafficking that was facilitated through Backpage or CityXGuide to seek compensation.
- Conducted nationwide crackdowns this month and during Operation Justice for All in August 2025.
- Streamlined and strengthened [Joint Task Force Alpha](#) efforts to combat combined human trafficking, human smuggling, and transnational organized crime threats by integrating the Department's National Human Trafficking Coordinator and human trafficking prosecution experts into the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section; and
- Announced new [grant funding opportunities to support victim services](#) for the year ahead.

Sex Trafficking	Labor Trafficking
<p>Because commercial sex is already illegal in most locations, it is more likely that law enforcement will encounter potential victims. However, victim identification may be hampered because minors may say they are over the age of 18, and adults may conceal the use of force, fraud, and coercion.</p>	<p>Labor trafficking often occurs in the context of an otherwise lawful industry, decreasing the number of encounters between law enforcement and individuals engaged in that industry, which makes victim detection and identification more difficult.</p>
<p>Victims exploited for commercial sex must be advertised to or brought into contact with customers, further increasing opportunities for law enforcement or civilians to encounter the victims and interdict the crime.</p>	<p>Labor trafficking victims, including victims of domestic servitude, can be exploited in isolated homes, fields, or factories, with few opportunities to come into contact with customers or other outsiders.</p>

Overview of Human Trafficking

Methods of Control. Foreign victims who are facing extreme poverty and limited economic opportunity in their home countries are often targeted by traffickers who lure them to the United States with false promises of marriage, education, legitimate jobs, and steady income to send home to support their families. The traffickers then manipulate the victims' lack of documented legal status, fear of law enforcement, limited ability to communicate in English, isolation from friends and family – including, in some cases, control over their children back in their home countries – and lack of means to get themselves back home, to further compel and coerce the victims to comply with the traffickers' demands.

The most common types of coercion encountered in forced labor situations include forced drug use, violence, threats, isolation, intimidation, debt bondage, and passport confiscation.

Sex traffickers generally control their victims through force, fraud, or coercion, although these means need not be proven in cases involving minors. Whether preying upon minors or adults, traffickers usually identify and exploit specific vulnerabilities of their victims, which can include preexisting psychological trauma, drug dependency, disabilities, homelessness, dislocation, and isolation.

Pimps also often seek to exploit children because they are perceived as easy to control and more profitable. Such victims are commonly recruited from broken homes or may be runaways with whom a pimp came into contact. Victims are frequently lured by pimps with offers of food, clothes, attention, friendship, love, and a seemingly safe place to sleep. Once a pimp gains this control over a child, he or she will often use acts of violence, intimidation, or psychological manipulation to trap the child in a life of sex trafficking.

Sex Trafficking Settings. Sex trafficking can occur in many different contexts, including:

Pimps often target children at bus stops and train stations, schools, strip clubs, casinos, group homes, truckstops, and through social networking and escort websites.

- street prostitution controlled by violent or coercive “pimps,”
- prostitution facilitated through online advertising,
- “escort services” offering delivery or “outcalls” to hotels or residences, and
- compelled or coerced prostitution in residences, massage parlors, cantinas, nightclubs, karaoke bars, or other entertainment venues.

Pimps commonly advertise the services of sex trafficking victims in the adult services or escort services sections on certain online classified advertising websites. The advertisements generally do not explicitly discuss commercial sexual activity and use a false name and age for the victim. Often the trafficker will advertise in multiple areas in order to increase his or her profit and to avoid law enforcement detection. In the FBI’s experience, pimps who sell minors for sex are also often involved in other violent criminal activities. Most defendants in the FBI’s human trafficking cases have prior criminal records, and they are prone to recidivism. And there has been an increase in child sex trafficking cases involving pimps who are also gang members or affiliated with a gang.

A significant number of foreign-victim sex trafficking cases involve trafficking enterprises that operate across the U.S.-Mexico border. Multiple prosecutions in Atlanta, New York, New Jersey, Miami, and San Diego have exposed the extent of these transnational sex trafficking networks, which exploited dozens of victims before being dismantled by law enforcement.

While both U.S. and foreign citizens, and male and female individuals, have been sex trafficking victims, in the FBI’s experience, most victims in the last decade have been U.S. citizen women and children. As noted in footnote 3, additional information about the U.S. Government’s work involving foreign trafficking victims can be found in the Attorney General’s Annual Report.

Labor Trafficking Settings. Labor trafficking is providing or obtaining labor by one or more of the following prohibited means:

- force,
- threats of force,
- threats of serious harm, or
- a scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a victim to fear serious harm.

FBI investigations suggest that labor trafficking is likely to be found in low-skilled or temporary-worker labor situations including agriculture, traveling sales crews, and restaurants and food service. Approximately one-fifth to one-third of the FBI's labor trafficking investigations are domestic servitude situations, i.e., the compelled service of an individual in a home for cooking, cleaning, elder care, child care purposes, or other domestic labor. In addition, compelled labor in a sexually oriented legal business, such as a strip club, without engaging in commercial sex acts, is a form of labor trafficking.

Please continue on to the next page for the revised 2026 online publication from the US Office of Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center, which is affiliated with the US Department of Justice.

**Office for Victims of Crime
Training and Technical Assistance Center**

Human Trafficking

The following information is the primary, currently published information from the OVCTTAC pertaining to current national statistics about Human Trafficking, definitions, the impact of the crime on victims, and the Professional Response to Human Trafficking of Native Americans - 2026



Human Trafficking*

Human trafficking, modern-day slavery, is a crime against the world's most vulnerable individuals. Traffickers may abduct, deceive, use, and sell men, women, and children for profit or personal gain. Victims are treated as commodities who often endure physical and/or sexual brutality, exploitation, and mental and emotional abuse.

As a result of this trauma, victims may experience multiple, long-lasting consequences. Once victims escape or are recovered from their trafficking situations, they often receive services across a wide variety of systems (e.g., social services and criminal justice); therefore, coordinated service delivery is critical to successful intervention. This paper briefly describes the crime of human trafficking, its impact on victims, and models for multidisciplinary, collaborative approaches for serving this population.

Definitions

Human trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation. It is important to understand that physical movement or transportation of an individual is not a requirement for human trafficking to take place. The critical elements are whether force, fraud, or coercion are present, with the exception of minors involved in commercial sex activities for which there is no force, fraud, or coercion requirement. Trafficking victims can be foreign nationals or U.S. citizens, adults or children, male or female. Given this definition, there is no nation and no community that is not affected by human trafficking.

While similarities between trafficking and other criminal activities do exist, there are notable differences between these crimes. These differences are due, in part, to the fact that crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault are often perpetrated by one individual, whereas victims of trafficking may have been victimized by multiple perpetrators, including networks of organized crime.

Sex trafficking can present itself in a variety of forms including prostitution and pornography. Sexualized forced labor such as stripping and exotic dancing often occur within situations of sex trafficking. Victims of sex trafficking can also be subjected to debt bondage. When commercial sexual acts involve a minor (individual under age 18), there is no requirement for force, fraud, or coercion to have taken place.

Labor trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of debt bondage, involuntary servitude, peonage, or slavery. It can occur in many industries, including agriculture, construction, manufacturing, services, retail, domestic work, mining, and herding. Despite stringent child labor laws in the U.S., children are also vulnerable to labor trafficking.

Involuntary servitude (TVPA definition) is a condition of servitude induced by means of (a) 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 (b) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

Peonage is holding someone against his or her will to pay off a debt.

Current 2024-2025 Statistics from OVC on Instance of Human Trafficking

In 2024, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received reports of 11,999 potential human trafficking cases in the U.S., involving 21,865 potential victims. Reports included 6,647 sex trafficking situations and 2,220 labor trafficking situations. Data from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) indicates that between FY 2021 and 2022, task forces identified over 12,351 confirmed victims, primarily through sex trafficking investigations.

Key 2024 Statistics & Trends

- **Case Breakdown:** Of the 11,999 potential cases, 8,233 involved adults and 2,666 involved minors, with the vast majority of victims (8,359) being female.
- **Industries:** Common industries for trafficking include illicit massage/spa businesses, prostitution, and residential/hotel exploitation.
- **Regional Impact: Texas consistently ranks among the top states for trafficking reports, with 2,418 signals and 1,360 cases identified in 2024 alone.**
- **Child Vulnerability:** 1 in 7 of the more than 29,000 cases of children reported missing in 2024 were likely victims of child sex trafficking.
- **OVC Task Force Data (FY 2021-2022):** Investigations: Task forces opened 8,757 new sex trafficking and 490 new labor trafficking investigations.
- **Results:** These efforts led to 3,788 arrests for sex trafficking and 31 for labor trafficking.

Unique Impact / Effects on Victims

The impact and effects of human trafficking often mirror those of other criminal activities such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and torture. Similarly to domestic violence, traffickers often use psychological coercion to control their victims. The forms of psychological coercion used on victims of trafficking are numerous and often vary depending on the type of trafficking and the individual circumstances of each case.

In many cases trafficking victims are exploited by people known to them – neighbors, boyfriends, distant relatives, lovers, or fiancés – who build on a trusting relationships in order to gain control of the victim. Labor and sex trafficking victims are often told that if they try to escape, their families will be harmed. The traffickers instill fear in victims with threats of deportation, law enforcement harm, personal exposure, and other punishments. This is one of the most effective tools traffickers use to manipulate victims; as such, this and other forms of coercion allow traffickers to control victims often without needing to rely on physical force. - **OVC**

Physical Impact

The health needs of victims of human trafficking tend to present themselves at multiple stages in the recovery and reintegration process, and can be chronic or present for extended periods of time. Almost all victims of trafficking suffer from at least one physical health problem. Some of these ailments can include the following:

- Unhealthy weight loss due to food deprivation and poor nutrition.
- Memory loss.
- Chronic pain.
- Head and neck trauma.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Infectious diseases.
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) & Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).
- Dental or oral problems.
- Respiratory illness.
- Scabies.
- Lice.
- Pelvic pain or pelvic inflammatory disease.
- Pregnancy.
- Complications from abortions.
- Other gynecological problems.
- Workplace injury.
- Amputation.
- Pesticide or other chemical intoxication.
- Illness resulting from poor sanitation and/or contaminated food and water.
- Heat stroke or exhaustion.
- Occupational hearing loss.
- Cancer.
- Musculoskeletal trauma from awkward posture, repetitive movement, and/or lifting heavy loads.
- Exposure to dangerous/poisonous animals.
- Infectious disease, including parasites, hepatitis, and tuberculosis.
- Occupational asthma and/or respiratory problems.

Studies have found that 76-100 percent of survivors of trafficking report being physically assaulted and 67-100 percent report being sexually assaulted while they were trafficked.¹⁴ One study found that of the survivors that report being injured while they were trafficked, 57 percent said that the injuries caused persistent problems or pain.¹⁵ Physical injuries can present themselves anywhere on a victim's body. However, like perpetrators of domestic violence, some traffickers only inflict physical injury where the bruises and scars will be covered by clothing. In addition to injuries outside of the body, sexual assault occurring during either sex or labor trafficking can cause genital trauma, which can result in lacerations, tears, and injuries to the internal reproductive organs.¹⁶

While the majority of research has focused on the health needs of victims of sex trafficking, victims of labor trafficking have a unique set of health risks due to the nature of their work.¹⁷ These risks can be similar to occupational hazards stemming from dangerous or highly repetitive work. These health problems are often exacerbated by lack of protective gear appropriate for the work that is being performed and the living conditions they are forced to reside in.¹⁸

Due to lack of health care, it is important to remember that children who were trafficked at a young age, including adults trafficked as children, may have missed certain developmental milestones that have gone undetected. In addition, lack of health care often causes victims of trafficking to self-medicate, potentially leading to a buildup of resistant strains or infections.¹⁹

STDs While all trafficking victims are at risk for HIV, STIs, and pregnancy, victims of sex trafficking are especially vulnerable. One study of women and adolescents trafficked in Europe found that 90 percent of respondents reported being forced or intimidated into sex or doing something sexual during their trafficking experience.²⁰ Studies indicate that the duration of forced prostitution and the number of locations where victims are prostituted are positively correlated with HIV infection.²¹ HIV infection is negatively correlated to the age a victim is initially trafficked for prostitution; therefore, the younger a person is when initially trafficked, the greater the risk is for HIV.²² Victims of sex trafficking are also at high risk for contracting hepatitis B and syphilis and have a high risk of developing tuberculosis.²³ In addition to HIV and STIs, victims of sex trafficking are at high risk of pregnancy and unsafe abortions.

Psychological and Social Impact

As a result of the traumatizing and complex nature of human trafficking, the mental health issues associated with this population are often complex and there is a high degree of comorbidity of mental health ailments. In addition, many mental health issues do not present themselves until after the more immediate and practical needs, such as safety and shelter, have been met.

Health Issues.

One of the principal factors that can complicate mental health issues correlated with human trafficking are the individuals associated with a victim's entry into the trafficking situation. For example, children and adults can suffer significant psychological distress when family members or close friends are intentionally or unintentionally involved in their being trafficked.

Similar to victims of other traumatic experiences, many victims of human trafficking suffer from symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While estimates of the prevalence of PTSD differ depending on type and location of study, PTSD symptoms are reported in a significant percentage of this population. In addition to PTSD, other mental health issues include depression, anxiety disorders, substance and alcohol abuse, and dissociative disorders.

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF TRAFFICKING INCLUDE:

- Anxiety.
- Headaches.
- Loss of interest in things.
- Anger.
- Changes in appetite or eating.
- Hopelessness.
- Sleeplessness, sleep disturbances, nightmares, and/or insomnia.
- Isolating behavior.
- Exhaustion.
- Fear of being alone.
- Distrust/fear of strangers.
- Guilt, shame, and/or self-blame.
- Aggression.
- Denial.
- Stockholm syndrome.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Autonomic arousal.
- Numbness.
- Recurrent or intrusive memories of abuse.
- Incongruent affect.
- Crying more than usual.
- Depression.
- Feelings of sadness or unhappiness.
- Feeling inferior to others.
- Feeling permanently damaged.
- Sexual problems.
- Obsessions and compulsions.
- Mood changes.
- Somatization/psychosomatic symptoms.

Medical Response⁵¹

Unlike many victims of other criminal activities, victims of human trafficking may not initially enter medical facilities as a direct result of their sexual and/or labor exploitation due to their inability to access medical care during their captivity. Screening by medical providers in all health care settings is important to ensure proper identification and service provision.

While limited research has been conducted to identify best practices for serving the health needs of victims of human trafficking, some of the procedures and protocols used for domestic violence and sexual assault offer an important foundation on which to learn from and build proper response systems for victims of sex trafficking. Unfortunately, a similar foundation does not currently exist for victims of labor trafficking.

While little is known regarding the effectiveness of evidentiary exams on victims of human trafficking, some protocols for evidentiary examinations appear appropriate for victims of human trafficking, such as ensuring that victims of sexual assault be examined in a private room and by trained medical providers. Similar to sexual assault response, it is also important to have a rape crisis advocate, medical health professional, social worker, or pastoral caregiver trained in crisis intervention available to victims of trafficking who have been sexually assaulted.

A number of tools have been developed to assist with the evaluation of domestic violence and sexual assault and can potentially be applied with victims of trafficking.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) programs also offer unique models that may be beneficial for victims of human trafficking, who, as previously mentioned, tend to be connected to multiple service providers. While all SANES/SARTs follow basic unifying guidelines and principles, each is unique in its structure and composition; therefore, communities will need to assess the best way to integrate human trafficking into their current response system on an individual basis.

All medical services should be based in culturally competent practices that respond to the cultural needs of the victim. Particular care should also be taken when conducting examinations of children. As previously mentioned, little is known regarding the effectiveness of various medical techniques and models on victims of human trafficking; Therefore, while guidelines for sexual assault and domestic violence can inform health care efforts related to human trafficking, further research is needed to assess their effectiveness with the trafficking victim population.

Mental Health Response⁵⁶

Similarly to medical treatment, limited research has been conducted to assess the impact of various mental health therapeutic treatments when caring for victims of human trafficking. In the absence of research pertaining to the mental health treatment of victims of human trafficking, mental health professionals working with this population must educate themselves on the evidence-based research related to the treatment of common diagnoses, crime victims, and similarly marginalized populations to ensure proper provision of the best mental health care possible. Service providers engage in supportive counseling from the onset of the case. Clients must be stabilized before more formal mental health interventions are introduced.

Empirical evidence on the treatment of PTSD, anxiety, and mood disorders increasingly supports the use of cognitive-behavioral therapy. While many practitioners continue to employ psychodynamic therapy, family systems intervention, or a combination of techniques from multiple theoretical practica, the effectiveness of these treatment options lack evidence-based support at this time. However, it is important to remember that lack of evidence regarding other types of interventions does not necessarily mean they are ineffective, but rather that recommendations regarding the use of these treatment methods cannot be made based on current available research.

Legal Response

Victims of human trafficking often require significant legal assistance. For foreign nationals, one of the most immediate and significant legal needs is assistance attaining immigration relief. Foreign nationals are typically unaware that as a victim of human trafficking they have the legal right to attain immigration relief and receive victim assistance services. In addition to attaining immigration relief for themselves, victims applying for T- and U-visas may also need assistance seeking immigration relief for family members, as permitted under the law.

Many domestic and foreign victims also require legal assistance disputing charges that may or may not have been brought as a result of their being trafficked. For example, law enforcement may have charged a foreign national with illegal boarder crossing, not recognizing that the individual was actually smuggled and then trafficked into the United States. On the other hand, a domestic minor may have previous charges of stolen property unrelated to being a victim of human trafficking.

Additional legal services often needed by victims of human trafficking include assistance obtaining identification papers, protection orders, and restitution, and filing for divorce or working with child protective services to prevent removal of children from the home or facilitating the children's return.

Law Enforcement Response⁵⁹

Law enforcement plays a number of roles in cases of human trafficking including participating in covert/overt operations, following up on leads, conducting surveillance, and interviewing victims. In recent years there has been increased awareness among law enforcement regarding the crime of human trafficking, particularly among specialized investigators, units, or task forces.

When working with this population it is critical for law enforcement to view victims of human trafficking as victims and not criminals who broke laws such as prostitution or border crossing. Trainings have been developed to assist law enforcement in employing interview techniques that are culturally sensitive, respectful, and nonthreatening.

Partnerships among law enforcement, service providers, and other community agencies have been shown to facilitate efficient and effective responses to human trafficking. As previously mentioned, these partnerships help victims quickly connect to needed services and support and enhance communication among the multiple service providers working to address human trafficking in a given community.

Barriers to Victim Identification and Accessing Services

There are a number of barriers that hinder both the identification of and service delivery to victims of human trafficking. Some of these barriers result from the nature of the crime while others are more systemic in nature. It is important for service providers to understand and recognize these barriers so that they are better prepared to respond to them when working with victims of this crime.

Identification

Despite coming into contact with community members, social service providers, law enforcement personnel, medical personnel, or other first responders, victims of trafficking often go unidentified because most people are unaware of the issue and the definition of trafficking, which includes persons who have not typically been associated with human trafficking, such as minors involved in prostitution.⁶¹ One study found that, of the 21 human trafficking victims interviewed, 28 percent reported having contact with the health care system while in a trafficking situation; however, none of these interactions with medical personnel led to the victim's identification or removal.⁶² In addition to lack of general awareness, providers and first responders often associate trafficking with only foreign nationals and border crossing, potentially missing opportunities to identify domestic victims of trafficking.

Fear of Law Enforcement

Many foreign national victims come from countries or cultures that distrust law enforcement. In some countries, law enforcement and military are the primary perpetrators of human trafficking. In other instances, victims have been conditioned to fear law enforcement by their traffickers to prevent them from seeking help. Understanding these barriers is a critical component in communities that are affected by human trafficking.

Access to Services

Simply accessing services can be a major challenge for victims, due to a lack of knowledge about where providers are located, restricted mobility, limited financial resources, and a lack of awareness of free services. For these and other reasons, victims of human trafficking may avoid seeking assistance until their mental or physical health is severely affected. Proactive outreach can help facilitate victims' awareness and access to needed services.

Length of Service Eligibility

Nonprofit and community-based organizations rely heavily on victims' access to public benefits to meet their needs. It can take weeks to secure welfare benefits and medical insurance, and, as previously mentioned, coverage for foreign nationals may depend on their being certified as a victim of human trafficking and their willingness to cooperate in criminal proceedings against traffickers. According to service providers, pre-certification can take up to a year and post-certification resources requiring month-to-month approval are limited in duration.

Cultural Considerations

Individuals' ethnic and cultural heritage is often directly related to their world view and thus their experiences. It can affect how individuals seek assistance, define their problems, attribute psychological difficulties, experience their unique trauma, and perceive future recovery options. A victim's heritage can also directly influence their outlooks on their pain, expectations of mental health treatment, and beliefs regarding the best course of treatment. Many cultures do not differentiate psychological, emotional, and spiritual reactions from more physical reactions; rather, they focus on the impact of trauma on the body as a whole. Additionally, cultural factors influencing individuals' beliefs about threats and response to danger can play an important role in how individuals respond to violent crimes.

The Cultural Approach. Service providers should remember that every culture has a distinct framework or perspective and, as a result, distinct beliefs about the benefits of seeking different forms of assistance. For example, counseling is a predominantly western practice and in some cultures traditional forms of healing are commonly accepted forms of health care provision.

Additionally, cultural beliefs may influence who people are willing to receive services from. Victims may feel self-conscious speaking about stigmatizing subjects, such as sex, with service providers or interpreters of the opposite sex and/or their same cultural background. These issues should be considered when providing services to victims of human trafficking, and all efforts should be taken to match victims with providers and interpreters with whom they are comfortable disclosing information.

Service providers should familiarize themselves with the beliefs, values, and practices of the various cultures of their clients so they are able to provide culturally competent care. Cultural competency trainings and literature can assist with this, as can speaking with leaders within different cultural communities. Asking clients directly about their culture can be an empowering intervention and demonstrate care and interest on the part of the provider.

In addition to cultural considerations, foreign national victims often have limited or no grasp of English, a significant barrier to their identification and attainment of services. Victims and traffickers are often confused for each other after a law enforcement operation. Service providers should meet with victims off-site only after law enforcement has determined who is who, to maintain their appropriate role, to ensure safety, and to prevent victims from misconstruing service providers as law enforcement.

In order to ensure proper identification and service delivery, service providers who do not speak a victim's native language must meet with each victim independently of the individuals accompanying them and with a neutral interpreter. Even service providers who do speak the victim's language should still meet with each victim independently as victims may be fearful or ashamed to disclose facts in front of other people. Providers should also avoid to the greatest extent possible being used as interpreters by law enforcement.

Service providers must remain aware of the risk for crossing professional boundaries when working cases in which clients may have no other social supports initially or even months into service delivery. **A strengths-based approach to case management entails assisting clients to build social supports outside the realm of professional services, which protects the client's best interests and fosters client independence.**

What Is the Difference Between Trafficking and Consensual Commercial Sex [Sex Work]?

"The terms sex trafficking, sex work, and prostitution are often conflated. While both sex work and sex trafficking involve prostitution by definition, sex work is consensual and entails a willing engagement in commercial sex. By contrast, sex trafficking involves force, coercion, or deceit. Some enter the industry willingly as sex workers but may eventually become victims of trafficking." *HumanTraffickingSearch.org*

Commercial Sex is defined as "engaging in sexual practices to earn money or other economic benefits." *Consensual Commercial Sex* [often referred to as 'sex work'] is VOLUNTARILY engaging in sexual practices to earn money or other economic benefits. *Sex Trafficking* is NOT VOLUNTARY. Sex trafficking involves force, fraud, or coercion of the trafficking victim. ***Anyone can be a human trafficking victim.***

Unlike Consensual Commercial Sex, Sex Trafficking is covert and is NOT the same as voluntarily engaged in sex work or prostitution. Human trafficking victims are forced into the sex industry against their will. *It is not necessary to prove force, fraud, or coercion if the victim is under the age of 18.*

What Is the Importance of Documentation When Working with Human Trafficking Victims?

Documentation has two meanings in working with this population: One is the traditional task of effectively *documenting* observations, medical and laboratory findings, clinical assessment, information from the victim, and the other interactions with the individual as well as our communications with law enforcement representatives who will determine if trafficking has in fact occurred in keeping with Federal and State laws.

The other type of documentation which is important in working with trafficking victims is the presence or absence of *legal paperwork or records* such as a birth certificate, visa, drivers license, social security card, bank account, or other evidence of citizenship or refugee status - important to confirm eligibility for citizen or refugee protections and benefits.

All health care professionals must have *a clear understanding of the signs that sex or labor trafficking are occurring*, as well as the requirements that govern proper collection, preservation, and *documentation* of physical evidence during initial examination of the victim - particularly in the case of sexual assault or other physically damaging abuse which may have occurred. ***Anyone can be a human trafficking victim.***

Statutes Pertaining to Reporting of Abuse or Neglect of People Ages 65 and Older or Disabled

- In Texas, any professional, who suspects that an adult aged 65 or older, or a person with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or financially exploited, has a legal obligation to report it.
- If you are an employer and come to know of this information during the scope of the person's employment in your company, you should report it.
- If you are a professional, say an attorney, police officer, clergy member, medical practitioner, social worker, or mental health professional and come to know of this confidential information through professional communications, you should report it.
- If the situation is an emergency, involving an immediate risk of abuse or neglect that could result in death or serious harm, call 911 or your local law enforcement agency.
- If the situation is not an emergency, you can report in one of these ways:
 - Call the Texas Abuse Hotline at (800) 252-5400 if:
 - You believe your situation requires action in less than 24 hours.
 - You prefer to remain anonymous.
 - You have insufficient data to complete the required information on the report.
 - You do not want an e-mail to confirm your report.
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing: If you are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, or speech-disabled you can call by using the relay service of your choice or by using Relay Texas External Link at 1-1. Tell the relay operator to call the Texas Abuse Hotline at (800) 252-5400.

Interviewing Privacy

Never interview the victim within sight of the trafficker or someone who may be the trafficker. If the victim arrives with a person exhibiting controlling behavior, talk to the victim in private. This person may be the trafficker or someone working for the trafficker. Do not allow a companion who arrives with the victim to interpret for the victim - use an independent interpreter. If possible devise a reason to talk to the victim alone, such as during a physical exam.

This is the end of Study Guide 1

You may take Quiz 1 (i.e., the quiz for Study Guide 1) now or after you finish reading the other Study Guides in this course. (There are three Study Guides total, and each has a quiz.)

To take the quiz for Study Guide 1, return to your My Home Page and click the name of the course. You will then see links to 'view or take' the three quizzes on the right. You can also print a paper copy of all of the quizzes before you start reading, to note answers as you read along (a 'quiz practice' copy). Then when you are ready to take a quiz online, just transfer your answers to the screen, which will take you only a couple of minutes to do. Then click SUBMIT.

You can find Study Guide 2 for this course by returning to your account's *My Home Page* and clicking the name of the course. You will then see links to the three study guides on the left, and links to the three quizzes on the right.