



RESOURCES: IDENTIFYING AND INTERACTING WITH VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Victims of human trafficking are vulnerable human beings who have been subjected to severe physical and emotional coercion. Most have been “taught” to distrust law enforcement, so victims of human trafficking need to be reassured that once they come in contact with law enforcement officers, they will be protected and safe.

Following are some things law enforcement officers should consider when dealing with victims of trafficking. Being aware of these items will help promote a cooperative relationship, helping law enforcement to gain the assistance of victims in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

- Human trafficking is a devastating human rights violation that takes place not only internationally, but also here in the United States. As a law enforcement officer, you play an important role in identifying and helping trafficking victims. While trafficking is largely a hidden social problem, trafficking victims are in plain sight if you know what to look for.
- Trafficking is not just forced prostitution. Victims of human trafficking may also be in forced labor situations as domestic servants (nannies or maids); sweatshop workers; janitors; restaurant workers; migrant farm workers; fishery workers; hotel or tourist industry workers; and as beggars.
- A person who is trafficked may look like many of the people you see daily, but asking the right questions and looking for small clues will help you identify those people who have been forced or coerced into a life of sexual exploitation or forced labor. Look for the following clues:
 - Evidence of being controlled
 - Evidence of an inability to move or leave job
 - Bruises or other signs of battering
 - Fear or depression
 - Non-English speaking
 - Recently brought to this country from Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, Canada, Africa or India
 - Lack of passport, immigration or identification documentation
- There are four areas of general victim needs:
 - Immediate assistance (housing, food, medical, safety and security)
 - Mental health assistance (counseling)
 - Income assistance (cash)
 - Legal status (certification, immigration)
- Take into consideration a victim’s cultural and social background as these traits will impact the way victims should be managed as witnesses, as well as the way the investigation of their cases are carried out. If possible, you should work with a culturally and linguistically competent interpreter when a victim demonstrates any of the above-mentioned characteristics. Ideally, this person could serve as a language interpreter and be able to interpret the cultural values and unique behaviors that are characteristic of the victim’s national and ethnic background.
- Effective communication is essential in gaining trust of victims as well as defining their immediate needs. Effective witness management extends into the courtroom when the time comes to present testimony and evidence to a jury.



- Screen interpreters to ensure they do not know the victim or the traffickers and do not otherwise have a conflict of interest.
- A successful investigation and prosecution of a human trafficking case is victim-centered. This requires lending support to traumatized and confused victims before you can gain their confidence.
- Once victims of human trafficking are rescued from the traffickers, they generally will be incapable of finding outside support due to the isolation they have suffered while in captivity. This especially impacts you as law enforcement officers because it can place you in the initial position of having to arrange for such support.
- Victims of human trafficking in the U.S. who are non-citizens may be eligible to receive special visas and to receive benefits and services through the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) to the same extent as refugees. Victims who are U.S. citizens are already eligible to receive many of these benefits.

If you think you have come in contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the **Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline at 1.888.3737.888**. This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit **www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking**.