



RESOURCES: THE MINDSET OF A HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM



When interacting with and providing assistance to potential trafficking victims, it is important to understand their mindset so you can provide them the best care and help them begin the process of restoring their lives.

- Many trafficking victims do not speak English and do not understand American culture. Preying upon the poor and destitute from countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa, traffickers lure their victims into the United States with promises of marriage, a good job so they can provide for their families back home, and a better life.
- These promises and dreams quickly turn to nightmares as victims find themselves trapped in the sex industry, the service industry, in sweatshops or in agricultural fields – living daily with inhumane treatment, physical and mental abuse, and threats to themselves or their families back home. Sometimes victims do not even know what city or country they are in because they are moved frequently to escape detection.
- Victims of trafficking have a fear or distrust of the government and police because they are afraid of being deported or because they come from countries where law enforcement is corrupt and feared. Sometimes they feel that it is their fault that they are in this situation. As a coping or survival skill, they may even develop loyalties and positive feelings toward their trafficker and try to protect them from authorities.
- Confidentiality is vital for victims of human trafficking. Their lives and the lives of their families are often at great risk if they try to escape their servitude or initiate criminal investigations against their captors. Therefore, it is imperative that you minimize the number of staff members who come in contact with the victim. Ensure that all staff members who have contact with the victim, including interpreters and advocates, understand the importance of confidentiality for the safety of the patient. Ensure that interpreters do not know the victim or the trafficker and do not otherwise have a conflict of interest.
- Many victims do not self-identify as victims. They also do not see themselves as people who are homeless or drug addicts who rely on shelters or assistance. Victims may not appear to need social services because they have a place to live, food to eat, medical care and what they think is a paying job.

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**.