



Recognizing the Signs

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Are you or someone you know being trafficked? Is human trafficking happening in your community? Recognizing potential red flags and knowing the indicators of human trafficking is a key step in identifying more victims and helping them find the assistance they need.

Bear in mind that not all indicators will be present in all situations. The type of trafficking and the content or environment are all important to take into account.

Common Work and Living Conditions: The individual(s) in question

- Is not free to leave or come and go at will
- Is under 18 and is providing commercial sex acts
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp / manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work
- High security measures exist in the work and/or living locations (e.g. opaque windows, boarded up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.)
- Is living and working on site
- Experiences verbal or physical abuse by their supervisor
- Is not given proper safety equipment
- Is not paid directly
- Is forced to meet daily quotas

Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior

- Is fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid
- Exhibits unusually fearful or anxious behavior after bringing up law enforcement or immigration officials
- Shows signs of substance use or addiction

Poor Physical Health

- Shows signs of poor hygiene, malnourishment, and/or fatigue
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture

Lack of Control

- Has few or no personal possessions

- Is frequently monitored
- Is not in control of their own money, financial records, or bank account
- Is not in control of their own identification documents (ID or passport)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on being present and/or translating)

Other

- Claims of just visiting and inability to clarify where they are staying/address
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or do not know what city he/she is in
- Appear to have lost sense of time
- Shares scripted, confusing, or inconsistent stories
- Protects the person who may be hurting them or minimizes abuse

This list is not exhaustive and represents only a selection of possible indicators. The red flags in this list may not be present in all trafficking cases. Each individual indicator should be taken in context, not be considered in isolation, nor should be taken as “proof” that human trafficking is occurring. Additionally, cultural differences should also be considered.

Note: According to federal law, any minor under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex is a victim of sex trafficking, regardless of the presence of force, fraud, or coercion.

If you believe you are a victim of human trafficking or may have information about a potential trafficking situation, please contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline . If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 911.

Español

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