



Look Beneath the Surface:

Role of Health Care Providers in
Identifying and Helping
Victims of Human Trafficking



Presentation Overview

- Understanding human trafficking
- Identifying human trafficking victims
- Health problems of trafficking victims
- Special considerations when working with trafficking victims
- Support for victims through Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (the TVPA)



Human Trafficking: What Is It?

- Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery
- Victims of trafficking exploited for commercial sex or labor purposes
- Traffickers use force, fraud or coercion to achieve exploitation

After drug dealing, human trafficking is tied with the illegal arms trade as the second largest criminal industry in the world, and it is the fastest growing.



Human Trafficking: What Is It?

Sex Trafficking: Commercial sex act induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which person performing the act is under age 18.

- *Victims can be found working in massage parlors, brothels, strip clubs, escort services*

Labor Trafficking: Using force, fraud or coercion to recruit, harbor, transport, obtain or employ a person for labor or services in **involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery**

- *Victims can be found in domestic situations as nannies or maids, sweatshop factories, janitorial jobs, construction sites, farm work, restaurants*

Crime of trafficking occurs with the exploitation of the victim.

The physical movement of the victim is not a requisite.

The TVPA protects both U.S. citizens and non-citizens.



Human Trafficking: How Are Victims Trafficked?

- Force, fraud and coercion are methods used by traffickers to press victims into lives of servitude, abuse
 - **Force:** Rape, beatings, constraint, confinement
 - **Fraud:** Includes false and deceptive offers of employment, marriage, better life
 - **Coercion:** Threats of serious harm to, or physical restraint of, any person; any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause victims to believe that failure to perform an act would result in restraint against them; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.



Human Trafficking: Who Are Victims?

- Approximately 800,000 to 900,000 victims annually trafficked across international borders.
- Between 18,000 and 20,000 victims trafficked into United States annually.
- More than half of victims trafficked into United States are thought to be children; victims are probably about equally women and men.
- Victims can be trafficked into the U.S. from anywhere. Victims have come from, among other places, Africa, Asia, India, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Russia and Canada.



Human Trafficking: Who Are Victims?

- Many victims in the U.S. do not speak English and are unable to communicate with service providers, police, or others who might be able to help them.
- Often kept isolated and activities restricted to prevent them from seeking help.
- May be watched, escorted or guarded by traffickers Traffickers may “coach” victims to answer questions with cover story about being wife, student or tourist.
- Victims comply and don’t seek help because of fear
- Within the U.S., both citizens and non-citizens fall prey to traffickers.
- Purpose for coming to United States and immigration status no longer issue when determined to be victim of trafficking.



Trafficking Victims: Understanding Mindset

Frequently victims:

- Do not speak English and are unfamiliar with the U.S. culture
- Confined to room or small space to work, eat, sleep
- Fear, distrust health providers, government, police
 - *Fear of being deported*
- Unaware what is being done to them is a crime
 - Do not consider themselves victims
 - Blame themselves for their situations
- May develop loyalties, positive feelings toward trafficker as coping mechanism
 - *May try to protect trafficker from authorities*
- Sometimes victims do not know where they are, because traffickers frequently move them to escape detection
- Fear for safety of family in home country



Myths Associated with Human Trafficking

Myth #1:

All Prostitutes Are Willing Participants



Myths Associated with Human Trafficking

Myth #2:

**All Immigrants Smuggled into the
United States Enter Willingly**



Myths Associated with Human Trafficking

Myth #3:

**All Participants Involved in Human
Trafficking Are Criminals**



Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking

- Frontline health providers play important role identifying and helping trafficking victims
- While trafficking is largely hidden social problem, many victims are in plain sight if you know what to look for
- Very few places where someone from outside has opportunity to interact with victim



Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking

- Is potential victim accompanied by another person who seems controlling?
- Does person accompanying potential victim insist on giving information to health providers?
- Can you see or detect any physical abuse?
- Does potential victim seem submissive or fearful?
- Does potential victim have difficulty communicating because of language or cultural barriers?
- Does potential victim have any identification?
- Is potential victim suffering from common health problems experienced by trafficking victims?



Health Issues Associated with Victims of Human Trafficking

- Victims suffer from host of physical and psychological problems stemming from:
 - *Inhumane living conditions*
 - *Poor sanitation*
 - *Inadequate nutrition*
 - *Poor personal hygiene*
 - *Brutal physical and emotional abuse*
 - *Dangerous workplace conditions*
 - *General lack of quality medical care*



Health Issues Associated with Victims of Human Trafficking

- Preventive health care virtually non-existent
- Health problems typically not treated in early stages
 - *Tend to fester until they become critical, life-endangering situations*

Health care frequently administered at least initially by unqualified “doctor” hired by trafficker with little regard for well-being of “patients” – even less regard for disease, infection or contamination control



Health Issues Associated with Victims of Human Trafficking

- Sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, pelvic pain, rectal trauma and urinary difficulties
- Unwanted pregnancy, resulting from rape or prostitution
- Infertility from chronic untreated sexually transmitted infections or botched or unsafe abortions
- Infections or mutilations caused by unsanitary and dangerous medical procedures performed by unqualified individuals
- Chronic back, hearing, cardiovascular or respiratory problems from endless days toiling in dangerous agriculture, sweatshop or construction conditions
- Weak eyes and other eye problems from working in dimly lit sweatshops

Health Issues Associated with Victims of Human Trafficking

- Malnourishment and serious dental problems
 - *These are especially acute with child trafficking victims who often suffer from retarded growth and poorly formed or rotted teeth*
- Infectious diseases like tuberculosis
- Undetected or untreated diseases, such as diabetes or cancer
- Bruises, scars and other signs of physical abuse and torture
 - *Sex-industry victims often beaten in areas that will not damage their outward appearance, like lower back*



Health Issues Associated with Victims of Human Trafficking

- Substance abuse problems or addictions
- Psychological trauma from daily mental abuse and torture, including depression, stress-related disorders, disorientation, confusion, phobias and panic attacks
- Feelings of helplessness, shame, humiliation, shock, denial or disbelief
- Cultural shock from finding themselves in strange country



Communicating with Victims of Human Trafficking

- Before questioning potential trafficking victim, isolate individual from person accompanying her/him without raising suspicions
 - *Individual accompanying patient may be trafficker posing as spouse, other family member or employer*
 - *Say that ER/health clinic policy is to examine patient alone*
- Enlist trusted translator/interpreter who also understands victim's cultural needs
 - *If patient is child, important to enlist help of social services specialist skilled in interviewing child trafficking or abuse victims*



Communicating with Victims of Human Trafficking

- For victim's safety, strict confidentiality is paramount
 - *Ask questions in safe, confidential and trusting environment*
 - *Limit number of staff members coming in contact with suspected trafficking victim*
- Importance of indirectly and sensitively probing to determine if person is trafficking victim
 - *May deny being trafficking victim, so best not to ask direct questions*
 - *Phrase “trafficking victim” will have no meaning*



Communicating with Victims of Human Trafficking: Questions

- Can you leave your work or job situation if you want?
- When you are not working, can you come and go as you please?
- Have you been threatened with harm if you try to quit?
- Has anyone threatened your family?
- What are your working or living conditions like?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Do you have to ask permission to eat, sleep or go to the bathroom?
- Is there a lock on your door or windows so you cannot get out?



Communicating with Victims of Human Trafficking: Messages

- Gaining victim's trust important first step in providing assistance
- Sample messages to convey:
 - *We are here to help you.*
 - *Our first priority is your safety.*
 - *If you are a victim of trafficking and you cooperate, you will not be deported.*
 - *We will give you the medical care that you need.*
 - *We can find you a safe place to stay.*
 - *We can help get you what you need.*
 - *We want to make sure what happened to you doesn't happen to anyone else.*
 - *You are entitled to assistance. We can help you get assistance.*
 - *If you are a victim of trafficking, you can receive help to rebuild your life safely in this country.*



Victims of Trafficking and Their Needs

There are four general areas of victim needs:

- **Immediate assistance**
 - *Housing, food, medical, safety and security, language interpretation and legal services*
- **Mental health assistance**
 - *Counseling*
- **Income assistance**
 - *Cash, living assistance*
- **Legal status**
 - *T visa, immigration, certification*



Getting Victims of Human Trafficking the Help They Need

- If you think you have come in contact with victim of human trafficking, call **Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline, 1.888.3737.888.**
- This hotline will help you:
 - Determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking
 - Identify local community resources to help victims
 - Coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they begin process of restoring their lives
- For more information on human trafficking visit **www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking.**
- ***Call local police if victim at risk of imminent harm***

1.888.3737.888

www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking



Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA)

Areas of Focus:

- Prevention
 - *Public awareness and education*
- Protection
 - *T visa, certification, benefits and services*
- Prosecution
 - *Created Federal crime of trafficking, new law enforcement tools and efforts*



TVPA: How Law Protects Victims

- Enables trafficking victims to obtain medical care, witness protection, other types of social service assistance
- Enables victims to obtain legal immigration status
- Criminalizes trafficking
- Permits prosecution where victim's service compelled by confiscation of documents
- Increases prison terms for all slavery violations from 10 years to 20 years; adds life imprisonment for death, kidnapping or sexual abuse of victim



TVPA Reauthorized in 2003

- Federal government authorized more than \$20 million to continue domestic fight against human trafficking
- New law strengthens legal elements of TVPA
 - *Sex and labor trafficking now considered offenses under RICO statute*
 - *Encourages nation's 21,000 law enforcement agencies to investigate cases of trafficking*



Questions and Answers

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