

MODERN-DAY SLAVERY

Human Trafficking: Health Consequences

Human trafficking is a very serious problem in the United States. The U.S. government estimates that **14,500 to 17,500 people** are trafficked into modern-day slavery in this country every year.

Human trafficking can happen in every area of the country.

If you are a health care professional, law enforcement officer, social service or faith-based worker, you may have already encountered a victim of trafficking in the course of your work.

Under the **Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000**, trafficking victims in the U.S. have rights and protections available to help them deal with their health-related needs.

IF YOU SUSPECT a case of human trafficking, contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline toll-free at:
1-888-373-7888

Operators can help identify local resources in your community.

For additional information on how you can help combat human trafficking, visit
www.vitalvoices.org/programs/anti-trafficking/.

HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE A VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that involves the exploitation of humans for forced labor or sexual exploitation. Trafficking victims may be forced into service in a wide range of activities, including:

Some of the signs of a trafficking victim may include: Evidence of being controlled, lack of

- Brothels
- Strip clubs
- Domestic workers (nannies, maids)
- Massage parlors
- Sweatshop factories
- Construction sites
- Escort services
- Farm work
- Janitorial and restaurant work

identification such as passport or visa, bruises or signs of abuse, extreme fear (especially of the authorities), language barriers, and an inability to move or leave a job.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH CONCERNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS?

It is very important to know that trafficking victims may have chronic as well as acute health problems that are both physical and psychological. These may have not been attended to for a long time or treated in their early stages and have become critical or life-threatening.

Some of the health problems seen in trafficking victims include

- Malnutrition; dehydration; poor personal hygiene
- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS from working in the sex industry and drug use
- Poor eyesight or hearing and chronic breathing or cardiovascular problems from working in dangerous forced labor situations
- Pregnancy; related complications from lack of care in delivery or termination of a pregnancy
- Undetected critical or life-threatening diseases like cancer, diabetes, heart disease
- Signs of rape or sexual abuse
- Infections caused by unsanitary medical "treatment" administered by unqualified persons
- Post-traumatic stress and other psychological disorders from physical and mental abuse and torture, including depression, dementia, shock, panic attacks
- Bruising, broken bones, scars or other signs of physical abuse, particularly in areas not immediately visible
- Substance abuse problems

HOW CAN I HELP A TRAFFICKING VICTIM?

Immediate assistance: It is most important to help trafficking victims obtain food, medical care for immediate problems and safe and secure housing away from their traffickers

Legal status: The next important step is to help them get legal assistance to become certified victims of trafficking, which is a necessary first step in applying for the "T" visa or other immigration relief, and additional public assistance

Mental health assistance: Victims need both short and long-term counseling to help in the rehabilitation process

Income assistance: Victims need financial support to help them in the short-term, until they can be certified to receive other forms of assistance

Long-Term Recovery Plan: Victims need help from social service providers to recover from their past horrifying experiences and live normal lives, whether in the United States or their home country (if safe repatriation can be achieved)

