

COUNTER-TRAFFICKING TOOLKIT RESOURCE GUIDE



Combating Human Trafficking Through Identification and Intervention

About the Toolkit

A21's Counter-Trafficking Toolkit ("Toolkit") serves as a resource for frontline sectors seeking to increase their understanding of human trafficking in the United States. Frontline sectors refers to certain industries that, by their type of work, are more likely to encounter a victim of human trafficking. Frontline professionals are the forward-facing employees in these sectors.

This Resource Guide to the Counter-Trafficking Toolkit is designed to provide a broad overview of the tools available. Through the tools described in this Guide, frontline professionals can apply practical strategies in employing counter-trafficking intervention efforts, such as identifying and engaging with victims and potential victims of human trafficking.¹

To learn more, access the following resources in the A21 Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

The resources available in the Toolkit are highlighted in the yellow boxes throughout this Guide. Click the [Access Now](#) resource title to access each "tool."

How Can Frontline Sectors Combat Human Trafficking?

Frontline professionals play a pivotal role in identifying and combatting human trafficking within their particular sector. See below for just a few examples of how frontline sectors can make an impact within their area of influence.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- ▶ Law enforcement is a key frontline profession for identifying victims of human trafficking. By implementing a victim-centered approach, officials play a pivotal role in ensuring that support is trauma-informed and implementing effective safeguarding interventions. While each situation is unique, this response may result in the discovery of victims, the arrest of actual perpetrators, and ultimately, a successful prosecution.

TRANSPORTATION

- ▶ At times, transportation sector services are misused in the facilitation of a victim's movement from origin to destination locations. With appropriate training and the right procedures in place, the transportation sector can play a vital role in raising public awareness, identifying trafficking situations, and safeguarding victims in transit who are in various stages of exploitation.

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

- ▶ Victims have limited, if any, time apart from the perpetrator. However, such occasions may arise when victims require medical care as a result of ongoing exploitation. Healthcare workers in hospitals, urgent care facilities, and sexual health clinics are in a unique position to observe, identify, and engage with potential victims of human trafficking.

HOSPITALITY

- ▶ The hospitality industry often unwittingly harbors victims in transit or being actively exploited. With increased training on recognizing potential key indicators, along with established protocols and resources to assist trafficking victims once encountered, the hospitality industry can help safeguard victims.

IMMIGRATION

- ▶ Both documented and undocumented migrants can be victims of human trafficking. Immigration officials are in a key position to be able to interview and identify potential victims of human trafficking crossing the border.

FINANCIAL INDUSTRY

- ▶ Banks may unknowingly facilitate the financial exploits of trafficking. Traffickers often use the credentials of victims to open bank accounts or access credit cards to launder money and avoid detection. Through close monitoring of financial transactions and increased training on human trafficking and fraud detection, the banking sector can stop the monetary profit that is the core motive of human trafficking.

EDUCATION SYSTEM

- ▶ Educators often have a good insight into the well-being of students in their classrooms, including potential changes in behavior that signal the existence of a possible exploitative situation. Having the unique ability to observe students almost daily, those in the education system may be able to identify and intervene to assist a student who is being groomed or actively being exploited.

The list above is not exhaustive, but merely highlights multiple industries that might encounter a potential victim of human trafficking.

Human Trafficking in the United States

- ▶ Human trafficking is reported in all fifty states, and victims may be United States citizens or foreign nationals, primarily from Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico.^{2*}
- ▶ In the United States, trafficking occurs in the hospitality industry, restaurants, nail salons, illicit massage parlors, agricultural, factory or textile industries, landscaping and construction, forced begging and panhandling, domestic servitude and cleaning crews, and via forced criminality.³

DEFINING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

A simple way to define human trafficking is to look at its three component parts: the act, the means, and the purpose.⁴

ACT

to induce, recruit, harbor, transport, provide, or obtain persons

MEANS

the use of force, fraud, or coercion

PURPOSE

for commercial sex or labor or services

At a minimum, one element from each category above must be present to establish a human trafficking situation. However, in the case of sex trafficking of a minor, force, fraud, or coercion (the means) does not need to be established.⁵

Types of Trafficking

- **SEX TRAFFICKING** Forcing, using fraud, or coercing a person to perform a commercial sex act; where a minor is being trafficked, force, fraud, or coercion need not be present.
- **FORCED LABOR** Forcing a person to work for little or no pay.
- **DOMESTIC SERVITUDE** Forcing a person to work and live in a private residence as a cook, cleaner, nanny, or domestic worker for little or no pay.

To learn more, access the following resources in the A21 Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

▶ **HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE U.S.** [Access Now](#)

This resource explains human trafficking laws in the United States, the types of trafficking most prevalent in the United States, and human trafficking recruitment methods.

▶ **CAN YOU SEE ME? SCENARIO GUIDE** [Access Now](#)

This training manual explains the federal law, recruitment methods, exploitation types and indicators of human trafficking scenarios.

▶ **ONLINE CHILD EXPLOITATION**

These two guides provide information about how to safeguard against online child sexual exploitation, tailored to the reader's age.

→ ADULT GUIDE [Access Now](#)

→ YOUTH GUIDE [Access Now](#)

Understanding How Human Trafficking Can Happen

VULNERABILITY

Anyone can be exploited, but traffickers often prey on those most vulnerable in society to recruit and exploit as victims. Vulnerability factors include, but are not limited to:

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| ▶ Age | ▶ Substance addictions | ▶ Unstable political and/ or social conditions |
| ▶ Homelessness | ▶ Unemployment | ▶ Mental health |
| ▶ Abusive home environments | ▶ Legal status | ▶ Migrant / refugee status |
| ▶ Lack of education | ▶ Poverty | |

Lack of employment options, economic turmoil, or dysfunctional and abusive home environments may lead people to seek alternative employment elsewhere. This can increase their vulnerability to exploitation through desperation and acceptance of unregulated or informal work in attempts to improve their personal financial situations. Conflict or unstable political conditions also increase a person's vulnerability, as seen in migrant and refugee populations. Wider cultural, political, and socio-economic barriers may also play a role. For example, many people may not have access to further education, may lack social support networks, or may not have access to social protection measures to safeguard against potential exploitation.

RECRUITMENT AND GROOMING

Traffickers utilize a variety of recruitment methods to deceive and coerce victims into exploitative situations, such as:

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| ▶ False job opportunities | ▶ Recruited by family / "friends" | ▶ False relationships |
| ▶ Promises of a better life | ▶ False immigration opportunities | |

One common recruitment method involves posting a false job opportunity online about a job in another country with little to no further details. The job posting may promise a competitive salary, accommodation, and a guaranteed work visa. Another recruitment method, called the "romeo pimp" method, may involve profiling and targeting an emotionally vulnerable youth to engage in a "romantic relationship." The trafficker's ultimate goal is emotionally manipulating the youth into sexual exploitation. It may involve the trafficker showering the targeted victim with gifts and building a fast emotional connection. The trafficker may also isolate the targeted victim from friends and family, so the trafficker soon becomes their sole emotional support.

The "romantic relationship" doesn't happen immediately as the trafficker will set aside time to "groom" the victim – that is, build a relationship and establish rapport for the sole purpose of manipulating and exploiting the victim at a later time. While the grooming process can happen quickly, it can also occur over long periods. The trafficker builds trust during this critical grooming period so that at a later date, the trafficker can create a future situation, trapping the targeted victim with minimal to no opportunity to seek assistance. They use deception and manipulation to make their victims feel ashamed or responsible for their own exploitation and, in the process, create the perception of a willing victim. After grooming a victim, traffickers can control their every movement.

Recognizing a Possible Human Trafficking Situation

Identifying a victim of trafficking requires understanding the nuances and complexities of a victim's self-identification process and the numerous reasons why an individual may not self-identify. Manipulated victims may blame themselves for their victimization, or they may still be trauma-bonded to the trafficker. These complex issues underlying the exploitative situation may manifest in a way that means a victim can appear to be complicit in the exploitation. At other times, self-blaming victims may not realize that the trafficker had planned every step, resulting in their exploitation. In some cases, individuals may recognize that they are a victim of abuse or exploitation, but they may not perceive that the harm they are experiencing is actually human trafficking.

Certain vulnerability factors may make victims feel they cannot leave an exploitative environment, such as an inability to return home, likely due to homelessness, or a lack of alternative employment options. Foreign national victims face additional hurdles such as immigration status, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with a foreign country. Victims may have experienced threats or punishments when attempting to change their situation. Therefore, a victim may perceive that it may be better, or in some ways safer, to stay in a hostile or exploitative situation rather than to leave and face the unknown.

Furthermore, individuals who have been "identified" as human trafficking victims may continue to be re-victimized if certain vulnerability factors are not adequately addressed. While identification may be the first step, the likelihood of re-victimization remains high without further support.

To learn more, access the following resources in the A21 Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

▶ **INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING** [Access Now](#)

Key indicators that might suggest a potential trafficking situation.

Industry-specific indicator cards are also available for the following industries:

- ▶ LAW ENFORCEMENT
- ▶ AVIATION
- ▶ RIDESHARE
- ▶ RAIL
- ▶ HEALTHCARE
- ▶ BUS
- ▶ HOSPITALITY

▶ **RECOGNIZING HUMAN TRAFFICKING** [Access Now](#)

Explores human trafficking in the United States, how to recognize a possible trafficking situation, and guidance on engaging with a potential victim.

▶ **IDENTIFICATION VS. RECOVERY** [Access Now](#)

Provides insight into the barriers of victim identification, and explains the point of identification and recovery as two distinct parts of a survivor's journey out of a trafficking situation and the nuances of each stage.

Engaging with a Potential Victim of Trafficking

Before engaging with a potential victim of trafficking, frontline professionals can develop their understanding of the ongoing complex trauma victims of trafficking may be predisposed to, which could impact their memories, behavior, or social interactions. The impact of trauma varies by person; frontline professionals may detect coping responses to trauma by observing intense outbursts of emotion, while others may be completely emotionally detached. In addition, some frontline professionals may find interactions with potential victims challenging when a victim may refuse to self-identify despite clear signs of trafficking.

Utilizing a victim-centered approach requires considering the impact of trauma by interacting compassionately and sensitively to prioritize the victim's needs above all else.

To learn more, access the following resources in the A21 Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

▶ **VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH** [Access Now](#)

Explains the use of the victim-centered approach when engaging with potential victims of trafficking, which involves taking a trauma-informed perspective to support the individual and prioritizes their needs and concerns.

▶ **VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH VIDEOS**

These industry-specific training videos explain how to use a victim-centered approach when interacting with a potential victim of trafficking.

RESOURCES FOR POTENTIAL VICTIMS

A potential victim of trafficking may or may not want further assistance from a frontline professionals, but you can provide resources for them to access later.

To learn more, access the following resources in the A21 Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

▶ **PREVENTATIVE LABOR EXPLOITATION PASSPORT** [Access Now](#)

Provides information about labor exploitation in the United States. Share this resource with potential victims of labor exploitation and at-risk communities.

▶ **ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY SAFEGUARDING RESOURCE** [Access Now](#)

This resource, tailored for those working in the entertainment industry in the United States, helps workers recognize if someone might be trying to exploit them. Offer this resource to individuals in the entertainment industry.

Counter-Trafficking Strategies

Frontline sectors may consider developing counter-trafficking strategies, which may include public awareness campaigns as prevention and intervention strategies aimed at the general public and potential victims.

To learn more, access the following resources in the A21 Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

- ▶ **DEVELOPING A COUNTER-TRAFFICKING STRATEGY** [Access Now](#)
Provides an overview of best practices in adopting a holistic counter-trafficking strategy in frontline sector organizations.
- ▶ **OVERVIEW OF A21'S CAN YOU SEE ME? AWARENESS CAMPAIGN** [Access Now](#)
Provides an overview of the purpose and the methodology of A21's *Can You See Me?* awareness campaign, with guidance on implementing the campaign to raise awareness.
- ▶ **CAN YOU SEE ME? INDICATORS OF TRAFFICKING POSTERS**
 - EXPLOITATION TYPE POSTERS [Access Now](#)
 - STORY-TELLING POSTERS [Access Now](#)These posters summarize different trafficking scenarios to raise awareness. Place them in strategic locations such as toilet stall doors and in transportation hubs.

Law Enforcement “Extension” Tools

Given the unique role law enforcement plays in countering human trafficking, specific Toolkit “Extension” resources are available for law enforcement only. If you are in law enforcement, please check your email or contact infor@a21.org for the access password.

To learn more, access the following resources in the A21 Counter-Trafficking Toolkit

- ▶ **INDICATORS OF TRAFFICKING**
These resources include indicators specific to sex and labor trafficking investigations, as well as general indicators for law enforcement.
 - SEX TRAFFICKING
 - LABOR TRAFFICKING
 - GENERAL INDICATORS
- ▶ **VICTIM-CENTERED INVESTIGATIONS**
A victim-centered approach to sex and labor trafficking investigations prioritizes the victims needs and well-being. These guides offer effective approaches to interacting with potential victims during investigations.
 - SEX TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATIONS
 - LABOR TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATIONS
- ▶ **VICTIM ASSISTANCE SURVEY** [Access Now](#)
This printable survey can guide your assessment of the needs of a potential victim of trafficking.
- ▶ **VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH VIDEO**
This training video provides an overview of the victim-centered and trauma-informed approach.

Responding to Human Trafficking

REPORT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- For **emergency services**, call **911**.
- To report known or suspected human trafficking, call the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** at **1 (888) 373-7888** or text **“BeFree”** to **233-733**.
- Report incidences of human trafficking to local law enforcement.
- Suspected child sex trafficking can be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) at **1-800-THE-LOST** or **cybertipline.org**.

SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

- Call the **National Human Trafficking Hotline 1 (888) 373-7888**. Trained call specialists are available 24/7 to provide local resources for victims or survivors of human trafficking.
- Local, state and federal law enforcement agencies can provide referrals and services through **victim assistance programs**. A report must be made to the Department of Child Protective Services and law enforcement to connect minors to appropriate resources.
- Foreign national minors require an **Eligibility Letter**, and foreign national adults require a **Health and Human Services Certification Letter** to access certain benefits and services. A report must be made through the Office on Trafficking in Persons to obtain these letters.
- Familiarize yourself with local **non-governmental organizations** that provide services for victims of human trafficking. A list of resources can be found at <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/find-local-services>.
- Access other **local community services**, such as food or housing, by dialing **211**.

1. The term “potential victims” is used to encompass those who may be victims of human trafficking but for whom there has not yet been a screening to determine their victim status definitively. The term can also refer to those who have not yet been exploited but are in the process of being initially approached, groomed, or recruited.

2. U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 24th Ed., June 2024, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

*based on identifications in FY 2023 by HHS-funded providers.

3. Ibid.

4. Polaris, The Action Means Purpose “A-M-P” Model, 2012, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/AMP%20Model.pdf> [accessed 27 June 2024].

5. Individual states often have their own human trafficking statutes, which may be broader or narrower than the federal definition.