

INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DETENTION CENTER



SEX TRAFFICKING

A potential victim of human trafficking may:

- ▶ Have brandings/tattoos.

EXAMPLE Their “boyfriend’s” (Romeo Pimp’s) street name, crown, dollar signs, and pimp/prostitution-related language.

- ▶ Show a heavy reliance on rationalizations or use common lies such as:

“He is my boyfriend, I don’t have a pimp.”

“I don’t have sex. I only give massages.”

“I really only work when I want to.”

“I get to keep some of the money.”

“This was my first night working.”

“Me and my girls just travel and get money together.”

NOTE They may not recognize they are a victim of a crime.

- ▶ Show indicators of intimate partner violence.
- ▶ Have criminal charges for prostitution, drug possession, or larceny. These behaviors indicate the individual is at risk or vulnerable.
- ▶ Act deceptive or manipulative with law enforcement, displaying loyalty to the trafficker.

EXAMPLE The potential victim takes responsibility for other criminal activity, such as drug or arms dealing, out of fear of the trafficker or even loyalty to the trafficker.

- ▶ Claim the perpetrator is their boyfriend/girlfriend, but may not know much personal information about them, particularly if they have been recruited from the corrections system.

EXAMPLE Refers to the pimp by a street name and does not know their last name or any historical information related to criminal or abusive behavior.

- ▶ Show signs of having a trauma bond with the trafficker by simultaneously displaying both fear and gratitude towards the trafficker.

EXAMPLE Perceives the trafficker as “giving life” simply by not taking their life.

- ▶ Have fake IDs/documentation if underage or a lack of identification.

- ▶ Be hostile to any form of assistance post-release, and has a plan of release that involves going back to their “boyfriend.” They may demonstrate a sense of urgency in getting back to him.

EXAMPLE Has jail calls or letters inferring she will be taken care of when she gets out or that she “held it down” by going to jail.

- ▶ Have a mental health diagnosis or display mental or behavioral health difficulties for which they may or may not be receiving medication.
- ▶ Struggle with homelessness.
- ▶ Be in frequent communication, e.g., by phone, when not in the presence of the potential perpetrator.
- ▶ Not identify as a “victim” and may be hesitant to speak to law enforcement or seek help.

EXAMPLE It is common for traffickers to pretend to be a “boyfriend” or “friend helping to make money.”

EXAMPLE Some victims are “trained” to not speak to law enforcement as part of “the game” or “lifestyle,” similar to how many gangs operate in the US. They are also told there will be repercussions against themselves or family members if they do.

MINOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

A potential victim of human trafficking may:

- ▶ Show overtly sexualized behaviors and/or early sexual activity.

EXAMPLE *Talking about selling sex for money/food/a place to stay, “tricking,” and doing illicit acts with multiple people.*

- ▶ Be a frequent runaway and elopements are always with an adult who is not a relative or friend from school. They may have an internet connection to this person, but know minimal information about that individual.

EXAMPLE *A Romeo Pimp builds an online relationship with an at-risk minor who then feels she has an older “boyfriend” to run away from home to, although she does not actually know him and is at high risk for exploitation. When the minor runs away, they may be staying in hotels paid for by that adult.*

- ▶ Suggest they have older male or female friends who are not relatives or friends from school.
- ▶ Be actively in Department of Social Services or Department of Juvenile Justice custody when recovered.
- ▶ Be “courted” by an adult using romantic relationship-building methods or “love bombing.”
- ▶ Post images to social media using suggestive images and hashtags.
- ▶ Come from a home where there is substance abuse or be experimenting with substances themselves.
- ▶ Show evidence or reports of physical or sexual abuse.
- ▶ Be accompanied by a potential offender who attempts to prevent service providers from speaking with the minor separately.
- ▶ Frequently miss school and appointments and stop socializing with their friend group, or participating in activities they previously enjoyed.

NOTE Male victims may engage in sexual acts with other men in exchange for a place to stay or illicit substances, but the victim does not necessarily identify as homosexual.

GENERAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING INDICATORS

A potential victim of human trafficking may:

- ▶ Appear apprehensive to speak in the presence of the person they are with or other potential victims.
- ▶ Be dependent on another person (i.e. financially, emotionally, and/or for drugs).
- ▶ Lack information on where they are traveling to, staying, or working.
- ▶ Have few personal belongings or be dressed inappropriately for the weather conditions.
- ▶ Live and work in the same place.
- ▶ Not be free to come and go as they please.
- ▶ Be traveling alone and receive frequent calls or messages on their phone (from the trafficker) which cause visible anxiety.
- ▶ Not be in control of their own identification documents. Instead, another person is in control of their identification documents.

NOTE Labor trafficking victims may show signs of physical neglect or abuse, such as scars, bruises, burns, etc., and/or seem malnourished or disheveled. In contrast, victims of sex trafficking are less likely to show signs of physical abuse in areas like the face, arms, or legs.

Review resources titled “Victim Centered Approach,” “Sex Trafficking Investigations,” or “Labor Trafficking Investigations” for additional tips on engaging with a potential victim of trafficking.