

VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH IN LABOR TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATIONS



DO have an interpretation line readily available.

- Labor trafficking victims are often foreign nationals and do not speak English. Have an interpretation line available to ensure clear communication with potential victims of trafficking.

DO assure the potential victim that you are not investigating their immigration status (in cases involving foreign nationals).

- Generally, when law enforcement clearly communicates to the potential victims that their immigration status is not under investigation, the potential victims feel more at ease, resulting in the disclosure of more intelligence.

DO separate individuals from the group of potential victims before speaking with them.

- Even if potential victims appear to have a positive rapport with one another, some may be affiliates of or have a close relationship with the trafficker.

DO have a service provider or support resources on hand.

- Prepare to have vetted service providers (CPS, NGOs, shelters, etc.) available to contact at any time to immediately connect victims to services.
- You can also provide cards supplied by local service providers that display their contact information.

DO have some form of a care pack available.

- Multiple NGOs create “care packs” containing toiletry kits, clothes, or other essential items. Having these bags readily available helps build rapport by meeting immediate needs, such as providing a change of clothes or even food.

DO have TVAP materials to give foreign national victims.

- If an individual is identified as a victim of trafficking, giving them simple materials about TVAP can help them know what their options are as foreign nationals who were victimized in the US.

AVOID taking documents or passports from the potential victims of trafficking.

- Photograph a foreign national’s documents; taking documents can be traumatizing. If law enforcement recovers the victim’s documents from the trafficker, photograph the documents, then return the originals to the victim.

AVOID arresting the potential victims.

- Arresting potential victims for not speaking to law enforcement can be a traumatizing event that will hinder law enforcement’s chances of gaining intelligence.

AVOID speaking to the potential victims through another person, even if they appear to be a family member or friend.

- Please use an official interpretation line as this decreases the chances of getting incorrect information. It can be tempting to allow an apparent friend or another potential victim to interpret, but they may be complicit or provide misleading interpretations

AVOID leaving the scene of the identification without a clear plan of action for the potential victim.

- Having a plan prepared for the potential victim increases your chances of being able to successfully contact them in the future. An external service provider such as an NGO can assist, increasing your chances of successful future contact.
- Foreign nationals often do not have a US phone number. Connecting with a service provider to facilitate communication can be very helpful for finding out further intelligence after the operation.

AVOID texting the potential victims.

- Do not send text messages, as you do not know who can access their phone and read your messages. To ensure no one else is listening, meet in person or use video calls to communicate with a potential victim. If this is not possible, a non-video phone call can be used.

