

In 2012, President Obama declared January to be National Slavery & Human Trafficking Prevention Month and January 11th to be Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

Modern slavery and human trafficking are terms used for the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud or coercion. Modern slavery is also known as sex trafficking, forced labor, and domestic servitude. Human trafficking is a hidden crime. Victims are often afraid to come forward. Language barriers or fear of their traffickers frequently stop victims from asking for assistance. Most people may not recognize the signs of human trafficking even when it's taking place right in front of them.

Human Trafficking is not Human Smuggling. Human smuggling involves the illegal transportation of a person across a border, whereas human trafficking centers on the illegal exploitation of a person. A person that has been smuggled could become a trafficked person in some cases.

Traffickers may use violence, manipulation, or false promises such as well-paying jobs, romantic relationships, or the escape from poverty to attract their victims into trafficking situations. Victims may fear retribution from traffickers, including threats to harm family members, and traffickers may be in possession of victim's identification documents. As a result, victims become trapped and fear escape.

Victims may be any age, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, or nationality and from any socioeconomic background. Human trafficking happens everywhere, including cities, suburbs and rural areas.

Some Indicators of a Potential Trafficking Victim:

Behavior or Physical State

- Does the victim act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid?
- Does the victim defer to another person to speak for them?
- Does the victim show signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, restraint, confinement, or torture?
- Does the victim appear to have been harmed or deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care?
- Does the victim seem to have few or no personal possessions?

Social Behavior

- Can the victim freely contact family or friends?
- Is the victim allowed to socialize?
- Does the victim have freedom of movement?
- Has the victim or the victim's family been threatened with harm if the victim attempts to escape?

Work Conditions and Immigration Status

- Does the victim work excessively long hours?
- Is the victim a juvenile engaged in commercial sex?
- Was the victim recruited for one job and forced to engage in some other job?
- Has the victim been forced to perform sexual acts?
- Has the victim been threatened with deportation or law enforcement action?
- Does the victim work and live in the same place?

Should you suspect that you have encountered a victim, do not at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert a victim to your suspicions. Your safety as well as the victim's safety is paramount. Instead, please contact local law enforcement directly or call the tip lines indicated on this page:

- Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip-line at 1-866-347-2423.
- National Human Trafficking Resource Center (Non-Government organization) at 1-888-373-7888. English, Spanish and 200 more languages.