IDENTIFYING SURVIVORS

Overview

This guide is intended for victim service agency staff and other social service providers who come into contact with potential trafficking victims. Law enforcement, health care and shelter workers will also find it helpful in improving trafficking victim identification, especially in conjunction with appropriate training or mentoring.

Step-by-Step

Create Suitable Interview Conditions

The setting in which an interview takes place is as important as the questions that are asked. Make sure that you:

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Be honest about the purpose and duration of the interview.
3. Fulfill the individual's basic needs, such as food, clothing, medical care or assurance of at least temporary shelter.
4. Hold the interview in a non-threatening, private, and comfortable location.
5. Provide the individual with food and drink, and incidentals including tissues, regular breaks, and a place where the victim can gain their composure if the interview causes distress.
6. Maintain a professional, but friendly, attitude and appearance.
7. Consider employing competent, trustworthy interpreter and counselor (see this webpage, "working with interpreters")
8. Be aware of gender issues and ask victims if they would be more comfortable being interviewed by someone of the same gender.[1]

Recognize the Indicators of Human Trafficking

Before you begin an interview, take the time to observe the person you are about to talk to. Recognizing potential red flags and knowing the indicators of human trafficking is a key step in identifying victims and helping them find the assistance they need. This list is not exhaustive and represents only a selection of possible indicators.

1. Lack of Control. Do the person's movement and activities appear to be closely controlled or

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[1] Screening for Human Trafficking: Guidelines for Administering the Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT), Vera Institute of Justice 4-6;13-24
https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/246713.pdf

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controlled or monitored by another person? Is the person not allowed or able to speak for themselves? Is the person fearful of discussing his/her relationship to a person who appears to have physical control over them? Is the person in the company of someone to whom he/she defers or someone who seems to be in control of the situation? Does the person protect the person who may be hurting her/him or minimize abuse? Does the person lack personal possessions? Is the person not in control of their own money, financial records, or bank account? Is the person not in control of their own identification documents (ID or passport)?

2. Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior. Is the person fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid? Does the person show signs of substance use or addiction?

3. Poor Physical Health. Does the person show signs of poor hygiene, malnourishment, and/or fatigue? Does the person show signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture?

4. Work or living conditions. Does the person show signs of having been denied food, water, sleep, or medical care? Is the person fearful of discussing working conditions or is unaware that unsafe conditions are unlawful? Does the person claim he/she is just visiting and is not able to clarify where he/she is staying?[2,3]

Conduct Interview

To establish whether the person is a trafficking survivor, try to determine whether the person was:

1. recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, and/or received;

2. forced, threatened, coerced, subjected to fraud, deceived, and/or subjected to abuse of power;

3. exploited or whether there was an intent to exploit; exploitation may include: prostitution, or other forms of sexual exploitation, or forced labor, or slavery.

Make the Final Decision

To establish whether the person is a trafficking survivor, try to determine whether the person was:

1. Decide as accurately as possible whether or not the person has been trafficked.

2. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that this is the case, the person should be recognized as a victim of trafficking. The victim needs to be immediately transferred to a safe environment where he/she can receive appropriate assistance.

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[2] https://healtrafficking.org/resources/handbook-on-initial-victim-identification-and-assistance-for-trafficked-persons/
[3] https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/recognize-signs

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Resources

For tips for conducting interviews and an outline of interview questions, check out:

Screening for Human Trafficking: Guidelines for Administering the Trafficking Victim Identification Tool

https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/246713.pdf

Resources specific for public health, behavioral health, health care, and social work professionals:

Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking: What to Look for in Health Care Settings
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/otip/soar_nhtrc_what_to_look_for_in_health_care_settings.pdf

Human Trafficking Victim Identification Toolkit for Physicians and Other Medical Professionals
https://gcms.org/Bulletins/2015_10_01%20-%20Human%20Trafficking%20Victim%20Identification%20Toolkit.pdf

Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool and Guide, National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/otip/adult_human_trafficking_screening_tool_and_guide.pdf

Resources specific for child welfare and delinquency professionals:

Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST)
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ZRCmPIB6_ukJ:https://ncjtc-static.fvtc.edu/Resources/RS00002755.docx+&cd=4&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us

Identifying Minors and Young People Exploited Through Sex Trafficking: A Resource for Child Welfare Agencies
https://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/capacity/Blob/106060.pdf?r=1&rpp=10&upp=0&w=+NATIVE%28%27recno%3D106060%27%29&m=1

This fact sheet provides legal information, not advice.