

# WORKING WITH HT SURVIVORS: REFERRAL BEST PRACTICES

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## Overview

Survivors have experienced physical as well as psychological trauma as a result of being trafficked, and may also have experienced retraumatization from contact with systems including judicial, law enforcement, health care, education, family, and child welfare involvement.<sup>1</sup> It is important to keep trauma in mind when developing a referral process and to recognize that many of these systems are interconnected and dependent upon one another. Although survivors might come across services through word of mouth or community outreach efforts, in one survey, it was noted that the majority of survivors came by way of referrals from other programs.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that agencies are dependent upon one another for connecting survivors with resources and there is a need for effective collaboration between service providers.

## Considerations

### System Practices

- Have a process in place for identifying trauma-informed agencies for making referrals and update this list regularly. The list could include providers with specialized training in trauma-informed care.<sup>3</sup>
- Work collaboratively with other service providers to identify gaps and inconsistencies within the provider network.
- Have policies in place that respect survivor's privacy and avoid retraumatization by requiring only the minimum necessary information in the referral process.<sup>4</sup>
- Provide training about the signs and symptoms of trauma and working with victims of trauma as well as training about vicarious trauma for service providers.

### Individual Practices

- Rapport - For incoming referrals, it is important to build rapport with the survivor who might have a distrust for others or who may have had negative experiences with systems, such as law enforcement or child welfare services.

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn P.Boyer. (2014, August 11). The Role of Trauma in Human Trafficking. <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/the-role-of-trauma-in-human-trafficking/>

<sup>2</sup> Needs Assessment for Service Providers and Trafficking Victims. (2003, October). <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/202469.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> A checklist for Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach into Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs. (n.d.). <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/sites/default/files/traumainformed-checklist.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Inclusion in the National Human Trafficking Referral Directory: Guidelines and Expectations. (n.d.). <http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/NHTRC%20Referral%20Directory%20Info%20%26%20App%20%28Light%29%20%282%29.pdf>



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- Confidentiality - Ensure survivor has given consent before referring a client to another agency and before sending information to that other provider.
- Cultural awareness - It is important to be familiar with the survivor's cultural background because this will assist in making appropriate referrals and might provide access to specialized services for particular cultural groups.
- Transparency - Understand the reason for the questions you are asking in the referral/intake process and be able to explain to a survivor why that information is important. Make sure that the survivor understands the decisions that are being made when referring in and out of services.
- Barriers to services should also be explored to ensure that a referral is appropriate, such as transportation, housing, language, legal, mental health, immigration status, substance use, and financial barriers among others.<sup>5,6</sup>
  - » While it is important to come prepared with questions in mind, the interviews that yield the most accurate portrayal of a survivor's experience are those that are unstructured and responsive.
  - » Providers may also utilize standardized tools to identify barriers, such as ecomaps, genograms, culturegrams, or specialized tools depending on the providers field of expertise.
  - » Be “referral-ready,” and do not make promises that cannot be fulfilled. Be prepared to provide information in a survivor's native language about appropriate legal, health, shelter, social support and security services, and to help with referrals, if requested.<sup>7</sup>
- Providers should seek to empower survivors rather than make decisions for them and survivors should be allowed to make their own choices whenever possible.
- Be discreet when providing referral information as it may pose a danger if found by a trafficker. It is useful to have contact information for referral services written on a small card that a woman may take with her after the interview and keep hidden for future reference.

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<sup>5</sup> SAMHSA-HRSA Center For Integrated Health Solutions: Referral to Treatment. (n.d.).

<https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/sbirt/referral-to-treatment>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. Human Trafficking Into and Within the United States: A Review of the Literature. (n.d.).

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/75891/index.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women. (2003).

[https://www.who.int/mip/2003/other\\_documents/en/Ethical\\_Safety-GWH.pdf](https://www.who.int/mip/2003/other_documents/en/Ethical_Safety-GWH.pdf)



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## Resources

Justice Programs: Office for Victims of Crime

Provides extensive multidisciplinary resources, case studies, training guidance, and best practices.

<https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eguide/welcome-letters/>

The Role of Trauma in Human Trafficking

Brief discussion of trauma informed care, and website also provides training resources for providers working in the area of human trafficking.

<https://humantraffickingsearch.org/the-role-of-trauma-in-human-trafficking/>

7 Essential Visual Tools for Social Work Assessment

Creately is a diagramming program not specific to human trafficking, however, this site lists several diagrams helpful for interviewing clients.

<https://creately.com/blog/diagrams/social-work-assessment-tools-templates/>

National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call 1-888-373-7888 (TTY: 711), text 233733, or chat on the website.

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>

