



# IDENTIFYING AND HELPING VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

## WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Human trafficking is a crime under both Federal and Florida law:

Human trafficking generally involves the use of **force, fraud, or coercion** to exploit a person for profit. Trafficking victims are subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labor, or both. Labor exploitation includes slavery, forced labor, and debt bondage, while sexual exploitation typically includes abuse within the commercial sex industry. If victim is under 18 no force fraud or coercion needed.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A MAJOR GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

### HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAFFICKING

- Substance abuse problems or addictions
- Psychological trauma from daily mental abuse or torture, including depression, stress-related disorders, disorientation, confusion, phobias and panic attacks
- Feeling of helplessness, shame, humiliation, shock, denial or disbelief
- Proneness to commit suicide, cultural shock from finding themselves in a foreign country
- Back, hearing, cardiovascular or respiratory problems from endless toiling in agriculture, sweatshop or construction conditions
- Weak eyes from working in dimly lit sweatshops
- Malnourishment and serious dental problems
- Infectious diseases like tuberculosis
- Undetected or untreated diseases, such as diabetes or cancer
- Allergies, bruises, scars and other signs of physical abuse and torture.
- STDS/HIV/AIDS
- Pelvic pain or rectal trauma
- Urinary difficulties
- Unwanted pregnancy, resulting from rape or prostitution
- Infertility from chronic untreated sexually transmitted infections or unsafe abortions
- Infections or mutilations caused by unsanitary and dangerous medical procedures performed by unqualified individuals.

*Health Providers have a crucial opportunity for identification and intervention because they are one of the few groups of professionals likely to interact with victims of human trafficking while they are still in the control of the traffickers.*

## IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Potential signs and clues for identification of victims of human trafficking – evidence of being controlled; evidence of an inability to move or leave a job; bruises or other signs of battering; fear of deportation; recently brought to the country/ moved to the state, city; lack of passport, immigration or identification documents etc.**

- Is potential victim accompanied by another person who seems controlling?
- Does person accompanying potential victim insist on giving information to health providers?
- Can you see or detect any physical or psychological abuse?
- Does potential victim seem submissive, nervous, fearful, avoiding eye contact and giving evasive answers?
- Is the patient reluctant to explain or has inconsistencies when asked about his/her injury?
- Does potential victim have difficulty communicating because of language barriers?
- Does potential victim have any identification documents?
- Is potential victim suffering from common health problems experienced by trafficking victims?

## INTERACTING WITH VICTIMS

- Isolating the potential victim from the person accompanying her/him without raising suspicions
- Building an environment of mutual trust; strict confidentiality is extremely important;
- Enlisting trusted translator/interpreter who also understands victim's cultural needs

## RESPONSE AFTER IDENTIFICATION

- Short term** – the provider should care for any immediate needs, including treatment of physical trauma, sexually transmitted infections etc.
- Long term** – establishing a long-term treatment with an interdisciplinary team of health care professionals; building a client-specific plan of care; providing dental care and mental health assistance – counseling, healing the trauma.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Where are you from?
- How did you get your current job?
- Can you leave your work or job situation if you want?
- Have you been threatened with harm if you try to quit?
- Has physical abuse from your employer made you fearful to leave the job?
- Has anyone threatened your family?
- What are your working or living conditions like?
- Has anyone lied to you about the type of work you would be doing?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Have you ever been forced to have sex to pay off a debt?
- Does anyone hold your identity documents for you?

## MESSAGES TO CONVEY

- You have rights.
- You are entitled to assistance.
- We would like to help you.
- Your safety is our priority.
- We can find a safe place for you to stay.
- We will provide you with the medical care that you need.

## LEGAL STATUS

Foreign born victims can be certified by the US Department of Health and Human Services as trafficked persons. Once certified, victims can access the same benefits as refugees. They are eligible for physical and mental health services, housing, food stamps, educational and vocational programs, as well as legal and translation services. Minors do not require certification. Victims of the severe forms of trafficking may also apply and be granted a T-Visa.

## INTERVENTION

The health care provider cannot force the victim to report the crime. The provider and the client can anonymously call the **National Human Trafficking Hotline (1.888.373.7888)** which can assist in finding local resources and developing a safety plan for the victim.