



Basic Information about Sex and Labor Trafficking

Human trafficking involves the use of *force, fraud, or coercion* to compel another person to perform a profitable labor or sex act. Victims can be adults or children, foreign or domestic born. The trafficking can involve purely labor or purely commercial sex, or be a blend of both.

The following are examples of how force, fraud, or coercion can show up in trafficking. It is not an exhaustive list of strategies that might be employed by traffickers.

- Force:** Restricted access, restricted movement, permission required for access or communication, locks, guards, guard dogs, etc.
- Fraud:** Exorbitant or new charges incurred for job placement, transportation, food, or other services; wage and hour violations; “bait and switch” tactics regarding job duties and compensation.
- Coercion:** Threats of deportation, reporting to law enforcement, harm to family members, or blacklisting from future employment; sexual harassment; confiscation of passport and visa; shaming; debt bondage.

If the trafficking victims are foreign-born, the threat of deportation is omnipresent.

Vulnerabilities that Traffickers Exploit: These vulnerabilities can be social, physical, political, financial, or situational, taking many different forms. Here are some examples:

- Family conflict/instability
- Financial stress
- Social isolation
- Homelessness
- Limited English proficiency
- Addictions
- Immigration status
- Unsafe community or living conditions
- Natural disasters
- Sexual orientation/gender identity
- Lack of transportation
- Rejection by family or community
- History of physical or sexual trauma
- Foster care placement; aging out of the child welfare system
- Political instability
- Cultural background

Environmental Conditions that Enable Trafficking:

- Tourist destinations
- Large public events
- Seasonal farm work
- Online advertising opportunities
- Interstate highways
- Truck stops
- Highway rest stops
- Military bases
- Factories
- International borders
- Colleges and University



The Indicators of Trafficking: To employ a common description, human trafficking is often “hidden in plain sight” in our communities. Whereas Hollywood regularly employs imagery of physical restraints and kidnapping, the reality is that the indicators of trafficking can be much more subtle and situational.

This list of “red flags” is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Different forms of trafficking generate variations in the indicators that might be visible to outsiders. The presence of any single indicator is not necessarily proof of human trafficking. However, the presence of several indicators should generate attention and reporting to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, law enforcement, or the local Rapid Response Team.

Behaviors and physical characteristics of the victims:

- Fearful, timid, or submissive actions; avoid eye contact
- Appear to lie about their age, identity, or relationship with others
- Matching tattoos
- Bruises indicating abuse or restraint
- Malnourishment; extreme fatigue
- Drug use
- Have injuries that should have been treated earlier
- Are not allowed adequate food or sleep
- Repeated pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases
- Are not allowed control of their own finances or identification documents
- Are not allowed to contact friends or family
- Are not allowed to come and go as desired
- Have a large debt that cannot be repaid
- Claim to be ‘just visiting’ or are unable to clarify where they live or where they are
- Might not know exactly where they are, how long they have been there, or what the day is.
- Appear to be living at their worksite
- Have little personal property



Behaviors and physical characteristics of the trafficker:

- Lies about identification, relationships, purpose of travel, nature of work, hours worked
- Tries to stay with the victims and speak for them
- Tries to distract observers away from the work site, the indicators, or the victims
- Verbally or physically intimidate, manipulates, or controls the victims
- Keeps control of the victims' identification documents

Property in the setting:

- Multiple cell phones, numerous hotel key cards, stashes of condoms, pornography, sex toys, sexy costumes
- False identification cards
- Handcuffs or other forms of restraint
- Tools of intimidation, such as a rod for beating,
- Beds, food, personal items that indicate people are living on the premises
- Guard dogs, or dogs in pens in between the work site and the exit door or highway

Vehicle characteristics:

- Multiple unrelated people traveling together
- Passengers unsure of where they are or where they are going
- Conflicting accounts of the purpose of the travel or nature of the group.
- Overcrowded or unsafe conditions for passengers; hidden compartments

Situational characteristics:

- Locks on the wrong side of doors to confine people; buckets in locked rooms to be used for body waste.
- Too many cameras, particularly on exits
- Windows are covered or barred.
- Massage parlors/nail salons/spas are open late hours. Personnel change regularly.
- Customers are provided tokens that the employees collect in order to prove they have provided services.
- Personnel rarely leave the premises or only leave under the supervision of a manager.
- Personnel report exorbitant fees associated with holding the job or with regular living expenses.
- Tips must be handed to management, not the employee.
- Lack of paychecks, personnel records, identification documents
- Ownership and/or licensing of the business is vague or not documented.
- The business advertises on commercial sex websites.



The Polaris Project is affiliated with the National Human Trafficking Hotline and serves as the national repository of data on human trafficking in the US. Using the statistics from callers, they identified twenty-five business models of human trafficking. <https://polarisproject.org/> To learn which local government staff might be in positions to see the indicators of trafficking in these business models, refer to Public Management Bulletin 15, *Exploring the Intersections Between Local Government and Human Trafficking: The Local Government Focus Group Project*. Available online at sog.unc.edu

1. Escort services is a broad term used in the commercial sex trade and refers to commercial sex acts that primarily occur at a temporary indoor location, such as a motel or residence. The traffickers deliver the victims to the sex buyers, transferring across locations to meet demand. Online advertising platforms enable the transactions.

2. Illicit massage, health, and beauty businesses present a façade of legitimate spa services, concealing that their primary function is the sex and labor trafficking of women trapped in the location. They appear to be single operations but often are controlled as part of larger networks.

3. Outdoor Solicitation occurs when traffickers force victims to find buyers in outdoor, public settings, such as a particular city block or truck or rest stops along major highways.

4. Residential brothels might be run by networks of coordinated traffickers; private households might be used informally for commercial sex. Advertising might be through word of mouth or covert business cards as well as through online advertising.

5. Domestic workers often live within their employers' households and provide such services as cooking, cleaning, and caretaking for children, the elderly, or the infirm.

6. Bars, strip clubs, and cantinas might be fronts for both sex and labor trafficking. There are variations on the type of trafficking as well as the connection to the traffickers.

7. Pornography is a product enabled by modern technology. The victims can be children or adults. They can be overtly controlled and trafficked or be tricked into being photographed by intimate partners or caregivers.

8. Traveling sales crews are moved between cities and states, going door-to-door to sell fraudulent products, such as magazine subscriptions. Young salespeople, in particular, are rarely fully compensated, work long hours, and are unable to leave.

9. Restaurants and food service sites of all kinds have been documented as taking advantage of language barriers and immigration status, in particular, when labor trafficking.

10. Peddling and begging rings involve traffickers who, posing under the guise of a seemingly legitimate charitable or religious organization, claim to provide trips or enrichment services to "at-risk youth." They sell candy or baked goods, or solicit donations on streets or in shopping centers.

11. Agriculture and animal husbandry industries sometimes engage trafficked victims, particularly in the more labor-intensive harvesting processes. Trafficking can happen at multiple levels along the complex labor supply chain of recruiters, managers, contractors, subcontractors, growers, and buyers.

12. Personal sexual servitude takes various forms of activity and payment. Victims may be sold, forced to marry, or coerced to engage in sex in order to have basic needs met, such as in the case of runaway homeless youth.



13. Health and beauty services provided in seemingly legitimate nail and hair salons or spas can be exploiting foreign-born workers who were recruited under false pretenses, live in isolation under heavy monitoring, and may lose control of their identification papers.

14. The construction industry generates a complex labor supply chain that can involve trafficking through the roles of direct employers, recruiters, and contractors. The abusive actions can range from the physical (denying necessities, such as water or safety equipment) to the fraudulent (misrepresented visa contracts or working conditions; severe wage and hour violations.)

15. Hotels and hospitality industries might employ trafficked victims who are manipulated through false recruitment, debt bondage, or other forms of economic abuse. If the trafficker is a contractor, the hotel may not be aware of the abuse.

16. Landscaping businesses that traffic foreign-born men, primarily, to work in maintaining public or private grounds, use strategies that range from fraudulent recruitment to misrepresented work contracts or conditions.

17. Illicit activities operated by criminal syndicates in illegal industries can exploit people for profit with the same levels of force, fraud, and coercion as in any legitimate labor industry.

18. Arts and entertainment functions, such as modeling, athletics, dancing, or performance groups, may employ fraudulent recruiting, economic abuse, or psychological manipulation. In terms of exotic dancing, in particular, both labor and sex trafficking can be involved.

19. Commercial cleaning services operated by business owners, rather than networks, can employ fraudulent recruitment or economic abuse as tools of manipulation. Exploitation can include exposure to hazardous cleaning chemicals without proper protective equipment. Those who work at night or alone can be particularly vulnerable to abuse, including trafficking.

20. Factories and manufacturing in food processing, clothing, and shoe manufacturing are especially vulnerable to labor abuse and trafficking, based on the reports to Polaris. A wide range of manufacturers were reported, including factories producing electronic devices and vehicles. Factories that process or produce food products also have the potential for abuse.

21. Remote interactive sexual acts are live commercial sex acts simulated via remote contact between the buyer and victim through technologies such as webcams, text-based chats, and phone sex lines.

22. Carnivals have been reported for labor exploitation and trafficking of workers who operate rides, games, or food stands as well as for assembling and disassembling carnival equipment. The lack of sleep from working long hours can generate workplace accidents, potentially affecting both the staff and customers. Carnival companies may contract with state or county fairs.

23. Forestry and logging exist in another complicated labor supply chain. Traffickers have been reported as management or crew leaders. In addition to using fraudulent recruitment and economic abuse, these traffickers can exert additional control due to the isolated work settings.

24. Health care settings, such as nursing homes or in-home service care, might enable trafficking and exploitation of migrant or low-wage workers through their complex work chains and often isolated work settings.

25. Recreational facilities—such as amusement parks, summer camps, golf courses, or community swimming pools—may mislead recruits through promises of free transportation to and from work, fairly priced housing, and a living wage. Young adults on J-1 visas are particular targets.

The School of Government Public Management Bulletins:

(Available at sog.unc.edu)

- [PMB No. 12](#) introduces the issue of human trafficking to city/county managers and elected officials. **“Human Trafficking in North Carolina: Strategies for Local Government Officials”**
- [PMB No. 14](#) explains how government works at the local, state, and national levels and offers advice to community advocates on how to seek help from local government officials in addressing human trafficking. **“Ten Questions about Local Governments: A Primer for Anti-Human Trafficking Advocates”**
- [PMB No. 15](#) focuses on the business models traffickers use to manage their human trafficking enterprises and reports on focus group discussions with local government officials to determine how greater awareness of these models and their various signs within the community might be incorporated into their daily work. **“Exploring the Intersections between Local Governments and Human Trafficking: The Local Government Focus Group Project”**
- [PMB No. 16](#) shares basic information about labor trafficking, describes how it shows up in NC, and offers distinctions between labor and sex trafficking. **“Labor Trafficking – What Local Governments Need to Know.”**

Online Educational Resources:

- **The School of Government resource page:** www.sog.unc.edu/resource-series/human-trafficking Provides legal and programmatic updates specific to NC.
- **Project NO REST** www.projectnorest.org Training videos are available on the website. Follow the PNR Facebook page for current headlines
- **The National Human Trafficking Hotline** humantraffickinghotline.org North Carolina statistics are available here. Look under “resources” for topic-specific reports
- **The Polaris Project** polarisproject.org Creates data-driven reports on the typologies and incidence of various forms of trafficking, as well as “disruption strategies.”
- **Emergency Disaster Response Toolkit from the City of Houston.** humantraffickinghouston.org
- **Human Trafficking ELearning**, Michigan Public Health Institute. Curricula for health care, first responders, and safety officers <http://humantraffickingelearning.com/>
- **Truckers Against Trafficking** truckersagainstrafficking.org Check out both their model of intervention and their educational resources.
- An excellent 2.5 minute [PSA from Michigan State Police](#) on how workers might see the indicators of trafficking, a useful tool for introducing the topic to an audience. Search for “MSP Look Again” on YouTube
- **“Take a Second Look”** PSA and other resources from Homeland Security’s Blue Campaign, at <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>