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# Working with Survivors of Human Trafficking for Health Care Providers

Hannah Halbreich, LICSW, MSW

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- Hannah Halbreich is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in Washington D.C., where she specializes in managing programs and providing counseling to individuals and families challenged by trauma, victimization, and discrimination. Hannah has expertise in working with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, and conflict-related trauma. She is presently a Trafficking Specialist at the Office on Trafficking in Persons at the Department of Health and Human Services, and she also provides individual counseling to adults with a range of social-emotional issues and diagnoses at the TrueYou Center, a mental health practice in D.C.



# Disclosures

- **Presenter Disclosure:** Financial disclosures: Hannah Halbreich received an honorarium for presenting this course. Non-financial disclosures: Hannah Halbreich has no relevant non-financial relationships to disclose.
- **Content Disclosure:** This learning event uses specific products but does not focus exclusively on any specific product or service.
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# Limitations/Risks

- The significant diversity of experiences within human trafficking cannot be fully discussed given the brief time allocated for this course.
- For course participants, vicarious trauma is possible as narratives discussed in this course may be upsetting.



# Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the types and venues of sex and labor trafficking.
2. List risk factors for and red flags of human trafficking.
3. Explain techniques and barriers to identifying victims.
4. Identify resources for reporting suspected victims of human trafficking.



# Human Trafficking

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” (United Nations General Assembly, 2017)

# The Two Types of Human Trafficking

**Sex Trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for a commercial sex act, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.

**Labor Trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.





# Subcategories of human Trafficking

- **Involuntary Servitude:** Forced labor. Any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process. This can also include “involuntary sexual servitude”.
- **Debt Bondage:** Labor associated with a debt that increases or never decreases. The status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.
- **Peonage:** Labor with threat of harm that is connected to a debt. A status or condition of involuntary servitude based on real or alleged indebtedness.
- **Slavery:** Owned for the purpose of performing labor or services. The child was forced to perform labor or services with no pay or exchange of any goods and full purpose of day to day life becomes for the purpose of the labor or service. This can also include “sexual slavery”.
- **Commercial Sex Act:** Sexual act in exchange for something of value. Any sex act on account of anything of value given to or received by any person.

# Debunking Human Trafficking Myths

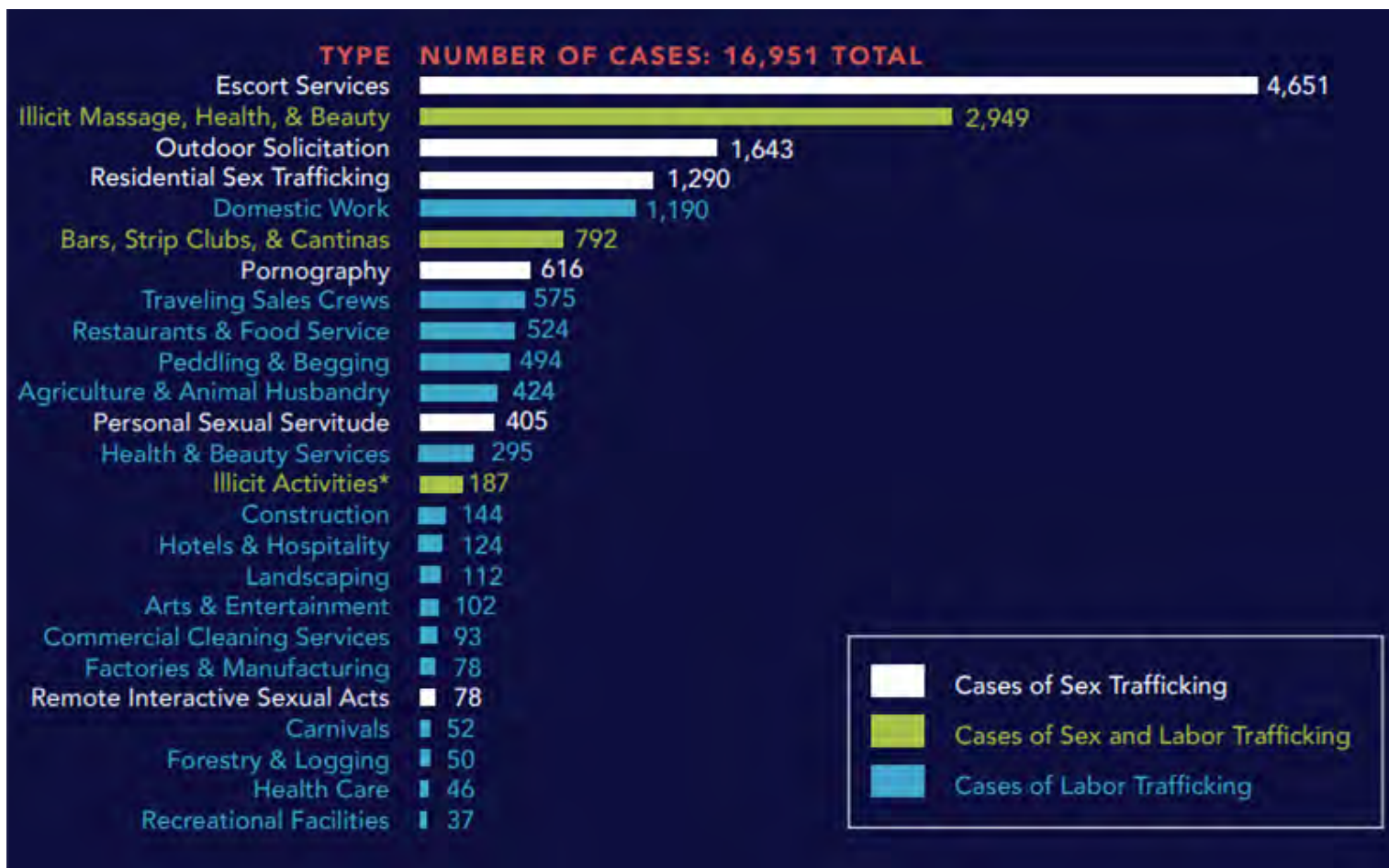
1. **Myth:** human trafficking must involve transportation/movement
  2. **Myth:** Victims are chained/held/physically harmed.
  3. **Myth:** Only foreign national victims are trafficked in the U.S.
  4. **Myth:** Only women and girls are sex trafficked.
  5. **Myth:** Victims of human trafficking will self identify.
  6. **Myth:** Human trafficking only involves commercial sex.
- 

# Venues for Human Trafficking

| Labor Trafficking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Sex Trafficking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Construction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Farms</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Construction sites</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Private homes/domestic servitude</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Retail</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare: nursing homes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Landscaping</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hotels</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Brothels</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fake massage businesses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strip clubs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bars/clubs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Online exploitation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Truck stops</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Escort services</li> </ul> |



# United States Statistics



Source: <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Typology-of-Modern-Slavery-Summary.pdf>

# United States Statistics

Worsened by covid: 125% increase in recruitments on Facebook over the previous year and a 95% increase on Instagram  
(Polaris, 2021)

94% of sex trafficking victims were female, 40% were Black, and 24% were Latinx  
(Rights4Girls, 2018)

19% increase of human trafficking from 2018 to 2019  
(Polaris, 2020)

1,612 calls (2015) to 4,312 (2019)  
(Polaris, 2020)

# Who is Being Trafficked?

- US citizens and foreign-born nationals
- Children, adolescents and adults
- Girls, young women
- Men and boys
- Individuals with disabilities (theft of Social Security and disability benefits)
- Victims from wealthy and poor families



# Who are the Traffickers?

- Family members
- Friends/acquaintances
- Partners/intimate partners
- Neighbors/community members
- Employers
- Gang and criminal networks
- Factory/business owners
- Peers



# Risk Factors for Human Trafficking

| Societal Risk Factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Community Risk Factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Relationship Risk Factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Individual Risk Factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of knowledge of labor and sex trafficking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health and economic disparities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Demand for cheap goods</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of worker rights</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social Norms</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Violence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Under-sourced schools, neighborhoods, and communities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian crises &amp; Natural disasters</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Family conflict, disruption, or dysfunction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of supportive adult</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social isolation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Familial poverty</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Immigration status</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Homeless or runaway</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQI</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History of being systems-involved (juvenile justice, criminal justice, foster care)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stigma and discrimination</li> </ul> |



# Risk Factors for Trafficking

- Sex trafficking
  - Substance use
  - Runaway/homeless youth
  - Unstable housing
  - Child abuse
  - Involvement in child welfare system
- Labor trafficking
  - Recent migration/relocation
  - Economic hardship
  - Unstable housing
  - Criminal history
  - Substance use

# General Indicators for Human Trafficking

- Shares a scripted or inconsistent history
- Is unwilling or hesitant to answer questions especially about their address, employment or an injury/illness
- Is accompanied by an individual who is monitoring them
- Fearful, nervous behavior or avoids eye contact
- Unaware of location



# Indicators of Sex Trafficking

- History of running away from home
- Truancy in attending school
- Possessing cell phones that they did not purchase on their own
- Making purchases with credit cards that do not belong to them
- Older boyfriends or girlfriends
- New tattoos (traffickers often use tattoos as a form of branding)
- Signs of gang affiliation
- Increased engagement in high risk behaviors, such as running away or early sexual initiation if a minor



# Health Indicators of Sex Trafficking

- Unexplained physical injuries
- High number of sexual partners
- Repetitive STDs
- Substance/drug addiction
- Reproductive issues
- Genital trauma/pelvic pain
- Eating disorders
- Depression/anxiety/PTSD
- Depersonalization/dissociation
- Lack of routine medical/dental care
- Frequent ER visits



# Indicators of Labor Trafficking

- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long or unusual hours
- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off
- Employer withholds of documents such as passports/ social security cards
- High security measures are in place of work or living locations (barbed wire; security fences, excessive security cameras)



# Health Indicators of Labor Trafficking

- Malnutrition and/or dehydration
- Gastrointestinal conditions
- Poor dental hygiene
- Work related injury
- Lack of routine medical/dental care
- Anxiety/depression/paranoia/PTSD
- Affect dysregulation



# Mental Health Indicators of Trauma

Trauma is the emotional response that occurs when a person's capacity to cope is overwhelmed by a negative event, series of events, or set of circumstances.

- Short and/or long-term complex emotional trauma
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): hypervigilance, intrusive memories, and flashbacks related to the experiences



# Trauma-Informed Screening for Human Trafficking

- Importance of identifying victims when visiting medical services\*
- Avoid retraumatization
- Be prepared to respond verbally and according to agency/state protocols
- Ask simple questions
- Assist client in understanding informed consent and confidentiality
- Set clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for service process

Safety  
 Trustworthiness and  
 Transparency  
 Peer Support  
 Collaboration  
 Empowerment  
 Cultural, gender and historical  
 considerations

(Harris & Fallot, 2001)



# Barriers to Identifying Victims

- Do not self-identify as victims or know what trafficking is
- Loyalty to their trafficker, “Stockholm syndrome”
- Depend on their trafficker for shelter/food and essentials
- Distrust of law enforcement
- Shame/guilt
- Cultural/language barriers
- Controlled movement and communication
- Difficult to reach/identify victims (hidden crime)
- Fear retribution and deportation
- Debt to their traffickers



# Breaking Down Barriers for Survivors

- Screen ALL patients
- Ensure physical needs are met
- Separate the victim from the trafficker
- Be aware of gender issues
- Be transparent about purpose of screening
- Provide culturally and linguistically relevant services
- Give survivors choice/options during screening
- Impact of trauma on memory and expressions
- Ask only relevant questions
- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Obtain patient's permission to call law enforcement collaboratively



# Breaking Down Barriers for Survivors

- Create an open door policy
- Importance of building trust and rapport
- Addressing the societal and economic drivers of trafficking
- Be careful not to blame victim for abuse/exploitation
- Ensure confidentiality and that client understands policies
- Adapt the screening process to accommodate the patient's individual needs
- Continue to educate yourself on human trafficking (how to report and best practices for working with survivors)



# Possible Screening Questions

- “You are coughing a lot. Can you tell me about your home and your bedroom? Are you sharing your room with others? Do you have a window in your room? Can you open it easily?”
- “Were you injured while working? Can you tell me about your work and how you were injured?”
- “Sometimes kids are in a position where they really need money, drugs, food or a place to stay. Have you ever traded sex for money, drugs, a place to stay, a cell phone, or something else?”



## Medical Assessment Tool (Polaris/NHTH)



### Once medical concerns are assessed / treated

If possible get patient alone to discuss questions with a social worker or medical professional.

Have you ever been forced to do work you didn't want to do?

Have you ever been forced to have sex to pay off a debt?

Does anyone hold your identity documents (i.e. driver's license/passport) for you? Why?

Have physical abuse or threats from your employer made you fearful to leave your job?

Has anyone lied to you about the type of work you would be doing?

Were you ever threatened with deportation or jail if you tried to leave your situation?

*For a more comprehensive list, consult Polaris Project's Generic Trafficking Assessment*

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Assessment%20Tool%20-%20Medical%20Professionals.pdf>

# Responding to Disclosure of Trafficking Concerns:

- Validate the patient and thank them for sharing with you
- Provide the patient with the NHTH number and encourage calling together
- In situations of imminent danger follow your state's/institution's policies
- If patient is a minor, follow mandatory state reporting laws and institutional policies
- Discuss safety planning options
- provide options for services and resources



# Responding to Disclosure of Trafficking Concerns:

V. If the patient screens positive for human trafficking (answers yes to ANY of the screening questions)

A. Give the patient a validating message:

1. You do not deserve to be treated this way.
2. You are not to blame.
3. Help is available for you.
4. There is no excuse for human trafficking.
5. No one deserves to be abused/taken advantage of.
6. You are not alone. There are people you can talk to for support, shelter and legal advice.  
This could be a social worker, abuse referral team member, office manager, etc.
7. It must be very difficult for you.

(The Regents of the University of Michigan, 2021)



# Screening Resources

1. Vera Institute Assessment tools
  - Long and short versions
2. National Human Trafficking Resource Center and SOAR, *Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking: What to Look for in Health Care Settings*,
3. NHTTAC Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool
4. Massachusetts General Hospital, Human Trafficking: Guidebook on Identification, Assessment, and Response in the Health Care Setting.



**NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
TRAINING AND TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE CENTER**



# Resources and Reporting

## National Human Trafficking Hotline

1-888-373-7888

TEXT: "BE FREE" –  
233733



National  
Center for  
Missing and  
Exploited  
Children  
800.843.5678



Office on  
Trafficking in  
Persons  
Case Staffing Line  
202.205.4582



# Health Providers Role in Combating Human Trafficking

- Continue to educate yourself on human trafficking and what it looks like in your community
- Implement policies and procedures for assisting victims in your organization
- Ensure providers are aware of indicators and how to conduct screenings

