

Identifying and Reporting Human Sex Trafficking

Tips for Medical Providers

Background: Human sex trafficking, also called modern day slavery, occurs when a controlling individual uses force, fraud, or coercion to exploit a victim for the purpose of personal gain. Anyone under the age of 18 is considered a victim if they engage in commercial sex acts, regardless of trafficker involvement. Force, fraud, or coercion does not have to be present if the victim is a minor.

Only by identifying victims, offering resources, and reporting victims (when able) to the proper authorities can medical providers play their role in preventing future victimization.

Risk Factors for Human Trafficking Victimization: While an individual of any age, sex, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status can become a victim, some common risk factors include:

- Young age
- Runaway
- Involvement with foster care services
- Family dysfunction
- Prior history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Drug/alcohol use
- Poverty
- Lack of social support
- Learning disabilities
- Mental health problems

Signs that Suggest Human Trafficking Victimization:

- Clear disclosure from patient
- Delay in seeking medical care
- Signs of physical and/or sexual abuse
- Inconsistent or vague explanations of injuries
- Accompanied by a person who appears to be controlling them
- Accompanying person resistant to leaving the room
- Accompanying person insistent on interpreting if patient is LEP
- Patient does not have possession of their identification or documentation
- Patient appears anxious or fearful
- Avoids eye contact
- Unable to speak for themselves
- Reported history does not match injuries
- Patient is unsure about whereabouts
- Inappropriate attire
- Patient appears younger than stated age
- Evidence of injuries at various stages of healing

Dynamics of a Human Trafficking Victim:

- A victim may not self-identify
- Victims may deny mistreatment and may not be truthful about their situation
- Victims may defend their trafficker and state their involvement is voluntary
- Victims may have been conditioned to not trust others, including medical providers and law enforcement

You are a MANDATED REPORTER. All suspected minor sex trafficking MUST be reported to CPS 410-887-TIME (8463) and Police - 911

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Safety Tips When a Patient is a Suspected or Known Victim:

- Safety is always the top priority
- Treat each situation as extremely dangerous, until you have evidence that it is safe
- Notify 911 for any immediate threats
- Attempt to speak with the patient alone
- Do not attempt to speak to the patient if you believe this will threaten safety
- Do not allow anyone in the room while speaking with your patients about your concerns;
A trafficker may be present or may send another victim to pose as a concerned friend but this person may actually be “watching” them to prevent disclosure
- Do not allow any cellular telephones when you are speaking with your patient;
At times traffickers will “listen in” during medical appointments thus preventing a victim from disclosing
- Do not pressure a patient to disclose or report if they do not wish to

Common Medical Presentations & Past Medical History that Should Raise Suspicion:

- Vaginal and/or anal trauma
- Evidence of inflicted injuries
- Pregnancy complications
- Lack of prenatal care
- Suicidal Ideations
- HIV testing or treatment
- Strangulation injuries
- Dental related complaints
- History of multiple/untreated STIs
- Undiagnosed/untreated medical conditions
- Substance abuse related issues
- Malnutrition/dehydration

When to Report to Department of Social Services & Law Enforcement:

As a mandated reporter, you are REQUIRED to report all suspected or known human trafficking of minors. Proof is not needed to make a report. Call DSS AND Law Enforcement to make a report and closely monitor the patient until assistance arrives.

You are NOT mandated to report adult victims of human trafficking. Never report to law enforcement without the adult victim's consent. Adults have the right to make decisions about self-reporting. If an adult would like to report, contact law enforcement. If they do not wish to report, provide them with resources including the National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-3737-888 and encourage them to report in the future.

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