

## **Human Trafficking- a Form of Modern-Day Slavery**

Human trafficking is considered to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries and is tied with illegal arms trade as the second largest criminal industry in the world. Victims of human trafficking are exploited for the purpose of commercial sex or forced labor.

Victims are in plain sight. Those being trafficked include young children, teenagers, men and women and can be domestic citizens or foreign nationals. Foreign-born victims can be either documented or undocumented in the United States.

Facts about Human Trafficking: The United States is one of the top three destination points for trafficked victims and California, New York, Texas and Nevada are the top destination states within the country. Los Angeles is one of the top three points of entry into this country for victims of slavery and trafficking. This trafficking route occurs in a triangle from Los Angeles, California to Las Vegas, Nevada, and back to Sacramento, California. The diverse communities of these sprawling cities make it easier to hide and move victims from place to place. This makes it very difficult for law enforcement to locate potential survivors. Sacramento is the #2 city in the United States experiencing an epidemic of child trafficking.

Immigration agents estimate that 10,000 women are being held in Los Angeles' underground brothels; this does not include the thousands of victims in domestic work, sweatshops or other informal industries. Women who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation experience a significantly higher rate of HIV and other STDs, tuberculosis, and permanent damage to their reproductive systems.

Trafficking victims normally don't get help because they think that they or their families will be hurt by their traffickers, or that they will be deported.

Human trafficking has been identified as the largest human-rights violation in the history of mankind. Human Trafficking is the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the 21st century.

It is a 9 billion dollar industry. Human Trafficking is the second largest criminal enterprise in the world, after drug smuggling and arms dealing. Human Trafficking is often run by organized crime.

An estimated 27 million people are enslaved around the world this very moment, and 13 million of them are children, who account for nearly half of trafficking victims in the world.

The average age of a young woman being trafficked is 12-14 years old. More than 2/3 of sex trafficked children suffer additional abuse at the hands of their traffickers.

There are anywhere between 600,000 and 800,000 victims trafficked through international borders every year, which does not include the millions who are trafficked domestically within their own countries.

The average cost of a slave around the world is \$90.

According to estimates, approximately 80% of trafficking involves sexual exploitation, and 19% involves labor exploitation.

A relatively large percentage of women and children who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation will become HIV positive, as they experience a tenfold risk of contracting HIV.

Trafficked children are significantly more likely to develop mental health problems, abuse substances, engage in prostitution as adults, and either commit or be victimized by violent crimes later in life.

According to the 2008 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, human trafficking is a multi-dimensional threat; it deprives people of their human rights and freedoms, it increases global health risks, and it fuels the growth of organized crime.

How can you recognize the victims of human trafficking in your city? Victims of human trafficking may look like many of the people you see every day. They can be young children, teens, men or women. By looking beneath the surface and asked yourself some questions you may be able to help identify potential victims. Is the person often accompanied by another person who seems controlling? Is the person rarely allowed in public except for work? Can you detect any physical or psychological abuse? Does the person seem submissive or fearful? Does the person lack identification or documentation? Is someone else collected the person's pay or holding their money for "safe keeping"? If you get the opportunity to speak to the person alone, asking these questions can help you determine if you may be dealing with a victim: Can you leave your job or situation if you want? Can you come and go as you please? Have you been threatened if you try to leave? Has anyone threatened your family? What are your working or living conditions like? Where do you sleep and eat? Do you have permission to eat, sleep, or go to the bathroom? Is there a lock on your door so you cannot get out? Does someone prohibit you from socializing or attending church?

If you suspect that someone is a victim of Human Trafficking call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-3737-888. This hotline can help victims safely and securely begin to rebuild their lives by connecting them to basic services which include: Housing, Healthcare, Immigration Assistance, Food and Employment as well as Legal Assistance. Victims of human trafficking who are not U.S. Citizens are eligible to receive benefits through the TVPRA to the same extent as refugees. Victims who are U.S. citizens may already be eligible to receive many of these benefits. Gaining the trust of a victim of human trafficking is an important first step for providing assistance. Confidentiality is vital for victims of human trafficking.

*Statistics and information found at: United States Department of Health and Human Services*

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