



Tool 6.9 Interviewing tips for health-care practitioners

Overview

This tool reproduces some of the materials created by the United States Department of Health and Human Services for health-care practitioners to use in identifying and assisting victims of trafficking.

Overview of the problem

Health-care practitioners may have treated victims of human trafficking without realizing their circumstances and therefore have lost a chance to help them escape a horrific situation. The following provides a brief overview of the trafficking problem, as well as tips for identifying and assisting trafficking victims.

Human trafficking is a widespread form of modern-day slavery. While trafficking is largely a hidden social problem, many trafficking victims are in plain sight if you know what to look for.

Trafficking is not just forced prostitution. Victims of human trafficking may also be in forced labour situations as domestic servants (nannies or maids); sweatshop workers; janitors; restaurant workers; migrant farm workers; fishery workers; hotel or tourist industry workers; and as beggars.

Front-line health-care providers can help victims of human trafficking since they may be the only outsider with the opportunity to speak with a victim. There are housing, health, immigration, food, income, employment and legal services available to victims, but first the victims must be found.

Victim identification

A victim of trafficking may look like many of the people health-care practitioners help every day. Victims of trafficking can get the assistance they need if people with whom they come into contact look beneath the surface for the following clues:

- Evidence of being controlled
- Evidence of an inability to move or leave a job
- Bruises or other signs of battering
- Fear or depression
- Not speaking the language of the State
- Recently arrived in the State from another country
- Lack of passport, immigration or identification documentation

Traffickers use various techniques to keep victims enslaved. Some traffickers keep their victims under lock and key. However, the more frequent practice is to use less obvious techniques, including:

- Debt bondage (financial obligations, honour-bound to satisfy a debt)
- Isolation from the public (limiting contact with outsiders and making sure that any contact is monitored or superficial in nature)
- Isolation from family members and members of their ethnic and religious community
- Confiscation of passports, visas and identification documents
- Use or threat of violence toward victims and families of victims
- The threat of shaming victims by exposing the circumstances to their family
- Telling victims they will be imprisoned or deported for immigration violations if they contact the authorities
- Control of the victims' money (e.g. holding their money for "safe-keeping")

The result of such techniques is to instil fear in victims. The victims' isolation is further exacerbated because many do not speak the language of the destination and are from States where law enforcement is corrupt and feared.

Victim interaction

Asking the right questions may help to determine if someone is a victim of human trafficking. It is important to talk to a potential victim in a safe and confidential environment. If someone who seems controlling accompanies the victim, an attempt should be made to separate the victim from that person. The accompanying person could be the trafficker or someone working for the trafficker.

Ideally, you should also enlist the help of a staff member who speaks the victim's language and understands the victim's culture. As an alternative, the services of an interpreter can be used. Interpreters must be screened to ensure they do not know the victim or the traffickers and do not otherwise have a conflict of interest.



Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services, at: www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/campaign_kits/tool_kit_health/identify_victims.html