

Red Flags for Human Trafficking

Red Flags for Children and Youth

- Sudden possession of expensive and/or revealing clothing, purses or electronics
- Sudden change in behavior
- Surprising change in friendships/relationships with peers
- Unexplained absences and truancy from school and out-of-school activities
- Signs of anger and/or depression
- Display substance misuse (legal/illicit)
- Loss of contact with parent/guardian
- Use of terminology like “the game” “the life” “daddy” “manager” “date/trick”
- Gang affiliation
- Deprivation of food, sleep or medical care
- Running away/couch surfing
- Lack of I.D.
- Tattoos or branding
- Signs of physical abuse: bruising, swelling, redness, cigarette burns
- Claim of an older boyfriend/girlfriend
- Hotel key cards

Psychosocial Warning Signs of Sex Trafficking

- Repeated “runaway” attempts
- Family Dysfunction; abuse in home; neglect/absence of a caregiver
- Prior record of arrest for prostitution
- Display substance misuse (legal/illicit)
- Sex industry association in one who is confirmed to be a minor
- Involvement with several sexual partners
- Relationship with an older man
- Use of lingo/slang relating to street work (“the life” or “the game”)
- Dominating/controlling boyfriend/or female in room accompanying individual
- Victim in crisis but downplaying health problems/risks
- Victim resisting helps (due to fear of retaliation from law enforcement/trafficker/social services)
- Multiple foster home/group home placements
- Restricted or controlled communication
- Lack of identification (i.e. passport, driver’s license)
- Display of emotional distress such as that of depression, anxiety or low self-esteem
- Claim that they are “just visiting the area”

Red Flags General

Common Work and Living Conditions: The individual(s) in question

- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Is under 18 and is providing commercial sex acts
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp / manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work
- High security measures exist in the work and/or living locations (e.g. opaque windows, boarded up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.)

Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior

- Is fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid
- Exhibits unusually fearful or anxious behavior after bringing up law enforcement
- Avoids eye contact

Poor Physical Health

- Lacks health care
- Appears malnourished
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture

Lack of Control

- Has few or no personal possessions
- Is not in control of his/her own money, no financial records, or bank account
- Is not in control of his/her own identification documents (ID or passport)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on being present and/or translating)

Other

- Claims of just visiting and inability to clarify where he/she is staying/address
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or do not know what city he/she is in
- Loss of sense of time
- Display substance misuse (legal/illicit)
- Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story
- This list is not exhaustive and represents only a selection of possible indicators. Also, the red flags in this list may not be present in all trafficking cases and are not cumulative. Learn more at www.humantraffickinghotline.org.

Questions to ask:

Where do you live/who do you live with?

Who takes care of you?

How did you meet your “boyfriend?”

Do you have to contribute money to your family?

Tell me about your tattoo.

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

Have you ever worked in a place where the work was different from what you were promised it would be?

Have you ever exchanged sex for food, shelter, drugs or money?

Does anyone take all or part of the money you earn?

Has anyone threatened your family?

Do you feel trapped in your situation?

Has anyone ever taken photos of you and put them on the internet?

Words to avoid:

Prostitute

Trafficking Victim

Pimp

Sex worker

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