Human Trafficking in the Healthcare Setting: a brief overview and resource list

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Human Trafficking in the Healthcare Setting: a brief overview & resource list

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What is Human Trafficking?

- Forced labor,
- Sexual exploitation,
- Slavery, or
- Removal of organs;
- In Vermont, any commerce in sex involving a minor (including survival sex).


International Law: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), also called the “Palermo Convention”
What this might look like in Vermont

Please note: these are hypotheticals, based on known categories of trafficking and the nature of our economy in Vermont

• “Frequent Flyer” with possible h/o drug use or suspected prostitution
• Migrant farmworker whose employer insists on translating
• Young adult, appearing younger than stated age, presenting with an older boyfriend
• A nanny whose employer refuses to allow her to speak for herself
• A homeless teenager who is “staying with” an older friend (consider survival sex)
Common Misconceptions

- **Transport is not required** (a victim may be an American citizen trafficked from her/his home)
- In Vermont, victims **may not be prosecuted for prostitution**
- Victim’s alleged consent to trafficking is immaterial
- In Vermont, a Safe Harbor Provision provides minors with a positive defense against crimes committed while a victim of human trafficking

- For adults: requires the use of force, fraud or coercion
- **For minors: no force, fraud or coercion required**

International Law: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), also called the “Palermo Convention”
“Red Flags”: When to consider trafficking in your differential

- Delayed presentation
- Stated history does not fit clinical presentation
- Scripted, memorized or mechanically recited history
- Stated age older than visual appearance
- Subordinate, hyper-vigilant, or fearful demeanor
- Inability to produce identification documents; documents may be held by accompanying companion ("friend"/"employer"/"family")

From Human Trafficking: Guidebook on Identification, Assessment, and Response in the Health Care Setting
“Red Flags”: When to consider trafficking in your differential

- Reluctance or inability to speak on one’s own behalf—a companion may translate
- Companion who answers questions for the patient, controls the content of the encounter, or who insists on providing translation
- Companion who refuses to leave
- Tattoos or other marks or insignias that may indicate a claim of “ownership” by another (branding tattoos)
- Evidence of any kind of physical violence, including torture

from Human Trafficking: Guidebook on Identification, Assessment, and Response in the Health Care Setting
Differential Diagnosis

If your initial impression elicits concerns of:

• Domestic violence
• Child abuse,
• Vulnerable adult abuse, or
• Elderly abuse

Consider human trafficking in your differential.
If You Suspect Trafficking

• **Minors, elders and vulnerable adults** may require mandatory reporting in Vermont.

  • **Minors** (<18 years old): 1-800-649-5285
    - Department of Children and Families
  • **Elders and Vulnerable adults**: 1-800-564-1612
    - Adult Protective Services

• **Adults who do not meet the above categories** do **not** mandate a report in the state of Vermont, and any reporting should be done only at the request of the victim/survivor.
Guidance, resources and service referrals:

• Vermont 2-1-1: 2-1-1 from any phone in VT
  • Statewide hotline for health and human services, including human trafficking; guidance and connect to local resources

• National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888
  • National hotline that can provide guidance and connect to local resources

• Vermont Law Enforcement: 1-888-98HUMAN
  • Law Enforcement Human Trafficking Hotline
Selected Resources and Trainings on Health and Human Trafficking

**Narrated PowerPoint (available online):**
- [Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking in a Healthcare Context](#) (2012, 2016)
  - Online Training (narrated PowerPoint) from The National Human Trafficking Resource Center/Polaris Project

**Written (available online):**
- [Human Trafficking Assessment Tool for Medical Professionals](#) (2016)
  - 1-page flow sheet for clinical assessment of suspected victims from The National Human Trafficking Resource Center/Polaris Project

  - 4-page overview from The National Human Trafficking Resource Center

- [Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Human Trafficking](#) (2012)
  - 5-page World Health Organization Information Sheet on Women and Human Trafficking

- [Human Trafficking: Guidebook on Identification, Assessment, and Response in the Health Care Setting](#) (2014)
  - 40-page reference guide from the MGH Human Trafficking Initiative and the Massachusetts Medical Society Committee on Violence Intervention and Prevention
Selected Research on Health and Human Trafficking

Case Study:


Sex Trafficking:

• An international comparative public health analysis of sex trafficking of women and girls in eight cities: achieving a more effective health sector response (2013)

• The Health of Trafficked Women: A Survey of Women Entering Posttrafficking Services in Europe (2008)

Labor Trafficking:

• Labour exploitation and health: a case series of men and women seeking post-trafficking services (2014)
For Further Learning on Health and Human Trafficking

• National Human Trafficking Resource Center/Polaris Project, a US-based nonprofit dedicated to combatting human trafficking around the world.

• Office on Trafficking in Persons, a US federal office under the Administration for Children and Families.

• HEAL Trafficking: Health Professional Education, Advocacy and Linkage, a network of healthcare providers combatting human trafficking.

• Give Way to Freedom, a Vermont-based foundation working with local, global and international partners to combat human trafficking.