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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).

Vermont Law: Act 55 (2011)

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**

Vermont Law: Act 55 (2011)

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
- [Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking: What to Look for in a Healthcare Setting](#) (2016)
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:

- [Identification and Treatment of Human Trafficking Victims in the Emergency Department: A Case Report \(2016\)](#)

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.