



## U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Child Victims of Human Trafficking



### What does the human trafficking of children look like in the United States?

Across the globe, traffickers buy and sell children, exploiting them for sex and forced labor, and moving them across international borders. Child victims are trafficked into the United States from Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe. In the United States, children are subjected to human trafficking in many different sectors. Examples include prostitution on the streets or in a private residence, club, hotel, spa, or massage parlor; online commercial sexual exploitation; exotic dancing/stripping; agricultural, factory, or meatpacking work; construction; domestic labor in a home; restaurant/bar work; illegal drug trade; door-to-door sales, street peddling, or begging; or hair, nail, and beauty salons. Family members, acquaintances, pimps, employers, smugglers, and strangers traffic children. They often prey upon the children's vulnerabilities – their hopes for an education, a job, or a better life in another country – and may use psychological intimidation or violence to control the children and gain financial benefits from their exploitation. Trafficked children may show signs of shame or disorientation; be hungry and malnourished; experience traumatic bonding (Stockholm syndrome) and fear government officials, such as police and immigration officers.

### What is the definition of human trafficking under U.S. federal law?

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) defines “severe forms of human trafficking” as:

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for

- **sex trafficking** in which a **commercial sex act** is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, **or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age**; or
- **labor or services**, through the use of **force, fraud, or coercion** for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Coercion includes threats of physical or psychological harm to children and/or their families. **Any child (under the age of 18) engaged in commercial sex is a victim of trafficking.**

### How do I report human trafficking?

If a child is in urgent need of assistance, contact law enforcement or child protective services to report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child. The Childhelp® National Child Abuse Hotline professional crisis counselors can connect a caller with a local number to report abuse. Contact Childhelp at 1.800.4.A.CHILD. (1.800.422.4453).

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) aims to prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and assist victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them. Contact NCMEC at 1.800.THE.LOST (1.800.843.5678).

The HHS-funded National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) operates a hotline 24 hours a day, every day. The NHTRC will help callers identify and coordinate with local organizations that protect and serve victims of trafficking. Contact the NHTRC at 1.888.3737.888.

### What are my reporting responsibilities if I am a government official?

The TVPA, as amended, requires Federal, State, or local officials to notify HHS within 24 hours of discovering a child *who may be* a foreign victim of trafficking, to facilitate the provision of assistance.

**National Human Trafficking Resource Center 1.888.3737.888**



## U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Child Victims of Human Trafficking



Federal, State, or local officials should notify a Child Protection Specialist in the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at [ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov) or call **202.205.4582**. An HHS/ORR Child Protection Specialist will respond to notifications to facilitate eligibility for assistance and provide technical assistance as appropriate.

### How do I obtain assistance for a foreign child victim of human trafficking?

To become eligible for federally-funded benefits and services that would not be available to a child without a legal immigration status, a child victim must have an Eligibility Letter or an Interim Assistance Letter from HHS/ORR. An individual may request these letters from HHS/ORR on behalf of a child when credible information indicates the child may be a victim of trafficking. Submission of a *Request for Assistance for Child Victims of Human Trafficking* form can facilitate a determination of the child's eligibility for assistance. Obtain a form at [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking). Submit requests by e-mail to [ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov) or by fax to 202.401.5487. An HHS/ORR Child Protection Specialist will respond to requests and may be reached by phone at **202.205.4582**.

HHS/ORR issues an Eligibility Letter to assist a foreign child trafficking victim to become eligible for benefits and services without regard to the child's immigration status. HHS/ORR issues an Interim Assistance Letter to a foreign child who *may have been* subjected to trafficking to make the child eligible to receive benefits and services for a 90-day period. After issuing an Interim Assistance Letter, HHS/ORR will consult with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and nongovernmental organizations with expertise in trafficking before determining the child's continued eligibility as a victim of trafficking. **Children are not required to cooperate with law enforcement or to have been granted Continued Presence or a T nonimmigrant visa by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to receive assistance.**

### Who provides care for unaccompanied or separated child victims of trafficking?

A child victim of trafficking with an Eligibility Letter who has no available parent or legal guardian in the United States is eligible for ORR's **Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program**. Children are placed in licensed foster homes or other care settings according to individual needs. An appropriate court awards legal responsibility to the State, county, or private agency providing services, to act in place of the child's unavailable parents. Children in the URM program receive the full range of services available to other foster children in the State, as well as special services to help them adapt to life in the United States and recover from their trafficking experience. Safe reunification with parents or other appropriate relatives is encouraged. To access the URM program for a child victim of trafficking, call an HHS/ORR Child Protection Specialist at **202.205.4582**.

### What assistance is available to child victims of human trafficking?

Victims of trafficking who meet State eligibility requirements may access medical screenings, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and public housing programs.

**National Human Trafficking Resource Center 1.888.3737.888**