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# Human Trafficking

Meets Florida's Board of Nursing education requirement on human trafficking, as defined in Florida statute 787.06(2)

## **Objectives:**

- 1) Define human trafficking.
- 2) Identify who is involved in the trafficking of humans.
- 3) Describe how a victim gets caught up in a human trafficking scenario.
- 4) Recognize the role the internet plays in human trafficking.
- 5) Verbalize the warning signs that may alert the nurse that a patient may be a victim of human trafficking.
- 6) Explain the nursing implications of victims of human trafficking.
- 7) Discuss the steps to intervene in a suspected human trafficking situation.
- 8) List health the care needs of victims of human trafficking.
- 9) Review a list of resources available to assist victims of human trafficking.



Way back in the day, literally, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which declared "that all persons held as slaves, within the rebellious states, are and henceforward shall be free." And while this was not the absolute immediate end to the slave situation, this proclamation did capture the hearts and imagination of millions of Americans and fundamentally transformed the way that led slavery to its eventual demise.

Fast forward to now almost 160 years later, where a *different* type of slavery is alive and flourishing worldwide in the form of 'human trafficking.' Today's trafficking industry is said to be worth mind-blowing billions. Growing numbers of victims are described as "enslaved" by modern day human traffickers. It just sounds surreal; not possible, and makes one wonder how does this happen in these modern times? The pool of potential victims is plentiful and are they are often tricked into captivity through fraudulent employment schemes, kidnapping, or even sold by parents or other authority figures. It's hard to fathom that men, women, and children around the world are deprived of freedom while being physically and psychologically violated.

Human trafficking is often defined by the term "modern-day slavery." The actual numbers of this crime are astonishing. With over 40.3 million victims worldwide, there are more slaves today than at any time in history. In fact, it is estimated that there are twice as many individuals enslaved today than during the active African slave trade industry. (International Labor Organization 2018), nih.gov 2010

As far as the United States goes, it is so prevalent that many of our local communities have threads of trafficking woven through it and yet most citizens are simply unaware of the scope of the problem. Blissfully unaware really, because the predators who perpetrate this crime go to great lengths to conceal the activity in secrecy. This shroud of secrecy is further reinforced by the very victims themselves, as they may be petrified of the individuals who hold them captive. There is just such an overwhelming sense of silence that prevails on this issue. This hush is further reinforced by community members who are in disbelief that such a situation even exists.

Traffickers control their victims through psychological means, such as threats of violence, manipulation, and lies. Often, traffickers use a combination of direct violence and mental abuse. These tactics can even include manipulating a person's religious beliefs or superstitions to compel service.

The definition of Human Trafficking, under both federal and Florida state law, is defined as the transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, or obtaining of another person for transport; for the purposes of forced labor, domestic servitude or sexual exploitation using force, fraud and/or coercion. (--Florida Department of Children & Families, 2014)

## **Types of Human Trafficking:**

### **Sex Trafficking:**

Victims of sex trafficking are manipulated or forced to engage in sex acts for someone else's commercial gain. Sex trafficking is NOT prostitution. Anyone under the age of 18 who is participating in commercial sex is considered to be a victim of human trafficking. No exceptions.

### **Forced Labor:**

Victims of forced labor are compelled to work for little or no pay, often manufacturing or harvesting the products that we use and consume every day.

### **Domestic Servitude:**

Victims of domestic servitude are forced to work in isolation and are hidden in plain sight as nannies, housekeepers or other domestic help.

Sex trafficking tends to garner more headlines in the media due to its sensational nature, but labor trafficking is more common. Victims of labor trafficking might work in sweatshops, agriculture, mines, construction, service industries, and restaurants. Younger victims may be exploited for their innocent looks and forced to beg on the street all day, with all the funds going to their captors. Working conditions, as you might imagine, are usually primitive and exploitative, and the workers are at significant risk of physical injury.

Trafficking victims include men, women, and children. They can be young, old or any age in between. Women and children are often used for sexual exploitation, while men are more likely to be used for forced labor. However, the majority of these victims are women and children. Although many victims are brought in from other countries, many are born and raised in this country who also fall easily into the trafficking environment.

Initially, trafficking victims may have been kidnapped or forced into this lifestyle against their will, but hear this—many of the victims have been initially lured into trafficking of their own accord. Impoverished individuals can be easy prey for human traffickers, as they may lack any resources to be able to provide food, housing or even basic necessities to themselves or their families. It becomes much easier to exploit these individuals than someone who is secure and already has their basic needs met in life. Traffickers understand that as in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the lower rungs of the pyramid are noted as deficiency needs because humans become anxious when basic necessities (food, shelter, sleep, affection & safety) are nowhere in sight.

Thus, human traffickers are known to target the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. False promises of lucrative jobs, stability, education, income or romance lure in potential victims. These traffickers take advantage of people's dreams and desires to live a better life and prosper. Even refugee camps are targeted by traffickers as they are an easy way to acquire victims. Refugees can't work in their host country; they live in crowded, dirty conditions with a lack of warmth, stability, and food. Therefore, when traffickers promise them well-paying jobs elsewhere and safe passage, their vulnerability is all too easy to exploit. Imagine their feelings of desolation and despair when they realize they have been forced or coerced into prostitution, domestic servitude, or other types of forced labor. Victims are found in legitimate and illegitimate labor industries, including sweatshops, massage parlors, agricultural fields, restaurants, hotels, and domestic service.

Victims also have varied levels of education, socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and are men, women, adults, children, and even newly born children.

Globally, about one in five victims of human trafficking are children. Over half of all



victims trafficked into the United States from other countries are children. Children are also exploited for the purposes of forced begging, child pornography or child labor. Their smaller hands may also be used in tasks like sewing or

untangling fishing wire. The dark world of child trafficking continues to escalate. It is estimated that around 10,000 children a year suffer the horrors of commercial sexual exploitation in the United States. Throughout the world, individuals pay to abuse more than 1 million children a year. The trafficker often confiscates the victim's identification documents and instill a hardy fear of government officials and law enforcement officials which makes it even more difficult for the victim to break free.

Obviously driven by supply and demand, and the harsh truth is these children are tormented, beaten, raped and viewed as "property" at an alarmingly increasing rate. In the United States, approximately 400,000 minors are trafficked in the United States at any given time. In 2016, EPCAT International, a research and advocacy organization, conducted a first of its kind global study that concluded more children than ever are at risk of abuse.

Another high-risk hot spot for potential sexual abuse of children in the United States appears to be the foster care system. In February of 2019, Project PA submitted a study report that asserts that 60% of sex and human trafficking victims have been involved in the foster care system. Children and youths in foster care are easy targets since many lack the protective factors of other people their age with stable and watchful families. Things you might take for granted like a parent in the home combined with a loving environment, safe housing and other adults that care (teachers, coaches, clergy, etc.) goes a long way to thwart the efforts that traffickers can take to victimize children. Flaws present within the foster system have led way too many vulnerable children into the life of exploitation and prostitution. Child welfare agencies and foster parents are now finally starting to receive education on what trafficking even looks like and the measures to actively take when there is a suspicion that victimization may be occurring. It's a start, and more certainly needs to be done to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable population.

Also in 2016, the National Human Trafficking Hotline recorded a 35% increase in reports of trafficking within the United States. Most of these numbers represented sex trafficking. It is estimated that a child worker is purchased for sex an average 5.4 times a day. In the current environment, it's cheaper and easier than ever for adults to exploit children. As it stands now, there is little risk of getting caught, and if they do, even less chance the buyer will be prosecuted as there are several obstacles to pursuing charges.

Children who are forced to work in the labor industry are subject to extremely hazardous work in harmful conditions that often put their health and lives at risk. Survivors of forced labor in the Thai fishing community were made to take large doses of amphetamines so they could work longer hours. If they dared to complain about the long hours for little or no wage, they were drug through the water with a rope around their neck. Children that are in slavery will most likely remain in the cycle of poverty for life.



Long term, child victims of trafficking face significant problems. They are often physically and emotionally abused and have distinct medical and psychological needs. The destructive effects of their exploitation can create the following long term health problems:

- Sleeping and eating disorders
- Sexually transmitted diseases—HIV/AIDS, pelvic pain, rectal trauma, and urinary issues from working in the sex industry
- Chronic back, hearing, cardiovascular or respiratory problems from endless days working in dangerous sweatshop, construction or agriculture conditions
- Fear, anxiety, and depression
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

### **Human trafficking is different from human smuggling:**

Trafficking is exploitation-based and does not require movement across borders, or any type of transportation. A trafficked victim may initially enter the country with the proper credentials and paperwork which is then seized by the trafficker, after the victim has entered legally. Once enmeshed in the system the victim's movements are closely monitored and restricted. They are basically unable to flee, on any level, from the trafficker's control.

Smuggling, on the other hand, involves people who want to enter another country but need assistance to do so as they do not have the required documentation. And while smuggling involves illegal movement across borders, the individuals are free to go on their way and do not have a continued relationship with the smuggler after arriving in the destination country. Basically, the individual consents to go and be transported across a border to another country and they are free to go. Whereas, people who are trafficked are subjected to ongoing force, fraud and coercion and belong to the trafficker.

Human trafficking is both a home town and a global crime, with victims trafficked within their own country, to neighboring countries, and between continents. Even refugee camps are also targeted by traffickers as they are an easy way to acquire victims. Refugees can't find work in their home country; they live in crowded, dirty conditions with a lack of warmth, stability, and food. So, when traffickers promise them well-paying jobs elsewhere and safe passage, their vulnerability is all too easy to exploit. Instead of living the "better life" of their dream, they are forced or coerced into prostitution, domestic servitude, or other types of involuntary labor.

Every continent in the world has been involved in human trafficking. In the United States, it is most prevalent in California, Texas, Florida, and New York.

It is difficult to know how the exact numbers measure out, as much of it is not reported, or even recognized. The United States is considered to be the second largest market of trafficking, while Germany is the first. Globally, it is estimated that up to 4 million individuals are victims of international trafficking annually. That's a lot, even if it's only an estimate!

In the United States, approximately 50,000 people are trafficked in annually, that we know of. Florida is considered to be a "hotspot," and the Florida Department of Children and Families reported 1,900 cases of human trafficking in 2016. This number represents a 54% increase from the previous year. Florida is a popular destination for tourists and transient populations which makes it an easy target to lure victims into the trafficking lifestyle. Predators will go to bus stations, strip clubs, bars and halfway houses hoping to find, again, **vulnerable individuals** to prey on.

Additionally, in the United States, the availability of online technology has expanded the exposure of young women and girls to trafficking predators. And while some girls are outright abducted, it has become increasingly easy for impressionable young girls to be contacted by men online with promises of a future in modeling, or the promise of working for a wealthy family. They may also be lured into trafficking as they respond to ads that offer work or to study abroad. Again, these girls and women are targeted because of their vulnerability. They are guaranteed work with a lot of money, but once a meeting is set up, they may be abducted and transported to a large city where they don't know anyone. From there, they are given drugs and forced into prostitution with horrible living conditions and physical abuse for any non-compliance. They are often trafficked quickly across other states and are forced to engage in sex acts for money in hotels and private homes multiple times a day.



It does lead one to wonder, as did I, why victims stay. While some are forcibly held captive, it seems others could simply walk away. The reality is, they stay because they understand that if they try to escape; they may be severely beaten, sexually brutalized, branded with a barcode tattoo, or worse. Several have seen others viciously murdered as they tried to escape. Those victims who have families in other countries are told their families will be targeted and harmed if they cause any trouble.



In this country, victims are preyed on their feelings of guilt and shame, as they are told that photographs of them engaged in explicit sexual activity will be sent to their families and posted online for eternity. Often these threats, physical violence, and intimidation tactics can be enough to keep the victim tightly in check.

Other barriers that prevent the victim from leaving are the absence of transportation, lack of understanding regarding their rights, and not having their identification paperwork in their possession.

A study on organized crime revealed that trafficking victims become so enmeshed in the abhorrent lifestyle that they often only see 3 possible ways out:

1. To become unprofitable (trauma, emotional breakdown, advanced pregnancy)
2. To be "helped" by someone else-- to get out
3. Death

In a bizarre twist of events, victims may even experience Traumatic Bonding, also called Stockholm Syndrome, which is a form of coercive control. This is when the victim becomes so molded and manipulated by the trafficker that they actually become grateful to the perpetrator for allowing them to live, or for any other perceived favor, no matter how small. Some fall in love with their captor, having been seduced into believing they will have security with someone who cares about them and their wellbeing. The combination of these control factors are what help to keep human trafficking a hidden crime. The victims are afraid to come forward and get help, and may not even need to be chained or locked up, as there is no risk of escape. Their fear-based panic of the unknown, compounded by distrust of the system has led to the term "hiding in plain sight." As you go through your daily life, you may encounter victims in various service industries that are simply put, too brainwashed, to reach out for help. At this point, they may not even recognize themselves as victims.

## **How Much is that Kidney in the Window?...**

Even human organs are not safe from illegal trafficking. As of March 2019, there are more than 113,000 candidates waiting for organ transplant in the US. There is a worldwide shortage of organs available for transplantation, and approximately 20 people die daily in the U.S. while waiting. Organ trafficking is a widespread crime and the commercial trade of human organs is illegal in all countries except Iran. However, the trafficking of human organs is in full practice globally. Obviously, because it's illegal, the exact data on the extent of the black market trade in organs is difficult to obtain, but it is estimated that around 10% of all organ transplants annually are obtained commercially.

Organ brokers lure poor, naïve, uneducated individuals into selling their kidney through the promise of financial gain and a better future. Desperate economic need drives most organ sellers. The kidney is the most sought after organ, and the World Health Organization estimates that over 7 thousand kidneys are obtained illegally every year.

The price for a kidney averages \$150,000-200,000 dollars. If the donor is lucky enough to be paid, (fraud is huge), they may receive around \$5,000.00. The middle man or organ broker is the one walking away with massive profits by taking advantage of an individual's hopes and dreams to make money by selling an organ. The organization, Fight Slavery Now, has brought attention to a refugee camp nicknamed "kidneyville" in India, because so many people there have sold a kidney, for minimal profit, to traffickers simply to survive. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), illegal organ trade occurs when organs are removed from the body for the purpose of commercial transactions. Despite ordinances against organ



sales, this practice persists, and Global Financial Integrity estimates that the illegal organ trade generates profits between \$600 million and \$1.2 billion per year, with a span over many countries.

Way worse yet, there are also many organs obtained not through coercion and money, but through force and savagery. This is called forced organ removal which means victims do not consent and they do not receive any money for the organ.

Often these victims do not survive the organ removal procedure. The demand for organs is so high that people will take whatever means necessary to obtain a healthy organ for wealthy recipients, who are willing to pay big bucks with no questions asked. According to the Washington Post (Dec.2016), international efforts against human trafficking have mainly focused on the sex trade side of trafficking, currently leaving little attention to the devastation of the organ trade industry.

## **It's ALL about the Money...really**

Unbelievably, human trafficking is one of the largest international crime industries in the world. It is an extremely profitable endeavor, now believed to be the fastest growing industry worldwide, second only to the sale of illegal drugs and guns. In fact, 67% of global profits are now from human trafficking.

A report from the International Labor Organization (ILO) says forced labor generates \$150 billion in illegal profits per year. Two-thirds of that money comes from commercial sexual exploitation, while the rest is from forced economic exploitation, including domestic work, agriculture, child labor and related activities. Sex trafficking not only grabs the sensational headlines; it also generates a lot more money than the other types of forced workers. A woman forced into sexual servitude may generate a profit of 100,000 dollars a year for her captor which is approximately 6 times the profit of other forced labor or domestic servitude positions.



The numbers in the United States alone is staggering. According to Deb Belt of the Buckhead Patch, Atlanta is the number one spot for sex trafficking. That city brought in \$290 million on sex trafficking alone, which is more than the Atlanta metro illegal drug and gun trade combined. Denver was worth \$40 million, San Diego \$97 million and Dallas \$99 million. One pimp disclosed to the local Atlanta television station WSBTV, that he made an average of \$33,000 a week. The amount of money that was generated in just the above listed cities alone gives a glimpse of how modern day slavery is alive, growing and prospering throughout our country alone.

## **Hello?? Where are you?**

So where are all these victims of trafficking at? Most individuals don't even know they exist; and not necessarily because they are hidden from view. You just don't recognize them in the back kitchens, shops, gas stations and in the hospitality industry. They are also tucked away in fields, laboring hard in environments where poverty and inequality thrive. They are forced to work long hours and earn virtually nothing for their labor. They don't come out and ask for help. "It's a different kind of slavery than long ago," says Dr. Lucy Steinitz, (Catholic Relief Services) senior technical advisor for protection. "They are not in shackles or on plantations. People are coerced into harsh employment under horrible conditions, and then have no freedom to leave. They are beaten, violated and told they are worthless—that no one else wants them anymore."

But they really are---well, everywhere....

Take for instance, in March 2019 on the Treasure Coast of Florida, a coordinated sting operation hit and closed ten spas simultaneously from Orlando to Jupiter, and issued arrest warrants to over 300 people believed to be involved in a prostitution ring, featuring mainly Asian women thought to be victims of 'sexual servitude.' It was a health department official that alerted the authorities to the suspicious presence of makeshift cots, personal care items and evidence of ongoing food preparation in a

small room in the back of the spa. It is alleged that these women were moved around so frequently between spas, that they seldom knew where they were. This high level of movement is structured to disorient and isolate the victims of sexual servitude. This also ensures the victim does not get too close to another person or too familiar with a location. All contact with outsiders is purposefully kept to a minimum so no social support network can be built up. One victim said she had relatives in China who would be in jeopardy if she cooperated with the police. She described coming to the United States with the belief that she would be working in a nail salon, only to find herself in an alleged erotic massage parlor.

The magnitude of these illicit activities took these sleepy, conservative counties by surprise. And while most of us never really think about slavery in our back yard, Florida is known to have the third highest incidences of sex trafficking in the nation. It's a perfect storm of tourism, hotels, other service industries, and agriculture. As a result of this sting operation, over 3 million dollars in assets were seized and local officials are working with federal agencies to track the money laundering process that likely occurred between China and the United States.

At this time, the full legal consequences of these incidents are not known as the investigation is ongoing, but one thing is for sure—it's just the tip of a massive nationwide iceberg. It was, however, a real wake up call for all Floridians to get educated on this matter, becoming more aware of suspicious indicators and reporting situations that appear suspect to the authorities.

The potential silver lining in the explosive media coverage of the Jupiter, Florida, case is a long overdue national conversation about an industry that exploits thousands of vulnerable women and children across the United States — and why it has been able to flourish for so long.

## **Human Trafficking is EVERYWHERE...Believe it**

Which brings us to the purpose of this program. In 2018 the Florida Board of Nursing mandated that 'all licensed nursing professionals shall complete a 2 hour CE approved course on human trafficking, as defined in Florida statute 787.06(2)' This education shall be completed by all nurses who are renewing in 2019 and beyond. Additionally, it appears this course will remain on the mandatory course completion list for future renewals as well. The timing of this education cannot be stressed enough as presently there are not any national guidelines for healthcare providers to screen individuals that appear to be at increased risk for trafficking.

Healthcare providers can play a vital role in the identification and fight against human trafficking. It is estimated that approximately 88% of victims of human trafficking will have contact with some type of a medical provider while they are held captive. Yet, less than 1% are correctly identified in the healthcare setting.

This is because providers fail to recognize the common signs and indicators that point to the disastrous living conditions that the individual may be returning back to following medical evaluation & treatment. That statistic alone underscores the need for appropriate training to be provided to nurses and other individuals that may encounter these individuals, however briefly, in the healthcare setting. The individual who has been trapped or coerced into the trafficking environment often will not have any interactions with others in the community unless they are in dire need of some type of urgent medical care, and the trafficker is forced to seek medical help for the victim. Seeking the services of healthcare is considered to be risky and the trafficker typically will not seek care until a condition becomes serious.

EMS providers may be the first to actually see a patient in the street or home environment. It is helpful for the pre hospital healthcare provider to receive the appropriate training to be able to recognize the common signs and indicators for human trafficking. Proper recognition and intervention on the front line goes a long way towards care and access to resources that could potentially save a life. And while the suspicious indicators will be the same for all patients regardless of presentation, EMS providers should be alert for additional signs that would not be visible to hospital employees. The following red flags should give the prehospital provider a moment to pause and consider the possibility of trafficking:

- The presence of multiple mattresses, many women and possibly only one male
- Rooms that have locks on the outside of doors or windows
- Presence of drugs/paraphernalia
- Presence of restraint devices (ropes, chains)
- Numerous expensive items (cell phones, cars, jewelry ect) that seem out of place for the environment
- Lack of proper identification
- Hotel room may show evidence of excessive amounts of sex paraphernalia, or multiple women living in one room with a male in the adjacent room.
- Unusual branding/tattoo marks
- Anyone under the age of 18 that is a suspected victim of performing sexual acts for commercial exploitation is automatically a trafficking victim. No exceptions

It is important for prehospital providers to establish trust as early on as possible when encountering potential trafficking victims in the community. Let them know that you are not there to get them in trouble and that your first priority is their safety and wellbeing. Utilize a gentle, non-confrontational approach by communicating clearly and actively ensuring that the victim is not re-traumatized during assessment or treatment. After evaluating the injury or illness, encourage them to allow you to transport them to the nearest medical facility for evaluation and treatment. Never confront or antagonize a suspected trafficker.

Ensure that you transport the patient alone, and ask them to turn off their cell phone so that no one can listen in during transport. Privately share your concerns with your crew and notify the emergency department staff so they are aware of the gravity of the situation. It's also key to get law enforcement involved as early as possible so they can interview the victim at the hospital after transport. It is equally important for EMS to develop and utilize consistent protocols when responding to suspect situations that may involve the trafficking of humans.

Victims of trafficking may present to the healthcare professional with issues that are well advanced because preventative care is rarely, if ever, provided and most victims do not have **ANY** access to medical care. The health problems that are encountered in trafficking victims are varied but may stem from extreme deprivation of nutrition and rest. They frequently describe a high level of stress and are often victims of violence, both physical and psychological. The risk is high from complications of untreated sexually transmitted infections and forced unsafe abortions. Physical abuse often occurs which may result in bruises, broken bones and teeth. The effects of psychological abuse range from PTSD, depression, drug addiction and suicide. Every trafficking case is different, but almost individuals suffer from both long term physical and emotional scars.

Upon initial exam, the following indicators may be red flags for the nurse, or EMS provider to consider:

- Someone else is speaking for the patient
- The person speaking for the patient will not leave the room/area
- The patient is not aware of their location or the current date
- The patient does not have any form of identification
- Unable to provide an address or clarify where they are staying
- They exhibit signs of fear, tension, submission or PTSD
- The patient is very reluctant to interact or explain their injury
- Avoids eye contact

- Exhibits a flat affect
- Numerous inconsistent stories/unclear past history
- Low body weight-signs of malnutrition
- Inappropriate clothing (too tight, provocative, unsuitable for weather)
- Untreated chronic diseases (diabetes, hypertension, cancer or TB)
- Bald patches (maybe where hair has been pulled out)
- Dental/vision problems
- Tattoos/branding marks
- STD's (especially repeat episodes)
- Bruises in various stages of healing & **ANY** signs of violent injury



If you suspect the patient may be a victim of trafficking, **the most essential first step to accomplish is to make every effort to examine the victim in private.** There are a variety of creative ways that intuitive nurses can accomplish this, depending on the circumstances of the visit. Remember, that all cases are different, so start thinking of ways to assure your patient a space to provide a confidential encounter. You may be acting on your "gut" intuition alone, but if you allow this chance to get away from you, then the opportunity to intervene is lost.

Although the data is still raw and underdeveloped, the numbers do indicate that the victims who have been helped by a medical team were discovered because of a confidential questioning process. It is the confidential questioning piece that is essential to identify the victims of human trafficking. It cannot be stressed enough. Once alone, a gentle non-judgmental attitude can go a long way towards establishing a rapport. It is advantageous to have a social worker available to assist with the resource referral process as there are many victims who don't even realize that the lifestyle they have been coerced into is illegal, and there are services available specifically to help victims of human trafficking.

Start with the realization that this trusted encounter may only be brief enough to plant a seed of hope or understanding to a victim who has not had any opportunity to think or speak for themselves in a very long time, if ever. They often feel helpless and hopeless, believing that things will never change.

They are most likely fearful and distrustful of any authority and may have even been brainwashed to believe their trafficker is their protector and link to the only lifestyle they know.

If the victim does not speak English, a neutral professional interpreter will absolutely be needed. Do not use the trafficker or some "associate" of theirs.

Some questions you may want to ask the potential victim are:

- Is someone "holding" your identification documents?
- Has anyone physically or sexually abused you?
- Have you been forced to perform sexual acts for money or favors?
- Do you feel like you, or your family, is in danger?
- Do you have a debt to someone that you can't pay off?
- Does anyone take all or part of the money that you earn?

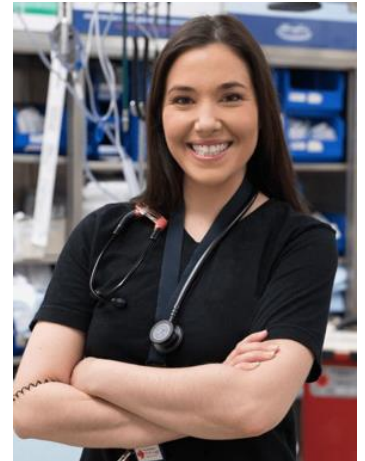
If you feel your suspicions are confirmed through questioning, it is time to act quickly. First off, understand that **nurses do not need to prove** that trafficking is occurring. Keep your cool and remember the safety of your patient, and yourself is paramount at this moment. After the point of suspicion and appropriate non-judgmental questioning, the next step would be to notify your supervisor; follow the facility protocol and report your suspicions to local law enforcement or by notifying the following reporting agencies:

- **Call 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423)** to report suspicious criminal activity to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Highly trained specialists take reports from both the public and law enforcement agencies on more than 400 laws enforced by ICE HSI, including those related to human trafficking. The Tip Line is accessible **outside the United States** by calling **802-872-6199**.
- **To get help from the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), call 1-888-373-7888 -----or----- text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733).** The NHTH can help connect victims with service providers in the area and provides training, technical assistance, and other resources. The NHTH is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. The NHTH is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a nongovernmental organization funded by the Federal government. (dhs.gov/blue campaign)



Depending on the institution that you work, a framework should be in place and available for all staff to understand and follow when faced with a potential trafficking situation. This ensures that all staff will be able to follow the same protocol, and not have to figure it out and reinvent a process upon each encounter.

To illustrate this point, an emergency room nurse, Danielle Bastien, R.N., DNP, FNP-BC took on the issue of human trafficking for a doctoral project, which grew into formal training and appropriate hospital policies for all emergency room doctors and nurses across the Henry Ford Health System. Living and working in Detroit, (Michigan is believed to have the sixth highest number of reported human trafficking cases among all states, according to data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline), she saw the need for and developed a specific screening tool to utilize in specific cases where there may be a suspicion of trafficking. Explained in Danielle's own words—this is how it works:



“It is a multiple step process and it involves mostly nurses. What happens is, as soon as you make contact in our area you go through triage. *Based on the education the nurses have, and also the physicians,* they are triaging this patient and might say, you know what, something doesn't seem right, I am going to flag them...A lot of the things we look for is an inconsistent story. If there is abuse, torture or neglect signs with that person; if they aren't holding their own ID or money. If the person with them is refusing to leave while they answer questions or answers the questions for them.”

If a patient is flagged, the report says, a “primary nurse is alerted and will conduct another assessment with specific questions.” For victims who want help, authorities are available to provide safe housing and other assistance. For those not ready for help, Bastien says, “you give them a small personal item that has the number hidden on it. The person can call anytime.”

The critical point here is that many healthcare workers of various disciplines, not just nurses, are trained to ask the right questions and follow through with a targeted assessment to flag a potential victim. The protocol involves formal training as well as a set of initial assessments by the triage nurse and, if appropriate, follow through with the primary nurse.

It appears to be working. As of January 2019, Bastien says the protocol has already identified 17 victims. And although much more needs to be done to curb the issue, this is proof that a well implemented plan needs to be adopted by facilities that do not have an organized training plan in place. And these plans can save lives.

Although Emergency Departments are often the first point of entry that trafficking victims may encounter, education should be a multidiscipline approach that not only includes nurses and doctors, but this training should also have components that include EMS workers, law enforcement, abortion facilities, dentists and urgent care facilities. This multifaceted approach can lead to the most successful programs, as each of these roles is important in the coordinated effort to end the trafficking of humans. The concerted efforts of all, including social services, are needed to implement these protocols and establish immediate key contact agencies while clearly outlining the steps necessary to avoid the compromise of critical information, as human trafficking is, first and utmost a crime.

Many, if not all, of the victims have no knowledge that resources and help exists. **And that is exactly how they remain victims.** Obviously, priority one is the medical treatment of the urgent health care issue that has brought them to the facility. Maintaining a safe environment for the patient while assessing and informing the patient of options is critical. Once they are empowered with the knowledge that help exists, the victim can open up to possible ways to handle the situation, and then an investigation can begin.

As we often see in many cases of domestic abuse, the trafficking victim may not be ready or willing to accept help. There are many reasons why this occurs, but it does; so it is essential to leave a line of communication open to establish a safe environment, in which they can return for help when ready. As always, if the suspected victim is believed to be under the age of 18, the incident must be reported as suspected child abuse.

Although every case is different, trafficking is always a process of enslaving and exploiting people by trapping or coercing them into situations with no way out. The first step to any change is awareness. By identifying victims and reporting tips, you are doing your part to help law enforcement rescue victims and prosecute the criminals behind trafficking. Best of all, you might save a life. Social services can connect victims to services such as medical and mental health care, shelter, job training, and legal assistance that restore their freedom and dignity. Keep in mind that the presence or absence of any of the indicators is not necessarily proof of human trafficking and it is up to law enforcement to investigate suspected cases.

Once educated in the subject, it's hard to turn a blind eye to the extent that this crime against humans continues to be allowed to flourish. Health education has always been a strong focus for nurses. There are areas outside of our clinical practice that nurses can speak out on, to increase community awareness of this issue.

It's important to educate parents regarding the availability of internet services that open up impressionable youth to the risks of being snared into a trafficker's net by simply opening lines of unsupervised communication. Studies have concluded that the easiest targets for predators are vulnerable kids from a troubled home environment, especially if they have already been sexually abused or exposed to sexual situations. Young adults need to be educated that engaging in "sexting" and posting sexy pictures of themselves can lead to easy prey for savvy predators. If they become inadvertently trapped into a sexual situation, these young, inexperienced kids are stuck in a system in which they feel they can't escape from because they are embarrassed, humiliated and ashamed of their actions. The public, in general, needs to be more aware of their surroundings, and better educated about the signs and indicators of trafficking.

The product trade industry is loaded with child workers and victims of trafficking as well. Anti-Slavery International says it's 'near certain that slavery can be found somewhere in a supply chain of every single company and it is nearly impossible to guarantee a slavery free product.' The United States Department of Labor also has a list of over 150 goods from 75 countries that are believed to be the product of child or forced labor conditions. Although we can't research every product we buy, we can start to notice free trade associated goods and purchase them when available over suspected goods produced from forced labor conditions. Look for the labels that say they are ethically produced because becoming a smarter consumer can help to stop the demand for forced labor products.

Even the very online technology that has made our youth vulnerable to the dark underworld may have an impact on promoting change for the better. In January 2019, the U.S. Institute against Human Trafficking launched a pilot program for a 'Reach Out Campaign' in Tampa, Florida. This program utilizes web scraping technology to obtain phone numbers of sites that sell sex throughout the Tampa area. They discovered that most of the numbers on these websites are actually cell phones that connect directly to the sex worker to communicate with the traffickers who are making the appointments for sex for hire. In the Tampa area alone, investigators identified over 10,000 phone numbers associated with sex for hire and began mass texting these phone numbers with a phone number and website offering help to these individuals to get out of the trade. They received a healthy 13% response back from those sex workers in a short amount of time, leading investigators to feel encouraged that, if utilized throughout the country, this technology could also be helpful for widespread change. (G. Rogers, U.S. Institute against HT)



Florida has a heavy migrant population, and we need to do more for migrants. All over the world, people are on the move and may have been forced to become migrants because of conflict, a changing climate, and economic instability. Many of these migrants are vulnerable to human trafficking. A United Nations rights expert warns a new approach is

needed. "Trafficking people in conflict situations is not a mere possibility but something that happens on a regular basis," said Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, the United Nation's special rapporteur on human trafficking, in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly. "This means anti-trafficking measures must be integrated into all humanitarian action and all policies regarding people fleeing conflict." Often these workers are seen in ER's or urgent care clinics for treatment of illness or farming injuries, and they deserve the same compassion and screening opportunities that we would offer to victims of sex trafficking.

Becoming educated regarding human trafficking also means making our voices known to our elected officials to make every effort to change this unacceptable practice in all elements of civilized society. This horrific issue, although globally widespread, is just now starting to gain the attention that it deserves. For a long time, there was not really a clear understanding of this, and there certainly have not been enough people speaking out and saying that it's wrong. So far, the traffickers are winning. Trafficking cases are notoriously hard to prove beyond a reasonable doubt; the risk of harsh punishment is low, and the financial benefits are high. The real insanity here is that these crimes continue to grow and perpetuate, and our government must be challenged to make the critical changes needed to disrupt the internal framework of the trafficking system.

Currently, when talking about ending human trafficking, the U.S. State Department and the United Nations are emphasizing a "3P approach."

The **3 P's** are:

- **P**revention of the circumstances that lead to trafficking
- **P**rotection of victims, and
- **P**rosecution of traffickers.

The U.S. and the U.N. recognize that until traffickers realize that there are dangerous consequences for their actions, they will continue to engage in trafficking.

## **So, exactly where does the nurse fit in?**

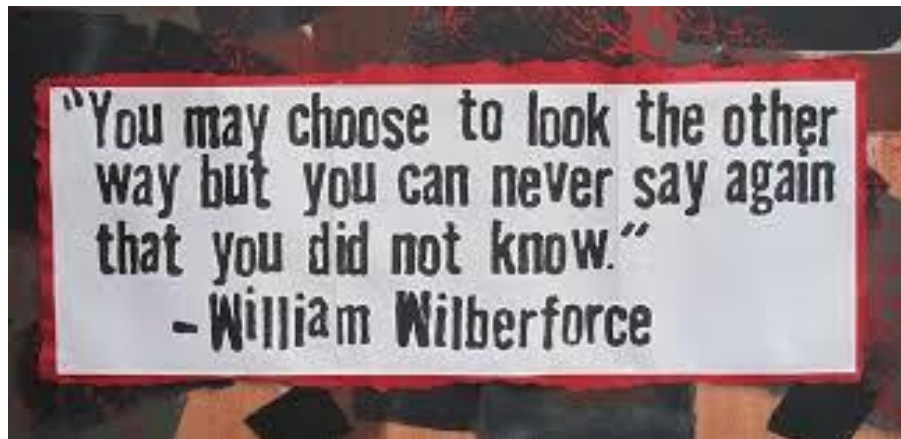
According to the 2017 Gallup Poll, more than four in five Americans (84%) rate the honesty and ethical standards of nurses as "very high" or "high," earning them the top spot among a diverse list of professions for the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Let that sink in a minute. That's really big, and I hope we understand as a profession the opportunity we have to a front row seat in the potential power to change this. We, nurses, are over 3 million strong and we are well placed throughout the nation to stand up and speak on this issue until trafficking is reformed. Nurses don't settle for band-aid fixes but prefer to get to the grassroots of issues that impact our patients and communities as a whole. That is where change occurs. Nurses are in a unique position to identify, treat and assist victims of trafficking as part of our routine clinical practice. To accomplish this goal, we need to have all nurses, in all hospitals throughout the U.S., trained to screen and report when faced with specific indicators. Hopefully, this training will be inclusive of the urgent care facilities and EMS workers who may encounter these unknown victims as well. The following is a sample framework from the National Human Trafficking Center that may be used as a guide to set up a routine screening process for all individuals. (see the last page)

## **Wonder how necessary this training is? Read this:**

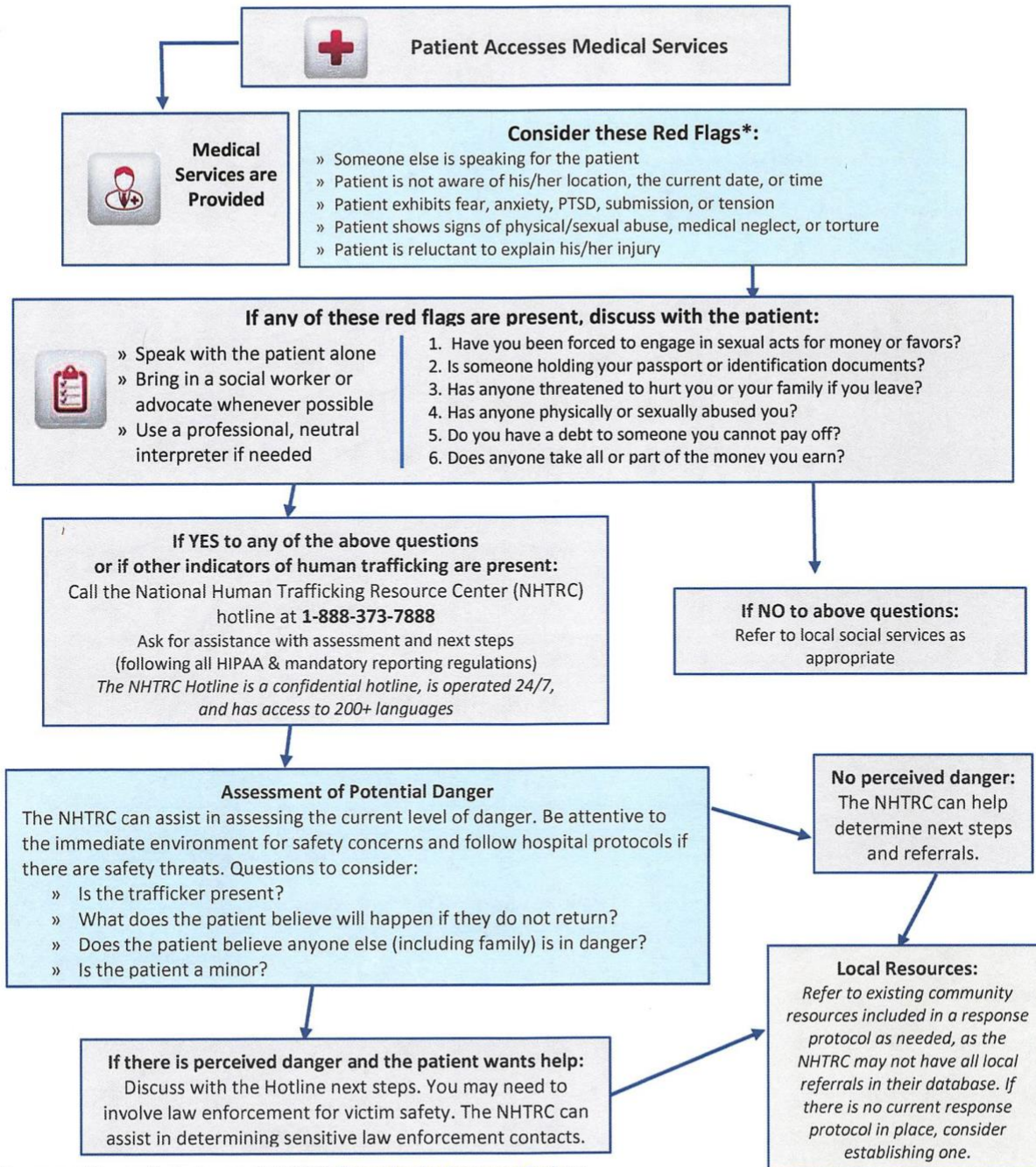
Getting healthcare systems up to speed with this training appears to be the challenge of the moment. In 2017, there were approximately around 6,000 hospitals in the United States, and only about 5% of the ER Workers had been formally trained to screen for and detect the red flags that could signal a potential human trafficking case. Even worse, 73% of ER physicians and nurses that were surveyed did not think their patients or communities were affected by trafficking.(MUSE, 2018) Those numbers are starting to improve; I'm sure because of increased awareness of the issue and the mandatory training that is starting to take place with Florida nurses alone. But we still have a long way to go. And the most successful programs that are in place share some simple characteristics:

- ❖ Provides necessary health services
- ❖ Uniformly screens all patients who meet a level of suspicion for trafficking
- ❖ Respects patient autonomy
- ❖ Educates patients about options
- ❖ Empowers them to seek assistance
- ❖ Complies with national/state requirements for investigation

I mean, really when you think about it, that applies to most areas of nursing assessment and treatment plans for a slew of illnesses that we already follow. By putting this training immediately into your practice, you will be learning to at least SEE the potential for trafficking, which means you will be more likely to seize the opportunity to intervene and offer hope and solutions at a time when it may be needed the most. Hopefully, this education will inspire you to look closely into your facility and see if there is a plan in place to respond to a suspected trafficking situation. That, in itself, would be a good start! Nurses have always been deeply committed to fighting for the safety of our patients not only at the bedside, but out in our communities as well. And now that you know the extent to which this evil exists, I think most nurses would agree that it is our honor to play the role of patient advocate on all levels.



**Framework for a Human Trafficking Protocol in Healthcare Settings**



\*For more red flags and indicators see the NHTRC's *Comprehensive Assessment Tool and Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking* document for healthcare providers.

Report Online or Access Resources & Referrals: [www.traffickingresourcecenter.org](http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org)

Call: 1-888-373-7888 (24/7)

Email: [nhtrc@polarisproject.org](mailto:nhtrc@polarisproject.org)

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