

# Sex Trafficking & Sexual Exploitation Identification, Assessment & Treatment

## Possible Indicators

### Behavioral:

- Avoids eye contact.
- Running away.
- Sudden changes in behavior, friends
- Mood swings.
- Withdrawn, isolated, aloof, disconnected, anti-social.
- Academic decline.
- Avoiding school, truancy.
- Substance abuse.
- Distrust police or adults.
- Has new expensive accessories.
- Older companion, often dominating.
- Scripted, coached, unlikely reasons for injuries or situations.
- Multiple sexual partners.
- Resists gynecological exam.
- Reported age older than apparent age.
- Lack of identification.
- False or no provided address, or homeless.
- Use of street lingo such as "the life".
- Has hotel keys, 2<sup>nd</sup> cell phone, or lots of cash.

### Emotional Health:

- Feelings of guilt, shame, unworthiness.
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts.
- Dissociation.
- Extreme anger.
- Depression or confusion.
- Self-harm or mutilation.
- Eating disorders.
- Flashbacks, nightmares, sleep disorders.
- History of abuse.

### Physical Health:

- Bruises or contusions.
- Fractures.
- Injuries to head and mouth.
- Hearing loss from head trauma.
- Traumatic brain injury.
- Bald patches from hair pulled.
- Cigarette burns.
- Bladder damage, injury or infection.
- Prolonged, easily-treatable infections.
- Drug-related asthma, Hepatitis C, skin infections.
- Chronic abdominal pain.
- Chronic foot problems.
- Fatigue.
- "Branding" tattoos.
- Bite marks.
- Unexplained scars.
- Knife or gunshot wounds.
- Dehydration.
- Malnutrition, poor diet, significant weight loss.
- Tension headaches or back or stomach pains.
- Dental problems.
- Temporal mandibular joint problems, jaw dysplasia.
- Somatic complaints.

### Sexual Health:

- Evidence of sexual trauma.
- Vaginal wall tears.
- Traumatic fistulas.
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Pelvic inflammatory disease.
- HIV infection.
- Pregnancy, with little or no prenatal care.
- Abortion complications.
- Impacted sponges, tampons, condoms, baby wipes.
- Vaginal discharge and infection from insertion of foreign objects to block menstruation.

## Follow-up

- May be sporadic.
- Expect relapse.
- Design a safety plan with the patient in case they return to "the life".

## Strategies for Treatment

- Develop a clinic protocol.
- Speak with victim alone.
- Consider involving a social worker.
- Recommend a follow-up visit.
- Connect patient with local resources.
- Use a shoe card for written info.
- Develop trust with victim.
- Monitor patient for stress, anxiety.
- Ask questions without insinuating guilt.
- Your notes can be used in court.

## Victims' Hierarchy of Needs

1. Food
2. Sleep
3. Security
4. Human interaction, belonging
5. Lifestyle change
6. Therapy (drug?, trauma, etc.)
7. Self-esteem
8. Job training, education

## Statements to Build Trust

- "You can trust me."
- "I am here to help you."
- "My first priority is your safety."
- "We will give you the care you need."
- "We can help you find a safe place to stay."
- "No one has the right to hurt you or make you do things against your will."

## Empathic Questions for Identification & Treatment

- Are you OK?
- Are you safe from harm?
- Are you hungry?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Can you come and go as you please?
- Can you sleep and eat when you want?
- Have you or your family ever been hurt or threatened?
- Are you in debt to anyone?
- Tell me about that tattoo.
- Do you have a boyfriend? How old, and how did you meet?
- Have you ever run away? Where did you stay?
- Have you had to do things you did not want to do in order to stay somewhere?
- Has anyone taken pictures of you and put them on the internet?
- How would you know when it's time for a change?

## Resources for Victims

### National:

- National Human Trafficking Hotline, 888-3737-888, [humantraffickinghotline.org](http://humantraffickinghotline.org)
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 800-THE-LOST, [missingkids.org](http://missingkids.org)

### Arizona:

- Arizona Child Abuse Hotline, 888-767-2445
- Tumbleweed UMOM Youth Services, 602-841-5799
- Sojourner Center, 602-244-0089
- Dream Center, 602-346-8701
- Fresh Start Women's Center, 602-252-8494
- Community Bridges, drug rehabilitation, 602-273-9999

## Resources for Practitioners

- Physicians Against the Trafficking of Humans, [doc-path.org](http://doc-path.org)
- HEAL; Health, Education, Advocacy, Linkage, [healtrafficking.org](http://healtrafficking.org)
- American Professional Society on Abuse of Children, practice guidelines
- AMA Journal of Ethics, opinions related to human trafficking, Jan 2017