

OFFICE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families



FACT SHEET: HUMAN TRAFFICKING (English)

Published: August 2, 2012

Topics: Public Awareness, Victim Assistance

Types: Campaign Materials, Fact Sheets

Official Campaign Material (PDF)
(http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/fact_sheet_human_trafficking_english.pdf) 143KB)

Definition of Trafficking in Persons | How Victims are Trafficked | Trafficking vs. Smuggling | Help for Victims of Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of commercial sex, debt bondage, or forced labor. They are young children, teenagers, men and women. Trafficking in persons occurs throughout the world, including in the United States.

Definition of Trafficking in Persons

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

- **Sex trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the 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; and
- **Labor Trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

In the TVPA, the term “commercial sex act” means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

How Victims Are Trafficked

Many victims of trafficking, particularly women and children, are exploited for purposes of prostitution and pornography. However, trafficking also takes place in diverse labor contexts, such as domestic servitude, small businesses, factories, and agricultural work. Traffickers use force, fraud and coercion to compel women, men, and children to engage in these activities.

Force can involve the use of physical restraint or serious physical harm. Physical violence, including rape, beatings, and physical confinement, is often employed as a means to control victims, especially during the early stages of victimization, when the trafficker breaks down the victim’s resistance.

Fraud involves false promises regarding employment, wages, working conditions, or other matters. For example, individuals might travel to another country under the promise of well-paying work at a farm or factory only to find themselves manipulated into forced labor. Others might reply to advertisements promising modeling, nanny, or service industry jobs overseas, but be forced into prostitution once they arrive at their destination.

Coercion can involve threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

Victims of trafficking are often subjected to debt bondage or peonage in which traffickers demand labor as a means repayment for a real or alleged debt, yet they do not reasonably apply a victim’s wages toward the payment of the debt, or limit or define the nature and length of the debtor’s services. Traffickers may charge victims fees for transportation, boarding, food, and other incidentals; interest, fines for missing daily work quotas, and charges

for “bad behavior” may be added. Debt bondage traps a victim in a cycle of debt that he or she can never pay down, and it can be part of a larger scheme of psychological cruelty.

Trafficking vs. Smuggling

Human trafficking and human smuggling are two separate crimes under federal law. There are several important differences between them.

Human Trafficking vs. Human Smuggling

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims are forced, defrauded, or coerced into trafficking. Even if victims initially offer consent, that consent is rendered meaningless by the actions of the traffickers to exploit them for labor, services, or commercial sex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals consent to being smuggled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human trafficking is a crime committed against an individual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smuggling is a crime committed against a country and its borders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trafficking need not entail the physical movement of a person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smuggling involves the illegal transport of an individual across a national border. Smuggling is always transnational.

Help for Victims of Trafficking

Prior to the enactment of the TVPA in 2000, no comprehensive Federal law existed to protect victims of trafficking or to prosecute their traffickers. The TVPA and its subsequent reauthorizations have worked to prevent human trafficking both in the United States and abroad, to increase prosecution of human traffickers, and to protect victims by providing benefits and services that will help them rebuild their lives in the United States.

Information about services for trafficking victims is available in the Victim Assistance fact sheet, the Certification for Adult Victims of Trafficking fact sheet, and the Child Victims of Human Trafficking fact sheet.

If you think you have come into contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.373.7888. The NHTRC can help you identify and coordinate with local organizations that protect and serve trafficking victims.

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Last Reviewed: December 31, 2015