



# SEXUAL TRAFFICKING

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**Working with Sexual Trafficked/Exploited Persons:**

**Important Program/Service Components**

Produced by The Salvation Army  
Canada & Bermuda Territory  
Anti-Trafficking Network

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**Definition:** “Human Sexual Trafficking” includes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of (sexual) exploitation.”<sup>1</sup> Trafficking can happen across international borders, and also within them. Trafficking is always involuntary, because even if consent is achieved, it is only through some form of fraud, deception or abuse of power.

**Introduction:**

As The Salvation Army, we have always been challenged to engage in the holistic care of vulnerable populations. One of these populations in our society is persons who have been sexually trafficked/exploited. These persons (mostly women) need compassionate, competent help from those willing to walk alongside and support them through a process leading to wholeness and restoration.

We know that human sexual trafficking is happening in Canada, and that trafficked persons may be coming through the doors of our ministry units without our knowledge. We, The Salvation Army, in no way desire to be complicit in human sexual trafficking by not addressing the issue or by not recognizing when people have been trafficked, and so we commit to upholding standards of practice that will help and not hinder.

Although many of these best practices are geared mainly towards women in residential settings, they are also adaptable for men, transgendered persons, children, and those not in residential settings.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, 2000. As a territory we use the term human sexual trafficking, as opposed to human trafficking, because as a movement, we have chosen to focus primarily, if not exclusively on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (this was felt to be the form of trafficking the organization would be best placed to respond to).

## Recognizing Trafficking Survivors<sup>2</sup>

A victim of trafficking may look like many of the people you help every day. You can help trafficking victims get the assistance they need by looking beneath the surface for the following clues. Many of the indicators for trafficked persons are similar to those identifying women who are being abused by their partners. Discovering these indicators does not necessarily mean that the person has been trafficked, but it may be the case:

- Evidence of being controlled
- Evidence of an inability to move or leave a job
- Bruises or other signs of battering (both physical and non-physical)
- Fear or depression
- Newcomer to Canada/Non-English speaking
- Lack of passport, immigration or identification documentation

## Suggested Screening Questions<sup>3</sup>:

*Note:* In a respectful, non-suspicious way, try to speak with the person privately and confidentially. The person they came with could be a trafficker posing as a spouse, family member or interpreter. Interpreters must be screened carefully to ensure they do not know the victim or the traffickers and do not otherwise have a conflict of interest. Preference is to use an interpreter hired by the centre.

- Has your identification or documentation been taken from you?
- Can you leave your job or situation if you want?
- Can you come and go as you please?
- Have you been threatened if you try to leave?
- Have you been physically harmed in any way?
- What are your working or living conditions like?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Do you sleep in a bed, on a cot or on the floor?
- Have you ever been deprived of food, water, sleep or medical care?
- Do you have to ask permission to eat, sleep or go to the bathroom?
- Are there locks on your doors and windows so you cannot get out?
- Has anyone threatened your family?

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<sup>2</sup>The Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking. *Resources: Identifying and Interacting with Victims of Human Trafficking*.  
[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/campaign\\_kits/tool\\_kit\\_health/identify\\_victims.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/campaign_kits/tool_kit_health/identify_victims.html) (retrieved 28/02/06)

<sup>3</sup>The Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking. *Resources: Screening Tool for Victims of Human Trafficking*.  
[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/campaign\\_kits/tool\\_kit\\_health/screen\\_questions.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/campaign_kits/tool_kit_health/screen_questions.html) (retrieved 28/02/06)

- Is anyone forcing you to do anything that you do not want to do?

### Serving trafficked persons

The most important first step in serving trafficked persons is assessing their **immediate threat of harm**. Questions must be asked about whether the person feels threatened, endangered or unsafe. If this is the case, trusted law enforcement (R.C.M.P.) should be approached. The R.C.M.P. has human trafficking representatives (current list attached at the back of this document) which can be used as a resource.

In serving trafficked persons, it is also important to remember that they are not a homogenous group. Their personalities, situations and needs may vary significantly. In addition, although it may be difficult for service providers to understand, a trafficked person may have never thought of herself as a victim or someone in need of help.

### Addressing needs of trafficked persons

Although trafficked persons often have incredible personal resources, including strength, they also have needs. Trafficked persons experience damage in all areas of the self: physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. All of these areas overlap, and all need to be addressed simultaneously in order for restoration and wholeness to be achieved. It is essential that all care be taken to ensure that trafficked persons are not re-victimised through carelessness in the social service/helping system.

### Addressing **physical** needs:

Initially, the most important program components addressing the physical needs of the victim are **safety** and **shelter**. Fear is a very real part of trafficked persons' lives. Shelter services housing trafficked persons need to be secure and safe from exploiters/abusers (traffickers, consumers, pimps, and organized crime). Measures must be undertaken to ensure safety, including an undisclosed location, security guards, locks, and specific procedures for disclosing information. **Confidentiality** should be protected at all times. If media become involved in a trafficked person's life (i.e. because they are involved in the prosecution of a case), policies must be put in place in order to best protect her (and the shelter). Care must also be taken to limit, if not eliminate, the

institutional look and feel of the environment. Trafficked persons may also need access to food, clothing, toiletries, and other necessary items.

In another aspect of safety, extreme care must also be taken in terms of how law enforcement is notified. Trafficked persons need expert **legal advice** about options available to them. At present, most people who are internationally trafficked would be reported to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and then deported if trafficking activity were reported to the police. If trafficking activity is disclosed to you, please contact your divisional Salvation Army Anti-Trafficking Network representative and/or your local RCMP unit. Trafficked persons may also have other outstanding legal issues which they need guidance on, such as child custody.

Trafficked **children**, and children of trafficked persons, also have needs and require specialized attention. Service needs may range from child care, to school enrolment, to play therapy. Children need to feel safe, and need to feel that their mothers are safe. It should be noted that each province in Canada also necessitates duty to report child abuse and violence. Because of the precarious legal status of most internationally-trafficked persons, contacting law enforcement must again be handled with care.

Another physical need is **health care**. Persons involved in the commercial sex trade are at risk of many health problems, including HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. Access to medical attention by competent and non-judgmental health care professionals is necessary. In cases where the trafficked person is not eligible for health insurance/services, alternatives should be explored (such as community health centres, not-for-profit health services, etc.). In addition, nutrition should be a consideration in residential programs.

In order to survive, individuals exploited through the commercial sex trade need to create methods of coping with the abuse and exploitation they face. Some coping mechanisms are positive, and others are negative. Upon escape from the exploitation, many of these coping mechanisms continue to manifest themselves. For example, **substance abuse/addiction** is prevalent. Women may use drugs to self-medicate, “numb out” or detach emotionally. The escapist nature of illicit drugs may also be used as a coping mechanism for psychological issues. On the other hand, trafficked persons may be performing sexual services in order to feed a substance addiction. Women-centred

addiction treatment programs are needed, to address the gendered reasons for using. Especially for women who have been exploited in the sex trade, abuse and trauma will likely be linked to their addiction, and these issues must be explored and addressed as an intrinsic part of their recovery.

Addressing **emotional/psychological** needs:

Psychological services are essential for the trafficked/exploited person's recovery. Because of their lived experiences, many trafficked persons have lost the ability to **trust** or to establish healthy relationships. They are cautious and vigilant about avoiding any additional betrayal<sup>4</sup>. Trafficking is inherently deceitful, and therefore those trapped in it often become suspicious of any relationship and expect it to be based on lies. This poses challenges for those seeking to help, and yet it also poses great opportunities. Social service providers need lots of patience and compassion in order to build relationships and trust slowly.

Many trafficked persons experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (**P.T.S.D.**) These include, but are not limited to: re-experiencing of events, avoidance and numbing, hyper-vigilance, depression, anxiety, difficulty with memory and concentration, delirious and hallucinogenic disorders, and suicidal thoughts.<sup>5</sup> In cases where trafficked persons are not coping well with these symptoms, access to mental health professionals is necessary. There may also be other psychological/psychiatric issues that need to be addressed. Again, this must come in a safe, non-judgmental form, and if services are not covered through the person's health coverage, other alternatives must be looked into.

Trafficked persons may be experiencing **grief** that needs to be worked through. This grief could be related to deaths that they have lived through, or could be related to other losses: of home, culture, family, expectations, trust, self-respect, or many other factors. Grief counselling may be appropriate.

Trafficked persons are quite vulnerable to **shame, guilt, lack of self-esteem** and self-loathing. This shame is often generated from internalized social attitudes because sex work is highly stigmatized. Guilt may come from an exaggerated sense of a person's own

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<sup>4</sup> Farley, 2003, p. 139

<sup>5</sup> Angel Coalition, 2005 p. 14

complicity in her situation. Trafficked persons may feel guilt over having engaged in behaviours contrary to their religious/cultural/family beliefs. They may feel guilt over leaving their families. They may even feel guilt for leaving their trafficker/pimp<sup>6</sup>. Social service providers have opportunity to teach and model love and forgiveness. Social workers/counsellors must also be involved in helping trafficked persons increase their self-esteem through modifying thought patterns and assisting trafficked persons realize that they are not the source of the problem/blame/guilt.

Many trafficked persons do not feel that they have **options** other than staying with their trafficker and obeying their demands. In terms of both psychological and social needs, it is important that trafficked persons feel like they have choices over their lives. Often, even if they seem quite bold, trafficked persons have difficulty in decision-making. Even so, they must be encouraged to make all of their own decisions, and be supported and respected in them once they are made. This encourages self-esteem, builds self-confidence, and is an attempt to re-balance some of the severe power differentials they have experienced. Social service providers can support the decision-making process by accompanying, and walking alongside.

#### Addressing **social** needs:

As a general rule, but also applicable to trafficked persons, services should be as **culturally appropriate** as possible. People's attachment to their culture varies, but re-connecting with one's culture can be an important part of healing. Care should be taken, however, in re-connecting a trafficked person with their cultural/ethnic groups, because there may be connections to the trafficker within that group.

**Education** (including language-learning) and **employment training** can be very important in terms of empowering trafficked persons, giving them choices in their own lives and also providing an arena for social interaction and support. Trafficked persons often need to develop a new sense of identity, as valued and responsible members of their community. Depending on the circumstances, access to education and employment training may be difficult (for example, if the person does not have identity documents, or

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<sup>6</sup>The "Stockholm syndrome" explains how humans bond emotionally to their abusers as a psychological strategy to survive under conditions of captivity.

if the person does not have legal status in Canada). In these cases, social workers and legal aid workers should be contacted to look at service options.

**Financial** options, and financial support can be crucial for persons involved in the commercial sex industry. For most trafficked persons, sex has been the way they have survived financially. Trafficked persons may need to access trustee support, social assistance/welfare or employment.

Trafficked persons also need to do “normal” **social activities** which are not hidden, nor stigmatized. Participating in recreational activities, day trips, etc. may give them both enjoyment, time to relax, and the ability to feel like they are doing everyday activities. Many internationally trafficked persons have not informed their families about their exploitation because of the shame and guilt they feel. It would be helpful for them, upon return to their country, to have some positive experiences to share, and the ability to speak of the country in which they were “employed”.

Again, depending on their circumstances, trafficked persons may need **family reconciliation** support. They will likely need to talk with someone about their family relationships, and what family re-unification or reconciliation will look like, if that is their desire.

#### Addressing **spiritual** needs:

With appropriate timing, spiritual needs of trafficked/exploited persons need to be addressed. Connecting/re-connecting with a person’s chosen **faith** may be a great source of healing, grace and forgiveness. There is a significant role for pastoral care personnel to assist in the healing journey of trafficked individuals. It is possible that trafficked persons will trust pastors and pastoral care counsellors with their situation, rather than enforcement or authority figures. Pastors, chaplains, or connections with a local church could be excellent spiritual resources for trafficked persons.

#### A word about **hope**:

It is crucial that social service providers maintain great degrees of hope when working with any persons, but particularly with trafficked persons. While it is true that they have been trafficked, exploited and abused by powerful people and systems, they likely also have great reserves of strengths that have helped them to stay alive. Hope

about their lives and futures must be kept alive and healthy both for the trafficked person and the ones trying to help her. Hope is also a way of ensuring the preservation of human dignity.

Each person, regardless of their background, occupation, lifestyle, race, class, culture or gender possesses human dignity, and therefore deserves to be treated with the utmost respect and compassion. We should never forget that people who have been trafficked possess both human dignity and enormous reserves of strength, agency and capabilities.

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