

# Human Trafficking and Substance Use

---

Katie Papke, LMSW, CAADC, CCHTVSP



# Objectives

At the end of this program, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the types and venues of human trafficking in the United States.
2. List three warning signs of human trafficking in health care settings for adults and minors.
3. Outline an appropriate response and assessment if a victim is abusing substances and is involved in human trafficking

# Am I Being Trafficked?

Victims and survivors often:

Do not identify with term “trafficked” or “human trafficking” and may use other words to describe their situations such as:

“booing,” “being in the life” or “being in the game” to describe their hookups or sex with clients.

“my boyfriend,” “daddy” or “uncle” when referring to the person in control of them (among others).

Lack of knowledge of the crime itself, power and control dynamic.

Are conditioned not to trust law enforcement or providers.

# What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is understood as the willful exploitation of another human being by force, fraud or coercion for personal benefit.

## **Legal Definitions -**

### Federal Anti-trafficking Laws

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA of 2000, revised in 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013)

State Level - All 50 states have laws that criminalise human trafficking and support the identification and prosecution of human trafficking perpetrators.

# The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)

**Sex trafficking:** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person included to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age. (22 USC 5 7102(9) ).

**Labor trafficking:** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery. (22 USC 5 7102(0) ).

# Definition of Terms

## **Force, Fraud, and Coercion:**

Include threats either physical or psychological and the victim has the belief that the person has the capability of performing such an act.

*Commercial Sex Act:* means anything of value is given to or received by any person.

*A Minor:* in federal law is anyone under the age of 18. In cases of sex trafficking, any child who is induced into commercial sex is considered a victim of human trafficking.

# Force, Fraud, Coercion

- Threatening serious harm to, or physical restraint against, the victim or a third person
- Destroying, concealing, removing, confiscating, or possessing any passport, immigration document, or other government identification document
- Abusing or threatening abuse of the law or legal process against the victim or a third person
- Asserting control over the finances of another person
- Placing a person in debt bondage
- Providing a drug, including alcohol, to another person with the intent to impair the person's judgment or maintain a state of chemical dependence
- Wrongfully taking, obtaining, or withholding any property of another person
- Blackmail
- Withholding or threatening to withhold food or medication

# The criminal business of human trafficking

- Human trafficking is the second largest criminal enterprise in the world, earning exploiters more than \$150 billion each year
- With such a high potential for monetary rewards and the low risk of prosecution, the enterprise has grown with profits more than tripling in the last decade
- Traffickers range from small-time, solo operators to unattached networks of criminals, to criminal organizations that operate internationally
- Trafficking humans has an advantage over drugs: humans can be sold repeatedly

# Why human trafficking exists?

- Trafficking is fueled by a demand for cheap labor, services and for commercial sex.
- Human traffickers are those who employ force, fraud, or coercion to victimize others in their desire to profit from the existing demand.
- The most common procurers of sexual services are employed men with enough disposable income to engage in these activities. An estimated 15%-20% of American men had purchased sex at least once
- Businesses such as hotels, manufacturing, agriculture, and transportation businesses may be aware of trafficking taking place, but they will turn a blind eye since it's financially advantageous

# Factors that can contribute to human trafficking

- **Globalization**
- **Poverty**
- **Social disorganization**
- **Corruption**

- **Digital technology**
- **Racialized sexual stereotypes**
- **Culture**

# Why are human trafficking cases so hard to prosecute?

- Victims not identifying as being trafficked
- Fear of reporting
- Victims not participating or showing up to trial
- Can be an international case
- Corruption





# Who are the Victims?

- The economically disadvantaged, the mentally ill, the emotionally distressed, those with family discord or homeless are easily manipulated based on their insecurities- those previously exposed to substances or not
- Traffickers prey on human weakness
- They come into people's lives at a time when they are feeling inadequate and vulnerable
- Traffickers attempt to fulfill a missing need that is lacking in their victims' lives
- From crowded venues to online dating and gaming apps
- ***Victims who get involved are voluntary at first or it's someone they know***

# Victim Blaming

- Are you sure you really said no?
- Were you drinking alcohol?
- Are you sure he heard you say no?
- What were you wearing?
- Society tries to blame the victim

*Nothing the survivor did or wore gave the perpetrator the right to disrespect, belittle and violate the victim. Clothing does not determine consent*



# Reasons entering the sex industry

**Money:** 53 percent

**Sex:** 27 percent

**Attention:** 16 percent

**Fun:** 11 percent

**Related Industry:** 7 percent

**Acquaintance:** 7 percent

**Chance/Confusion:** 6 percent

**Creative Expression:** 5 percent

**Personal Growth:** 4 percent

**Disliked Prior Job:** 4 percent

**Coercion:** < 1 percent

# Human Trafficking, Sex Work and Domestic Violence

At risk for involvement with the legal system; many clientele may not distinguish between human trafficking victims and sex workers and believe all participants are willing, buying and selling of sex acts for profit

**Sex Trafficking** Involves force, fraud, or coercion; victim has a pimp or manager (trafficker); and person under the age of 18 who is induced to perform commercial sex acts is a victim of human trafficking, regardless of whether he or she is forced or coerced

Traffickers can be romantic partners, spouses, parents or other relatives

**Sex Work** Sex worker keeps all proceeds of provided sex act; consensual activity between adults where mutually agreed compensation is involved

Vulnerable for abuse, sexual assault, and exploitation, leading to medical and mental health trauma

**Domestic Violence:** Romantic partner is not seeking a profit from another individual by selling their spouse for labor or sex

# The Relationship between Pimps and Prostitutes

- Higher-level prostitution would include those who work for themselves, work in legalized brothels or a business that may be a front for sex workers, or as escorts
- Lower-level prostitution includes those that have pimps, use sex work to fuel their drug habits and addiction, and would be more commonly known as “working the streets”
- 50% of prostitution is controlled by Pimps and more than 80% of those who work in prostitution will at some point be involved with a pimp (Cornell University of Law, 2018)
- Estimated 100,000 streetwalking prostitutes in the US at any given time (Cornell University of Law, 2018)
- Control of prostituted women and men are the pimp’s main role and use their “wants” and “needs” to remain in control

# The Drug Culture

- Exacerbate an individual's vulnerability to being trafficked
- Can be part of trafficker's means of coercing
- Means of incentive to remain in their trafficking situation by controlling access to substances
- Used by an individual who is **experiencing** trafficking as a mechanism for coping
- Used by an individual who has **experienced** human trafficking as a mechanism for coping
- Some traffickers recruit directly from substance use disorder treatment facilities

# Substances, Coerced Use, and Escalation of Substance Use

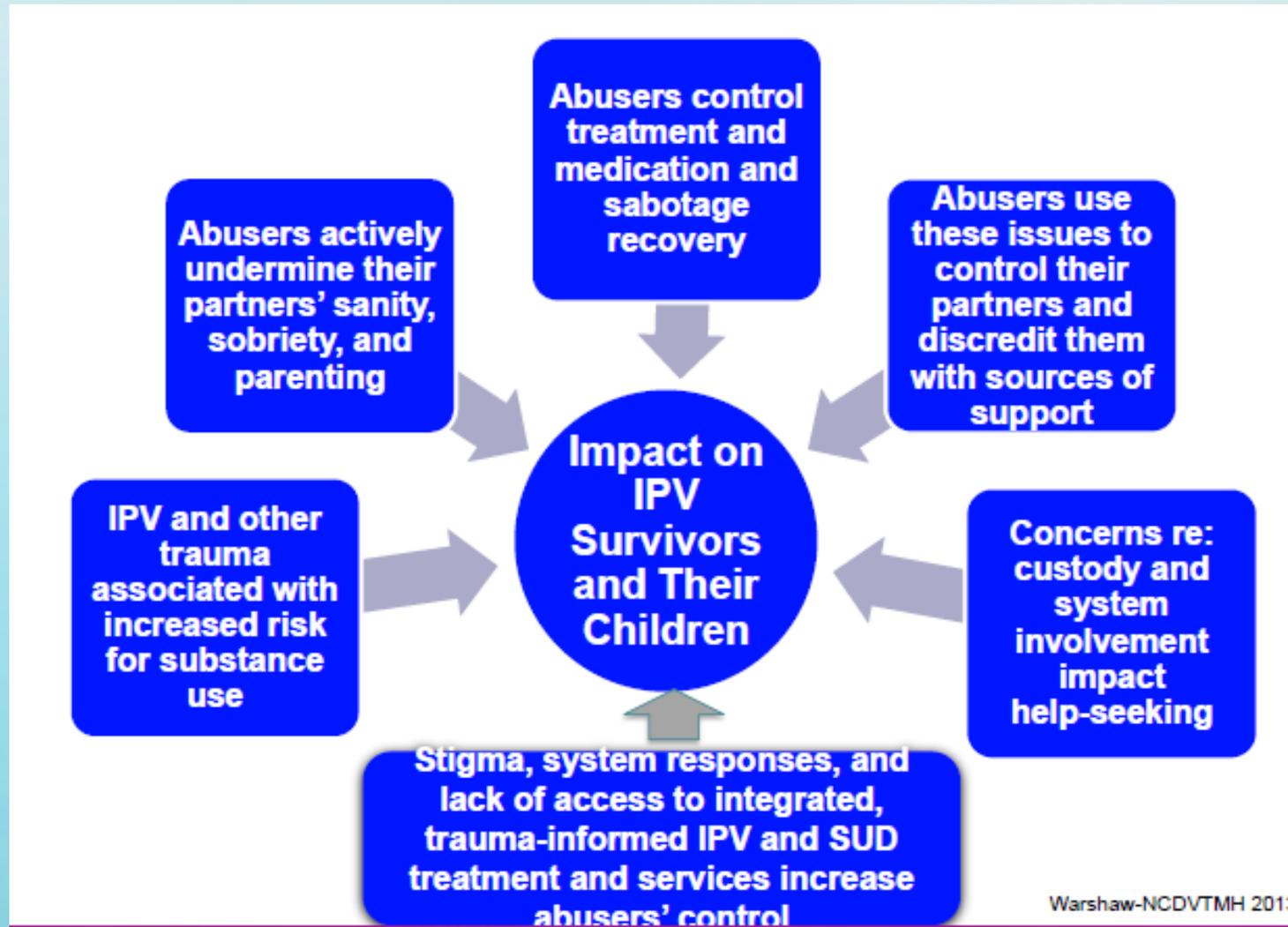
- Victims are often introduced to substances by an intimate partner or family member
- An abusive partners play major role in initiation of substance use and escalation of substance use problems
- Coercive tactics range from being pressured to use with partner or family member and unable to refuse; being manipulated, threatened or forced into using or being drugged
- Exposure to addictive/rewarding drugs
- Conditioned cues from the environment
- Exposure to stressful experiences



# Substance Use Coercion Include a Range of Abusive Tactics Designed to:

- Undermine a partner's sanity and sobriety
- Control a partner or family member's access to treatment
- Sabotage a partner or family member's recovery efforts-Not allowing partner or family member to attend mutual aid meetings (such as AA) or seek treatment; harassing into leaving
- Discredit a partner or family member with potential sources of protection and support and jeopardize custody
- Exploit any mental health or substance use for personal or financial gain
- Withholding transportation, childcare, and/or financial resources for treatment
- Keeping substances in the home
- Controlling medications, stealing medications, using medications to coerce or control
- Escalating violence if partner or family member tries to stop using

# The Complexity of Control Tactics



# Recognize the potential impact of coercion on a person's situation

- How have experiences of abuse and trauma contributed to...
  - ...the development of mental health and substance use disorder conditions?
  - ...the exacerbation of mental health and substance use disorder conditions?
  - ...sabotaged treatment and recovery efforts?
- How can symptoms and needs be understood as threat responses and survival strategies?

- Asking about substance use coercion:

“Many people have shared with us that their partner or ex-partner pressured them to use substances or use in ways that they didn’t want to. I wonder if this is something you’ve experienced?”

“Sometimes people who have been hurt by a partner find themselves using substances to deal with the pain. This is a common reaction. If this is something you can relate to, know that we’re here to support you.”

# Homelessness and Human Trafficking

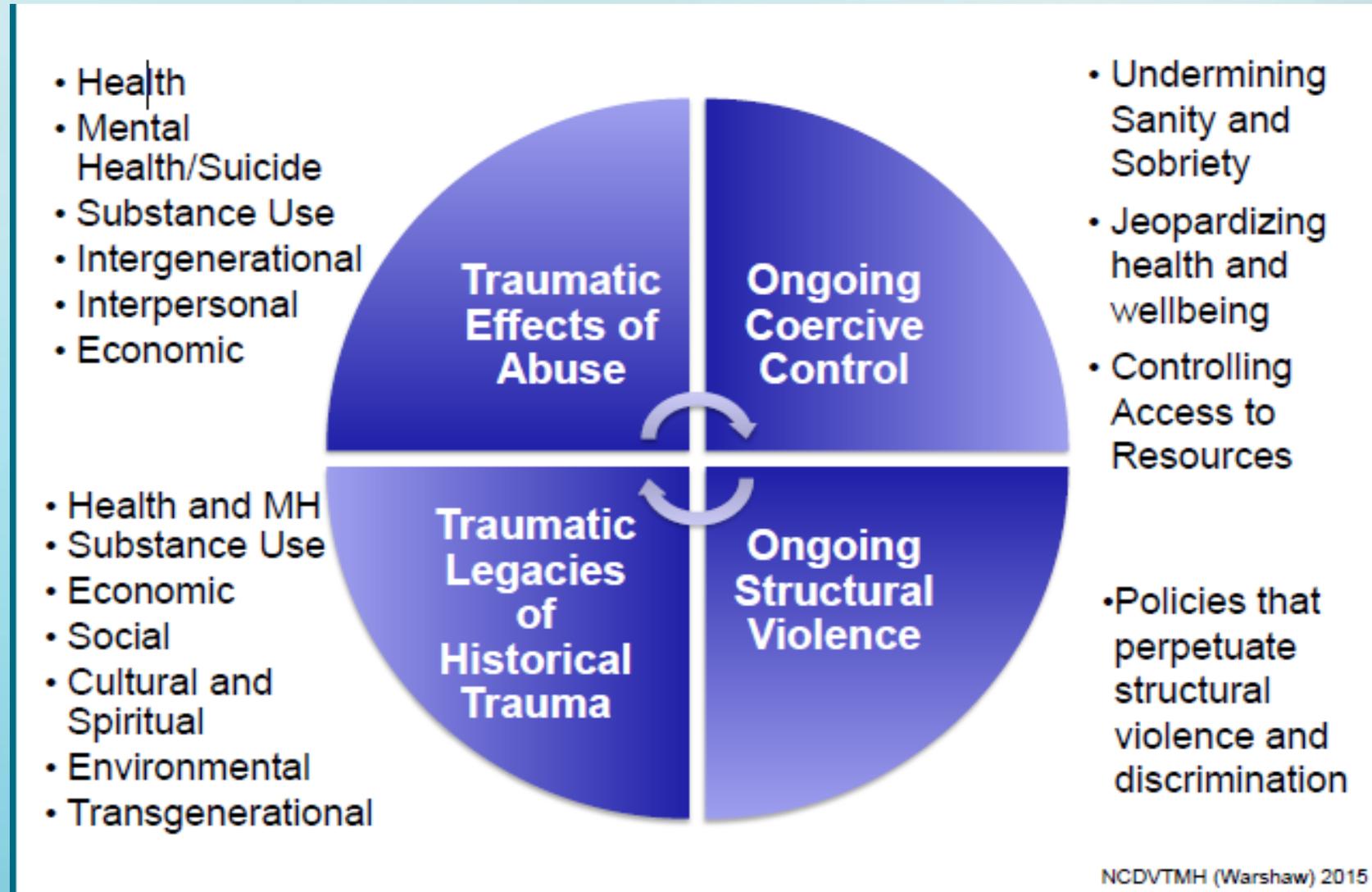
- 64% of victims of human trafficking reported being homeless or experiencing unstable housing at the time they were recruited into their trafficking situation
- Traffickers can exploit potential victims' fear of sleeping on the street by offering them safe shelter to recruit them into trafficking
- LGBTQ+ populations are at an increased risk as well as runaway/homeless youth and some may choose to engage in survival sex to get access to shelter
- The National Human Trafficking Hotline has documented cases of traffickers targeting homeless shelters as recruitment grounds
- Traffickers in labor trafficking have been known to rent housing properties and force workers to live in overcrowded spaces which tend to have effects on workers' health and safety

# Opioid Abuse

- Can numb both emotional and physical pain
- Trauma linked to substance abuse
- Can create debt bondage
- Links between US opioid epidemic and trafficking
- High rate of infections, OD, suicide due to lack of healthcare interventions allowed by the traffickers
- Opioid addiction in and of itself may be a red flag for clinicians to screen for trafficking



# Trauma, Mental Health, Substance Use in a Broader Social Context



# Cultural Factors

- Seen across all genders, sexual orientations, races, cultures, ages, abilities education, occupations, classes, and nationalities. There is no “right,” or “wrong,” type of victim, and there is no “correct,” response to being assaulted or exploited
- High prevalence of women and children
- Trafficking is rooted in the interconnected system of oppression, inequality through gender and sexual orientation-based violence, poverty, and racism
- LGBTQ often face stigma, discrimination, and bias in the healthcare setting
- Indigenous population often fear or retaliation from their tribal cultures, ceremonies, and communities

## Case Scenario 1

Do you think this is  
a case of human  
trafficking?

A 32 y/o homeless female presented to Urgent Care after being brought in by a girlfriend because of recent trauma reportedly at the hands of her fiancée. All she would say was that her fiancée hit her and that she did not want to get him in trouble. On her intake form she indicated that she used marijuana and other drugs nearly every day.

Physical examination revealed fingerprint marks on her neck, a tooth broken off and three other loose teeth. Further examination revealed bruising on all her extremities most of which appeared fresh as well as a barcode tattoo on her thigh. The Healthcare Provider discussed with the her reporting this assault to the local police department, but she declined saying, “I stay away from the police as much as possible. I don’t like them!”

## Case Scenario 2

Do you think this is  
a case of human  
trafficking?

A 56 y/o male presented to your facility. A few months ago, he had surgery on his broken ankle and was prescribed opioids for recovery. After his prescription ended, he was informed by his Healthcare Provider that it was not recommended to continue his prescription. He indicated that he lost his job due to COVID-19 and has not been able to work since.

He explained that he started purchasing Oxycodone from a friend. Not too much longer, he was unable to afford the pills. "My friend has been making me do things I don't want to do so I can get the medication I need. I just want to go back to work." He states that this friend is now making him have sex with some of his friends and drug connections. He states that he is not comfortable with these sex acts and some instances have been violent.

## Case Scenario 3

Do you think this is  
a case of human  
trafficking?

A 17 y/o female was brought to the Emergency Department by a man claiming to be her boyfriend. Boyfriend is not listed in her medical chart as an emergency contact or Next of Kin. She complains of dizziness, difficulty standing, and inability to walk over the past several hours. On her intake form her boyfriend lists her address as “homeless.”

Physical examination revealed a fever of 102 degrees, low blood oxygen saturation, dehydration, and septic infection of a wound to her thigh. Further examination of her lungs revealed severe pneumonia, and labs revealed high levels of crack cocaine in her system. She seemed to have lost sensation in her lower leg and foot. She was admitted to the ICU for IV antibiotic treatment, oxygen, and further testing. ER staff noted her boyfriend being reluctant to leave her alone once ICU visiting hours ended and lingering in the hallways of the hospital.

**Faces of Human Trafficking Video  
Effective Victim Services**

**<https://youtu.be/V4bga2CnZnc>**

# Listening for Language Themes

- Self-medication
- Coerced use
- Manipulation
- Undermining
- Blaming
- Threatening
- Coerced illegal activities
- Inducing fear



# Trauma-informed critical conversations

## Help release shame

- You did the best you could or knew how
- What you did and said IS the reason why you survived
- It wasn't your fault
- You didn't know his true intentions. There is no shame in not knowing
- You were terrified. There is no shame in fear.
- You are only human

## Build repopire to gain trust

- I'm going to be upfront with you. I'm going to tell you what's going on every step throughout the process
- Is there anything I can do to help you feel safe?
- I will do what I can to get all your questions answered
- You are my priority right now
- We will investigate what we need to investigate because we want you to know the truth

# Human Trafficking and Substance Use Recovery

- Trauma-informed care
- Psychoeducation about the causes and consequences of trauma
- Awareness of mental health and substance use coercion, and sabotaging of recovery efforts
- Safety Planning
- Cognitive and emotional coping skill development to address trauma-related symptoms and support goals
- A focus on survivors' strengths as well as cultural strengths on which they can draw



# Phased Approaches to Treatment

- Acute symptoms (detox, medical, hallucinations)- Inpatient hospitalization
- Need for specialized co-occurring treatment- Residential treatment
- Skill building and psycho-education evidenced based therapies:
  - Seeking Safety, Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR), Motivational Interviewing
- Trauma Processing evidenced based therapies:
  - Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), Narrative Therapy, Cognitive Process Therapy (CPT), Prolonged Exposure (PE)

# Complementary Therapies

- Meditation, yoga, guided imagery and tai chi
- Peer support services
- Art therapy, dance/movement, drama therapy and music therapy
- Religion or spirituality exploration
- Native American culture rituals and teachings

# TAKE ACTION

Know the signs and identify red flags during direct care or case consultation

Stay informed and debunk myths about human trafficking

Learn the local community resources that serve human trafficking victims and survivors

Become familiar with your state human trafficking laws

Join a human trafficking task force



Questions?

**For more information**



**Katie Papke, LMSW, CAADC, CCHTVSP**

**[KatiePapke@LifeSupportllc.info](mailto:KatiePapke@LifeSupportllc.info)**

**616-426-9104**

**<https://lifesupportllc.info/katie-papke-lmsw-caadc/>**

## References

Human Rights First. (2014, June). *Who Are Human Traffickers?*

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/who-are-human-traffickers>

*Human Trafficking and Drugs*. (2017, June 19). NIDA Archives.

<https://archives.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/human-trafficking-and-drugs>

Cornell University Law School, Grough, M., & Goldbach, T. (2018). *Relationship Between Pimps and Prostitutes*.

[https://courses2.cit.cornell.edu/sociallaw/student\\_projects/PimpsandProstitutes.html](https://courses2.cit.cornell.edu/sociallaw/student_projects/PimpsandProstitutes.html)

## References

- Arduizur Carli Richie-Zavaleta, Augusta Villanueva, Ana Martinez-Donate, Renee M. Turchi, Janna Ataiants & Shea M. Rhodes (2019) Sex Trafficking Victims at Their Junction with the Healthcare Setting—A Mixed-Methods Inquiry, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, DOI: [10.1080/23322705.2018.1501257](https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2018.1501257)
- Joshua S. George, Sana Malik, Stephen Symes, Panagiota Caralis, D. Jeffrey Newport, Anastasia Godur, Grechen Mills, Ira Karmin, Blaine Menon & JoNell E. Potter (2018) Trafficking Healthcare Resources and Intra-disciplinary Victim Services and Education (THRIVE) Clinic: A Multidisciplinary One-stop Shop Model of Healthcare for Survivors of Human Trafficking, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, DOI: [10.1080/23322705.2018.1530528](https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2018.1530528)
- Makini Chisolm-Straker, Cathy L. Miller, Gloria Duke & Hanni Stoklosa (2019) A Framework for the Development of Healthcare Provider Education Programs on Human Trafficking Part Two: Survivors, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, DOI: [10.1080/23322705.2019.1635333](https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2019.1635333)
- National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health. (2013). *A Systematic Review of Trauma-Focused Interventions for Domestic Violence Survivors*.
- Polaris Project. (2021). National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2011 [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)