

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

IDENTIFYING VICTIMS IN A MEDICAL SETTING



VIDEO RESOURCE

Learn how to identify victims in your medical setting with this free video resource.

WHY

This information and **video resource** is being provided to give healthcare providers and first responders practical tools for identifying victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in a medical setting.

RED FLAGS TO LOOK FOR

- **Trauma response:** the patient may present in fight, flight, freeze or fawn
- **No Identification:** they may not be in possession of their own government documents
- **Unawareness or instability:** they may not know where they are or how they got there
- **Controlling “family member”:** Being accompanied by a controlling “family member” or partner (this individual could be any gender and may or may not be with them)
- **Inconsistent Injuries:** Presenting with injuries or medical issues that are not consistent with the disclosure
- **Branding tattoos:** they may have branding tattoos or other tattoos associated with trafficking. Some examples include:
 - Explicit words or images
 - Images or words that are gang affiliated or associated with making money
 - 5-pointed crown, barcodes, dollar signs
- **Frequent and repetitive reproductive concerns.** Some examples include:
 - STIs, pregnancy and/or abortion(s)
 - Injuries
- **Frequent substance Use:** Partaking either at will, by force or pressure
- **Mental health:** Presenting with a mental health complaint, or arriving in a mental health crisis
- **Something is “off”:** As a healthcare provider, a general gut feeling that something is “off”.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- **Indirect disclosure:** It is highly unlikely that a patient will directly state, “I’m being trafficked”. Instead, expect patients to make indirect disclosures.
- **Describing sex trafficking and/or survival sex without calling it ‘trafficking’:** The patient may share information regarding their experiences without treating it like a disclosure. This may include describing survival sex, or engaging in sexual acts for something in return, including substances, food, transportation, or housing.
- **The patient may not trust you or want to receive any help:**
 - There are many reasons for this. It is important to respect their decision. Any situations involving anyone under 18 years old must still be reported.
- **They may not identify as a victim:** The patient may even refer to their trafficker as their boyfriend, dude, boss, fiancé, husband, or another term of endearment
- **They may be in communication with their trafficker:** If the trafficker is not in the room, the patient may be highly preoccupied with their phone as a means to stay connected with their trafficker.

IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN A MEDICAL SETTING

HOW TO RESPOND

- **Stay calm:** Maintain a calm demeanor and open body posture
- **Minimize the power dynamic:** Sit down (angled toward the patient) when possible
- **Mindful language and gestures:** Be mindful of using non-threatening body language and aim to mirror the words they are comfortable using. Offer eye contact, but check for discomfort. Avoid rapid movements or gestures that may trigger a trauma response.
- **Build rapport** through validation, common interests, and empowerment
- **Provide choices, safety planning and resources:** Give the patient the opportunity to make as many choices as possible, including having a choice in their care and who they want to have support them. If you are unable to safety plan or provide appropriate resources, ask permission to connect them with someone who can.
- **Treat them as an equal partner** in their care


RECOMMENDATIONS


- **Assess, Identify, Refer out:**
As a non-forensic medical professional, your role is to assess the patient to determine if red flags are present. If you identify red flags, refer out to whatever forensic services are available to you. The forensic team will then utilize their specific skillset to evaluate the patient further and approach your concerns more directly.
- **Ensure patient privacy:** Wait to ask questions until the patient is alone, and be mindful of how, when, and where you discuss the patient's information.
- **Use an interpreter:** If your patient does not speak English, always utilize a safe, certified interpretive service.
- **Law enforcement:** Remind your patient that as long as they are over 18 years of age, they do NOT have to report to law enforcement.
 - **If your patient is under the age of 18**, as a mandated reporter, your concerns need to be reported to both law enforcement and child protective services.

REFERRING OUT

- **Forensics:** Refer to your forensic team, whether that be at your facility, or a facility that you can transport to if the patient is willing to do so.
- **Law enforcement:** Engage law enforcement if your adult patient says they would like to report OR, if you suspect that a minor (someone 18 years old or younger) may be experiencing sexual exploitation or trafficking.
- **Victim advocacy:** If your patient is open to receiving resources, engage available victim advocacy organizations to provide additional support.


RESOURCES

 **Value Unconditional**
816-610-8822
www.valueunconditional.org

 **MOCSA**
816-531-0233 or 913-642-0233
www.mocsa.org

 **SimplyReport**
An App for 24/7 Reporting

The National Human Trafficking Hotline: 888-373-7888

 **MO Attorney General's Office**
573-751-8807

 **KS Attorney General Anti-Trafficking Unit**
785-291-3950

 **Relentless Pursuit Outreach & Recovery**
816-368-1879

 **ReHope**
816-865-1808

 **MOCATE**
321-800-3323

 **Child Protection Center**
816-778-8000