

# Recognize the Signs of Human Trafficking for Healthcare Professionals

Human trafficking is considered a form of modern-day slavery. It is a multi-billion-dollar industry and occurs in all parts of the world. It is believed that at the latest count, over 20 million people, from all walks of life, have been victims of human trafficking. Victims can be of any age, race, and gender regardless of immigration status. These victims live in cities, suburbs and rural areas in every state of the U.S., as well as other countries. While there are no concrete indicators for human trafficking victims, there are general indicators that may indicate the need for further investigation and support services. As healthcare providers we are in a unique situation to identify these indicators.

## **Physical health indicators may include signs physical abuse or unexplained injuries:**

- Bruising, burns, cuts or wounds
- Signs of blunt force trauma or fractures
- Broken teeth
- Signs of torture
- Severe weight loss or malnutrition
- Sexually transmitted infections, and/or an unusually high number of sexual partners
- Repeated unwanted pregnancies
- Forced abortions
- Genital trauma

## **General indicators of human trafficking may include:**

- Shares a scripted or inconsistent history
- Unwillingness/hesitancy to answer questions about an injury or illness
- Is accompanied by an individual that speaks for/interprets for the patients; refuses to leave patient alone (no privacy within the examination room/hospital room)
- Evidence of controlling or dominating relationships
- Demonstration of fear, avoidance of eye contact, nervous behavior
- Demonstration of hostile or resistant behavior
- Is unable or unwilling to provide home address
- Is not aware of current day, date, time, or location
- Does not have identification paperwork: driver's license, photo identification, passport
- Is not being paid or wages are being withheld
- Does not have control over their own money
- Tattoos or other branding
- Inappropriate clothing for current weather conditions

**To request help or report suspected human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-3737-888 or text HELP to: 233733 (BeFree).**