

# Human Trafficking and Exploitation

## Informational Guide

### What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking occurs when one person manipulates or controls another person to provide labor or sex for someone else's benefit. In Minnesota, victims can be trafficked by any means. Victims of human trafficking are not able to leave their situation for a variety of reasons.

**To control their victims, traffickers may use multiple methods, including but not limited to:**

- Intimidation
- Coercion and threats
- Abuse (emotional, physical, sexual)
- Isolation
- Denying, blaming and minimizing
- Privilege and superiority
- Economic abuse
- Sense of obligation towards the victim's family
- Withholding documents

*No single sign can definitively identify human trafficking. The most important thing to look for is a pattern of control by a trafficker over one or more people.*

### What is exploitation?

Exploitation happens when one person treats another person unfairly to benefit from their work. There is an unequal power dynamic between the exploiter and the victim, with the exploiter holding the power. Exploitation can be seen as middle ground between total freedom and human trafficking. These situations can be overlapping and individuals can experience different places between freedom and trafficking at different times.

Commercial sexual exploitation occurs when someone exchanges sex for anything of value or a promise of something of value such as money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, or higher status in a gang or group. Labor exploitation is subjecting workers to unfair labor practices and can include refusing pay or being underpaid for labor, or wage theft (withholding legally or contractually promised wages, including overtime).

### Who are the traffickers and buyers?

Anyone of any age, race, ethnicity, or gender can be a trafficker. Traffickers can be a family member or a close friend, or may even appear to be a boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse.

Like traffickers, buyers can be of any age, race, ethnicity, or gender. They come from urban, rural, and suburban communities. Buyers use the internet, in-person solicitation, and word of mouth networks to purchase sex.

## Who are the victims?

Anyone can become a victim of human trafficking. Victims/survivors come from every background, race, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship status, and economic status.

Traffickers target individuals who, for any reason, are vulnerable to the trafficker's manipulation and control. Social conditions of communities, such as high unemployment rates or lack of resources, can make it easier for traffickers to target victims. Conditions that increase the risk of trafficking include:

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Age – children, youth, elderly
- Immigration status
- Racial minority
- History of abuse
- Chemical dependency
- Having a disability
- Homelessness

## How should I talk about human trafficking?

The words we use shape how we view a situation and others. It is important to use terms that decrease stigma and allow people to feel accepted so they can come forward for help, without shame. Use sensitive and appropriate terms such as commercially sexually exploited, human trafficking victim, survivor, or someone who has been subjected to exploitation or trafficking.

## What do I do if I suspect human trafficking?

- Contact your [Safe Harbor Regional Navigator \(http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safe-harbor/response/navigators.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safe-harbor/response/navigators.html) or the Day One Hotline at 1-866-223-1111 to learn more about services available in your area.
- Report a suspected trafficking situation to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's (BCA) Tip Form, or call the BCA at 1-877-996-6222 or email [bca.tips@state.mn.us](mailto:bca.tips@state.mn.us)
- Call 911 if you or someone you know is in immediate danger.

## Resources

For more information about human trafficking, please visit [Minnesota Safe Harbor \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/index.html)



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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5484.