

ASSISTING CHILD VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Red Flags:

Children will rarely identify themselves as victims of trafficking. Therefore it is crucial that agencies and service providers most likely to encounter a child victim have a heightened sense of awareness of trafficking.

Some signs that may indicate that further screening is required –

- Evidence of abuse (physical, mental or sexual)
- Employer is holding identity and/or travel documents
- Working unusually long hours
- Unpaid or paid very little
- Not in school or significant gaps in schooling in the US
- Living at workplace or with employer
- Living with multiple people in a cramped space
- Heightened sense of general fear (for self and family), unusual distrust of law enforcement
- Inability to speak to the child alone
- Engaged in prostitution or induced to perform a commercial sex act

It does not matter how the child entered the US, if at any time a child was deceived or coerced into forced labor or is being held against his or her will in some sort of debt bondage, she or he is a victim of trafficking.

Interview considerations for child victims:

Children should be approached in a manner that takes into consideration their age, development, culture, language and what is known about the nature of their experience.

Child may –

- Be hostile/ afraid
- Try to protect trafficker
- Try to set tone of interrogation

Child's history of interaction with adults may influence his or her interview behavior.

Understand the history of the case:

- Know how the child was rescued or escaped
- Talk to the witnesses
- Talk to involved victim service providers

Asian Anti-Trafficking Collaborative
*API Legal Outreach * Asian Women's Shelter * Cameron House * Narika*

Remember that in sex trafficking situations involving a child, the victim does not need to prove force, fraud or coercion. Understand the victim's account may evolve over time – gradual disclosure of truth is typical of victims

Interview process:

- Rapport building is different from adults
- May require multiple interviews to develop rapport and trust and obtain information
- Different dynamics from traditional child sexual abuse interviews
 - Trafficking abuse is typically outside of the child's normal surroundings
 - Often involves multiple offenders
- Empower the child victim
 - Help them understand that:
 - There is a way out
 - You will help them
 - It is not their fault
 - They are victims
 - They will be cared for
- Obtain a narrative account of the abuse
 - Use narrative account to focus on specific information
 - Keep them on track
 - Start building foundation for corroboration
 - Understand that child victims may not tell their account in chronological order
 - Events may be referenced in relation to activities in their life versus actual dates.

Immediate needs for child victims:

- Secure housing
- Therapy
- Contact with family members were appropriate
- To get into school as soon as possible
- Trust that the people working on their case are working for them

Benefits available:

ORR benefits once they have been certified as trafficking. These include:

- Cash assistance
- Medical
- Unaccompanied Refugee Minor program (URM) - Services provided through the program include English language training; career planning; health/mental health needs; socialization skills/adjustment training; family reunification; residential care; education/training; and Ethnic/religious preservation.