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MCHB OWH
September 2007 Webcast
Health Implications of Human
Trafficking for Public Health and
Medical Practitioners
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Moderator:
Sabrina Matoff-Stepp

Health Implications of Human Trafficking for Public Health and Medical Practitioners

Speaker: Vanessa Garza



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Overview

- Understanding Human Trafficking
- Health Consequences of Human Trafficking
- Condition of Victims
- Identifying & Communicating with Victims
- Needs of Victims
- How You Can Help



UNDERSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING



What Is Human Trafficking?



HHS Role – Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000

- Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 made human trafficking a federal crime. Through TVPA, HHS is responsible for:
 - Identifying, certifying and servicing victims of human trafficking
 - Increased public awareness
- Victims eligible for T-visa, and benefits for food, medical, shelter, counseling, job training



HHS Role – Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000

- Philosophy is victim-centered
- Network of grants, contracts, coalitions to identify, provide support to victims
 - Street Outreach Grants
 - Per Capita Contract
 - Intermediary Contracts
 - *Rescue & Restore* public awareness campaign
 - National Human Trafficking Resource Center







Your Role

- Healthcare practitioners play important role in identifying and helping trafficked victims
- Trafficking largely hidden problem, but many victims in plain sight if you know what to look for
- Healthcare system ideal point of entry - few places where “outside” has opportunity to interact with victim



HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

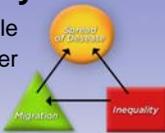


Health & Mobility

▪ Migrant populations are vulnerable to disease and illness by the sheer nature of being mobile.

▪ **Vulnerabilities of migrants:**

- Lack of access to health services
- Lack of family and other support systems
- Irregular and undocumented status
- Sense of anonymity, separation
- Sexual and physical violence



Health & Mobility

Trafficked victims **particularly** vulnerable to health risks:

- Poverty or harsh and dangerous labor conditions
- Coercive and stressful nature of their mobility (violence, deception, coercion, abuse, etc.)
- Nature of the activities for which they are exploited (forced prostitution, labor)
- Potential stigma and isolation upon return home



Health and the Process of Human Trafficking

Pre-Departure & Recruitment

Destination & Exploitation Movement & Transit

Health and the Process of Human Trafficking

Pre-departure / Recruitment

- Family-based violence, child abuse
- Already sexually exploited
- Poverty, malnourishment
- High prevalence of disease, including TB, HIV and other STDs
- Lack of preventive health care and access to information

Health and the Process of Human Trafficking

Movement / Transit

- Traveling in overcrowded or unsanitary conditions, exposure to disease
- Lack access to healthcare services and other support systems
- Physical and sexual violence

Health and the Process of Human Trafficking

Destination / Exploitation

- High number of sexual partners – 10-50 per night
- Lack of access to healthcare
- Ongoing violence / control of all types (physical, mental, financial, etc.)
- Abusive living and working conditions
- Special vulnerabilities of adolescents and children



CONDITION OF VICTIMS



Physical Health of Victims

- Bruises, broken bones and other signs of physical abuse and torture
 - Torture: electrical burns, scarring, genital mutilation
- Hearing loss, chronic back, cardiovascular or respiratory problems
- Infections or mutilations caused by unsanitary and dangerous medical procedures



Physical Health of Victims

- Malnourishment and serious dental problems
- Undetected or untreated diseases, such as diabetes or cancer
- Infectious diseases, like tuberculosis or hepatitis



Reproductive Health of Victims

- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS
- Other reproductive problems, including pelvic pain, rectal trauma and urinary tract infections
- Infertility from untreated STDs or abortions
- Pregnancy



Mental Health of Victims

- Feelings of helplessness, shame, humiliation, shock, denial or disbelief
- Drug/alcohol addiction
- Psychological trauma, depression, stress-related disorders, disorientation, confusion, phobias and anxieties, and panic attacks
- Cultural behavioral inadequacies / "culture shock"



IDENTIFYING & COMMUNICATING WITH VICTIMS



Mindset of Victims

- **FEAR** ⇒⇒ Deportation, safety of family in home country
- **DISTRUST** ⇒⇒ Healthcare providers, government, police
- **DENY / UNAWARE** ⇒⇒ What is being done to them is a crime - Do not consider themselves victims, blame themselves for situation
- **MISPLACED LOYALTIES** ⇒⇒ Towards trafficker - Develop positive feelings as means of coping; protect trafficker from authorities
- **CONFUSION** ⇒⇒ About where they are because trafficker may move frequently to escape detection



Identifying Victims

- Evidence of being controlled
- Evidence of an inability to move or leave job
- Non-English speaking
- Recently brought to the U.S. from Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, Canada, Africa or India
- Lack of passport, immigration or identification documentation
- Poor hygiene, dirty, unwashed
- Same clothes every day; clothes torn and dirty



Identifying Victims – Ask Yourself...

- Is potential victim accompanied by another person who seems controlling?
- Does person accompanying potential victim insist on giving information to health providers?
- Can you see or detect any physical abuse?
- Does potential victim seem submissive or fearful?
- Does potential victim have difficulty communicating because of language or cultural barriers?
- Does potential victim have any identification?
- Is potential victim suffering from common health problems experienced by trafficking victims?



Communicating with Victims: Basics

- **SEPARATION** ⇨⇨ Before questioning, separate potential victim *without raising suspicions* from person accompanying her/him
- **CULTURE & LANGUAGE** ⇨⇨ Enlist trusted translator/interpreter who also understands victim's cultural needs
- **CONFIDENTIALITY** ⇨⇨ For victim's safety, maintain strict confidentiality
- **SENSITIVITY** ⇨⇨ Indirectly and in a sensitive manner, probe to determine status



Communicating with Victims: Screening Questions

- What are your working or living conditions like?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Do you have to ask permission to eat, sleep or go to the bathroom?
- When you are not working, can you come and go as you please?
- Is there a lock on your door or windows so you cannot get out?
- Can you leave your work or job situation if you want?
- Have you been threatened with harm if you try to quit?
- Has anyone threatened your family?



Communicating with Victims: Messages

First step ⇒ Gain victim's trust

- *We are here to help you.*
- *Our priority is your safety.*
- *We will help you receive medical care, find a safe place to stay and get you what you need.*
- *We want to make sure what happened to you doesn't happen to anyone else.*
- *You are entitled to assistance. We can help you get assistance.*
- *If you are a victim of trafficking, you can receive help to rebuild your life safely in this country.*



Needs of Victims

Short-term Goal ⇒ Four general areas of assistance:

- Immediate – Housing, food, medical, safety and security, language interpretation
- Mental Health and Well-Being – Support counseling and spiritual resources
- Income – Cash, living assistance
- Legal – T visa, immigration, certification

Long-term Goal ⇒ Move victims beyond immediate, emergency care into re-integration and recovery programs



Resources for Public Health and Medical Practitioners

1.888.3737.888

- If you think you have come in contact with a victim, call the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center** to:
 - Determine if you have encountered a victim
 - Identify local community resources to help victims
 - Coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin process of restoring their lives
- **Call 911 if victim is at risk of imminent harm**



Resources for Public Health and Medical Practitioners

www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking

- Public health-focused materials



Resources for Public Health and Medical Practitioners

www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking

- Access to local coalitions to join the fight against human trafficking



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Thank you for attending this event!

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