

# RESPONDING TO THE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH: INNOVATIONS IN PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

**ELIZABETH MITARO, CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION SPECIALIST  
LAUREN DEVINE, CHILD TRAFFICKING PREVENTION AND PROTECTION COORDINATOR**

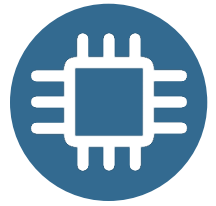
**OFFICE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**MAY 24, 2023**



# Office on Trafficking in Persons

*Mission, Goals, and Organization*



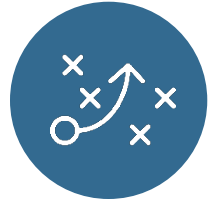
# OTIP Mission

**Mission:** To address human trafficking by supporting and leading systems that prevent trafficking and protect survivors, helping them rebuild their lives and become self-sufficient.

## Responsibilities:

- Develop anti-trafficking strategies, policies, and programs to prevent trafficking
- Build health and human service capacity to respond to trafficking
- Increase victim identification and access to services
- Strengthen health and well-being outcomes of individuals who have experienced trafficking





# Public Health Approach to Trafficking



Adapted from Chang, K., & Hang, R. (2017). *Public health approach to preventing human trafficking* [Webinar]. HEAL Trafficking. <https://healtrafficking.org/resources/public-health-approach-to-preventing-human-trafficking>



## OTIP Major Functions

### **Protection**

Victim service and assistance activities, grant programs, Child Eligibility and Adult Certification programs, child victim coordination activities, and the National Human Trafficking Hotline

### **Prevention**

Training and technical assistance, survivor engagement, public awareness, regional coordination, and prevention education

### **Research and Policy**

Identification, coordination, and implementation of anti-trafficking research agenda, and supports program and policy development



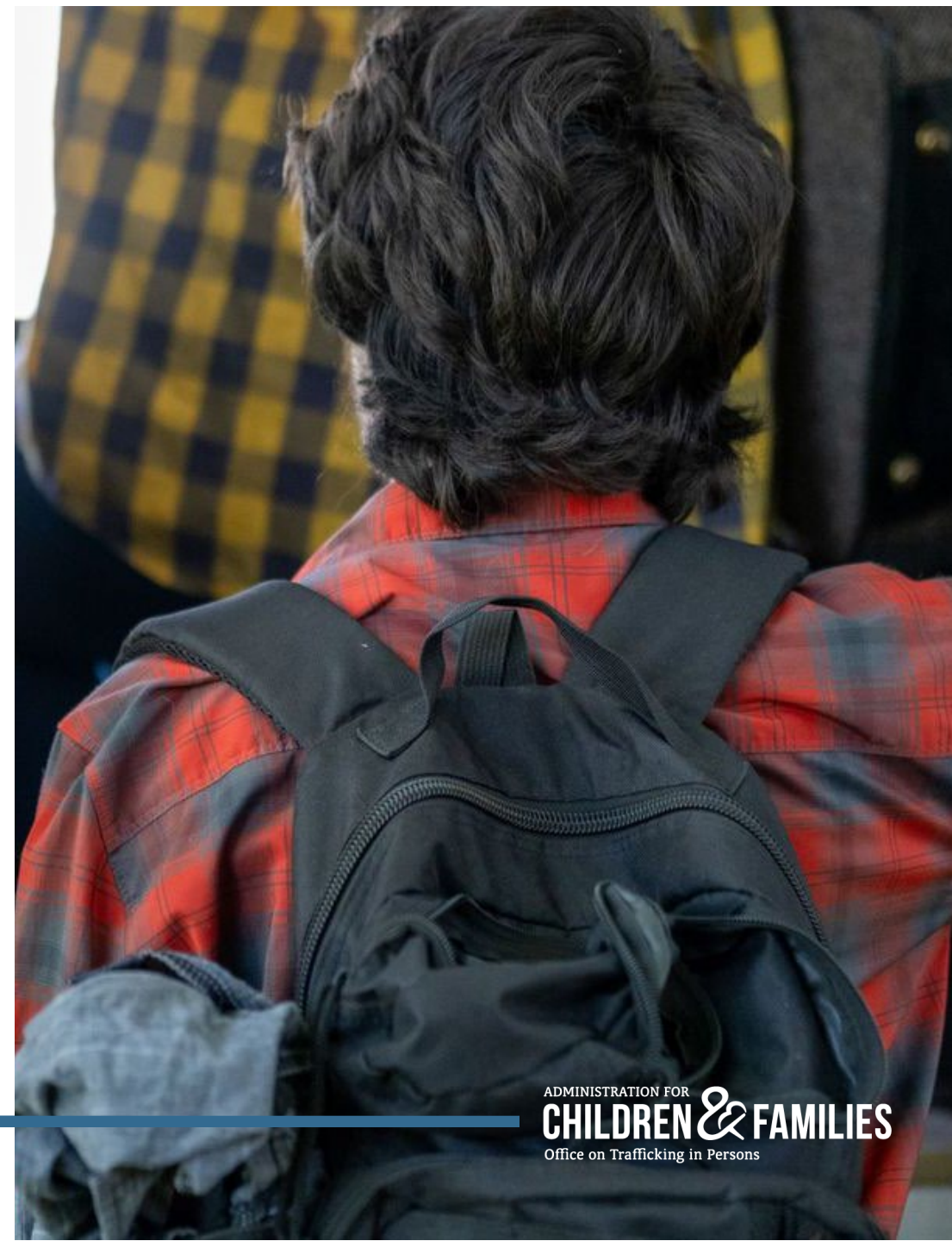
# Human Trafficking among Children and Youth

*Definitions and Common Trends*



# Definitions

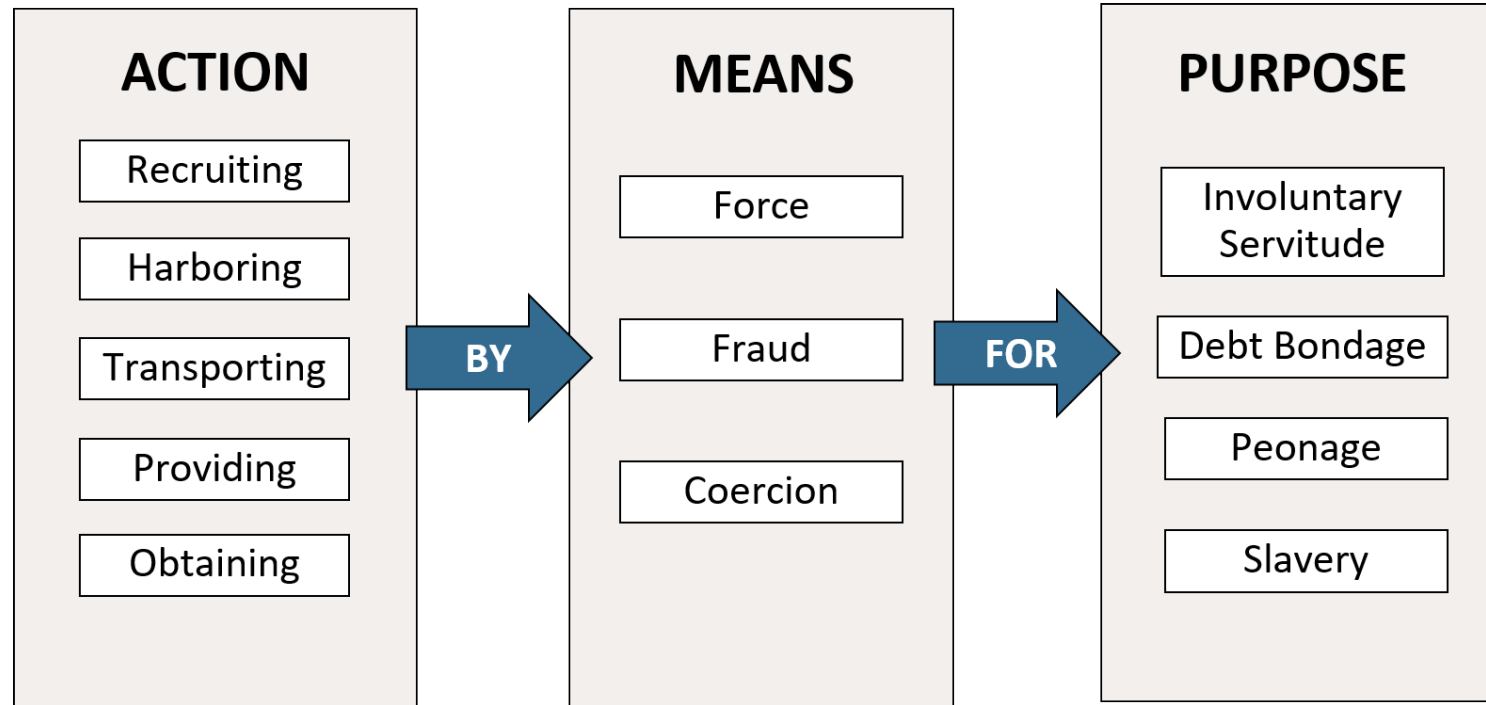
- **Labor Trafficking** (*forced labor*)  
The recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining of a child for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 USC. § 7102 (11)).
- **Sex Trafficking** (*commercial sex*)  
The recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, soliciting, or patronizing of a child for the purpose of engaging in a commercial sex act (22 USC. § 7102 (12)).





# Labor Trafficking of Minors

The recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining of a child for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.



22 USC. § 7102 (11)





# Labor Trafficking and Exploitation

## Labor Exploitation

- Paid less than promised
- Withheld pay
- No written earnings statement

- No meal breaks
- Hazardous work environment
- Lack of safe water or toilet

- Movement to work controlled

- Individual lives at work site

- Threatened to pay debt and expenses
- Threats or use of violence
- Demoralizing
- Held against will

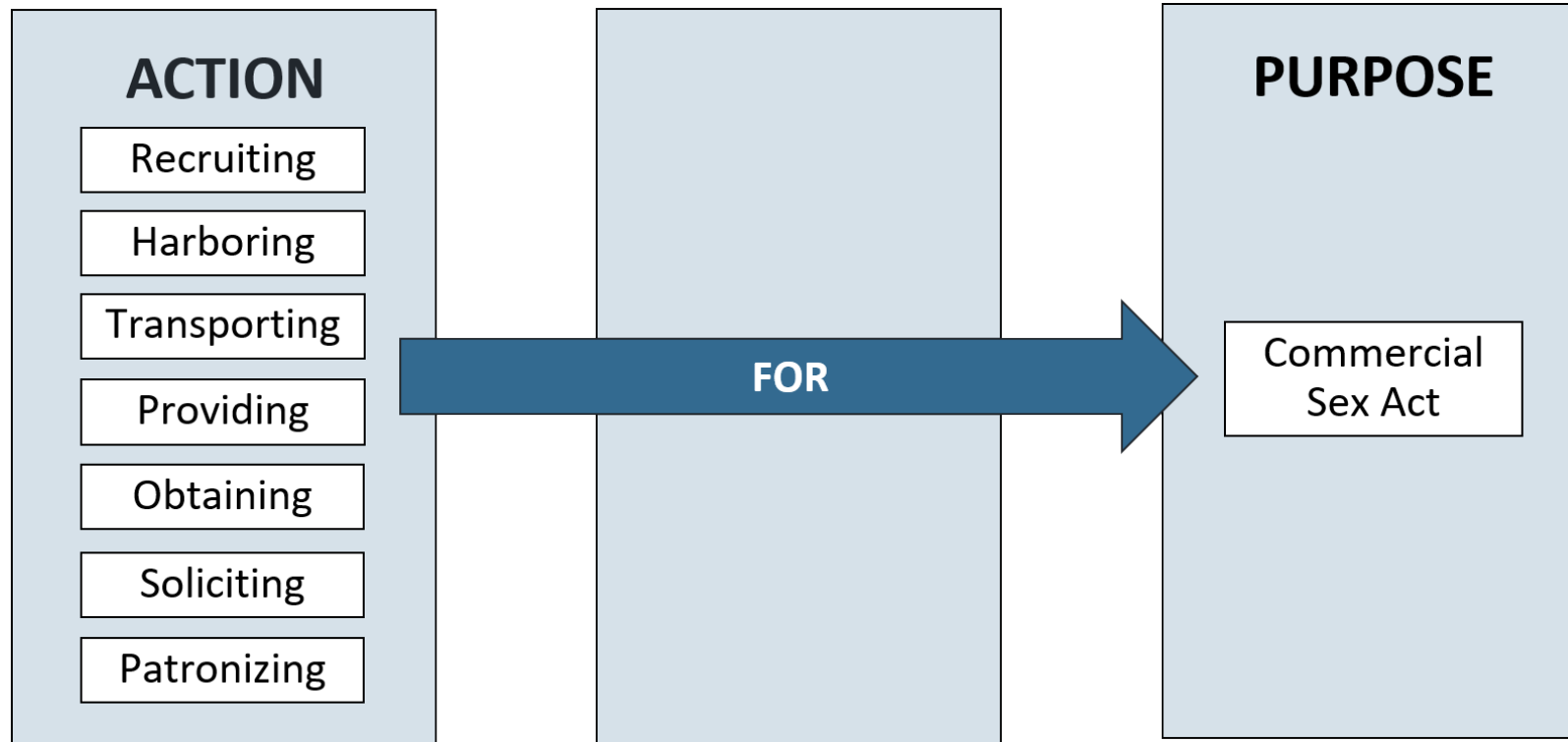
- Intimidation and control
- Sexual assault
- Use or threatened use of law
- Physical beatings

## Labor Trafficking



# Sex Trafficking of Minors

The recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, soliciting, or patronizing of a child for the purpose of engaging in a commercial sex act.



22 USC. § 7102 (12)



# Sex Trafficking of Minors

The “**something of value**” can include money, food, shelter, gifts, transportation, etc.

Offers of something of value for **videos or images of a minor** must include knowledge that the minor would be **depicted or made to engage in a sexual act** in the images or videos to be considered sex trafficking.

**Sexual Act** as defined in federal law, 18 U.S.C. § 2246.

Even if the sex act or exchange never occur, **solicitation for a commercial sex act alone may be considered sex trafficking of a minor.**



# Action: Labor & Sex Trafficking

- **Recruitment of a child**

Did the minor have a vulnerability that was used against them for the purpose of exploitation? Did the child fit a specific profile?

- **Harboring of a child**

Was the child taken away from others (family, friends) or isolated? Was the child confined to a specific location? Were the child's movements or communications monitored?

- **Transporting of a child**

Was the child moved from one location to another for purpose of forced labor or commercial sex? Were travel arrangements provided to the child?

- **Provision of a child**

Was the child given to another individual? Was the child given to a third-party employer?

- **Obtaining of a child**

Was the child forcibly taken by an individual? Was the child grabbed for the purpose of forced labor or commercial sex?

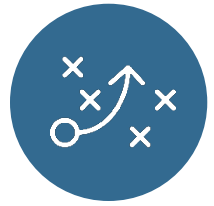
- **Soliciting of a child\***

Was the child offered or promised money or something of value in exchange for a sex act?

- **Patronizing of a child\***

Was any person offered or given money or something of value in relation to the child engaging in a sex act?

*\*Soliciting and patronizing are only for cases of sex trafficking.*



# Means: Labor Trafficking

- **Force**  
Physical. Sexual assaults, beatings, physical confinement, isolation.
- **Coercion**  
Psychological. Threats of serious harm or psychological manipulation, climate of fear, threatening the life and safety of a person or their family and friends, withholding legal documents, increasing or compounding debt that is impossible to pay off, witnessing harm to others, abuse or threatened abuse of the legal system.
- **Fraud**  
Deception. False promises about work and living conditions, use of fraudulent travel documents, fraudulent employment offers, withholding wages, changes in agreement or nature of relationship.

*Children induced into commercial sex are victims of trafficking regardless of force, fraud, or coercion.*



# Purpose: Labor & Sex Trafficking

- **Involuntary Servitude**

*Forced labor.* Any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process. This can also include “involuntary sexual servitude”.

- **Debt Bondage**

*Labor associated with a debt that increases or never decreases.* The status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.

- **Peonage**

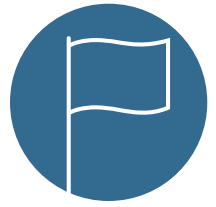
*Labor with threat of harm that is connected to a debt.* A status or condition of involuntary servitude based on real or alleged indebtedness.

- **Slavery**

*Owned for the purpose of performing labor or services.* The child was forced to perform labor or services with no pay or exchange of any goods and full purpose of day-to-day life becomes for the purpose of the labor or service. This can also include “sexual slavery”.

- **Commercial Sex Act**

*Sexual act in exchange for something of value.* Any sex act on account of anything of value given to or received by any person.



# Potential Red Flags



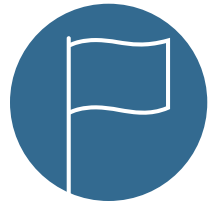
Physical



Behavioral



Environmental



# Potential Red Flags

- Living with multiple individuals, many of whom are not family
- Living with a sponsor, caregiver, or individual who serves as an employer or offers the minor's services to an employer
- Traveling to work alone or with other adults who are not immediate family members
- Having fraudulent documents or not having possession of their documents
- Isolation from outside support
- Unable to enroll in or attend school regularly
- Concern about repaying a debt for their family
- Worry that their family needs money
- Unable to communicate or interact with others without a sponsor or caregiver present
- Accompaniment by a caregiver who hovers at and answers all questions; or if minor is not allowed to attend appointments or speak to a case manager alone
- Frequent moves





# Intersections and Risk Factors

- Children and youth who are missing or have run away from foster care have a greater likelihood of experiencing adverse outcomes.
- Research supports an association between running away from home and increased vulnerability for experiencing sexual exploitation and human trafficking.
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) estimates that 19 percent of children and youth who ran away from foster care likely experienced sex trafficking.

Exploitation

Sexual abuse

Physical abuse/neglect

Emotional abuse/neglect

Deprivation of necessities

Medical neglect

Educational neglect/truancy

Separation of family/community

Rejection by family

Community violence/gangs

Involvement in the justice system (juvenile, adult)

Administration for Children and Families. (2022, December). *Responding to Human Trafficking among Children and Youth in Foster Care and Missing from Foster Care*. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/policy-guidance/responding-human-trafficking-among-children-and-youth-foster-care-and-missing>



# Screening and Assessment

*Utilizing a Trauma Informed Approach*



# Trauma Informed Approach



SAFETY



TRUSTWORTHINESS  
AND TRANSPARENCY



PEER  
SUPPORT



COLLABORATION AND  
MUTUALITY



EMPOWERMENT,  
VOICE, AND CHOICE



CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND  
GENDER CONSIDERATIONS



# Inquiring about Human Trafficking

- Interview minor in a private space.
- Review confidentiality, mandated reporting, and informed consent.
- Seek to understand and provide support.
- Ask open-ended questions (TED), rather than detailed questions about the trafficking experience.
- Refer children with potential indicators to authorities and community resources.
- Remember, disclosure is not the goal.





# Using the TED Approach

## **T: Tell Me About**

Tell me about your journey to the United States.

## **E: Explain**

You mentioned your guide was mean to you. Explain to me how he was mean to you.

## **D: Describe**

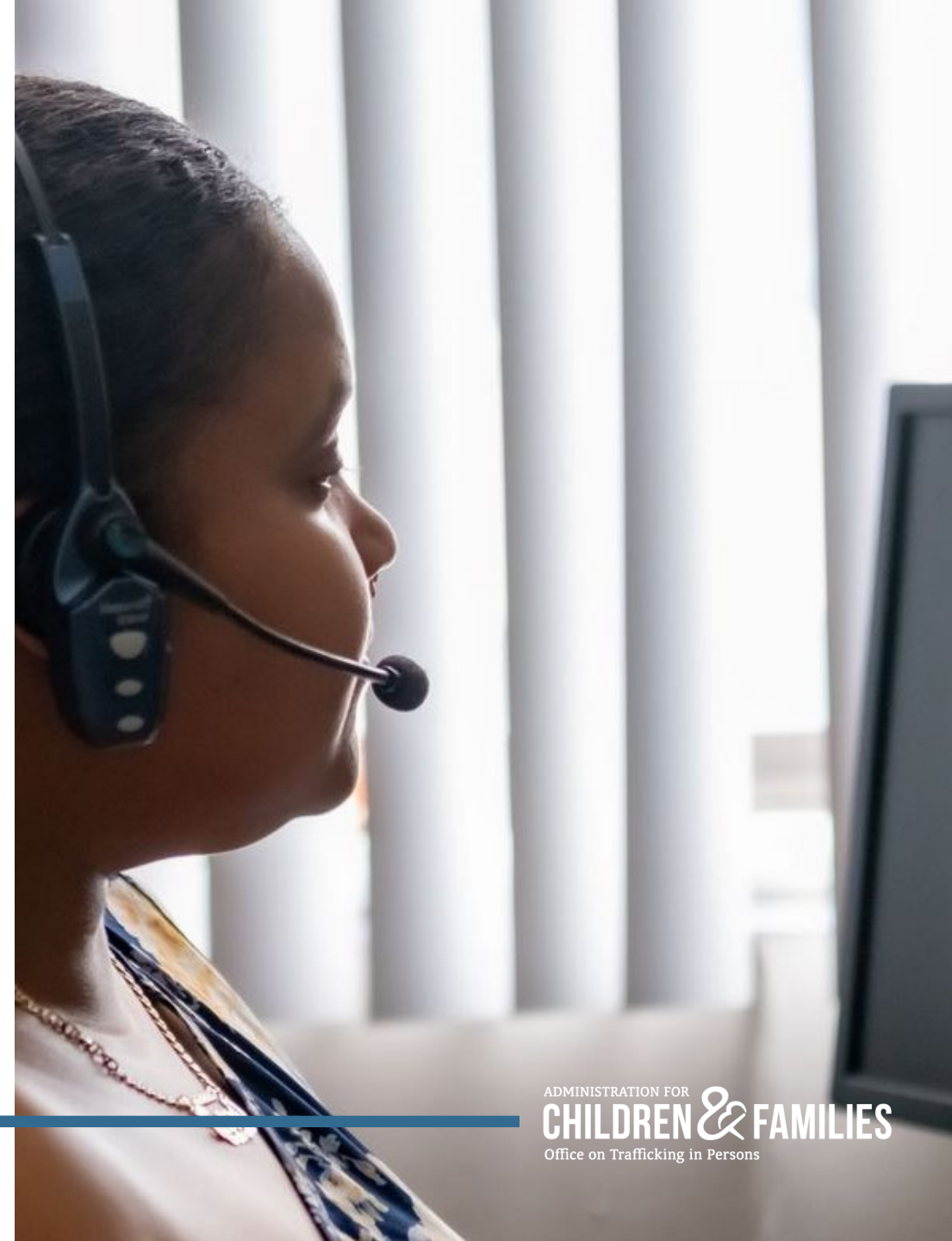
Describe what happened next after your guide told you that you had to work.



# Language Access

Always have interpreters available for individuals who speak another language:

1. Ensure that the interpreter is a trained professional, **not** a friend or family member
2. If in-person interpretation is not available, a **language line** may be used
3. Ensure that the interpreter is aware of the reason for the interpretation and has been trained in **trauma-informed** interpretation





# Screening Tools for Trafficking Identification

Administration for Children and Families. (2020, September). *National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States: Best practices and recommendations for states*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/nac\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/nac_report_2020.pdf)

Tool Identifier	In-Depth	Short/Rapid	Demographic	Environment	Available Online
Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT)		X	Ages 10 and older; sex trafficking only	Multiple settings, including child welfare and juvenile justice systems, schools, homeless youth shelters, and healthcare and mental health settings	X
Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure (HTIAM-14)		X	Youth who are homeless; sex and labor trafficking	Service provider setting	X
Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST/HTST-Short-Form)	X	X	Between ages 18 and 24; sex trafficking only	Runaway and homeless youth system settings	X
Quick Youth Indicators for Trafficking (QYIT)		X	Youth who are homeless; sex and labor trafficking	Service provider setting	X
Rapid Appraisal for Trafficking (RAFT)		X	Ages 18 and older; sex and labor trafficking	Healthcare setting	X
Short Screen for Child Sex Trafficking (SSCST)		X	Between ages 12 and 18; sex trafficking only	Healthcare setting	X
Vera Institute's Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT)	X	X	Ages 13 and older; sex and labor trafficking	Not specified	X

“

Samuel, a 14-year-old boy, is reported missing from foster care. Samuel returns several weeks later and doesn't want to talk about where he's been. Samuel starts acting withdrawn and isolates himself from other children. He has occasional outbursts and has recently gotten into trouble for throwing a chair at another youth.





# Reporting and Response

*Utilizing a Multidisciplinary Approach, Safety Planning, and Prevention Efforts*



# Supporting a Child Experiencing Trafficking

You can support children and youth in various ways as it relates to human trafficking– both through prevention and protection efforts:

## Ways to support:

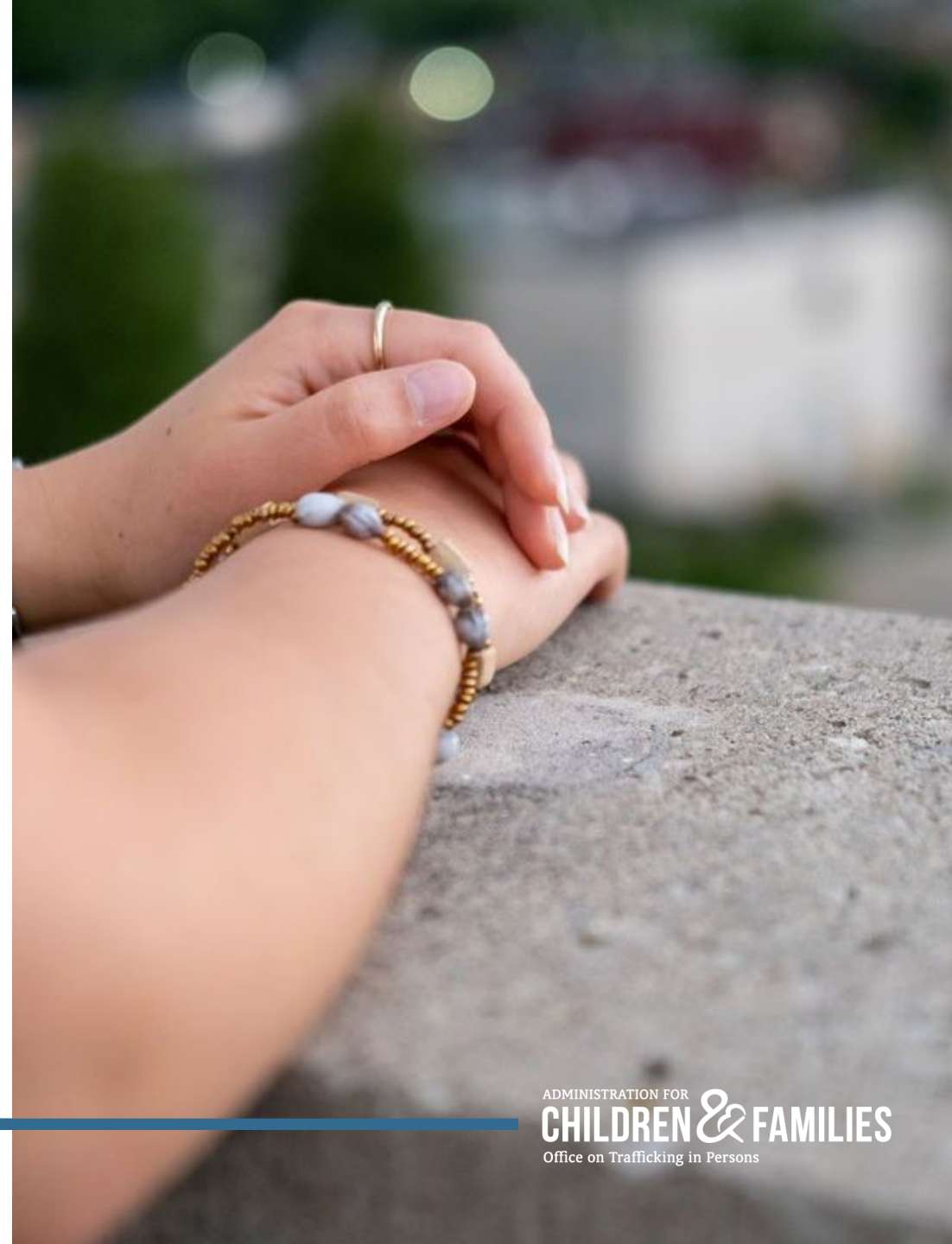
- Safety plan
- Report trafficking concerns accordingly (child welfare, OTIP, NHTH, etc.)
- Coordinate with entities across various sectors
- Ensure provision of culturally and linguistically responsive services that are tailored to the unique needs of each child or youth





# Safety Planning

- Safety planning is an ongoing process.
- Safety planning must be in collaboration with the youth.
- The youth should clearly understand the plan.
- Use consideration when involving law enforcement and other entities.





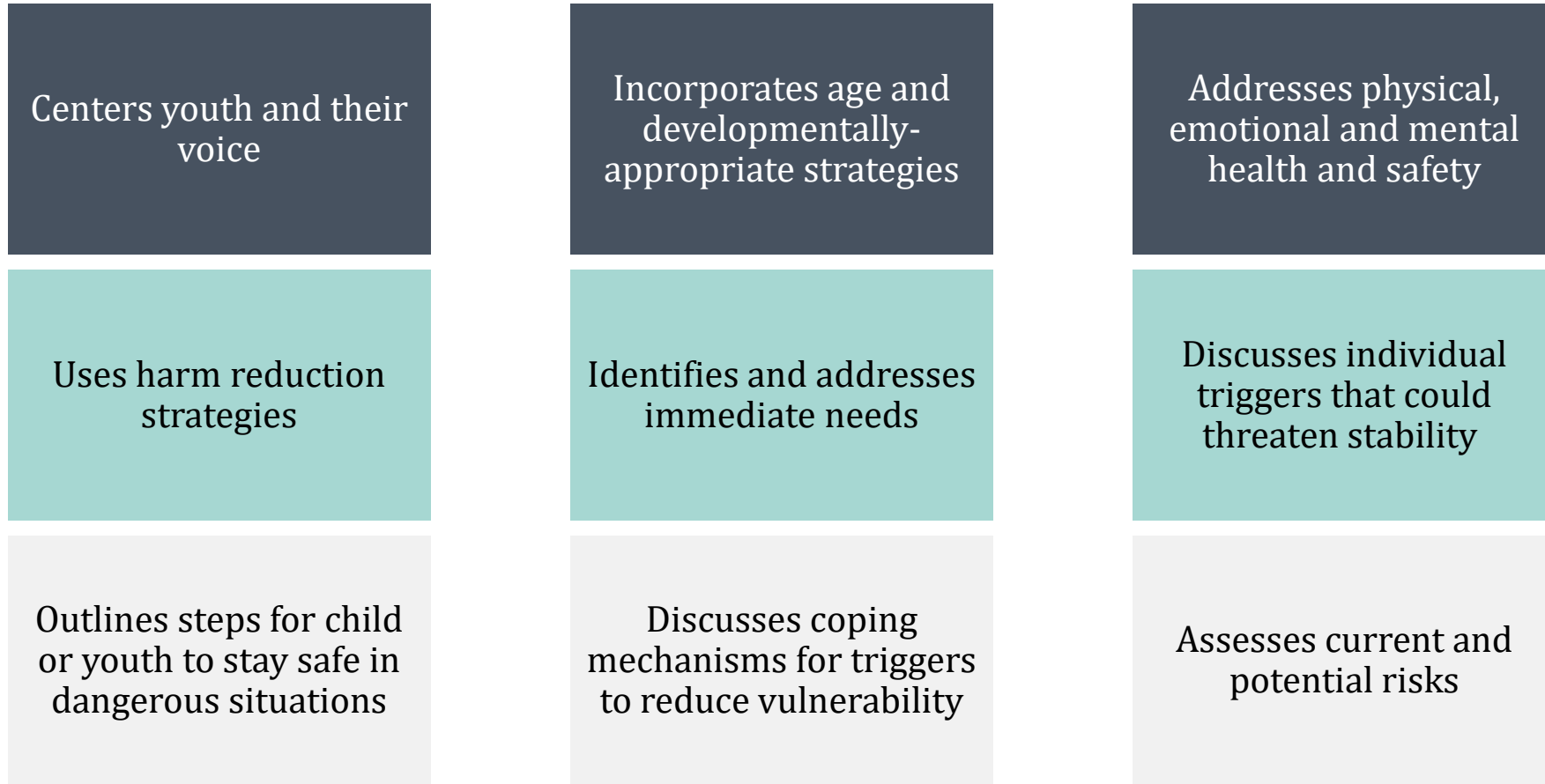
# Assess for Risk and Plan for Safety

- Interview minor in a private space.
- Inform minor about confidentiality, mandated reporting, and informed consent.
- Ask minor about their sense of safety (physical, mental, emotional).
- If there are placement concerns or concerns of abuse and neglect, coordinate with child protective services, the National Human Trafficking Hotline, and/or other community resources as appropriate.

**Remember:** The goal in having these conversations is not disclosure of a trafficking experience, but rather to learn how you can provide support and refer the minor to appropriate services.



# Developing a Safety Plan





# Additional Safety Considerations

Individual	Organizational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Children and youth who have experienced trauma view safety and security through their experience</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Integrate harm reduction strategies</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Their definition of safety may differ from yours</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consider service accessibility (i.e., if the child is unable to contact you, how can you keep them safe?)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The individual has the agency to decide if and when law enforcement is involved</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Vet all persons/agencies that may work with the child and their family</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cell phones and other social media are often a safety net for the individual</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mitigate secondary and vicarious trauma</li></ul>



# Reporting Requirements

## Foreign National Minors

Federal, state, and local officials with information about foreign national minors who may have experienced human trafficking must refer all cases of potential trafficking among foreign national minors to OTIP for assessment within 24 hours. *(Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as amended)*

## Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is included in the definition of child abuse. Therefore, mandated reporters are now required to follow their state and local child welfare reporting requirements and report trafficking accordingly. *(Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015)*

## Children Missing from Care

Child welfare agencies must create protocols to determine a child's experiences while missing from care, including screening to determine if they experienced sex trafficking. *(Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014)*



# Multidisciplinary Coordination







# Culturally Responsive Services

- Respect beliefs and practices, sexual orientations, disability status, age, gender identity, cultural preferences, and linguistic needs
- Provide culturally appropriate and immediately available services
- Services are specific, client-focused, and driven by the individuals impacted by the abuse, assault, or exploitation





# Support for Youth who are Missing or Experiencing Homelessness

Youth who are missing or experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience trafficking. Discrimination, oppression, and societal marginalization can increase the risk of youth homelessness.

## Remember:

- Use person-centered language to avoid stigma and decrease harm.
- Communicate with youth about why they ran away.
- Communicate with youth about their needs.





Adam, a 16-year-old boy, is identified for having missed almost a third of the school year. Adam reports that he was kicked out of his family's home because he identifies as bisexual and has been living with an adult "friend." Adam ultimately shares that this "friend" offered him housing in exchange for a relationship, and that he's been engaging in sex acts in order to remain in the home.



# Considerations when Working with Foreign National Minors


- Culturally and linguistically appropriate services are paramount to providing trauma-informed and effective services.
- The TVPA of 2000 requires federal, state, and local officials to notify HHS no later than 24 hours after discovering that a foreign national minor may be experiencing trafficking (22 U.S.C. §7105(b)).
- Understanding the OTIP child eligibility process and other available supports can enhance one's ability to effectively advocate for and serve foreign national minors.





# Child Eligibility

- **Reporting and requesting assistance:** The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, as amended requires all federal, state, and local officials to report potential trafficking concerns on behalf of foreign national minors (including unaccompanied children) to HHS within 24 hours (22 U.S.C. 7105(b)).
- **Benefits letter:** Upon receipt of credible information that a foreign national minor experienced human trafficking, OTIP issues an Eligibility Letter to the child, making them eligible to apply for benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee.

 ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office on Trafficking in Persons | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201  
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/otip

IHHS Tracking Number:  
DOB:

Irving, TX 75062

**ELIGIBILITY LETTER**


Dear

We have determined that you were subjected to a severe form of trafficking in persons. In accordance with 22 U.S.C. § 7105(b)(1)(G), this Eligibility Letter confirms that you are eligible to apply for benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee. This letter does not confer immigration status.

You can start applying for benefits and services on May 24, 2022.

If you wish to apply for benefits and services, it is important that you seek assistance as soon as possible because some of the benefits are time-limited and may expire. When you access benefits, bring the original copy of this letter to the benefit-issuing agency.

See the attached packet for further information on accessing benefits and services, descriptions of the benefits and services you are eligible for, and information about the comprehensive case management services that are available to support you in this process. The National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to connect you with available services in your area.

Sincerely,  
  
Katherine Chon  
Director  
Office on Trafficking in Persons

This letter serves as official notice from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that the individual listed in this letter is eligible and in need of a non-work Social Security Number (SSN Card), as HHS determined that this individual is a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons (VSFT) under 22 U.S.C. § 7105(b)(1)(G). Reference the SSN PIN: R01 1021 0750 to confirm that an IHHS Eligibility or Inactive American's Letter is sufficient to establish the identity and age of a foreign national minor VSFT applying for a non-work SSN.

Benefit-issuing agencies: To instantly verify this letter online, visit [this URL](#) and select Verify an IHHS letter.

Questions? Call IHHS at 1-866-401-5519 during regular business hours.



Anita, a 17-year-old girl who recently arrived in the U.S. from El Salvador, says that her stepfather makes her work for his landscaping business, often for 10 to 12 hours daily. She indicates she often has to miss school and is forced to work even after hurting her back. Anita reports that she fears her stepfather and feels pressure to repay a debt.



# Prevention through Strengthening Protective Factors

As you work with children and youth, consider these protective factors that may prevent trafficking (or re-trafficking):



**Positive Relationships**



**Connection to Culture**



**Hobbies**



**Safety and Stability**



**Education**



**Comprehensive Resources**



# Resources

*Resources to Support Efforts to Respond to Trafficking Concerns among Children and Youth*





# Coordination with Resources in your Area

## **Coordinate with local, state, and national anti-trafficking entities:**

- HHS Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP)
- National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH)
- National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC)
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
- Task forces and coalitions
- Multidisciplinary teams
- Anti-trafficking organizations

## **Seek national and state data about your area's cases of trafficking.**

- Identify industries in your area where individuals have increased risk factors for trafficking or are currently experiencing trafficking.
- Identify populations with increased risk factors in your area and the current impact of trafficking.
- Identify trends in your area that may be creating vulnerabilities.



# Highlighted Resources

- [SOAR to Health and Wellness](#)
- [SOAR Online Training: Responding to Human Trafficking Through the Child Welfare System](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)
- [Microsite: Trafficking Prevention and Protection Resources for Working with Unaccompanied Children](#)
- [National Advisory Committee on the Trafficking of Children and Youth Report: Best Practices and Recommendations to States](#)
- [Look Beneath the Surface Public Awareness Materials](#)
- [Technology-Facilitated Trafficking Infographic](#)
- [Information Memo: Addressing Online Harassment and Abuse in Technology-Facilitated Human Trafficking](#)
- [Human Trafficking School Safety Protocol Toolkit](#)





# Information Memorandum

The purpose of the information memo from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), [Responding to Human Trafficking among Children and Youth in Foster Care and Missing from Foster Care Information Memorandum](#), is to provide supportive guidance related to federal statutory requirements regarding human trafficking among children and youth, as well as resources from ACF to support these efforts.

## Information Memo Topics

- Service Provision
- Screening and Reporting
- Training
- Data Collection
- Multidisciplinary Response

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
	1. Log No. ACF-IM-22-01	2. Issuance Date: 12/1/2022
	3. Originating Office: The Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF), the Children’s Bureau (CB), the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), and the Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP)	
	4. Key Words: Human Trafficking, Foster Care, Child Welfare, Missing,	

### INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Administration for Children and Families (ACF) grant recipients; organizations preventing and responding to human trafficking; and state, tribal, and territorial agencies administering and supervising the administration of title IV-E of the Social Security Act

**Subject:** Responding to Human Trafficking among Children and Youth in Foster Care and Missing from Foster Care

### Purpose

The purpose of this joint Information Memorandum (IM) from the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF); Children’s Bureau (CB); Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB); and the Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is to elevate resources available to assist states in meeting legal requirements intended to protect children and youth in the child welfare system, from negative outcomes associated with human trafficking. The IM provides an overview of federal statutes related to human trafficking among children and youth in the child welfare system and highlights resources to meet those requirements. Resources include guidance, best practices, recommendations, training, and technical assistance.

### Background

#### Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a public health issue that impacts individuals, families, and communities. Certain populations are disproportionately at risk including individuals who have experienced, or been exposed to, other forms of violence, such as child abuse and maltreatment, interpersonal violence and sexual assault, community violence, and gang violence. Individuals disconnected from stable support networks (youth who have left home due to family conflict or other crises, youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability, children and youth in foster care, unaccompanied minors, people displaced during natural disasters, etc.) are also at greater risk. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), as amended (22 U.S.C. 7102), defines “severe forms of trafficking in persons” as follows:

- **Sex trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which



# OTIP Child Eligibility Resources

Training and Technical Assistance	<a href="#">Recorded Child Eligibility Webinar (45 minutes)</a>	This webinar provides an overview of the child eligibility process, including screening and identification, reporting, benefits and services, and case trends.
	<a href="#">Overview of Child Eligibility Process (3-minute video)</a>	This informational video provides a brief overview of the child eligibility process, including referring, benefits and services, and determination letters.
	<a href="#">Monthly Child Eligibility Webinar</a>	These webinars occur the first Wednesday of every month from 2:00 -4:00 p.m. ET on Zoom.
	<a href="#">SOAR Training Module: Working With Foreign National Minors Who Have Experienced Trafficking</a>	This is an advanced training designed for providers who work with children and youth under the age of 18 who are foreign nationals and who may have experienced human trafficking before, during, or after their journey to the United States.
	<a href="#">Shepherd</a>	Shepherd provides a secure, streamlined way for individuals to request assistance for victims of human trafficking and check the status of their request.
	Case Staffings	To discuss a potential case of trafficking on behalf of a child, ORR UC staff and volunteers can contact the OTIP Child Protection Team at by phone at 202-205-4582 or by email at <a href="mailto:ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov">ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov</a> .
Prevention, Public Awareness, and Benefits	<a href="#">Safety Planning and Trauma-Informed Care Toolkits for Foreign National Minors</a>	These U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants' (USCRI) toolkits provide tools and tips to provide safety planning and trauma-informed case management services for foreign national children.
	<a href="#">Look Beneath the Surface Campaign</a>	Through the HHS Look Beneath the Surface campaign, OTIP works with grantees and partners to raise awareness of human trafficking and risk factors for human trafficking.
	<a href="#">Child Eligibility Benefits Handout</a>	This document explains how to use an Eligibility Letter or Interim Assistance Letter to apply for benefits and services. This handout is also available in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Chinese.

# Questions?

Contact:  202-205-5778  
202-401-9296

 Lauren.Devine@acf.hhs.gov  
Elizabeth.Mitaro@acf.hhs.gov

 [acf.hhs.gov/otip](https://acf.hhs.gov/otip)