

Stop Trafficking!

Awareness Advocacy Action

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter • May 2020 • Vol. 18 • No. 5

FOCUS: Most victims of human trafficking have contact with a health care provider sometime during the time they are being trafficked. Despite this, up until recently many health care providers failed to recognize or address the signs of trafficking. The focus of the May newsletter is to raise awareness of the health consequences of trafficking and how health professionals are becoming better equipped to identify and aid human trafficking victims.

Survivor's Reflection

"I have a GPS tracker in me," read the note scribbled by the 20-something woman in the emergency room. Upon x-ray the medical personnel found a small metallic object only a little bit larger than a grain of rice embedded in the right side of her hip. It was not a GPS tracker but a RFID chip which is used to tag cats and dogs. Someone had tagged her like an animal.



Adapted from Scared Man, Asiandelight, Shutterstock

Behavioral Indicators of Human Trafficking

Some trafficking victims may not present with physical signs of abuse but will exhibit behavioral concerns. Some examples are scripted answers/stories, minimizing abuse or injuries, overly fearful or nervous behavior, being unaware of location or date/time, being unwilling or hesitant to answer questions about the injury or illness, or symptoms related to depression or PTSD.

Behavior while in medical setting

Victims may leave against medical advice or refuse care due to a potential trafficker using threats or manipulation to pressure the victim to return to work quickly.

Health care staff, particularly those in reception areas, may notice that the patient is accompanied by someone exhibiting controlling behavior over the patient. For example, the accompanying person may try to monitor or speak for the patient, become aggressive or verbally abusive, may be in possession of the patient's ID or money, insist on filling out paperwork, or insist on being present during exams. They may also claim to be related to the patient despite not knowing critical details about their medical history or identity. At-risk patients may report high risk environmental factors such as living at work or in crowded living conditions or not have a fixed home address.

Some survivors remember feeling judged or discriminated against when they sought treatment while being trafficked. These experiences can discourage the survivor from seeking health care later in life.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Health Effects of Human Trafficking

The health effects of trafficking are extensive and are largely dependent on the particular situations experienced by individual victims.. The following summary should not be considered exhaustive.

1. Physical Injury

Trafficking victims may suffer from a range of physical injuries, including:

- ◆ Intentional and accidental burns
- ◆ Branding, tattoos, and other purposeful and permanent stigmata of “ownership”
- ◆ Blunt force trauma
- ◆ Firearm and knife wounds
- ◆ Strangulation injuries
- ◆ Fractures
- ◆ Dental and oral cavity injuries
- ◆ Traumatic brain injuries
- ◆ Neuropathies and other effects of torture
- ◆ Scarring, especially from unattended prior injuries
- ◆ Depending on the specific work setting and type of coercion, victims of labor trafficking may suffer from a variety of exposure, overuse, or misuse injuries, such as:
 - ◆ Chronic back pain from repeated strain or overuse
 - ◆ Vision and hearing impairment from lack of protective gear
 - ◆ Skin, nervous system, and respiratory ailments from exposure to industrial or agricultural chemicals
 - ◆ Effects of prolonged sun, heat, or cold exposure

2. Reproductive Health

In addition to physical injuries, sex-trafficking victims and sexually abused labor-trafficking victims can suffer from the physical and mental health effects of:

- ◆ Rape or gang rape
- ◆ Genital trauma
- ◆ Repeated unwanted pregnancy
- ◆ Forced abortion
- ◆ Complications from repeated or poorly performed abortions



- ◆ Sexually transmitted infections (e.g., chlamydia, gonorrhea, human papilloma virus, hepatitis B and C, and HIV)

Left untreated, trafficking victims are at risk for infertility, chronic pelvic pain, cervical cancer, liver failure, HIV-AIDS, and chronic disease states resulting from untreated sexually transmitted infections.

3. Developmental Health

Trafficked children and adolescents are at particular risk for physical, cognitive, and emotional developmental health consequences, including:

- ◆ Delayed physical and cognitive developmental milestones
- ◆ Stunting, vitamin deficiencies, and other consequences of chronic under-nutrition
- ◆ Impaired social skills
- ◆ Long-term effects of inadequate treatment of common childhood diseases

4. Comprehensive Health

In addition to the specific physical health problems listed, victimized individuals generally lack access to most forms of primary, preventive, anticipatory, and illness-focused medical care, including routine immunizations, vision and hearing screening, dental care, cancer screening, and diagnosis and treatment of common, episodic, or chronic illnesses. As a result, even

in the absence of acute traumatic injuries, patients may present for — or with — chronic or neglected health conditions such as:

- ◆ Malnutrition
- ◆ Dental caries



Senol Yaman, Young Girl Silhouette, Shutterstock

- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Abdominal complaints
- ◆ Chronic pain syndromes
- ◆ Substance abuse
- ◆ Infectious diseases usually prevented through routine immunization
- ◆ Other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, and hepatitis

5. Mental Health

Victims of trafficking live in constant fear, experience psychological manipulation, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and may experience a range of mental health problems.

Trafficking victims characteristically describe feelings of intense stigma, shame, anxiety, and hopelessness. Victims of human trafficking can suffer from pathologic fear, panic attacks, sleep disturbances, dissociative disorders, depression, and suicidal ideation. The effects of the cumulative trauma experienced by trafficking victims extend far beyond the time under their traffickers' control by disrupting coping mechanisms, undermining self-confidence, and inhibiting the ability to form healthy and trusting relationships with others. Some survivors exhibit complex trauma-like behavior that has features similar to those seen in torture survivors.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Barriers to Disclosure by Victim

Victims may be reluctant to disclose to health care providers that they are trafficked due to:

- ◆ Fear of harm to themselves, coworkers, friends, or family members
- ◆ Fear of being released back to the trafficker
- ◆ Fear of being sent back to a prior abusive environment
- ◆ Prior unsuccessful attempts to leave or escape
- ◆ Feeling overwhelmed or frightened
- ◆ Young age
- ◆ Stigma and shame
- ◆ Uncertainty regarding geographic location
- ◆ Language barriers combined with lack of availability of a trusted professional interpreter
- ◆ Physical or mental illness or disability
- ◆ Cultural or religious prohibitions against speaking up
- ◆ Sexual orientation or lifestyle
- ◆ Inability to speak privately with the health care provider
- ◆ Unfamiliarity with the health care system
- ◆ Distrust of authority figures including those in health care
- ◆ Prior negative experiences following attempts at disclosure or help-seeking
- ◆ Lack of money to pay for medical care
- ◆ Lack of safe options post disclosure
- ◆ Fear of deportation
- ◆ Prior criminal record

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Red Flags That Patient May be Victim of Human Trafficking

The following may indicate that a patient may be a victim of human trafficking. The goal of the interaction of the health care provider with the victim is not disclosure or rescue, but rather to create a safe environment that will help identify trafficking indicators and assist the patient. This list is not exhaustive.

- ◆ There is a discrepancy in stated history and clinical presentation;
- ◆ The patient gives a scripted or mechanically recited history;
- ◆ The patient is accompanied by an individual who controls the encounter. This person may insist on holding on to the patient's passport or other legal documents, may insist on interpreting for the patient, etc.;
- ◆ The patient appears fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, hyper-vigilant, tense, nervous or paranoid;
- ◆ The patient is concerned about arrest or imprisonment, concerned about the safety of family;
- ◆ The patient displays with evidence of a lack of care for prior or existing medical conditions;
- ◆ The patient has tattoos or insignias indicating ownership;
- ◆ The patient displays occupational-type injuries/ physical ailments linked to a work situation;
- ◆ The patient displays with sexually transmitted infections, signs of multiple and frequent pregnancies or terminations that may have been forced;
- ◆ The patient has material possessions beyond what is apparently affordable;
- ◆ School truancy; frequent running away.

Not all victims of trafficking will feel comfortable acknowledging or speaking about their situation. Moreover, not all victims will be ready to seek assistance from service providers, law enforcement, or even health care providers. Health care providers do have a unique opportunity to provide potential trafficking victims with information and options. They can also support victims through the process of connecting with advocates or service providers if they are ready to report their situation.

Advocacy



Care of the Health Care Provider

Health care providers who care for patients who are traumatized may experience emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue, depression, anxiety, and psychosocial isolation. Health care providers need to understand their own trauma triggers in order to work effectively with patients who have experienced significant trauma.

Providers also need to exercise self-care practices that will support and nurture their own physical, mental and emotional well-being. Such practices may include meditation, self-reflection, debriefing, reflective writing, exercise-based methods of stress reduction (e.g., yoga), and peer check-ins. Attention to self-care will reduce the likelihood of occupational burnout and will allow clinicians as well as support staff to continue to work with highly traumatized patients in a creative, meaningful and compassionate manner. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Training of the Health Care Professional

While most victims of human trafficking interact with a health care professional, the ability to recognize the signs of trafficking and to intervene appropriately is often compromised by a lack of training on the part of the health care provider. Lack of knowledge on how to identify human trafficking, proper care and response, occur among all involved in health care including medical students, residents, physician assistants, attending physicians, nurses, and social workers.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched the Stop, Observe, Ask, and Respond (SOAR) initiative to the Health and Wellness Training program to provide human trafficking training to health care and other related professionals. The SOAR training equips professionals with skills to identify, treat, and respond appropriately to human trafficking. SOAR is for anyone interested in learning how to recognize and respond to human trafficking in health care or social service settings. Trainings are available for health care providers, social workers, public health professionals and behavioral health professionals. For more information on the SOAR training program, please click [here](#).

The University of Louisville School of Medicine created a simulation-based medical education (SBME) curriculum to prepare medical students to recognize and respond to victims of human trafficking. The Medical Student Instruction in Global Human Trafficking program employs online learning, medical documentation and standardized patient-based simulation. The goal of the simulation is not to force

intervention on the patient but rather to build trust. Additional alternatives are provided for other medical educators seeking to implement similar modules for their particular profession.

Amber R. Murray, DNP, MSN, MPH published data which recommended that baccalaureate nursing students be educated about human trafficking, using evidence-based active learning teaching strategies, to provide effective nursing care, promote human rights, and support social justice.

At present, it does not appear that human trafficking is included in nursing school curriculum but is presented through continuing education. Click [here](#) to learn more.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), the American Nurses Association (ANA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), and other medical, nursing, and social welfare organizations have encouraged their members to receive training in and increase their awareness of human trafficking.

Since those in healthcare and other helping professions will certainly encounter victims and survivors of human trafficking in the course of their careers, it is imperative that all graduates be educated about this issue while in school. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Human Trafficking Education for Nurses

"I remember the doctor looking at me, looking at my father, looking at me, and looking at my father and on the inside, I was just begging, please ask me some questions," said Christy Ivie. Today, through an organization called Christy's Cause, Christy works to eradicate child sex trafficking through awareness and education.

Lee Health established a human trafficking policy in 2016—recently, Lee Health partnered with Christy's Cause to teach nurses how to recognize and respond to signs of human trafficking. Teaching health experts what to look for and how to make a report can hopefully empower nurses to intervene if they see something wrong. Awareness can potentially rescue victims from human trafficking. Please view this short YouTube video by clicking [here](#).

Human Trafficking and HIPAA

Clydette Powell, Michelle Asbill, Samantha Brew and Hanni Stoklosa discuss human trafficking and HIPAA coverage in Human Trafficking and HIPAA: What the Health Care Professional Needs to Know, Journal of Human Trafficking



As health care professionals become more aware of the signs of human trafficking, they may find themselves in a unique position at the intersection of health and law. Some may be reluctant to become involved due to a lack of clarity about matters related to patient privacy as delineated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

A health care professional covered by HIPAA is allowed to release health information about a person suspected of being a victim of human trafficking with the patient's permission.

If the patient does not give permission, then the health care provider can provide information under specific exclusions or exemptions defined by HIPAA. These may include when human trafficking falls under child-abuse-mandated-reporting laws or when a state law specifically mandates disclosure for suspected trafficking of a minor.

The health care provider may also make a decision in "good faith" to report a suspected case of human trafficking if there is imminent danger to the patient or the staff.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

ICD Codes for Diagnosing Human Trafficking

The World Health Organization established the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in 1948 to standardize medical records. The ICD is a system used by physicians and other healthcare providers to classify and code all diagnoses, symptoms and procedures recorded in conjunction with hospital care. In June 2018, healthcare providers were presented with 29 human trafficking-related diagnosis codes that differentiate trafficking from other types of abuse. The codes address both confirmed and suspected adult and child sex/labor exploitation as well as maltreatment and neglect

The ICD system enables tracking the number of victims of human trafficking and helps provide appropriate treatment. More importantly, these codes represent a new method of data collection for the identification of victims. These data assist the healthcare system to better track victim needs and to inform public policy to develop an infrastructure of services and resources. Click [here](#) to learn more.

View a 4-minute video by the American Hospital Association on the ICD codes for medical personnel to diagnose human trafficking. Click [here](#) to view the video.

Resources for Protocol Development

Many healthcare systems are putting in place formal protocols and education on how to respond to when a human trafficking victim presents themselves. Examples of several training and response protocols include:

[HEAL Trafficking and Hope for Justice's Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Health Care Settings.](#)

This systems toolkit is designed to help professionals working in health care settings such as emergency departments, hospitals, clinics, private offices, or school-based health centers develop a protocol to respond to potential victims of human trafficking who present to their facility. The toolkit presents an ambitious, comprehensive approach to protocol development, portions of which may be adopted for particular contexts based on capacity. The document is based on existing guidelines and recommendations from experts in this field. To receive a copy of the Protocol Toolkit, please click [here](#).

Framework for a Human Trafficking Protocol in Healthcare Settings published by the Catholic Health Association, click [here](#).

Resources for Protocol Development (continued)

San Diego County Health Subcommittee – Best practices addressing human trafficking in healthcare settings

San Diego County Health Subcommittee Welcome Packet: best practices addressing human trafficking in healthcare settings including protocol development, screening and assessment, and education tools. Click [here](#) to find out more about this packet.

Dignity Health – Human Trafficking Response Program Shared Learnings Manual

The Dignity Health Human Trafficking Response (HTR) Program was developed to help ensure that trafficked persons are identified in healthcare settings and assisted with trauma-informed patient care and services. The purpose of this manual is to share updated HTR Program learnings

and materials with Dignity Health associates and others seeking to implement a similar program. Click [here](#).

Illinois: Cook County “Model Human Trafficking Protocol for Health Care Setting”

This protocol was developed by the Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force’s Healthcare Subcommittee. They can provide technical assistance and support to area hospitals and clinics to adapt this model protocol for your specific setting. The subcommittee also recommends training and education for all hospital staff on human trafficking and on the adapted protocol once it is ready to be implemented. Click [here](#).

Kansas: University of Kansas Hospital Emergency Department Protocol

The University of Kansas Hospital Protocol, “Care of Suspected Victim of Human Trafficking,” is sponsored by the Emergency Department. Click [here](#).

Trauma Informed Care

A.J. stated numerous times that she wanted to cooperate with law enforcement after being screened and identified as a victim of trafficking. However, when A.J. arrived for her interview with law enforcement, she was jumpy, angry, and only gave one-word answers to the male agent. The law enforcement agent assigned to interview A.J. felt that she was wasting his time.

Later in the day, her service provider brought the same questions to A.J. in a caring and nonjudgmental way and learned that the tall male agent reminded her of her trafficker. Using a trauma-informed lens, the provider asked the victim whether she would prefer a female agent. This small change affected the victim’s feelings of increased control and decreased vulnerability, which made a significant difference in the efficiency and effectiveness of interactions between the victim and task force members.

Victims of human trafficking have experienced trauma, some for many years. The impact of trauma is far reaching and affects every aspect of health. Health care providers then should assume that all patients who are victims or survivors of human trafficking have past trauma and adjust care accordingly.

It is important that all who collaborate in the care of human trafficking victims, health care professionals, law enforcement, those involved in the judicial system, etc., are educated in and understand trauma, and how trauma affects victims’ response to services and the criminal justice process.

Policies and procedures should be developed with the goal to reduce re-traumatization and promote recovery. A trauma-informed approach begins with understanding the physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma on the individual, as well as on the professionals who help them. This includes victim-centered practices and incorporates three elements:

1. Realizing the prevalence of trauma.
2. Recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce.

3. Responding by putting this knowledge into practice

Using a trauma-informed approach helps produce better case results for law enforcement. It leads to more effective interviews of victims and witnesses and helps structure the search for evidence to present a trauma-informed story in court.

While each victim's experience of trauma may be different, it is important to understand how it can tax the individual's coping resources and survival strategies. While trauma may be the result of a single event, the majority of trafficking situations are the culmination of many traumatic experiences.

Trauma affects how victims see themselves ("I am helpless," "worthless"), their worldview ("the world is dangerous, no one can protect me"), and relationships ("I cannot trust anyone"). These beliefs affect how victims respond to services and the criminal justice system and highlights the importance of taking a trauma-informed approach at all stages in the recovery process.

All sectors need to be trained in trauma-informed care. The bottom line to all interactions with a victim might look like this: "How can I create a situation in which the victim feels safe, makes his or her own choices, and feels understood?"

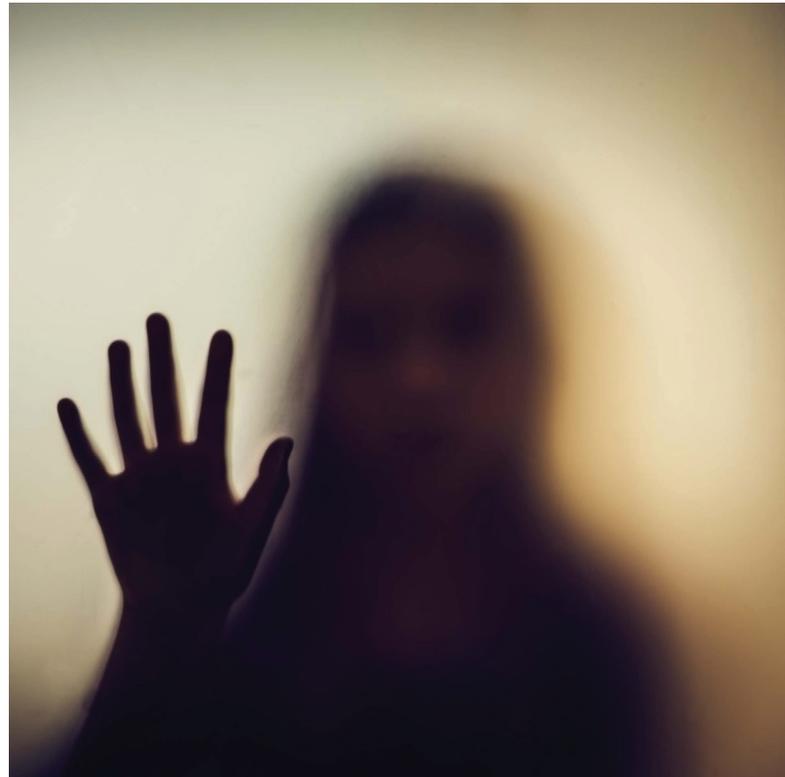
Triggering Re-traumatization

Both the criminal justice and victim services systems can inadvertently trigger re-traumatization. Key triggers to re-traumatization may include:

- ◆ Feeling a lack of control
- ◆ Experiencing unexpected change
- ◆ Feeling threatened or attacked
- ◆ Feeling vulnerable or frightened
- ◆ Feeling shame

It is helpful to consider the effect of trauma when a victim exhibits behavior that may seem unusual, inconsistent, or even aggressive.

Human Trafficking: A Trauma-Informed Health Care Response discusses the importance of using a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach when caring for a victim of any type of interpersonal abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation. This one-hour webinar presents strategies and discusses the importance of this approach when caring for victims and survivors of human trafficking. Click [here](#).



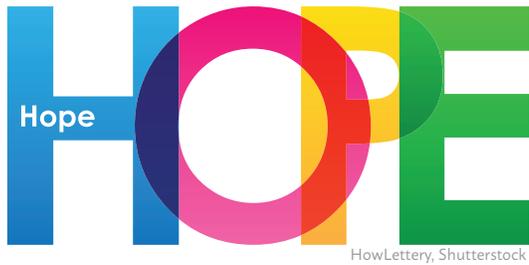
Silhouette of a Woman, Oleg Golovnev, Shutterstock

Empowering Human Trafficking Survivors Through Trauma-Informed Healthcare

Trafficked persons suffer from serious medical and mental health issues ranging from physical and sexual abuse, to malnutrition, to post-traumatic stress disorder. Dignity Health explains their model of trauma informed care with the collaboration of community partners at Medical Safe Haven in this 5 minute YouTube video. Click [here](#) to view the video.



Action



A Message of Hope

Please click [here](#) to see A Message of Hope, a 6-minute video of the sad story of how this woman from Kentucky was trafficked as a child. Despite being treated for a sexually transmitted disease as a child, doctors and Child Protective Services missed the signs of sexual exploitation.

Addressing Human Trafficking in the Healthcare Setting

This educational course for health providers includes vital information on victim identification and appropriate response. It is available on Catholic Health Initiatives' public website. This educational course for health providers has been developed by Catholic Health Initiatives in collaboration with Massachusetts General Hospital Human Trafficking Initiative. The course can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Webinars on Healthcare and Human Trafficking

Eleven online education modules for the healthcare professional on human trafficking produced by the Christian Medical & Dental Associations may be accessed by clicking [here](#). These modules are each about one hour long and cover basics of human trafficking, medical and behavioral consequences, identification and evaluation of victims in the healthcare setting, caring for victims in low resource settings and collaboration with outside services for the long term care of the victim. All eleven modules along with other resources focused on healthcare and human trafficking may be accessed by clicking [here](#).

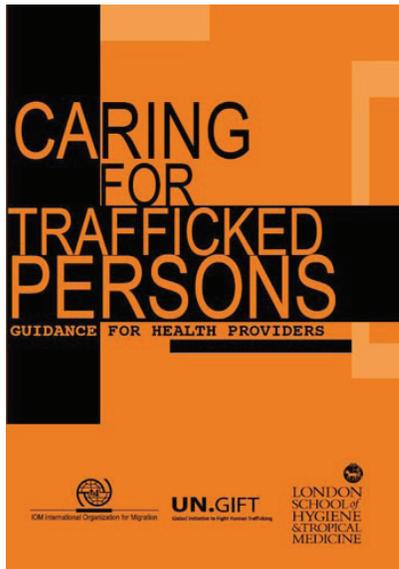
Creating a Human Trafficking Victim Medical Safe Haven in Resident Physician Education

Creating a Human Trafficking Victim Medical Safe Haven in Resident Physician Education: A Synergistic Dynamic of Care presents a solution for providing the long-term medical care essential for human trafficking victim and survivor recovery.

A logistical framework, best practices and training curriculum will be presented based on a highly successful medical safe haven incorporated into Dignity Health's family medicine residency clinic. The program presents a viable, low-utilization construct for providing widespread survivor-led, victim-centered, trauma-informed medical care to human trafficking victims and survivors while concurrently training the future physician workforce to recognize and appropriately treat this vulnerable patient population.

To view this one-hour video, please click [here](#).





Caring for Trafficked Persons

For many trafficked persons, the physical and psychological aftermath of a trafficking experience can be severe and enduring. Health providers may come into contact with victims of trafficking at different stages of the trafficking process and at different stages of their recovery. For health practitioners, diagnosing and treating trafficked persons can be exceptionally challenging. The informed and attentive health care provider can play an important role in assisting and treating individuals who may have suffered unspeakable and repeated abuse.

Caring for Trafficked Persons brings together the collective experience of a broad range of experts from international organizations, universities and civil society in addressing the consequences of human trafficking. Developed with the support of the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, and led by IOM and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, the handbook gives practical, non-clinical advice to help a concerned health provider understand the phenomenon of human trafficking, recognize some of the associated health problems and consider safe and appropriate approaches to providing healthcare for trafficked persons. This essential tool is available in additional languages.

Websites on Human Trafficking & Healthcare

Click below to visit these sites.

[Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking in a Healthcare Context](#)

[The Joint Commission
— Identifying Human Trafficking Victims](#)

[American Hospital Association — Identifying and Assisting Victims of Human Trafficking](#)

[SOAR to Health and Wellness Training](#)

[Catholic Health Association — Human Trafficking](#)

[Health, Education, Advocacy, Linkage
— Human Trafficking is a Public Health Issue](#)

[Physicians Against the Trafficking of Humans](#)

[Dignity Health: Human Trafficking Response Program Shared Learnings Manual](#)

The image is a graphic for the National Human Trafficking Hotline. It features a dark blue background with white and light blue text and icons. On the left, it says "NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE". To the right, there are three contact options: "CALL 1-888-373-7888" with a phone icon, "TEXT 'BeFree' (233733)" with a text message icon, and "LIVE CHAT humantraffickinghotline.org" with a laptop icon. Below these options, it says "24/7 • Toll free Confidential 200+ languages". At the bottom, there is a light blue bar with the text "GET HELP • REPORT TRAFFICKING".



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