

# Stop Trafficking!

## Awareness Advocacy Action

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter • June 2021 • Vol. 19 • No. 6

*FOCUS: This month's newsletter focuses on those often unrecognized victims of human trafficking: persons with disabilities.*

*Years ago, people believed that human trafficking was something that occurred in other countries. We now know that trafficking can and does occur everywhere and anyone can be a victim. Even with this increased awareness, people generally remain largely unaware of a population affected by trafficking at an alarming rate: people with disabilities. Trafficking of persons with disabilities occurs in the United States and globally. The 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report cited trafficking of persons with disabilities in over 40 country narratives.*

*As in all human trafficking cases, traffickers use force, fraud, and/or coercion to exploit adults for commercial sex and/or for forced labor or hold victims under 18 years for commercial sex or labor. Victims with disabilities may be trafficked into sex or labor; however, many cases include one additional factor, the theft of Social Security and disability benefits.*

## Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

In a presentation sponsored by the New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking, Jessica Oppenheim, Esq., of the Criminal Justice Advocacy Program from the ARC of New Jersey, presented on human trafficking in people with disabilities, including general background information.

Persons with disabilities represent the single largest minority group both globally and in the United States. Around 10 percent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability. Eighty percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), while the World Bank estimates that 20 percent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their communities as the most disadvantaged.

Victims of human trafficking may develop disabilities from abuse at the hands of their traffickers, while individuals with disabilities may be targeted by traffickers because they are vulnerable. Many human trafficking task forces miss identifying this risk factor or fail to make provisions for people with disabilities.

Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse. In one area in India, it was found that virtually all the women and girls with disabilities were beaten at home, 25 percent had been raped, and some had been forcibly sterilized. According to UNICEF, 30 percent of homeless youth living on the streets have some disability.

A disability may be cognitive, physical, sensory, or related to mental health. Disabilities may also be intellectual, characterized by a limitation in general mental capacity and adaptive behavior, related to IQ or autism spectrum disorders, and a host of syndromes such as fetal alcohol syndrome and Down Syndrome. Developmental disabilities may be difficult to diagnose and are often misdiagnosed. All may lead to substantial functional limitations of activities of daily living. Many persons with disabilities can be very adept at hiding their disability.

Many people with disabilities may have less education and may be either under- or unemployed. Many rely on family or caregivers to help with the activities of daily living. This could lead to an unequal power dynamic and victims of abuse not reporting the abuse. Some victims may also lack understanding of physical and social barriers.

People with disabilities are three and a half times more likely to be victims of sexual assault and more likely to be the victims of a violent crime. Most victims know their perpetrators,



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# Awareness

while a quarter of victims of violent crime believed they were targeted because of their disability. Common forms of trafficking for people with disabilities include commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, debt bondage, forced begging or peddling, involuntary servitude, and servile marriage.

Barriers to injustice within the criminal justice system may include false stereotypes about what people with developmental disabilities may understand and do and lack of understanding on the part of professionals such as law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers about the ability of the victim to report and testify. The number of people with disabilities who are victims of human trafficking is not known. It is clear from crime statistics that this population has a higher rate of victimization. Click [here](#) to learn more.



*Authorities are looking for additional human trafficking victims of a man who held a teenage girl with autism in his house against her will and had men pay to have sex with her in his home. BB, 23, held the 16-year-old in December in his house for four days while he took illicit photos of her and posted them on a prostitution website, then had four men come to the house and pay to have sex with her. He then released the teenager, leaving her at a bus stop. Following his arrest, investigators found 15-20 additional victims after searching BB's social media accounts and electronic devices. Click [here](#) to learn more.*

## Traffickers who exploit people with disabilities seem to think that this added vulnerability will be an advantage.

Unfortunately, this is true. There are several factors that may make a person with a disability vulnerable to becoming a victim of human trafficking.

The Human Trafficking Taskforce of the Office for Victims of Crime outline factors that make people with disabilities more vulnerable to trafficking.

People with disabilities often rely on others to meet their basic needs. This may lead them to trust others even when they are being taken advantage of. They might become submissive to caregivers and comply with their wishes. Sometimes their level of care requires close, intimate physical contact, and they might become desensitized to touch or unaware of boundaries. Even if the caregiver themselves is not the trafficker, people with disabilities may have a learned response to comply with caregivers' wishes due to their dependence on them. Therefore, they may have normalized an unequal power dynamic in their relationships, which could carry over into their relationship with a trafficker or abuser. They may be unsure about whether they have the right to object to and report unwanted touch, sexual abuse, and sexual acts. They also could lack information about and understanding of what constitutes a crime and what their rights are as victims of crimes.

Traffickers may also target people with disabilities and use their medications as a means of control. Traffickers may require these victims to sell sex or work before receiving their required medications.

People with disabilities may lead isolated lives. They crave friendship and human connection which may persuade them to perform sexual acts if they are promised friendship as a reward. Isolation can also make it difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to contact people who could help them.

There may be challenges with communication. Some individuals with disabilities may require assistive technologies or additional supports with communication and/or speech. This may affect their ability to get help and report the abuse they are suffering and could require them to depend on their trafficker for interpretation. For these victims, suffering in silence takes on a very literal meaning. Task forces and those in the criminal justice system should have access to sign language interpreters, plain language specialists, and assistive communication devices. They should also remove physical barriers to and within their offices.

For those trafficked for labor, unfamiliarity with labor laws and regulations, no knowledge of how to get help, lack of resources or community context, no identification papers, lack of social support and compliance due to power in balance all contribute to placing those with disabilities at risk.

Traffickers may seek out victims with disabilities to gain access to their public benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits.

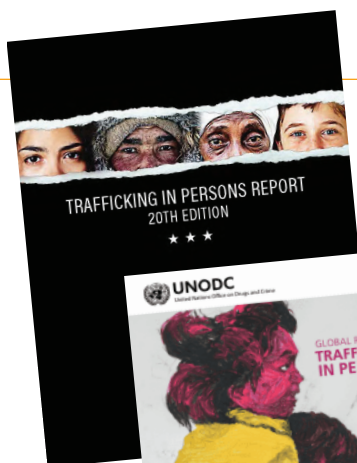
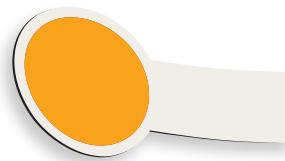
Traffickers may also target individuals with disabilities because of the social discrimination and prejudice they face. This can cause authorities and even their own family and friends to not believe victims when they report their abuse. This is especially true for victims with disabilities that affect intellectual, cognitive or communication functions or those individuals with mental health diagnoses. Law enforcement may be reluctant to believe individuals with certain disabilities and less likely to investigate or prosecute an allegation. Persons with limited communication abilities may be unable to report being victimized.

Of all the ways we may help people with disabilities, this is one issue where we can take action. We must listen when a person with a disability says he or she is being abused or exploited. Traffickers and all who abuse persons with disabilities should be handed stiffer penalties.

The U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports indicate some additional reasons people with disabilities are especially vulnerable to trafficking. For example, the 2016 TIP report states:

“Lack of training for police, prosecutors, and judges on how to accommodate persons with disabilities can leave victims with disabilities unable to report their abuse or effectively participate in the criminal justice process. Lack of accessible information about judicial procedures and rights may also preclude them from approaching law enforcement to report abuse; those who do may encounter social biases against the credibility of their statements. Diminished access to the justice system and limited avenues of recourse to address abuse can empower traffickers to target persons with disabilities with a sense of impunity.” Click [here](#) to learn more.

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*“An adult with a developmental disability was recruited from a recreational and vocational training center. The trafficker posed as a boyfriend and made the victim believe that counselors, family, and friends did not want her to be an independent adult. He used her fear of being treated as a child against her, which caused her to be isolated from those looking after her interests. He then convinced her to engage in commercial sex out of their home.” (National Human Trafficking Hotline)*

## Human Trafficking of Persons with Disabilities Globally

The 2020 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons reports that 3 percent of victims of human trafficking had some type of physical disability. Click [here](#) to learn more.

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Meanwhile, the 2020 Trafficking in Persons report published by the United States Department of State included the trafficking of persons with disabilities in the narratives of 44 countries. Several examples are included below. Click [here](#) to read the complete report.

## Burundi

In Burundi some families are complicit in the exploitation of children and adults with disabilities, accepting payment from traffickers who run forced street begging operations.

## China

In China, traffickers target adults and children with developmental disabilities and children whose parents have left them with relatives to migrate to the cities. They are trafficked most commonly for forced labor and forced begging.

## Mexico

Observers in Mexico reported potential trafficking cases in substance abuse rehabilitation centers, women's shelters, and government institutions for people with disabilities, including by organized criminal groups and facility employees.

## Nicaragua

In Nicaragua children and persons with disabilities are subjected to forced begging, particularly in Managua and near tourist centers.

## Rwanda

An international organization reported 43 percent of children with disabilities in Rwanda did not attend school, increasing their vulnerability to be targeted by traffickers.

## Slovenia

Traffickers in Slovenia force Slovak men, women, and children of Romani descent and Slovaks with physical and mental disabilities to beg throughout Western Europe. Traffickers also exploit children without family or relevant support structures who leave institutional care facilities in sex and labor trafficking.

## Red Flags

Signs that a person with disabilities is being trafficked are the same as with any victim of human trafficking, including frequent emergency room admissions, isolation and signs of trauma and fear. Additionally, be aware of seeing someone who is the same representative for multiple unrelated people with disabilities.



## Reducing the Risks

Human trafficking is always an exploitation of vulnerability. What can be done to reduce the vulnerability of people with disabilities from becoming victims?

As with most people, educating those with disabilities about abuse may decrease their risk of being abused. There needs to be appropriate sexuality education for people with developmental disabilities. People should be made aware that they have a right to say "no," and when noncompliance with caregivers is appropriate. People should be trained on steps to take and processes to report abuse. People also should be aware of all available services and options for healing and recovery.

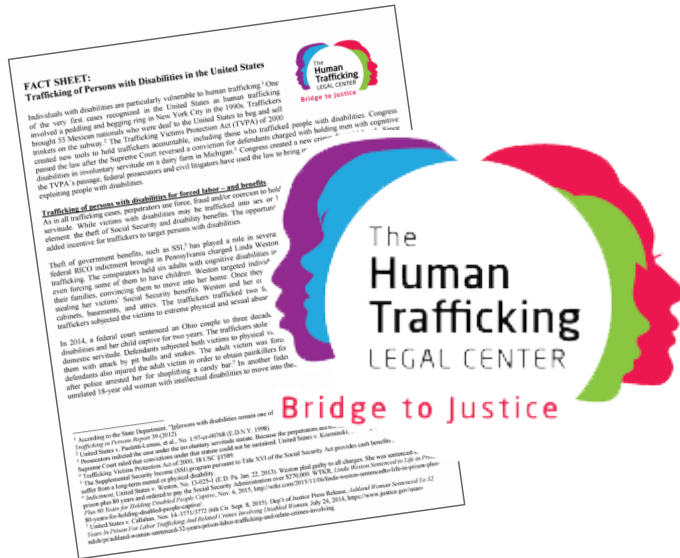
## Victims who are Deaf

Deaf people are one to five times more likely than hearing people to experience domestic and sexual violence. Despite being at greater risk, they face significant barriers to accessing victim services. Many mainstream hearing programs want to serve survivors who are deaf, but are often not aware of the unique experiences and cultural values of deaf survivors and are not prepared to provide sign language interpretation. Please go to the resources section of this newsletter to view the many resources available for working with survivors of trafficking who are deaf or deaf and blind.

## Human Trafficking Legal Center

Before the passing of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in October 2000, two high-profile cases involving victims with disabilities highlighted the existence of the trafficking problem in the United States.

In 1988, in the United States v. Kozminski, the Supreme Court ruled that purely psychological coercion, even in cases involving children, immigrants, or mentally disabled individuals, was insufficient to support an involuntary servitude conviction. The case originated on



Below is a summary of several cases since the TVPA was passed from the Human Trafficking Legal Center Trafficking of Persons with Disabilities Fact Sheet. Click [here](#) to learn more.

## The Weston Case

As in all human trafficking cases, traffickers use force, fraud, and/or coercion to hold victims under the age of 18 for commercial sex or exploit adults for commercial sex and/or for forced labor. Victims with disabilities may be trafficked into sex or labor, however, many cases include one additional factor, the opportunity to steal government benefits. The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program according to Title XVI of the Social Security Act provides cash benefits to individuals who suffer from a long-term mental or physical disability. One well-known case in Pennsylvania involved six adults with cognitive disabilities who were trafficked for forced labor and sexual servitude for years, even forcing some of them to have children.

In the *United States v. Linda Weston*, a federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) indictment charged Weston and four co-defendants with labor and sex trafficking. The RICO statute added human trafficking to the list of 27 federal crimes categorized as racketeering. Because sex trafficking is common among organized crime networks, this statute has allowed prosecutors to bring charges against anyone who participated in or facilitated trafficking. Anyone who can be linked in some way to the incidence of trafficking can be charged and have their assets seized.

Weston targeted individuals with disabilities who were estranged from their families, convincing them to move into her home. Once they did so, she became their “representative payee,” stealing her victims’ Social Security benefits. Weston and her co-conspirators kept the captives locked in closets, cabinets, basements, and attics. The victims were malnourished and sedated. The defendants would mix their food and drinks with sedatives to keep them under control. The traffickers trafficked two female victims into forced commercial sex. Two victims died in captivity.

Weston pled guilty to all charges. She was sentenced to life in prison plus 80 years and over \$270,000 restitution was awarded. However, restitution was to the Social Security Administration rather than the victims.

## The Callahan Case

In 2014, a federal court sentenced an Ashland, Ohio couple to 30 years in prison for holding a woman with cognitive disabilities and her child captive for two years. The traffickers stole the woman’s disability benefits and forced her into domestic servitude. Defendants subjected both victims to physical violence, restricted their food

a dairy farm in Chelsea, Michigan, that was owned and operated by Ike and Margarethe Kozminski and their son, John. For over ten years two men with apparent cognitive disabilities worked in deplorable conditions and involuntary servitude on the dairy farm. This case ultimately led to the TVPA, which was passed in response to the limited decision that was made.

In the late 1990s, the New York City Police Department uncovered an immigrant smuggling scheme involving at least 55 deaf-mute persons from Mexico who had been persuaded to come to the United States with promises of jobs. Upon arriving in the United States, they were forced into a life of peddling trinkets in the subways and streets of New York City for eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. If they failed to meet their \$600 per week quotas, they suffered from beatings and electrocution. Some were sexually assaulted. The individuals in this group were given false IDs and those with cognitive delays forgot their real names and addresses over the years. They had no idea of the laws or their rights or the existence of social services, etc. They had been promised good jobs, and they saw how their traffickers lived well so they thought they too would prosper. Some managed to escape during these 10 years but most of them had no documents or no idea where to go or no resources or common language. They saw little pay. However, investigators uncovered that their work was part of a much larger criminal organization that netted over a million dollars a year in profits to the traffickers.

Since the passage of the Trafficking in Persons Act, federal prosecutors and civil litigators have used the law to bring numerous cases against traffickers exploiting people with disabilities. However, most trafficking cases go unreported and although people with disabilities are victimized at a higher rate than the rest of the population, they are also less likely to report a crime.



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intake, and threatened them with an attack by pit bulls and snakes. The adult victim was forced to have sex with the male defendant. The defendants also injured the adult victim to obtain painkillers for the traffickers' use.

The adult victim (S.E.) escaped after police arrested her for shoplifting a candy bar from a convenience store. When she was arrested, the police officers went to the house where she had been living and she told the officer I am living with Geordie (Callahan) and Jessica (Hunt) and they are mean to me. The police recognized that the victim was cognitively impaired due to a car accident where she suffered a traumatic brain injury when she was 16 years old. Her cognitive ability was estimated to be between age 11 and 16 years. As a result of that, she was on several different government benefits programs, including Social Security and other disability benefits.

Callahan and Hunt recruited S.E. and her daughter, B.E. to live with them in their two-bedroom apartment in Ashland, knowing that S.E. suffered a traumatic brain injury that left her with a cognitive disability and that S.E. and B.E. received monthly public assistance payments.

Callahan and Hunt used a combination of violence, threats, sexual assaults, humiliation, deprivation, and monitoring to establish and continue a pattern of domination and control over their victims. Their tactics included beating S.E., causing the victims to sleep in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, restricting B.E. and S.E.'s access to the bathroom, preventing them from eating regular and suitable meals, and forcing S.E. to eat dog food and crawl on the floor while wearing a dog collar, according to the court documents and trial testimony. Callahan pointed a firearm at S.E.'s head and threatened to kill her if she did not perform the labor and services he and other conspirators commanded. Callahan also forced S.E. on multiple occasions to engage in sex acts with him and threatened that he and Hunt would kill S.E. if she told anyone about the forced sexual acts.

In August 2011, a co-trafficker smashed S.E.'s hand with a rock with such force that S.E. needed to go to the hospital emergency room. Callahan then forced S.E. to give him the narcotic pain pills and prescription for narcotic pain pills she obtained after being treated at the emergency room. S.E. was injured and taken to the hospital at least two other times, received narcotics, and forced to hand over the narcotics to the defendants when she returned home.

They often forced S.E. to walk to the store to buy groceries, cigarettes, dog food, and other items for them and to pay

for these purchases with her public assistance card. They allotted S.E. only a brief time to complete the shopping and warned her she was not allowed to speak with anyone while she was out. They frequently required B.E. to remain with them at the apartment while S.E. was out and threatened physical harm to B.E. and S.E. if S.E. broke any of their rules. The defendants also threatened to contact Ashland County Job and Family Services and have B.E. taken away if S.E. purchased any items when shopping other than those they ordered or if she told anyone about their unlawful conduct.

The defendants used a video camera to monitor S.E. and B.E.'s activities and conversations in the apartment. On multiple occasions, Callahan locked S.E. and B.E. in a room with a window that was nailed shut and a door that had been locked from the outside.

S.E. was forced to hit her child, B.E. while the defendants recorded it and they then threatened to inflict much greater physical harm on both S.E. and B.E. if S.E. did not comply. Callahan and Hunt repeatedly threatened to have B.E. taken away by showing the videos to authorities to secure S.E.'s compliance to the traffickers' commands.

Following a three-week trial, Hunt, who was 32 at the time, was sentenced to 32 years in prison while Callahan, 28, was sentenced to 30 years in prison. Two other co-traffickers, acquaintances of Hunt and Callahan, pleaded guilty to related crimes and are serving sentences in federal prison.

## United States v. Wallace

Many people with disabilities have a family member, guardian, or caregiver act as their "representative payee". In the *United States v. Wallace*, the defendants, Waquita Wallace and April Chaney are sisters who lived together in St. Louis. While visiting the victim's cousin, they observed the victim, an 18-year-old woman with mental disabilities. Wallace persuaded the victim to move in with them, by telling her that she would help her get her babies back and would take care of her.

When the victim arrived at Wallace and Chaney's house, Wallace told the victim that the victim's cousin owed Wallace money, that the cousin's debt was now the victim's debt, and that she would have to pay it back by giving up her monthly social security disability check.

Wallace threatened to hurt the victim, her mother, and grandmother if the victim did not comply. Wallace took the victim out at night to work as a prostitute on the streets and arranged for men to come to the house and



have sex with the victim. Wallace also ordered the victim to do housework and engaged in other abuse, including leaving the victim in the backyard without clothes on, burning her, beating her, threatening her with a knife, making her drink a cup of urine, and lick a dog's genitals, and tying her to a chair, gagging her, and leaving her. Chaney participated in some of this abuse.

Wallace pleaded guilty to sex trafficking by fraud, force, or coercion and was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment and 5 years supervised release and fined \$100. Chaney pled guilty to conspiracy to commit sex trafficking. She admitted that she helped pick up the victim from the victim's cousin's house. She said she was aware that the victim was being beaten and forced into prostitution, and she admitted helping tie her up in a garage behind the house. Chaney was sentenced to 60 months imprisonment and 2 years of supervised release.

## Henry's Turkey Service

For 20 years, 32 men with intellectual disabilities worked in an Iowa-based turkey processing plant for just 41 cents an hour. The men, from Texas, had been transferred from a residential care facility to the worksite in Iowa. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) presented evidence to the jury that Henry's Turkey exploited these workers, whose jobs involved eviscerating turkeys because their intellectual disabilities made them particularly vulnerable and unaware of the extent to which their legal rights were being denied.

The affected men lived in Muscatine County, Iowa, where they worked for 20 years as part of a contract between Henry's Turkey and West Liberty Foods, an Iowa turkey processing plant. Forced to live in squalor, the men faced constant physical and verbal abuse, as well as harsh

discipline. Their employers deducted money for room and board from their earnings.

Verbal abuses included frequently referring to the workers as "retarded," "dumb ass" and "stupid." Class members reported acts of physical abuse including hitting, kicking, at least one case of handcuffing, and forcing the disabled workers to carry heavy weights as punishment. The Henry's Turkey supervisors, also the workers' purported caretakers, were often dismissive of complaints of injuries or pain. The civil case, brought by the EEOC under the Americans with Disabilities Act, awarded each of the men \$2 million in punitive damages and \$5.5 million in compensatory damages. This verdict follows a September 2012 order from the district court judge that Henry's Turkey pay the men \$13 million for unlawful disability-based wage discrimination, thus making the total judgment \$24.13 million.



## The 'Boys' in the Bunkhouse

Toil, abuse and endurance in the heartland.

THIS LAND BY DAN BARRY MARCH 9, 2014

Robert Canino, the prosecuting attorney for the EEOC office that won the verdict, stated that the turkey workers' case reminds him of human-trafficking cases he's prosecuted. The men were originally from Texas but transported out of state, where they lived isolated lives. He says vulnerable workers often remain silent because they don't know their legal rights. They're usually isolated by design from family, friends, and community, and live in fear of abuse.

A 35-minute documentary released by the New York Times, *The Men of Atalissa* relates the story of the men who worked for Henry's Turkey Service. This YouTube may be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Read the New York Times article, *The Boys in the Bunkhouse*, [here](#).

Click [here](#) to read the *Federal Human Trafficking Civil Litigation Report*.



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## Victims of human trafficking may develop disabilities from abuse at the hands of their traffickers

Meanwhile, individuals with disabilities may be targeted by traffickers because they are vulnerable. Disability rights advocates play a vital role in identifying and preventing the trafficking of persons with disabilities as the scope of the problem becomes more apparent.

Many human trafficking task forces fail to make provisions for people with disabilities. People with physical disabilities, cognitive or intellectual disabilities, sensory disabilities, and mental illnesses all need special attention and protection.

Task forces should make accommodations for the unique needs of the victim. Some practical considerations include slowing down interactions and giving time to ask questions and repeat them when necessary. Also, they should give extra time for the victim to respond to questions, particularly victims with cognitive disabilities. Additionally, access to sign language interpreters, plain language specialists, and assistive communication devices may be needed.

All physical barriers to and within offices should be removed if possible.

Health care and social service facilities such as behavioral and mental health centers, drug rehabilitation centers, residential care facilities, and even vocational training centers, which tend to serve patients or clients with disabilities, can consider sharing information and materials to help prevent the harm of trafficking in the first place. PSAs in waiting rooms, community prevention workshops, materials on healthy relationships, or simply having educational and trauma-informed one-on-one conversations with at-risk clients are some ideas to start.

When monitoring a facility, advocates and investigators should look for signs of potential trafficking or risk of trafficking. These can include evidence of control above what is typical for a facility or group home, poor physical health, malnutrition, evidence of work inside or outside of a facility without proper records, or anxious or depressed behavior not consistent with the disability. As with any investigation or monitoring of alleged abuse, use trauma effective skills to prevent further harm to a potential victim with a disability.

As with all victim populations, culturally and developmentally appropriate trauma treatment is an essential aspect of any quality comprehensive services response. Establishing relationships with psychiatrists and counselors who understand the unique needs of people with disabilities (e.g., mechanics of communication, physical interaction, using service animals) is an excellent strategy to meet these needs.

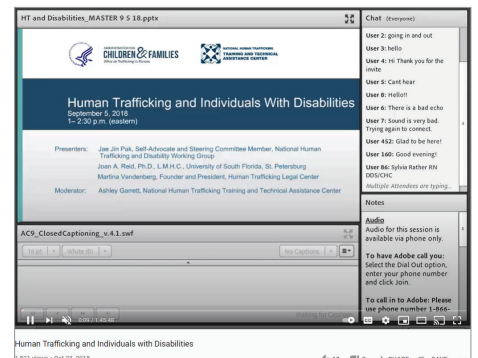
The Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVC TTAC) offers training on Supporting Crime Victims With Disabilities. This 3-day training is designed for victim service providers, advocates for people with disabilities, self-advocates, and allied professionals. Using case studies and small group discussions, you will examine the prevalence of crime against people with disabilities, perceptions of the criminal justice system, tenets of the disabilities movement, and the impact of disabilities on daily life. Through collaborative activities, you will identify ways that various agencies, organizations, and systems can work together to better serve crime victims with disabilities.



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## Human Trafficking and Individuals with Disabilities

The HHS National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center hosted a 90-minute webinar to help participants investigate bias, stigmas, and risk factors that may lead to victimization of individuals with disabilities. This YouTube video examines perspectives from researchers, service providers, and leaders to understand contributing factors to susceptibility to trafficking and discuss prevention from each of these lenses; and identify promising practices and service responses that address underlying issues that can put individuals with disabilities at risk. The video may be accessed by clicking [here](#).





## Podcasts from The National Human Trafficking & Disabilities Working Group

### Episode 1: Human Traffickers Targeting Youth with Disabilities? What is that All About?

This podcast is a discussion with experts working at the intersection of human trafficking and disabilities. It provides an explanation of trafficking and the unique complexities at the intersection of youth with disabilities and human trafficking, as well as existing services and what can be done as a community and providers to better support trafficking survivors and what gaps exist. We are a group leading the movement to give a voice to survivors as well as connect/foster a network of organizations and people to best understand, respond to and meet the needs of survivors and those with disabilities.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

### Episode 2 : Look Around You—Identifying young people with disabilities who may be trafficked

We learn from expert and registered nurse Melanie Cross about how traffickers target, groom, and control youth with disabilities and how to respond to suspicions of trafficking. Melanie shares first person experiences/testimonials from her career working with youth trafficking survivors with disabilities, as evidence of their greater risk of being trafficked. We discuss how the internet and dark web contributes to this victimization and recruitment and conclude the interview sharing what providers can do if they suspect trafficking.

We learn from Susan Kahan, clinical therapist and expert in disability advocacy, about how services can

best be accessible and inclusive for youth survivors with disabilities. Susan introduces different types and degrees of disability; shares where to find resources or referrals for a trafficked youth with disabilities; and how these agencies can be disability friendly and what that means. Finally, she shares her insight on cross training between agencies and the disability community and the need for collaboration.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

### Episode 3: Speaking Out! Human Trafficking Survivors and Individuals with Disabilities Discuss Their Lived Experience and Interaction with Services.

We hear the story of Ericka Reil, a human trafficking survivor who has 15 years working in disability rights. When Ericka was born with the rare genetic disease Marfan Syndrome, she was given a life expectancy of 9 years old. She recounts how she was deemed a “throwaway child” due to her health condition and therefore fell victim to trafficking at the hands of family. She describes the ways people treated her disability as a way to disguise and hide what was happening in the household and how it prevented her from getting the help she was calling out for as a young girl at school. She tells her story escaping the trafficking situation, who helped; what services were available and what the whole process was like. Ericka shares her beautiful journey from surviving trafficking to becoming an inspirational, empowered advocate who today trains law enforcement and combats all forms of abuse.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Vera**  
INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

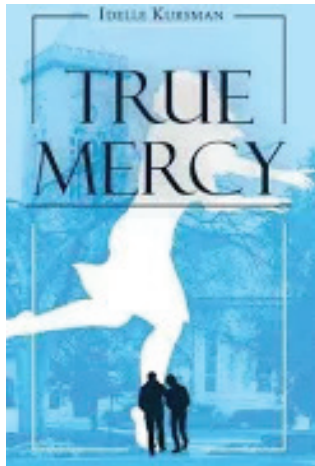
## Toolkits

*Just Ask: A Toolkit to Help Advocates Meet the Needs of Crime Victims with Disabilities* – The Just Ask Toolkit lays out four simple steps that advocates can use when providing accommodations to survivors with disabilities, and includes sample language you can use when talking to survivors. Click [here](#) to learn more.

*Supporting Crime Victims with Disabilities Toolkit* – For more information on sexual violence and people with disabilities, check out the Sexual Violence section of the toolkit. To learn more about supporting survivors of sexual violence with disabilities and addressing trauma, explore the Supporting Crime Victims with Disabilities From Crisis to Healing section. Click [here](#) to learn more.



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## True Mercy: A Page-Turning Thriller Involving Autism and Human Trafficking

She managed to escape, but will she survive?

Danger lurks everywhere for Marina. When the ship carrying her and other human trafficking victims from Europe arrives at a port in New Jersey, Marina manages to escape and wants nothing more than to be rid of her traffickers and free the other women. But one of the underground organization's vicious henchmen will stop at nothing to recapture her. Marina scarred his face on the ship and now he only desires to inflict the cruelest death possible on her. She is doomed until an unlikely pair come to her aid: a young man with autism and his widower father. Still reeling from the death of their mother and wife, son and father encounter her by chance and all three become caught up in the powerful tentacles of an international human trafficking ring. Will the henchman succeed and destroy all their lives? Will relentless evil triumph in the end?

## The Boys in the Bunkhouse: Servitude and Salvation in the Heartland

With this Dickensian tale from America's heartland, New York Times writer and columnist Dan Barry tells the harrowing yet uplifting story of the exploitation and abuse of a resilient group of men with intellectual disability, and the heroic efforts of those who helped them to find justice and reclaim their lives.

In the tiny Iowa farm town of Atalissa, dozens of men, all with intellectual disability and all from Texas, lived in an old schoolhouse. Before dawn each morning, they were bussed to a nearby processing plant, where they eviscerated turkeys in return for food, lodging, and \$65 a month. They lived in near servitude for more than thirty years, enduring increasing neglect, exploitation, and physical and emotional abuse—until state social workers, local journalists, and one tenacious labor lawyer helped these men achieve freedom.

Drawing on exhaustive interviews, Dan Barry dives deeply into the lives of the men, recording their memories of suffering, loneliness and fleeting joy, as well as the undying hope they maintained despite their traumatic circumstances. Barry explores how a small Iowa town remained oblivious to the plight of these men, analyzes the many causes for such profound and chronic negligence, and lays out the impact of the men's dramatic court case, which has spurred advocates—including former President Obama—to push for just pay and improved working conditions for people living with disabilities.

A luminous work of social justice, told with compassion and compelling detail, *The Boys in the Bunkhouse* is more than just inspired storytelling. It is a clarion call for a vigilance that ensures inclusion and dignity for all. This book was nominated for the 2017 Hillman Prize and the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award.

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## Resources

*For more information on human trafficking involving individuals with disabilities, please visit the following resources:*

**How to Identify and Communicate with Human Trafficking Victims** with an Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Human Trafficking and Health Care Providers:** Lessons learned from Federal Criminal Indictments and Civil Cases (HEAL Trafficking and Human Trafficking Legal Center.) Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Online Resources on Human Trafficking of People with Disabilities.** These include several YouTube videos on human trafficking of people with disabilities and other human rights issues. Click [here](#) to learn more.

### **The National Center on Ending Abuse of People with Disabilities**

is a resource center funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women to bring together people with disabilities, policymakers, practitioners, and other community members to better serve people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced violence. The National Center fosters dialogue and provides guidance on addressing problems that impede access to services, developing promising practices, and works to center the needs of people with disabilities and Deaf people when developing solutions and responses to crime. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA).** Takes referrals, offers training and technical assistance. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**National Human Trafficking and Disabilities Working Group.** Offers resources, training and support for professionals and organizations working to address the intersection of disabilities and human trafficking. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Working with Survivors who are Deaf or DeafBlind.** Directory of Deaf DV/SA Service Providers. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Deaf Hope** provides support services including peer counseling about domestic violence and sexual assault, support groups, systems advocacy and referral to DV/SA legal services, and shelter. They also provide space to explore options for safety and healing that include community based alternatives to police and court systems. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**DeafHope's Deaf Power and Control Wheel.** DeafHope advocates have compiled information through years of interviews from Deaf survivors of domestic violence into the Deaf Power and Control Wheel. The wheel shows SOME examples of power and control that SOME survivors experience. There are many unique

personal and community differences. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Supporting Deaf & DeafBlind Survivors Videos.** The Vera Institute of Justice brought together some of the country's leading experts in supporting Deaf and DeafBlind survivors to answer the field's most pressing questions about how to support survivors from these communities and best practices for finding and working with qualified interpreters. We created a series of videos about Deaf and DeafBlind culture, best practices for working with Deaf and DeafBlind survivors, and how to find qualified interpreters. There is also a panel discussion highlighting key factors that contributed to a successful partnership between a hearing and Deaf organization. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Please click [here](#) for several 1-3 minute videos on how to work with survivors of human trafficking who are deaf and/or blind.

**Culture, Language, and Access: Serving Deaf Survivors Policy Brief.** The Culture, Language, and Access: Key Considerations for Serving Deaf Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence policy brief offers practical suggestions for expanding and enhancing Deaf survivors' access to victim services and other supports. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**BRIDGES is the only Deaf-led domestic violence program in Georgia.** From accessible communication to emotional support to housing to justice, we see the whole picture of what Deaf survivors need. BRIDGES breaks the isolation Deaf survivors feel and empowers them to heal and build lives free from domestic violence through culturally appropriate advocacy and collaboration with hearing and Deaf community partners. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Freedom from Exploitation, Violence, and Abuse of Persons with Disabilities.** Exploitation, violence and abuse are frequent, yet often overlooked and under-reported. The societal forces that tend to marginalise persons with disabilities exacerbate the likelihood and the impact of exploitation, violence and abuse. This study explores the concepts, causes and impact of the exploitation, violence and abuse experienced by persons with disabilities, with particular attention given to institutional aspects and the impact of hate speech. General measures for prevention and examples of available responses from Council of Europe member States are also referred to. This study does not rely on interviews with persons with disabilities but rather on pertinent reports, some of which are based on qualitative interviews. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Webinar: A Conversation on Serving Deaf Survivors.** This session explores the challenges that Deaf survivors face and provides best practices for hearing organizations looking to serve Deaf survivors more. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) and The Human Trafficking Legal Center** work together to develop trainings, create materials, and engage in awareness and prevention measures to address trafficking of persons with disabilities. NDRN trains and provides technical assistance to the congressional mandated and federally funded Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system. This system protects and advocates for people with disabilities, especially against abuse. Their partnership with HT Legal Center will allow human trafficking advocates to join the conversation on how to address and prevent human trafficking of persons with disabilities.

**National Disability Rights Network** Protection and advocacy for people with disabilities, legal support, and technical assistance for providers. Click [here](#) to learn more.



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