

Stop Trafficking!

Awareness Advocacy Action

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter • December 2022 • Vol. 20 • No. 12

FOCUS: This newsletter explores Human Trafficking as a public health issue.

The understanding that human trafficking is a public health issue that results from interconnected factors at the societal, community, and family levels across generations, is becoming more widespread. Therefore, human trafficking requires a public health approach to prevention and response to a public health issue. In contrast to criminal justice professionals who primarily encounter victims during a crime, clinicians see patients throughout their lifespan. They are thus well positioned to intervene with individuals at risk for trafficking and individuals who are or were trafficking victims.

A criminal justice response to trafficking provides identified victims with services that are often of short duration and focused on services victims need to be able to become witnesses against their traffickers. However, legislation and prosecution of perpetrators will only help us go so far in abolishing human trafficking. Increasingly, public health strategies drive human trafficking research. The goal is to address root causes, such as racism and poverty, and build communities where everyone can live and thrive. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Public Health Approach to Human Trafficking

According to the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center, a public health approach aims to:

- ♦ Increase victim identification and help-seeking behavior to connect individuals who have experienced trafficking to trauma-informed services
- ♦ Prevent victimization and re-victimization by targeting assistance to individuals at higher risk of trafficking and strengthening the short and long-term health and well-being needs of survivors
- ♦ Address the root causes that make individuals, families, and communities at risk of trafficking

The public health process is long-term and oriented toward the individual, family, and community.

According to Chang & Hang in *Public health approach to preventing human trafficking*, the goal is to advance the health of both the individual and community at large and to prevent and treat harm. The relationship is with either patients or clients. The authors maintain that the criminal justice approach upholds a legal framework, is government based, and has a more defined timeframe. The process is oriented toward a victim to punish the perpetrators and recover the victims.

A public health framework expands the constituents that need to be engaged in anti-trafficking efforts.

Survivors of human trafficking are critical voices informing the development of community-based programs and government policies to prevent and end human trafficking.

Identifying opportunities to enable survivors of human trafficking to meaningfully engage in participating and leading anti-trafficking efforts can contribute to more effective intervention strategies.

Empowering educators and parents can improve the prevention of human trafficking.

A public health approach can target anti-trafficking efforts to reduce the risk of the highest-risk populations instead of relying on a one-size-fits-all approach. A public health approach recognizes human trafficking along a spectrum of inter-related violence, understands the ripple effects of trauma, and encourages cultural-specific prevention and intervention efforts.

Essential Services of Public Health

Each of the essential public health services as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention intersect with the prevention of, and community response to, human trafficking and other forms of violence prevention such as:

- ♦ Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems: An analyst may identify how human trafficking impacts a specific geographic area, community, or industry with a high concentration of risk factors.
- ♦ Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community: A public health clinic may diagnose an STI in a patient experiencing sex trafficking.

Awareness

- ◆ Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues: A community health worker may promote audience-specific social marketing messages to reduce the risk of recruitment into trafficking, increase understanding of the health impact of exploitation, and promote help-seeking behavior.
- ◆ Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems: The health department may convene a group of government agencies, legal services agencies, and community-based organizations to improve a state's response to labor trafficking.
- ◆ Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts: Maternal health workers may meet with the city council to propose expanding housing services for low-income pregnant women.
- ◆ Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety: An environmental health inspector assessing food safety practices may observe evidence of workers living in the back of a restaurant.
- ◆ Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable: A home visiting nurse may connect a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation with mental health services.
- ◆ Assure competent public and personal healthcare workforce: An emergency preparedness office may receive labor and sex trafficking training in disaster response.
- ◆ Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services: A youth services manager may regularly assess how often case managers document clients' experiences of co-occurring issues such as interpersonal violence or substance use.
- ◆ Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems: A university-based researcher may test and validate a screening tool for human trafficking for use in a child welfare setting.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

The 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report included a public health perspective of human trafficking as an issue of special interest

The report points out that the crime of human trafficking is increasingly associated with other government priorities such as national security, economic stability, migration, and environmental sustainability. The authors acknowledge that human trafficking increases transnational criminal organizations, exacerbates irregular migratory flows, disrupts labor markets, and sustains other harmful, illicit activities through the forced criminality of its victims. The report also pointed out that some industries known for using forced labor also feature practices that cause significant environmental damage.

Furthermore, victims of sex trafficking often suffer from unsanitary and dangerous work environments, poor living conditions, substandard nutrition, exposure to sexually transmitted and other communicable diseases, physical and mental abuse resulting in physical, sexual, and psychological trauma, and the denial of access to health care. In forced labor cases, victims may experience long hours and hazardous working conditions, including poor training, proximity to dangerous chemicals, lack of personal protective equipment, and financial or physical punishment, including sexual assault, which can cause or contribute to injuries and illnesses, all public health concerns.

Unaddressed health issues, which may have been treatable if detected early, can become more aggressive and severely degenerate the individual's health. Even after leaving a trafficking situation, survivors face health risks and consequences that last many years.

Click [here](#) to learn more (*Trafficking in Persons Report 2017*, 18.)





Levels of Prevention

Public health services intersect with the prevention of trafficking and other forms of violence prevention. Comprehensive efforts to prevent human trafficking include all primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention levels.

Primary

Primary prevention stops violence before it occurs. Primary prevention strategies include strengthening and creating healthy relationships, reducing risks within the individual's environment, and increasing buffers to violence.

Secondary

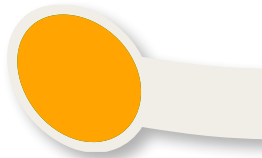
Secondary prevention provides an immediate response to violence as it occurs. These services include first responses, such as essential services and emergency and medical care that address short-term consequences.

Tertiary

Tertiary prevention activities are long-term responses in the aftermath of violence, such as rehabilitative services (e.g., long-term housing, job training, therapeutic counseling, and other supportive services) that seek to prevent revictimization.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Advocacy



How can a Public Health Approach Help?

As defined by the American Public Health Association, public health is concerned with the health of populations. It aims to improve the overall well-being of communities by preventing illness and injury and mitigating their effects. Victims of human trafficking may develop STIs and other communicable infections, like typhoid, intestinal parasites, and tuberculosis, all of which may readily spread to family members, buyers, coworkers, and other community members. In addition, many trafficked individuals do not have health insurance, so they may rely on or only be able to access emergency care for complications of these and other health issues rather than preventative, primary care visits.

When human trafficking is identified in a medical setting, medical personnel can safely intervene and connect the person to community-based organizations to meet their non-health needs. For patients at increased risk for trafficking, such as those who are homeless, evidence-based prevention efforts can include discussion about risky behaviors that can make some vulnerable to exploitation. In cases that warrant it, information on the treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), hepatitis B, human papillomavirus, HIV, and boosters for tetanus may be considered. Public health prioritizes the

recovery of trafficked persons so they can live productive lives benefitting themselves and their families and communities.

A public health framing of human trafficking can facilitate the prevention of trafficking. Public health prevention aims to rectify the contributing conditions that make people vulnerable and develops, implements, monitors, evaluates, and revises prevention programs targeted at specifically identified at-risk groups. Some contributing conditions and vulnerabilities include poverty, undereducation, mental illness, gender inequities, immigration status, and systemic inequities of power and resources. With the goal of root-cause prevention, public health seeks to prevent harm from occurring in the first place. Without attention to these factors, there will always be persons vulnerable to exploitation.

A public health approach has been successful in other social problems, such as smoking and wearing seatbelts. Lessons learned from these experiences can change societal norms that allow both sex and labor trafficking to proliferate.

Recknor, Frances H. and Chisolm-Straker, Makini (2018) "Human Trafficking: It's Not Just a Crime," Journal of Family Strengths: Vol. 18: Iss. 1, Article 7. Available [here](#).



Advocacy

Advantages of Using a Public Health Perspective

Public health can advance health equity for trafficked persons and add value to existing anti-trafficking efforts. Among its many contributions, public health can bring its expertise in health promotion and surveillance.

Public health experts make the case that using a public health perspective that moves beyond a criminal justice response has the advantage of enlisting a broader set of stakeholders and leads to more effective strategies to support victims and prevent human trafficking. For example, licensed health care practitioners, first responders, and other service providers, professionals dealing with domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse, can be trained to better identify victims seeking medical attention and help them to come forward.

Such enhanced understanding and expanded training among a wide range of community stakeholders also aid in preventing human trafficking, as individuals with particular histories—such as abuse, violence, homelessness, substance abuse, or untreated mental health disorders—are considered at increased risk for human trafficking. This way, a public health perspective can help develop more effective anti-trafficking interventions and prevention strategies.



Public Health Research Priorities on Human Trafficking

The HEAL (Health, Education, Advocacy and Linkage) trafficking research committee outlines the following research priorities on human trafficking:

- ◆ Determine the prevalence and incidence of human trafficking with better precision.
- ◆ Estimate the cost burden of human trafficking.
- ◆ Identify risk and protective factors for human trafficking victimization, perpetration, survival, and resilience.
- ◆ Investigate the effectiveness of healthcare screening and response protocols.
- ◆ Implement and evaluate human trafficking prevention strategies.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

A Public Health Approach to Global Child Sex Trafficking

Jordan Greenbaum is a physician who works with victims of suspected physical/sexual abuse, neglect, and sex trafficking at the Stephanie Blank Center for Safe and Healthy Children at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. In addition, she is the director of the Global Health and Wellbeing Initiative with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children. In a recent [article](#), she writes about the public health approach to human trafficking. She states that combating human trafficking requires an approach that addresses the health needs of entire populations and prioritizes the following:

- ◆ education to prevent people from becoming victims
- ◆ continuous monitoring and evaluation to track the effects of policies, laws, and programs

- ◆ Learn how the risk factors, needs and responses to the intervention of subpopulations of trafficked adults and children differ
- ◆ Use the ICD code system globally in medical records so that research may be done on large populations of patients while maintaining confidentiality

According to Dr. Greenbaum, a public health approach incorporates multidisciplinary collaboration and multiple data sources to determine the local, national, and global estimates of the incidence of human trafficking.

Dr. Greenbaum asserts that the public health focus on changing cultural norms is vital to addressing widespread beliefs and practices that marginalize individuals and



groups and condone situations that increase the risk of trafficking. Gender bias and discrimination, strict gender roles, homophobia, caste systems, racism, and religious/ethnic/social discrimination foster vulnerability to human trafficking. Social tolerance of systematic marginalization and individual and community violence allows it to thrive.

Developing protocols for child abuse investigation by law enforcement, health, mental health, and child abuse advocates helps minimize the re-traumatization of the child and family.

Consistent with the public health approach, antitrafficking efforts must involve the multidisciplinary collaboration of key stakeholders involved in prevention.

Dr. Greenbaum suggests that public health professionals may contribute to the antitrafficking movement in the following ways:

Prevention

Learn from public health efforts to address child maltreatment and intimate partner violence. Identify similarities and differences between the populations and assess components of prevention and intervention programs that are likely relevant to trafficked children and youth.

Work to develop, implement, and evaluate primary prevention efforts targeting potential victims and traffickers, and potential buyers. She suggests that schools are a promising avenue for prevention efforts, as are public health facilities and clinics.

Education and Training

Advocate for training health and public health professionals on all types of human trafficking. Dr. Greenbaum asserts that curricula for public health graduate students and those training in medicine and nursing should include sexual and labor exploitation information.

Advocate for available resources and technical assistance for health and public health professionals to supplement initial training (e.g., National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center or HEAL Trafficking).

Research

Conduct rigorous research on human trafficking, which includes analysis of the sexual exploitation/trafficking of boys, LGBTQ+ youth, and runaway/homeless/street-based children. Research should also focus on the similarities and differences between the trafficking of domestic versus foreign-national children/youth, including risk/resilience factors, prevention strategies, barriers to accessing health care, health care needs, and effective treatments.

Public Policy and Legislation

Work with health professionals and others to facilitate a public health approach to human trafficking within the United States and abroad and be familiar with the components of the APHA and the American Academy of Pediatrics policies on human trafficking. Advocate for decisive action to be taken by these societies on national and international policies

Support state, national, and international anti-trafficking policies and laws to improve services for foreign national and domestic trafficked persons, including adequate insurance coverage to allow increased access to comprehensive, victim-centered, culturally sensitive, medical and mental health services; immigration assistance; and holistic, coordinated, and collaborative multidisciplinary provision of aftercare. Also, support state, national, and international initiatives, policies, and laws addressing the social determinants of health that contribute to a person's vulnerability to human trafficking.

Direct Services

Dr. Greenbaum calls for the continued development of guidelines and protocols to assist health and public health professionals and health systems in responding appropriately to human trafficking. This includes developing and validating screening tools and creating child-friendly, victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive environments where staff are knowledgeable about human trafficking and exploitation.

Encourage health and public health professionals to actively engage in a multidisciplinary community-based approach to identifying and serving trafficked persons. This initiative involves educating critical stakeholders on the public health approach to human trafficking, increasing their awareness of the need for medical and mental health care for trafficked persons, and identifying key organizations that can provide victim services.



Action

Develop, implement, and evaluate approaches to mental health assessment and treatment that are culturally appropriate and relevant to the needs and challenges of trafficked persons in diverse settings. Prioritize the need to incorporate culturally relevant beliefs and practices to assist in the healing process.

Engage community public health workers in prevention and follow-up health care in rural communities to build resilience in vulnerable families and assist trafficked persons reintegrating into their villages and towns.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Webinar – The Public Health Response to Human Trafficking: A Look Back and a Step Forward

In August 2022, The United States Office on Trafficking in Persons published a supplement to Public Health Reports on *The Public Health Response to Human Trafficking: A Look Back and a Step Forward*.

In a recent webinar on this topic, Dr. Ginny Sprang stated that we have a responsibility and opportunity to reflect upon and learn from the past when racism, gender discrimination, and xenophobia colored our human trafficking response. Dr. Sprang offered that United States public health research has a history of contributing to inequities. Future research should be based on equity-grounded theories that address trauma and interpersonal violence.

Research should also be designed and implemented with the input of vulnerable and affected communities, including those with lived experiences of trafficking, and shaped by a diverse group of stakeholders.

Dr. Mekelia Cook addressed racism and domestic minor sex trafficking of black girls and the role of public health. Dr. Cook discussed prevention and service provisions in light of the critical race theory and the public health approach. In addition, Dr. Cook discussed how anti-sex trafficking efforts are shaped by racialized beliefs

and unintentionally reinforce racial bias about the adultification of black girls.

Dr. Anka Vujanovic discussed the prevalence of and barriers to the care for those with mental health issues among survivors and victims of human trafficking. Please click [here](#) to view this webinar on *The Public Health Response to Human Trafficking: A Look-Back and a Step Forward*.



The Public Health Response to Human Trafficking: A Look-Back and a Step Forward, Authors Ginny Sprang, Ph.D., Hanni Stoklosa, MD, MPH, Jordan Greenbaum, MD

Published July 1, 2022, Editorial. Click [here](#) to learn more.



NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

Please click [here](#) to view a short video on applying a public health approach to human trafficking.

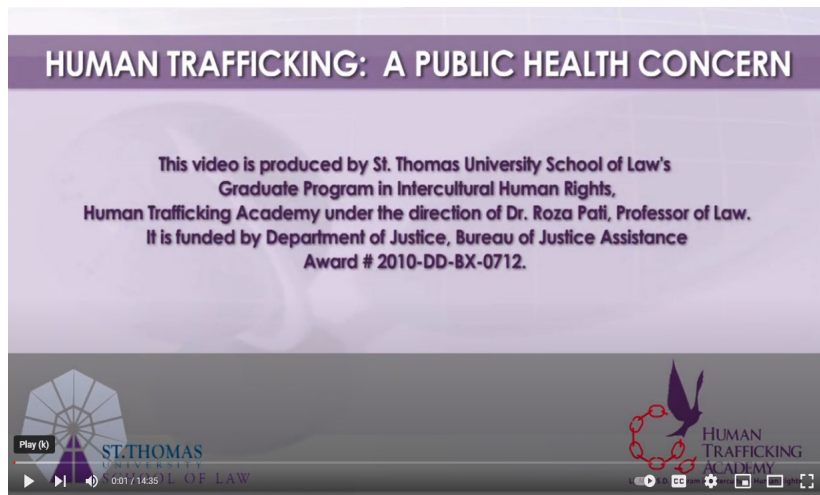
What is a public health approach to human trafficking?

Criminal Justice Framework

- Uphold Legal Framework
- Victims
- More Defined Timeframe
- Justice Orientation
- Government Based
- Punish Traffickers/Recover Victims

Public Health & Prevention Framework

- Advance Individual/Population Health
- Patients/Clients
- Long-Term Process
- Individual, Family, and Community Orientation
- Community Based
- Prevent/Treat Harms



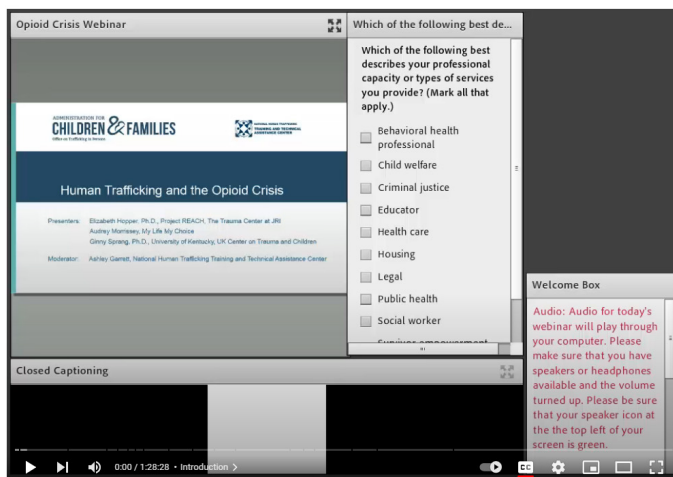
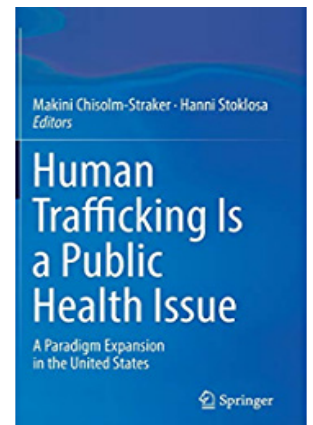
Human Trafficking as a Public Health Concern

Please click [here](#) to view a video on human trafficking as a public health concern. The experts in this video discuss human trafficking as a significant global health problem and the vital role of healthcare providers in identifying and providing care and services to victims of human trafficking. Human trafficking is best understood as a severe health risk for victims of trafficking because it is associated with physical and psychological harm. Healthcare service

providers have a crucial opportunity to identify victims and early intervention to rescue and protect them. They are one of the few groups of professionals likely to interact with victims of human trafficking while the victim is still under the control of the criminals manipulating and profiting from them.

Human Trafficking is a Public Health Issue: A Paradigm Expansion in the United States

This reference examines the public health dimensions of labor and sex trafficking in the United States, the scope of the crisis, and possibilities for solutions. Its ecological lifespan approach globally traces risk and protective factors associated with this exploitation, laying a roadmap towards its prevention. Diverse experts, including survivors, describe support and care interventions across domains and disciplines, from the law enforcement and judicial sectors to community health systems and NGOs, with a robust model for collaboration. By focusing on the humanity of trafficked persons, a public health paradigm broadens our understanding of and ability to address trafficking while adding critical direction and resources to the criminal justice and human rights structures currently in place.



The Public Health Framework to Address Human Trafficking

This one-hour webinar introduces a public health framework for human trafficking, which allows communities to identify and respond to the complex needs of all survivors of human trafficking while addressing the root causes that make individuals, families, and communities vulnerable to trafficking. This webinar applies the “upstream-downstream” metaphor to a public health approach. In addition, it examines the success of

looking upstream in building a public health response to other social issues, such as domestic violence or anti-smoking efforts. Click [here](#) to learn more.



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