



## Essential Knowledge for Healthcare, Mental Health, and Social Service Professionals on Human Trafficking

- Human trafficking is a **crime of exploitation, not movement**, and many victims access healthcare while still under the control of traffickers. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Victims may present for care **multiple times without disclosing abuse**, often due to fear, trauma bonding, language barriers, or threats against themselves or their families. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[fbi.gov\]](#)
- Common clinical indicators include **inconsistent histories, untreated chronic conditions, signs of physical or sexual assault, malnutrition, sleep deprivation, or work-related injuries** inconsistent with the stated job. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Psychological indicators may include **anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, dissociation, shame, self-blame, or intense loyalty to an accompanying person**. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- A controlling companion who **refuses privacy, answers questions for the patient, or controls identification, money, or movement** is a significant red flag. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[fbi.gov\]](#)
- **Any minor involved in commercial sex is legally a trafficking victim**, regardless of apparent consent or relationship dynamics. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[state.gov\]](#)
- Labor trafficking may present through **overwork, debt bondage, fear of job loss or deportation, or injuries tied to agriculture, domestic work, construction, hospitality, or caregiving**. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Screening for trafficking should be done **privately, safely, and without accompanying individuals present**, using clear, nonjudgmental, culturally appropriate language. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[fbi.gov\]](#)
- Indicators should **never be used as a checklist**, and clinical judgment must consider context, power dynamics, and patterns over time. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[justice.gov\]](#)
- Providers should **not attempt rescues or confront traffickers**, but follow institutional protocols, mandated-reporting laws, and referral pathways immediately. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Trauma-informed care that prioritizes **patient autonomy, confidentiality, safety planning, and informed consent** improves outcomes and reduces retraumatization. [\[un.org\]](#), [\[state.gov\]](#)

- Effective prevention and response rely on **interdisciplinary coordination** with social services, specialized advocates, law enforcement task forces, and survivor-centered resources. [[un.org](https://www.un.org/)], [[fbi.gov](https://www.fbi.gov/)]
- For immediate danger call **911**, and to report tips you can call the HSI Tip Line at **1-866-347-2423**. [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov/)]
- To get help or share concerns, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-888-373-7888** or text “**BEFREE/HELP**” to **233733** (24/7, confidential support). [[humantraffickinghotline.org](https://www.humantraffickinghotline.org/)], [[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov/)]

**Blink3** is the **Universal nonverbal SOS** for victims of human trafficking and abuse, blinking 3 times is a way to ask for help. Please see <https://blink3.org/> for more information, and free courses