



Essential Knowledge for TSA and Customs Agents on Human Trafficking

- Human trafficking is a **crime of exploitation, not transportation**, and the presence of travel documents or legal immigration status does not rule out trafficking. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Trafficking victims may be **traveling voluntarily on the surface but under coercion**, manipulation, or threats that are not immediately visible. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[state.gov\]](#)
- **Any minor traveling for the purpose of commercial sex is a trafficking victim**, regardless of consent or the presence of a purported guardian. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[state.gov\]](#)
- Red flags at airports include **one traveler controlling passports or boarding passes, answering all questions, restricting communication, or closely monitoring another person's behavior**. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[fbi.gov\]](#)
- Victims may appear **confused about their destination, itinerary, length of stay, or who is meeting them**, especially when questioned separately. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[fbi.gov\]](#)
- Human trafficking commonly involves **psychological coercion, debt bondage, lies about work or education, or threats to family members**, rather than overt violence. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- **Language barriers, fear of authority, trauma responses, or coached answers** may prevent victims from disclosing exploitation even when directly questioned. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[justice.gov\]](#)
- Traffickers increasingly use **technology**, including online recruitment, encrypted messaging, digital payments, and last-minute itinerary changes to evade detection. [\[state.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Indicators must **never be treated as a checklist**, and context, behavior, power dynamics, and inconsistencies are more important than any single sign. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[justice.gov\]](#)
- **Separating travelers politely and legally for routine questioning** can be a critical tool for identifying coercion or scripted responses. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Victim identification improves when agents apply a **trauma-informed, nonjudgmental approach** that prioritizes safety over speed or enforcement metrics. [\[justice.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)
- Human trafficking occurs across **all nationalities, genders, and socioeconomic levels**, including U.S. citizens and lawful travelers. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[state.gov\]](#)
- Effective prevention depends on **interagency coordination**, including referrals to specialized investigators, task forces, and victim-service providers rather than improvising responses. [\[fbi.gov\]](#), [\[un.org\]](#)

- For immediate danger call **911**, and to report tips you can call the HSI Tip Line at **1-866-347-2423**. [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], [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