National Slavery and Human Trafficking Month:
- The Administration of Children and Families a department within HHS is engaged in a number of activities to promote awareness, including issuing a Presidential Proclamation and a twitter thunderclap, so be sure to check out their resources if you are interested in this topic.
- More Info: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip

Definitions:
What is child trafficking? In the United States, child trafficking is broken up into 2 major categories- labor and sex trafficking. Child Sex trafficking is sometimes also referred to as the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

- Currently, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is the most comprehensive piece of federal legislation dedicated to addressing human trafficking. Passed in 2000, the TVPA defines the two types of human trafficking as:

  **Sex trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion. Or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; and

  **Labor trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.¹

Common characteristics that make specific groups of children particularly at risk of being sexually trafficked:

**Children with a History of Abuse**
- Children who have been abused are a prime target for traffickers. Abuse includes: mental, physical, and sexual abuse.¹
- Often children and youth who are abused in the home suffer from psychological issues that draw them to, or make them susceptible to traffickers and they may experience feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, traumatic sexualization, and stigmatization.³
- In addition, they may link the experience of receiving affection with performing sexual acts if a particular trafficker abused or groomed them over a significant period of time.³
- Childhood trauma related to abuse also makes this group more likely to be exploited for sex later on in life. A study found that victims of child abuse were 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution compared to their peers.⁴

Youth in Foster Care

• There is also a high correlation exists between children and youth who are currently or formerly in foster care and victims of sex trafficking.\textsuperscript{v} 

• The Department of Children and Families in Connecticut found that out of the 88 children identified as sex trafficking victims, 86 had been involved with child welfare services prior to being trafficked. 

• The Los Angeles Probation Department also found that sex trafficking disproportionately affects children and youth in foster care, with nearly 60 percent of minors arrested on prostitution-related charges coming from the foster care system.\textsuperscript{vi} 

• In northern California, Alameda County reported that 41 percent of 267 victims identified were at one time part of the foster care system. 

• Finally, a New York state study showed that up to 85 percent of trafficking victims had prior child welfare involvement.\textsuperscript{vii}

Targeting Vulnerable Youth:

• Pimps recognize that children and youth in or transitioning out of foster care have vulnerabilities that make them easy prey. 

• Reports indicate that pimps will recruit children and youth near group homes, at bus stops, malls, and other places that young people frequent.\textsuperscript{viii} 

• Interestingly, some young trafficked girls are sent into shelters to recruit other girls for a pimp.\textsuperscript{ix} 

• They will take advantage of a young person’s low self-esteem and history of abuse, neglect, and rejection to make trafficking seem appealing and stable. 

• Pimps also recruit children and youth at a young age, so that they can groom them and create a relationship in which the child feels indebted to the pimp. 

Homeless Youth and Runaways

• Homeless youth and runaway children are especially susceptible to being trafficked. 

• On the streets, traffickers may target these youth, because they are less likely to get caught, as no one is looking out for their protection and best interest. 

• In addition, traffickers may also appeal to homeless or runaway children and youth, because they know they are desperate to have their basic needs met including housing and food. 

• The exchange of sex for services, known as survival-sex, can be difficult to account for because on the surface it can appear to be a consensual relationship. 

• Efforts are underway under recently passed legislation to ensure that homeless and runaway youth are reported so that

LGBTQ Youth

• There is some evidence that suggests that LGBTQ youth can be up to 5 times more likely than their heterosexual peers to be victims of trafficking. 

• Many LGBTQ youth have experienced rejection and alienation and are also overrepresented in runaway, homeless and child welfare populations

Immigrant Children

• Immigrant children can also be targets of domestic trafficking due to vulnerabilities in not understanding the language or knowing their rights
• Children fleeing from other countries are supposed to be screened for trafficking and have special avenues available for legal status and services in the United States.

Tribal Youth
• American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and youth are five times more likely than their peers to be victims of sex trafficking.
• This is unsurprising due to the high rates of poverty. Recent estimates suggest that 32.4 percent of AI/AN children and youth lived in poverty.\textsuperscript{x}
• One factor that distinguishes AI/AN children and youth is the high propensity of sexual violence on tribal lands. AI/AN women are 2.5 times more likely to experience sexually violent crimes than other races.\textsuperscript{xii}
• “Traffickers were most frequently identified as non-Native “intimate partners” or men with whom young women are engaged in a sexual relationship, who initially gain the victim’s trust and dependence by providing emotional and economic security, only to pimp them out to friends and other acquaintances.\textsuperscript{xii}

Attachment to Traffickers:
• trafficked children and youth will often form emotional bonds with their trafficker, making it difficult to realize when they are being exploited.
• Victims may make progress in rehabilitating their lives, only to leave their support system to go back to their abuser.
• Researchers have identified this positive feeling by a victim towards an abuser as Stockholm syndrome and have found that trafficked children and youth often display its characteristics.\textsuperscript{xv}
• This behavior serves as a coping measure for those who cannot mentally process the trauma they are experiencing.\textsuperscript{xiv}
• As a result, children and youth may feel compelled to return to their trafficker and can be a flight risk when placed in shelters or group homes, because they feel a sense of belonging and attachment to their abuser.\textsuperscript{xv}

Child Labor Trafficking
• Child labor trafficking can take many forms
• Some common industry sectors where child labor trafficking may occur are: agricultural, domestic workers, abusive traveling sales crews, workers in restaurants, and hair and nail salons.
• Under labor laws, children under the age of 14 cannot work most jobs. However, for agricultural jobs, children under 14 can work with their parent’s permission
• Perhaps one of the most horrific example are those documented by Human Rights Watch of children working in tobacco fields. These children are at-risk of nicotine poisoning, exposure to chemicals from pesticide use, experience extreme heat and chronic pain due to their working conditions
• Companies are taking steps to reduce child labor and legislation has been introduced by Congressman Cicilline and others have introduced bills for the past few years to prohibit children under the age of 18 from working on tobacco farms.
Health Impacts of Labor Trafficking
In addition to the human rights abuses that define their involuntary servitude, victims of labor trafficking suffer from a variety of physical and mental health problems:

- Various methods of forced labor expose victims of labor trafficking to physical abuse such as scars, headaches, hearing loss, cardiovascular/respiratory problems, and limb amputation.
- Victims of labor trafficking may also develop chronic back, visual and respiratory problems from working in agriculture, construction or manufacturing under dangerous conditions.
- The psychological effects of torture are helplessness, shame and humiliation, shock, denial and disbelief, disorientation and confusion, and anxiety disorders including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, panic attacks, and depression.
- Child victims of labor trafficking are often malnourished to the extent that they may never reach their full height, they may have poorly formed or rotting teeth, and later they may experience reproductive problems. (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/fact-sheet-labor-trafficking-english)

What Services Do Victims Need?

Once identified, the services that a trafficked child or youth needs varies based on that individual’s unique set of circumstances.

Medical and Mental Health Treatment:
- A key component in providing the necessary services for sexually trafficked children and youth is access to medical care and mental health treatment.
- Medical services include treatment for physical trauma, including fractures, bruises, contusions and burns; and reproductive issues, such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and abortion-related complications, and vaginal and cervical infections.¹
- Victims may also require mental health treatments if they suffer from anxiety, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, substance abuse, and eating disorders.¹
- Currently, there are large gaps in access to services. Even when a child is reported or placed by child protective services in a foster home, mental health services may not be provided if someone other than the parent of the child committed the abuse.¹
- Trafficked victims may be eligible for Medicaid but they must meet the state eligibility categories and may have a difficult time navigating the benefits without assistance from a legal professional or social worker.

Trauma-Informed Rehabilitation:
- Best practices in the field indicate that consistent case management leads to successful outcomes, as it takes time for exploited children and youth to trust case managers and benefit from therapy.
- Victims of trafficking also report that having mentors to help them through the rehabilitative process can be extremely beneficial because it is easier to talk to and trust someone who has been through the same kind of trauma.
- In addition, providers can engage victims in therapy program activities focused on building self-esteem and empowering victims with educational and work opportunities.
- These therapies can involve art, journaling, music, yoga, outdoor activities, and other self-soothing methods.¹
• Service providers could also provide life skills training such as financial management and interview techniques.
• These initiatives can help children and youth gain self-confidence in their skills, promote normalcy, and ultimately lay a foundation for self-sufficiency.

Legal Assistance:
• A common point of entry for trafficked children and youth is through the juvenile justice system.
• Victims of sexual exploitation often find themselves prosecuted for prostitution, substance abuse and possession, and other criminal actions.
• While states are slowly recognizing and passing Safe Harbor laws that children and youth who are sexually exploited should not be treated as criminals, minors in juvenile court may not be properly screened and identified as victims of sex trafficking.
• In addition, attorneys can help expunge prostitution records in states that have vacatur laws.¹
• Collaboration between the legal system and child welfare can increase awareness and resources for service providers.
• Legal professionals who work with juveniles should be trained to identify trafficked children and youth and given training and information on housing, medical treatments, transportation, and employment opportunities that are available for victims.¹

Housing
• Currently, there are limited shelters and homes for victims of trafficking and what is available is focused on housing females. However, evidence suggests boys and transgender youth also need these services.¹ A New York City study found that 45% of exploited children and youth were male and 8% were transgender, highlighting that solutions cannot only be framed around females.¹
• Service providers continue to face challenges in safely housing children and youth in gender and age appropriate settings.
• There is also the need for facilities to provide housing capacities for an extended period of time, so that caseworkers can provide consistent services and can build a relationship with victims to provide the necessary therapy for rehabilitation.
• Gaining the trust of the victims and seeing positive outcomes from treatment can take several months and should be taken into account when service providers and agency workers make plans to address the needs of trafficked victims.¹

Recent Legislation

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act

• **Stronger Supports and Increased Collaboration** – Authorized new state-administered supports for trafficking victims, like life skills training, educational and job services, and improved collaboration between law enforcement agencies and service providers; 
• **Judicial Training** – Authorized training to help judges understand child victims’ needs and the availability of community resources to meet those needs, as well as training to avoid the inappropriate criminal conviction of trafficking victims; and  
• **Victims Fund** – Created a new fund to provide supportive services to victims, funded by $5,000 penalties against convicted traffickers
Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act

- States must identify, document and determine services for children and youth at risk of trafficking
- Requires reporting of sex trafficked victims within 24 hours
- Requires states to develop protocols for locating missing children from foster care and determining factors that caused runaway and whether the child was trafficked- have to alert the National Crime Information Center and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
- Establishes the National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth

State Efforts

- Safe Harbor Laws- California recently enacted one- 34 states have some version of safe harbor laws
- No Such Thing as a Child Prostitute
- Expungement of Records

Takeaways:

- Each victim has unique experiences and their treatment should be tailored to their circumstances
- Training and coordination by services providers in the medical, social services, law enforcement and legal sectors is paramount
- Victims may be untrusting of intervenors and runaway from rehabilitation back to their trafficker
- Peer-to peer support is very helpful in gaining trust
- Some indicators of trafficking include:
  - Evidence of physical, mental or emotional abuse
  - Inability to speak on one’s own behalf
  - Inability to speak to an official alone
  - Excess amounts of cash on hand
  - Working long hours with little or no pay
  - Presence of older boyfriend who seems controlling
  - Loyalty and positive feelings towards trafficker
  - Exhibition of fear, tension, shame, humiliation or nervousness
  - Lack od ability to identify him/herself as a victim

National Human Trafficking Hotline

- The Polaris project operates a national hotline to report instances of trafficking. They can offer assistance.

“Child Slavery is a crime against humanity. Humanity itself is at stake here”
-Kailash Satyarthi- Nobel Prize Winner
OTHER WEB RESOURCES

- Fields of Peril: Child Labor in US Agriculture: [https://www/hrw.org/report/2010/05/05/fields-peril/child-labor-us-agriculture](https://www/hrw.org/report/2010/05/05/fields-peril/child-labor-us-agriculture)
- Assistance for Child Victims of Human Trafficking- [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/eligibilityfs](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/eligibilityfs)

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i Heather Clawson, Nicole Dutch, Amy Solomon and Lisa Goldblatt Grace, Human Trafficking Into and Within the United States: A Review of the Literature, pg. 7 (August 2009).


iii Id. p. 6.


vi Id. p. 3.


viii ACYF guidance pg. 4.

ix Finding a Path to Recovery, Pg.2.


“Id. p. 25.
