



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:

CHILD TRAFFICKING:

Identification and Response

Child Trafficking: Identification and Response

The Community of Practice (CoP) series was developed through a partnership with IMPACT WV and the WV Home Visiting Program to help participants exchange technical information and share experiences about serving clients currently experiencing or who have past experiences with substance use and neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).

The information in this IMPACT WV product was taken from a CoP presentation by Jennifer Roman-Martin, LICSW, National Center on Child Trafficking.

Aim

The purpose of this CoP was to:

- Define child trafficking and identify the scope of the problem
- Identify risk factors and vulnerabilities for child trafficking
- Outline or define experiences and the impact of child trafficking
- Consider resources for responding to child trafficking

General information

National Center on Child Trafficking (NCCT)

A collaboration of professionals with expertise in child trauma and human trafficking funded by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). NCCT uses a science-driven approach to guide the development, adaptation, implementation and evaluation of trauma-informed interventions and resources addressing sex and labor trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation to improve the lives of impacted children and families who support the professionals who serve them.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA)

Child sex trafficking

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing or solicitation of a person under the age of 18 for the purposes of a commercial sex act (any sex act for which anything of value is given to or received by any person).

Child labor trafficking

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person under the age of 18 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.

Risk factors and vulnerabilities

- Substance use
- Familial trafficking
- Immigrant, unaccompanied and refugee children and youth
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning or another diverse gender identity (LGBTQ+) youth
- Poverty and economic factors
- Systems involved in children and youth
- Children and youth of color, racism and racial disproportionality
- Children and youth who are homeless or leave placement without caregiver permission.
- Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)

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General Information (cont.)



Substance use

Substance use may lead to experiences of being trafficked, often in an effort to cope with prior trauma. Exploiters may use alcohol and drugs to recruit and entrap. Youth with substance dependence may be vulnerable to exchanges of sex for access to substances. Youth use alcohol and drugs to cope with the experiences of being trafficked/exploited. After exploitation/trafficking survivors may use alcohol or drugs to try to cope with their past trauma and trafficking experiences. Caregiver substance use and dependence is a risk factor for children.

Familial trafficking

Psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse are used to control or continue involvement of children in familial trafficking. Examples may include:

- Family members allowing traffickers to exploit in exchange for drugs, money or something else of value
- Traffickers may fraudulently promise jobs or other opportunities for caregivers or their children
- Family members exploiting/trafficking their own children and potentially others
- Caregivers providing inadequate supervision leaving children/youth vulnerable to those who exploit them

Systems-involved children and youth

Very high rates of involvement in multiple child-serving systems, especially child welfare and juvenile justice. Foster care and congregate care appears to increase trafficking risk. Experiences while in care potentially increase vulnerability, including degrading of a youth's self-worth, erosion of their belief or expectation that others will care for them and the belief that others will make money from their care. Traffickers and buyers will target children who are not getting their basic needs met (including those for love and belonging). The child welfare system is increasingly the primary system to serve children and youth who have experienced child sex trafficking.



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General Information (cont.)

Sex trafficking indicators:

- Under the age of 18 and selling or trading sex in any way
- Live with or are supported by or dependent on a family member with a substance use disorder or who is abusive in other ways
- Have an older, or controlling parent, guardian, romantic partner or “sponsor” who will not allow you to meet or speak with the person alone or monitors their movements, spending and/or communications

Child labor trafficking indicators:

- Pressured by employer to stay in a job or situation they want to leave
- Owe money to an employer or recruiter
- Not being paid what they were promised or are owed
- Do not have control of their passport or other identity documents
- Living and working in isolated conditions
- Cut off from others or support systems
- Monitored by another person when talking or interacting with others

Mental health impacts

- Impaired attention or concentrating
- Being easily irritated or angered
- Trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much, nightmares
- Disassociation
- Difficulty with emotional identification, expression and regulation
- Intrusive thoughts
- Difficulty relating with others
- Self-blame, guilt, low self-esteem and shame
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance use or dependence
- Suicidal thoughts or self-injurious behaviors
- Changes in sense of self and worldview

Physical health impacts

- Impacts from physical violence
- Malnourishment, new medical illness or worsening of pre-existing chronic medical conditions
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS
- Forced or elective abortion, miscarriage, maternal complications and fetal/newborn complications
- Genital and/or anal trauma rarely, more severe internal injury
- Dental complications
- Substance use problems and related medical complications
- Forced tattoos or brandings
- Chronic pain and/or fatigue

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General Information (cont.)

Child trafficking indicators (sex and labor)

There is a wide range of reactions to trauma and loss. Youth may respond to everyday challenges with defiance, recklessness or by bonding with aggressors. Others may withdraw, emotionally shut down, dissociate or self-harm. Danger and safety are primary concerns and trafficked youth may believe that no person, relationship or place can ever be safe or trustworthy. Continual exposure to traumatic experiences can make it more difficult for youth to distinguish between safe and unsafe situations, leading to significant changes in their own protective and risk-taking behavior. Developmental neurobiology underlies reactions; therefore, trafficked youth may develop “survival brain” which is an automatic focus on anticipating or counteracting danger rather than letting down their guard.

Sexual impacts

- Experiences and understanding of healthy sexual relationships
- Problems with sexual function and pleasure
- Reproductive health challenges
- Fears and concerns regarding acceptance by partners





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Resources

- National Human Trafficking Hotline
 - CALL: **888-3737-888**
 - TEXT: **BEFREE** or **HELP** to **233733**
 - CHAT: **Humantraffickinghotline.org/chat**
 - EMAIL: **Help@humantraffickinghotline.org**
 - National Human Trafficking Referral Directory: **PolarisProject.Org**
- West Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force
 - WV State Police Missing Children Clearinghouse: **1-800-352-0927**
 - WV Abuse and Neglect Hotline: **1-800-352-6513**
 - WV Fusion Center: **1-866-WVWATCH**
 - **StopHumanTraffickingwv.org**
- West Virginia Center for Children's Justice
 - **HandleWithCareWV.org**
- West Virginia Child Advocacy Network
 - CALL: **304-414-4455**
 - EMAIL: **info@wvcan.org**
- Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) Children's Resource Center
 - CALL: **304-388-9860**
 - EMAIL: **camcfoundation@camc.org**
- Monongalia County Child Advocacy Center
 - CALL: **304-598-0344**
 - Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Program
 - Community Education (CE) Program
 - Preventative Care (PC) Program
 - Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Program
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
 - **www.nctsn.org**

TIPS:

Response:

- Mandated reporting is required when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is neglected or abused, including sexual abuse or sexual assault, or observation of a child being subjected to conditions that are likely to result in abuse or neglect, and includes human trafficking.
- The age of consent in West Virginia is 16 years old. Individuals aged 15 are not legally able to consent to sexual activity.
- The report must be made immediately and not more than 24 hours after suspecting abuse or neglect to the Department of Health and Human Resources Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.
 - CALL: **1-800-352-6513**
 - EMAIL: **dhhromcfhfamplan@wv.gov**