

Conducting Outreach to Labor Trafficking Victims

Labor trafficking victims often face challenges in reporting their situation and seeking assistance. Many labor trafficking victims are physically isolated, living on worksites or in group housing. Even victims serving in a customer service role may face monitored or regulated interactions with customers. This resource provides an introduction to labor trafficking and suggestions for organizations seeking to reach potential labor trafficking victims.

What Is Labor Trafficking?

Labor trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals are compelled to perform labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Labor trafficking may occur within small-scale “mom and pop” businesses and domestic work arrangements as well as large-scale business operations, like farms and factories.

Venues where labor trafficking has been reported include:

Agriculture	Traveling Carnivals	Cleaning Services
Construction	Domestic Work	Restaurant/Food Service
Hospitality/Service Industry	Landscaping/Forestry	Strip Clubs
Factories	Peddling/Begging Rings	Traveling Sales Crews

The Victims

The victims of labor trafficking are men and women, adults and children, and foreign nationals and U.S. citizens. Victims have diverse socio-economic backgrounds, varied levels of education, and may be documented or undocumented.

The Traffickers

Traffickers lure people into forced labor by manipulating and exploiting their vulnerabilities. Traffickers may initially appear to be valid employers, managers, or crew leaders. They use violence, threats, blackmail, deception, manipulation, and debt bondage to exploit individuals into forced work.

Potential Indicators of Labor Trafficking*

- Not free to come and go as he/she wishes
- Owes a large debt they are unable to pay
- Works excessive hours without breaks
- Has few or no personal possessions
- Is not in control of his/her money
- Unpaid or paid very little
- Recruited through false promises
- Has untreated work related injuries
- Lives in crowded employer-provided housing
- Signs of physical/sexual/emotional abuse
- Excessive security measures, such as bars on windows of the workplace

**The presence of one of these red flags is not, by itself, sufficient to indicate labor trafficking.
For a full list of indicators, visit: www.traffickingresourcecenter.org.*

What Is Direct Outreach?

Direct outreach is an activity carried out by organizations to contact individuals, in public or private, in order to share information about resources and answer questions. Direct outreach helps to ensure workers know what human trafficking is, what options they may have, and how to seek assistance if needed. Outreach increases the awareness of victim service programs and builds trust between service providers and potential victims.

Planning for Direct Outreach

Learn about Labor Trafficking and Worker Populations

The first step to effectively planning for direct outreach is to conduct research on the labor trafficking trends in your community. The NHTRC's guide, [Human Trafficking in Your Community](#), can guide you through this process. Outreach planning efforts should consider where trafficking is most frequently reported, how recruitment occurs, and how much access potential victims have to technology or resources. For additional state-specific information, visit www.traffickingresourcecenter.org.

Other important sources of information on labor trafficking trends can include trafficking task forces, law enforcement, labor departments, service providers, and advocates for workers, such as unions, NGOs, and consular offices. These entities may have knowledge about trends, victim experiences, and the local context necessary to build effective victim outreach programs.

Build Partnerships with Other Organizations

Human trafficking task forces, coalitions, and service providers seeking to engage in direct outreach should partner with allied organizations who are already working with these populations. Critical partners are those who already have strong relationships or rapport with the target population. Such organizations may include:

Health Outreach Programs	Community Legal Programs
Migrant Farmworker Outreach Programs	Chambers of Commerce
Worker Empowerment Programs & Unions	Business Development Organizations
Sexual Assault Response Teams	Educational Programs
Health and Safety Inspection Personnel	Immigrant Assistance Organizations
Consulates	

Considerations for Direct Outreach

Victim Identification

Labor trafficking may not be easy to recognize. A recent study by the Urban Institute found the following findings on labor trafficking in the United States.

- While most victims of labor trafficking worked in positions requiring interaction with the public, most victims had limited contact with first responders, such as law enforcement, code compliance or fire and rescue personnel.
- Labor trafficking victims entering the U.S. on visas came into contact with public and governmental institutions, such as customs and border patrol, health and safety inspectors, law enforcement, or consular officers. Yet, the majority of victims went unidentified and escaped on their own, without receiving trafficking specific services.
- 92% of victims interviewed who left their trafficking situations recognized much later that they experienced abuse in their working conditions, but none recognized their situation as labor trafficking.¹

¹ The Urban Institute (2014). Understanding the Organization, Operation, and Victimization Process of Labor Trafficking in the United States, available at <http://datatools.urban.org/Features/us-labor-trafficking/>.

Safety and Focus

The safety of all participants (target population, outreach workers, partner organizations) must be at the forefront of all outreach planning. For many labor trafficking victims, interaction with outreach workers on worksites or in shared living spaces may lead to retaliation by their traffickers. Therefore identify safe and effective venues for engagement such as schools, libraries, benefits offices, grocery vendors, or community events.

Direct outreach should never be confused with investigation. Outreach is conducted in order to connect with individuals and provide them with critical information should they need assistance. Programs should develop exit strategies for outreach workers, identify reporting mechanisms, and ensure offsite support before initiating an outreach initiative.

Response Networks

Establish protocols for potential victims who reach out for services, including referral networks to address assistance requests that are outside the scope or expertise of the outreach organization. [The National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#) (NHTRC) can assist in providing referrals for services. Local organizations may be found either by calling the NHTRC or visiting the [National Human Trafficking Referral Database](#).

Relationship Building

The success of direct outreach efforts relies on the ability of outreach workers to develop rapport and build authentic relationships with workers who may be victims of labor trafficking. Many successful outreach programs hire outreach staff from the same socio-economic, ethnic, or workforce population.

Outreach efforts rely on trust and rapport; therefore, it is important to be honest about purpose and resource limitations while demonstrating concern and willingness to assist. Outreach workers must be consistent in their message and reliable.

Messaging and Imaging

Make Materials Available in Priority Languages

The [U.S. Department of Labor](#), the [NHTRC](#), [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), among others, have useful resources translated into languages that may be appropriate for your region. For census data on the most frequently spoken languages in your region visit the [Census Bureau](#) or the Modern Language Association's [Language Map](#).

Translation requires both cultural and linguistic considerations. Many technical terms used to describe human trafficking may not have the same meaning or understanding when translated literally. Translations should remain faithful to original content and be understandable, culturally appropriate, and written at a basic reading level. Consider using images or fotonovelas in lieu of written content to increase access for workers with limited literacy.

Realistic and Empowering Messaging or Imaging

If you use printed materials in outreach activities, ensure the language or images used are realistic, relatable to the audience, and empowering. Images have a powerful ability to guide understanding of an issue. Therefore images portraying only sensationalized trafficking situations, such as chains and confinement, may give an inaccurate understanding of human trafficking. In contrast, images portraying real people in real jobs might be more relevant to potential victims. Empowering messages or images convey empathy and hope.

Additional Resources

The following resources include organizations specializing in human trafficking, labor exploitation and human rights abuses in the workforce. These organizations have research on the presence of trafficking in specific labor sectors and frequently conduct outreach to workers on their rights.

Government agencies with expertise in labor relations and human trafficking:

[U.S. Department of Labor](#)

[U.S. Department of State](#)

[U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

Organizations with expertise in worker rights and conducting outreach to at risk populations:

[Centros de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. \(CDM\)](#)

[Global Workers Justice Alliance](#)

[Southern Poverty Law Center](#)

[National Domestic Workers Alliance](#)

Where Can You Find Help?

The NHTRC maintains a database of service providers and resources throughout the United States. Victims and advocates, outreach workers, friends, family and others can call the NHTRC Hotline 24 hours a day to get connected to help.

Report Online or Access Resources & Referrals: www.traffickingresourcecenter.org

Call: 1-888-373-7888 (24/7)

Email: nhtrc@polarisproject.org