

# Faces of Human Trafficking: Focus on Youth

Youth who are trafficked for sex or labor face a distinct set of needs and often interact with a different set of response systems than adult victims. This video highlights the specific vulnerabilities, risk factors, and needs of youth, with a focus on the diverse range of professionals who are in a position to identify exploited youth and connect them with appropriate services. It is intended for service providers, law enforcement, school personnel, health care providers, child welfare services, juvenile justice, runaway and homeless youth programs, and youth-serving organizations such as mentoring programs, judges, and the general community.

## Key Points

- Maltreatment and poverty are risk factors for human trafficking.
- Youth are vulnerable to trafficking for a variety of reasons, including their age, developmental capacity, legal dependency on abusive adults, rejection by their family or community, and history of trauma or abuse.
- You may already be working with youth victims through separate systems or presenting issues (such as child abuse, sexual abuse, truancy, runaway or homeless youth, or criminal charges). However, if a trafficking victim is identified, additional services may be available.
- Addressing the full range of victimization that youth victims have suffered leads to better outcomes.
- It is important to acknowledge that there are challenges in providing some services (such as housing and gender-appropriate services) and to learn from communities that are successfully addressing these needs.

- The impact of trauma on a victim can be substantial. It may affect victims' ability to tell their story, make decisions, remember appointments, and more. Service providers and law enforcement need to understand how to work most effectively with young victims who show signs of significant trauma and also learn how to work effectively with mental health professionals.

## Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the vulnerabilities or risk factors of youth that traffickers can exploit?

*“Any young person is vulnerable.”*

— Melinda Giovengo  
Executive Director, YouthCare  
Seattle, Washington

2. Why might it be difficult for a young victim to self-identify as a human trafficking victim? Why might youth hesitate to disclose this victimization? Why might youth victims resist leaving abusive situations?
3. What are some of the specific needs of young victims of human trafficking, once they are out of the exploitative situation? What needs may their non-offending family members have?
4. Does your community have a protocol for responding to youth victims of human trafficking?
5. What youth-serving systems in your community may provide support to victims of human trafficking?
6. Are there specialized programs or services that might be especially helpful for individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer; immigrants; or American Indian and Alaska Native youth? What about programs for boys?
7. What happens when youth are arrested for theft, drug possession, prostitution, or delinquency in your community? Does the response change if these criminal acts are a result of being a trafficking victim?
8. What youth services are not available in your community, and how can you arrange for these services? Are service providers prepared to respond appropriately to the needs of diverse populations of trafficking victims?
9. What can be done in your community to raise awareness of sex and labor trafficking of youth?
10. What can you do with the knowledge that you have gained today?

## Supplemental Training Materials

- Provide the federal definition, from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, of “a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons” (found at 22 U.S.C. 7102).
- Provide a brief history of modern human trafficking legislation in the United States, including the TVPA of 2000 and its reauthorizations, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, and relevant legislation in your state.
- Provide any relevant Safe Harbor legislation in your jurisdiction, and discuss the resources available within the juvenile justice system for youth victims and the impact of a criminal record on juveniles.
- Provide an overview of the child welfare system in your community. Discuss how personnel in the system are being trained to better address the needs of trafficking victims.

For more information, including additional training resources, please visit [www.ovc.gov/trafficking](http://www.ovc.gov/trafficking) or [www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide](http://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide).