



Human Trafficking #71-4-22

As an advocate for people with developmental disabilities, it is important that you know what human trafficking is to prevent, identify, and report it. Since people with disabilities are especially vulnerable, you can help provide needed support.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is a crime in which people profit from the control and exploitation of others.

Here are some risk factors that make people with disabilities more vulnerable to human trafficking:

- Traffickers may seek out victims with disabilities to gain access to their public benefits such as supplemental security income (SSI) or social security disability insurance (SSDI) benefits.
- People with disabilities may require a caregiver to meet their basic needs. This caregiver can take advantage of this dependency and force them into prostitution or labor. Even if the caregiver themselves is not the trafficker, people with disabilities may have a learned response to comply with a caregiver's wishes because they rely on them for care, shelter, transportation, etc.
- Some people with disabilities may have difficulties with communication and/or speech. This may affect their ability to get help and report the abuse.
- People with disabilities may be isolated and therefore crave friendships and relationships.
- People with disabilities are often not provided sex education and may be unaware that they have the right to say "no".
- They may not realize that they have been a victim of a crime.

Other risk factors include:

- Prior abuse in the home, including sex abuse.
- Involvement with county children services.
- One or both parents abusing drugs at home.
- History of running away from home.
- Involvement in illegal activities, such as drug use.
- A mental illness.

Cuyahoga County Board Discusses Human Trafficking of Individuals with DD



Fast Facts:

- In 2021, Ohio reported the sixth highest number of human trafficking cases to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.
- Recent data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) found that the rate of violent victimization of people with disabilities was nearly four times the rate of people without disabilities. Those with cognitive disabilities experienced the highest rate of victimization among disability types.
- Since 2018, 16 cases of human trafficking of Ohioans with developmental disabilities have been investigated as exploitation MUIs.
 - » Ninety-four percent of the victims in these MUIs were females and six percent were males.
 - » The ages of people in the human trafficking cases ranged from 15-49 years. The average age was 27 years.
 - » About 30 percent of the exploitation MUIs, were substantiated. Often time, it is difficult to investigate these cases and even more challenging to prove.
 - » Twenty-three percent of those MUIs resulted in criminal convictions.



Prevention

- Make sure people know who to report to if they have questions or concerns.
- Identify safe people and places.
- Provide education and support so that people know about sexuality, body awareness, and their rights.
- Provide supports to people who may be vulnerable.
- Look for ways to connect people with healthy support systems.
- Provide ongoing training to employees on human trafficking and exploitation.

Identification

Some indicators that a person with a developmental disability may be trafficked:

- The person may show signs of sexual, physical abuse, malnourishment, or confinement.
- The person is receiving something of value in exchange for sex or sexual activity.
- Injuries go untreated.
- They may be very isolated and not allowed to have contact with their friends or family.
- There is interference when someone wants to speak to the person alone.
- The person has very little control over their money or belongings.
- The person exhibits signs of fear or trauma.
- Adhere to scripted or rehearsed responses in social interaction.
- Facility procedures fail to protect residents.
- Theft of benefits.
- Lacks official identification documents.
- Offered a job that seems too good to be true and their recruiter/prospective employer avoids giving detailed information about the job.
- Works long hours for very little pay.

Report

- If you believe you or someone you know is being trafficked, call the county board. If they are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
- Call 1-888-373-7888 or text "INFO" or "HELP" to 233733 (BeFree) for the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

Support & Referrals

- Seek professional help. There are many organizations that work with people who are victims of human trafficking.
- Connect with your [local human trafficking coalition](#).
- Use a forensic interviewer to conduct law enforcement interviews. Forensic interviewers conduct non-leading, victim-sensitive, neutral, and developmentally appropriate investigative interviews that help law enforcement determine whether a crime occurred and what happened. They can be particularly critical when interviewing victims with cognitive or developmental disabilities, which might require extended interviews.
- Never interpret monotone or lack of emotion as a lack of ability to feel.

Resources

- [Resource Guidebook for Human Trafficking Victims and Survivors with Disabilities](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline Website](#)
- [The Human Trafficking Easy-Read Guides](#)
- [Governor's Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force website](#)

