BLUE CAMPAIGN
One Voice. One Mission. End Human Trafficking.®

U.S. Department of Transportation

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESPONSE GUIDE

for the Transportation Industry

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Human traffickers often use planes, trains and ships to transport victims, hiding them in plain sight. As a transportation industry employee, you are the eyes and ears on the highways, in the air, on railways, and at sea. The nature of your profession puts you in a unique position to recognize and report potential instances of human trafficking. You play an important role because you regularly interact with members of the traveling public, and you may be able to recognize signs that someone is in danger.

This guide seeks to inform transportation industry professionals about human trafficking and its indicators so you can better prepare to recognize a potential victim and know how to report a potential case.

This guide includes information about:

- What human trafficking is
- How to recognize the crime in the transportation industry
- Key indicators for four groups of transportation employees: trucking, aviation, rail, and maritime
- Examples of human trafficking in the transportation industry
- Reporting options if you suspect someone is affected by human trafficking or is being exploited

For the purposes of this guide, the term "victim" will be used to describe an individual experiencing human trafficking. The term "survivor" will be used to describe a former victim of human trafficking.

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Human traffickers use various forms of force, fraud, and coercion to control and exploit victims.[1] These forms may include, but are not limited to, fraudulent employment opportunities, false promises of love or a better life, psychological coercion (i.e., threats of blackmail), and violence or threats of violence.[2] However, under U.S. law, causing someone under the age of 18 to engage in a commercial sex act, regardless of using force, fraud, or coercion is human trafficking.[3]

The crime of human trafficking hinges on the exploitation of another person. People often falsely believe "human trafficking" implies victims must be moved from one place to another to qualify as a victim. While transportation venues are an area of concern, human trafficking does not require a border crossing or transportation to be considered a crime.[4] It is a crime that can be committed against an individual who has never left their hometown.

Human trafficking and human smuggling are often confused. Human smuggling involves the provision of a service — typically transportation or fraudulent documents — to an individual voluntarily seeking to gain illegal entry into a foreign country. It is possible the crime may start out as human smuggling, but it can quickly turn into human trafficking. For example, a truckload of individuals voluntarily seeking to be smuggled into a foreign country could then be exploited for the purposes of forced labor or commercial sex. Human trafficking is an involuntary crime, and no border crossing is required.

1 To learn more about the definitions of force, fraud, and coercion and examples of different indicators of human trafficking, please see pg. 14-16 of the U.S Council's 2021 Annual Report: https://www.state.gov/united-states-advisory-council-on-human-trafficking-annual-report-2021/#_Toc89431164.

2 See 18 USC Chapter 77 for language on elements of the crime.

3 See 18 USC Chapter 77 for precise definitions.

4 Learn more about the difference between human trafficking and human smuggling: dhs.gov/bluecampaign.

Who It May Affect

Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, gender identity, sex, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, or socioeconomic class. In many cases, victims do not come forward to seek help because of varying vulnerability factors that may include potential language barriers, fear and distrust of authorities, or not self-identifying as a victim. Traffickers target vulnerabilities and will look to satisfy whatever need an individual has, whether it's providing basic needs like food or shelter or emotional support.

HOW TRAFFICKERS OPERATE

Human trafficking does not require an element of transportation to be considered a crime, but like any business, it can heavily depend on transportation systems to operate. Traffickers often use transportation hubs to recruit victims of sex trafficking and forced labor. Once recruited, traffickers may rely on transportation systems to transport victims to places where they will be abused and exploited. Traffickers can operate discreetly because transportation industry employees and travelers may not know the signs of human trafficking.

Traffickers often target vulnerable people with little or no social safety net, including a lack of social or family support systems, disability, membership in marginalized communities, unstable housing, previous traumatic experiences or abuse, unprotected immigration status, limited English proficiency, and inability to decipher exploitative situations. There is no single face of traffickers. They can be any gender or from any background.

INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR AVIATION STAFF

Commercial and private air travel can be used to move human trafficking victims from place to place. Signs of human trafficking can be observed in the airport or during check-in, security check, or boarding. They can also be present on the plane itself. Training aviation personnel on the indicators and how to appropriately report human trafficking is key to stopping the crime.

The Blue Lightning Initiative (BLI) is an element of the Blue Campaign, led by the Department of Transportation (DOT) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The BLI trains aviation personnel to identify potential traffickers and human trafficking victims, and to report their suspicions to federal law enforcement. Hundreds of thousands of personnel in the aviation industry have been trained through the BLI, and actionable tips continue to be reported to law enforcement. For more information, visit www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/blue-lightning-initiative.

While every situation is unique, and no single indicator can prove that human trafficking is occurring, you might experience the following indicators during your workday.

Victims of human trafficking in aviation settings may:

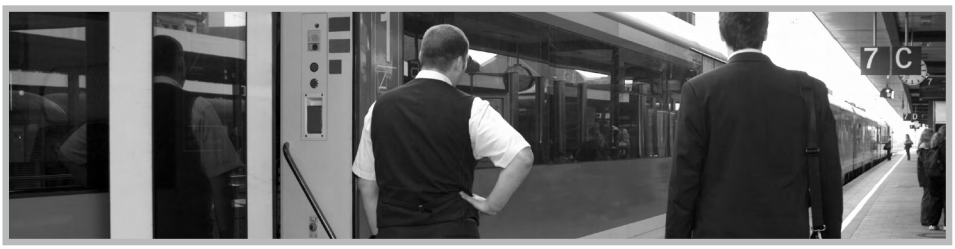
- Appear to have no control over or possession of their travel identification, money, luggage, and/or other documents.
- Have difficulty articulating reasonable, logical travel plans or answering basic questions.
- Seem to be under the influence and/or unaware of their surroundings.
- Have their movement and/or social interaction restricted by a co-traveler.
- Fly last minute on one-way flights.
- Be accompanied by a non-genuine parent/guardian.
- Appear to be deprived of food, water, sleep, basic hygiene, medical care, or other necessities.
- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, nervous/paranoid, or disassociated/ "checked out."
- Have bruises or other signs of physical abuse, restraint, and/or confinement.
- Have tattoos or scars that could indicate branding by a trafficker.
- Have scars, cut marks, burns, or other signs of self-harm/suicidal tendencies.
- Defer to another person to speak for them, appear to be coached on what to say, or their responses seem rehearsed.
- Appear to be traveling with few or no personal items, such as no purse or wallet.
- Exhibit evidence of verbal threats, emotional abuse, or being treated in a demeaning way.
- Seem to be with a noticeably older "boyfriend," "girlfriend," or romantic partner.
- Appear to be with a group of girls traveling with an older male or female.
- Dress inappropriately for their age, or in inaporopriate clothing for the weather.
- Reference someone in their group as being their "sugar daddy/sugar momma," or refer to themselves as a "sugar baby."
- Reference frequent travel to other cities or towns.
- Talk about getting paid very little or not at all for the work they do.
- Seem unaware of what items are in their checked baggage.

What to Do If You Suspect Human Trafficking

Do not attempt to confront a suspected trafficker or alert a victim to your suspicions. Follow your organization's reporting protocol or call 911 or local authorities if someone is in immediate danger.

You can report suspected human trafficking to: **Homeland Security Investigations Tip Line (HSI)** at **1-866-347-2423** or submit an HSI tip form online.

To get victim support, contact the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** at **1-888-373-7888.**



INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR RAIL STAFF

Rail police, conductors, ticket counter staff, and others encounter thousands of people on a daily basis, positioning them to identify potential human trafficking victims. Human traffickers may be more likely to travel with victims on railroads because identification from passengers is not required when traveling or purchasing a ticket, offering anonymity.

While every situation is unique, and no single indicator can prove that human trafficking is occurring, you might experience the following indicators during your workday.

Victims of human trafficking in rail transport settings may:

- Appear to have no control over or possession of their travel identification, money and/or other documents.
- Have difficulty articulating reasonable, logical travel plans or answering basic questions.
- Have their movement and/or social interaction restricted by a co-traveler.
- Seem to be under the influence and unaware of their surroundings.
- Be accompanied by a non-genuine parent/guardian.
- Appear to be deprived of food, water, sleep, basic hygiene, medical care, or other necessities.
- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, nervous/paranoid, or dissociated/ "checked out."
- Have bruises or other signs of physical abuse, restraint, and/or confinement.
- Have tattoos or scars that could indicate branding by a trafficker.
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INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR MARITIME STAFF

Coastlines and ports of entry can be particularly susceptible to human trafficking, putting maritime employees in a good position to potentially see victims when they first arrive and before they enter the country's transportation systems. Maritime employees may also observe human smuggling, which is distinct from human trafficking and involves moving a person across a country's border with that person's consent in violation of immigration laws.

The DHS Blue Campaign works with the U.S. Coast Guard to monitor the nation's waterways by training members to identify subtle cues encountered during routine operations that are often associated with cases of sex trafficking and forced labor. Areas of concern include, but are not limited to, trafficking onboard fishing vessels, people involved in search and rescue cases, and the recreational maritime sector. It's essential that maritime employees are ready to recognize, react to, and report indicators of human trafficking.

While every situation is unique, and no single indicator can prove that human trafficking is occurring, you might experience the following indicators during your workday.

Victims of human trafficking in maritime settings may:

- Appear to have no control over or possession of their travel identification, money and/or other documents.
- Have difficulty articulating reasonable, logical travel plans or answering basic questions.
- Seem to be under the influence and unaware of their surroundings.
- Have their movement and/or social interaction restricted by a co-traveler.
- Be accompanied by a non-genuine parent/guardian.
- Appear to be deprived of food, water, sleep, basic hygiene, medical care, or other necessities.
- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, nervous/paranoid, or disassociated/ "checked out."
- Have bruises or other signs of physical abuse, restraint, and/or confinement.
- Have tattoos or scars that could indicate branding by a trafficker.
- Have scars, cut marks, burns, or other signs of self-harm/suicidal tendencies.
- Defer to another person to speak for them, appear to be coached on what to say, or their responses seem rehearsed.
- Appear to be traveling with few or no personal items, such as no purse or wallet.
- Exhibit evidence of verbal threats, emotional abuse, or being treated in a demeaning way.
- Seem to be with a noticeably older "boyfriend," "girlfriend," or romantic partner.
- Appear to be with a group of girls traveling with an older male or female.
- Dress inappropriately for their age, or in inaporopriate clothing for the weather.
- Reference someone in their group as being their "sugar daddy/sugar momma," or refer to themselves as a "sugar baby."
- Reference frequent travel to other cities or towns.
- Talk about getting paid very little or not at all for the work they do.

What to Do If You Suspect Human Trafficking

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INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR TRUCKING STAFF

Traffickers take advantage of the remote location and convenience generally provided by commercial truck stops, state rest areas, and welcome centers. This puts trucking staff in a unique position to see potential signs of human trafficking. You may have direct or indirect contact with both traffickers and victims. Recognizing the signs is the first step in identifying potential situations of concern and stopping traffickers from using the transportation system to exploit people.

While every situation is unique, and no single indicator can prove that human trafficking is occurring, you might experience the following indicators during your workday.

Victims of human trafficking in commercial trucking settings may:

- Go from truck to truck.
- Spend excessive amounts of time near or in the truck stop showers and bathrooms.
- Seem to be under the influence and/or unaware of their surroundings.
- Appear to be deprived of food, water, sleep, basic hygiene, medical care, or other necessities.
- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, nervous/paranoid, or disassociated/ "checked out."
- Have bruises or other signs of physical abuse, restraint, and/or confinement.
- Have tattoos or scars that could indicate branding by a trafficker.
- Have scars, cut marks, burns, or other signs of self-harm/suicidal tendencies.
- Defer to another person to speak for them, appear to be coached on what to say, or their responses seem rehearsed.
- Have a difficult time providing logical answers to basic questions.
- Appear to be traveling with few or no personal items, such as no purse or wallet.
- Exhibit evidence of verbal threats, emotional abuse, or being treated in a demeaning way.
- Seem to be with a noticeably older "boyfriend," "girlfriend," or romantic partner.
- Appear to be with a group of girls traveling with an older male or female.
- Dress inappropriately for their age, or in inaporopriate clothing for the weather.
- Appear to have no control over their money and/or ID.
- Reference someone in their group as being their "sugar daddy/sugar momma," or refer to themselves as a "sugar baby."
- Reference frequent travel to other cities or towns.
- Talk about getting paid very little or not at all for the work they do.
- Appear to not have freedom of movement.

What to Do If You Suspect Human Trafficking

Do not attempt to confront a suspected trafficker or alert a victim to your suspicions. Follow your organization's reporting protocol or call 911 or local authorities if someone is in immediate danger.

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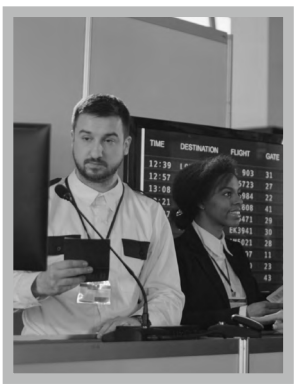
To get victim support, contact the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** at **1-888-373-7888.**

EXAMPLES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The following fictional examples are based on actual tactics that traffickers use to exploit victims. These fictional examples include indicators of suspected human trafficking. How you respond should be in accordance with your organization's protocol.



Troubling Airline Ticket Purchase

Kevin is a customer service agent at a regional airport. One afternoon, a male traveler approaches the ticket counter with a much younger woman. Kevin notices that the woman looks emotionally "checked out." The male traveler requests a one-way ticket for the young woman, but not for himself. When Kevin asks for her identification, it is the man who presents it. Despite a long-distance flight, Kevin realizes that the young woman only has a small carry-on bag with her — and that she hasn't once made eye contact with him. Once Kevin gives the total for the transaction, the man pays in cash. After the payment is processed, the man and woman proceed to airport security check-in. Concerned, Kevin immediately calls his airport's security team, and they make a report to the HSI Tip Line.

Rail Red Flag

Olivia is a conductor on a passenger train making her rounds and checking tickets shortly after departure. She comes to a group of five individuals comprised of a noticeably older man and woman and three much younger male travelers. Olivia immediately observes that in addition to wearing lower quality clothing than the older man and woman, the younger travelers seem to have poor overall hygiene. When Olivia inquires about the group's destination, the younger travelers defer to the man, who claims that they are going to see family. Olivia finds it odd, however, that there is only one bag on the overhead storage rack above the group. Later, as she watches from a distance, Olivia sees that the older man and woman exhibit signs of monitoring their area. She contacts her supervisor to discuss her concerns.

Evasive Port Visitors

Jim is a port security guard making his rounds when he notices two young women entering the port facility grounds with a middle-aged woman late at night. The women are not wearing protective clothing such as hard hats or vests to work on industrial property. Jim approaches the trio and asks one of the younger women to confirm the purpose of their visit to the port facility. The young woman looks fearful as she begins saying that they are going to a party but is interrupted by the older woman who says that they are going to visit a friend on one of the docked ships. Jim notices that the other younger woman appears disoriented and has bruises on her arms. He contacts the port police to report his observations and concerns.

Truck Stop Suspicion

Randall is a long-haul truck driver who travels cross-country throughout the year. He frequently visits truck stops and travel centers for meals and breaks. During the summer, he often sees families at rest areas taking breaks during long road trips and is used to seeing large groups piling out of vans and SUVs to buy food and use the picnic areas. During one of his truck stop breaks, he is eating a meal when a minivan pulls into the parking lot. The driver looks around before opening the rear passenger door for five people to exit. They appear to vary in age, their clothes are in poor condition, they are not speaking with each other, and one person is limping and seems to be in pain. Randall notices that their relationship is different from the typical family dynamics he is used to seeing during his stops. As Randall enters the convenience store to purchase a snack, he watches the driver escort the individuals to the bathroom while telling them to make it quick. Randall feels like something is off about the group, so he writes down the minivan's license plate in his phone. As the group leaves the truck stop, Randall reports his concerns and makes a call to the HSI Tip Line.

HOW TO REPORT HUMAN TRAFFICKING OR GET ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Do not at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert a potential victim to your suspicions. Call 911 for emergency situations — threats of violence, physical assault, emergency medical needs, etc.

Please refer to your organization's protocol for reporting suspected instances of human trafficking and engage additional support resources. Also, consider contacting your state or local human trafficking task force for support. Call **1-866-347-2423** to report suspected human trafficking to the **Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

Highly trained specialists take reports from both public and private agencies on more than 400 laws enforced by HSI, including those related to human trafficking. HSI agents and Victim Assistance Specialists responding to reports are specifically trained on a victim-centered approach to stabilize victims and connect them with support services, including providing immigration relief for qualifying victims.[5] You can also **submit an anonymous tip online via the HSI Tip Form** at: ice.gov/webform/hsi-tip-form.

Call 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733) to report suspected human trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), which takes calls from victims and survivors of human trafficking and those who may know them. The NHTH can help connect victims with service providers in their area and assist in reporting their situation to trusted law enforcement contacts. The NHTH is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in English, Spanish, and more than 200 other languages. The NHTH is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a nongovernmental organization.

Call 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or go to CyberTipline.org to report suspected child sex trafficking, sextortion, online enticement, and sexual abuse material to the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)**. NCMEC is a non-profit organization, available 24/7 to work with families, victims, private industry, law enforcement, and the public to support the identification, location, and recovery of child sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation victims.

5 Learn more about immigration assistance at dhs.gov/blue-campaign/immigration-assistance.

ABOUT BLUE CAMPAIGN

Blue Campaign is a national public awareness campaign within DHS, designed to educate the public, law enforcement and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases. Blue Campaign works closely with DHS components to create general awareness training and materials to increase detection of human trafficking, and to identify victims.

For additional human trafficking resources such as pamphlets, information sheets, and wallet cards, please visit Blue Campaign's resource webpage: dhs.gov/blue-campaign/share-resources.

ABOUT THE USDOT TRANSPORTATION LEADERS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING INITIATIVE

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) combats human trafficking by working with public and private sector stakeholders to empower transportation employees and the traveling public to recognize and report possible instances of human trafficking. USDOT's Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking (TLAHT) initiative is comprised of transportation and travel industry stakeholders working jointly to maximize their collective impact in combating human trafficking. Through TLAHT, the Department offers a variety of resources, including a transportation leaders' pledge, counter-trafficking strategies, training resources, and public awareness materials. Visit transportation.gov/tlaht for details.

Contact Blue Campaign

BlueCampaign@hq.dhs.gov
dhs.gov/bluecampaign

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Contact U.S. Department of Transportation

trafficking@dot.gov
www.transportation.gov/stophumantrafficking

@USDOT