Polaris

Freedom happens now.

Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking
Potential Indicators & Red Flags

The following is a list of red flags to look for in a potential situation of or a victim of human trafficking. Taken individually, each indicator may not be deterministic of trafficking and nor is this list meant to be exhaustive. This list is intended to encompass all forms of human trafficking; some indicators may be more strongly associated with one type of trafficking. Indicators reference conditions a potential victim might exhibit.

Common Work and Living Conditions

- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Is under 18 years of age and is providing commercial sex acts
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp/manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large and/or increasing debt and is unable to pay it off
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work
- Is living or working in a location with high security measures (e.g. opaque or boarded-up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.).

Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior

- Exhibits unusually fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid behavior
- Reacts with unusually fearful or anxious behavior at any reference to "law enforcement"
- Avoids eye contact
- Exhibits a flat affect

Poor Physical Health

- Exhibits unexplained injuries or signs of prolonged/untreated illness or disease
- Appears malnourished
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture

Lack of Control

- Has few or no personal possessions
- Is not in control of his/her own money, and/or has no financial records, or bank account
- Is not in control of his/her own identification documents (e.g. ID, passport, or visa)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for him/herself (e.g., a third party may insist on being present and/or interpreting)
- Has an attorney that he/she does not seem to know or has not agreed to provide representation services

PO Box 65323
Washington, DC 20035

TEL: 202-745-1001
info@polarisproject.org

www.polarisproject.org

Other

- Has been "branded" by a trafficker (e.g. a tattoo of the trafficker's name)
- Claims to be "just visiting" and is unable to clarify where he/she is staying or to provide an address
- Exhibits a lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or does not know what city he/she is in
- Exhibits a loss of a sense of time
- Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story