

Screening Questions for a Potential Trafficking Victim

The following are sample questions health care providers can ask in screening an individual to determine if he/she is a potential victim of human trafficking. As with domestic violence victims, if you think a patient is a victim of trafficking, you do not want to begin by asking directly if the person has been beaten or held against his/her will. Instead, you want to start at the edges of his/her experience. And if possible, you should enlist the help of a staff member who speaks the patient's language and understands the patient's culture, keeping in mind that any questioning should be done confidentially.

You should screen interpreters to ensure they do not know the victim or the traffickers and do not otherwise have a conflict of interest.

Before you ask the patient any sensitive questions, try to get the individual alone if they came to you accompanied by someone who could be a trafficker posing as a spouse, other family member or employer. However, when requesting that time alone, you should do so in a manner that does not raise suspicions (present the request as business-as-usual).

Suggested Screening Questions

Can you leave your job or situation if you want?

Can you come and go as you please?

Have you been threatened if you try to leave?

Have you been physically harmed in any way?

What are your working or living conditions like?

Where do you sleep and eat?

Do you sleep in a bed, on a cot or on the floor?

Have you ever been deprived of food, water, sleep or medical care?

Do you have to ask permission to eat, sleep or go to the bathroom?

Are there locks on your doors and windows so you cannot get out?

Has anyone threatened your family?

Has your identification or documentation been taken from you?

Is anyone forcing you to do anything that you do not want to do?

Suggested Screening Questions by Category

Fraud/Financial Coercion Questions

How did you get into this country?

Who brought you into this country?

Did you come to this country for a specific job that you were promised?

Who promised you this job?

Were you forced to do different work?

Who forced you into doing different work than what was promised?

Was there some sort of work contract signed?

Who organized your travel?

How was payment for your travel handled?

Are you getting paid to do your job?

Do you actually receive payment or is your money being held for you?

Do you owe your employer money?

Are there records or receipts of what is owed to your employer/recruiter?

Are there records/receipts of what was earned/paid to you?

How were financial transactions handled?

Are you in possession of your own legal (I.D.) documents? If not, why?

Were you provided false documents or identification?

Are you being made to do things that you do not want to do?

Physical Abuse Questions

Were you ever threatened with harm if you tried to leave?

Did you ever witness any threats against other people if they tried to leave?

Do you know about any other person's family ever being threatened?

Were you ever physically abused, or did you ever witness abuse against another person?

What type of physical abuse did you witness?

Were there any objects or weapons used in the physical abuse?

Where are these objects or weapons located?

Was knowledge of this abuse ever communicated to a person outside of this situation (e.g., police reports, domestic violence reports, hospital records, social service records)?

Was anyone else ever abused or threatened with harm in your presence?

How were medical problems handled, and who attended to them?

Freedom of Movement Questions

Is your freedom of movement restricted?

Do you live and work in the same place?

What were the conditions under which you were left unattended?

Were there instances of physical restriction through locks, chains, etc.?

Where are the locks used and who has the keys to them?

How was movement in public places handled (e.g., car, van, bus, subway)?

Who supervised your movement in public places?

How was the purchase of private goods and services handled (e.g., medicines, prescriptions)?

What forms of media or telecommunication did you have access to (e.g., television, radio, newspapers, magazines, telephone, the Internet)?

Psychological Coercion Questions

Behavioral indicators:

Who are you afraid of?

Why are you afraid of them?

What would you like to see happen to the people who hurt you (e.g., jail, deportation)?

How do you feel about the police? Why?

Environmental Indicators:

Do you live and work in the same place?

Where do you live/eat/sleep?

Where do the alleged perpetrators live/eat/sleep?

Are the living conditions between the two excessively disparate?