Taken from “Wisconsin Human Trafficking Protocol And Resource Manual,” *Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance Violence Against Women Program* (2012): 43-44

The following recommendations are presented as a guide to assist service providers who

encounter a victim of trafficking. Human service and other system-based agencies should also

follow their own protocols for assuring safety or providing services that are applicable to any

case in their jurisdiction, in addition to the guidelines provided below:

1. Assess the victim’s immediate safety concerns. Ensure that the victim is not in immediate

danger. In the event that the victim is in imminent danger of harm, service providers should

contact 911.

 Programs also need a back up plan for when 911 doesn’t respond in a helpful way,

e.g. 911 won’t respond because they don’t believe someone is in enough danger, the

victim is believed to be a liar by law enforcement, or the victim won’t give enough

information when law enforcement are called.

2. Arrange for interpretation services. If possible, identify someone who speaks the victim’s

native language, or a translator, to assist you in communicating with the victim. Victims will

be more comfortable if they are interacting with someone from their own culture. See page

86 of the Appendix for interpreter best practices.

3. Assess the immediate and long-term needs of the victim. Immediate needs may include

safety planning, translation services, food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and medical care.

Long-term needs may include housing, employment, health care, mental health counseling,

ESL classes, independent living education, and support through criminal proceedings,

immigration processes, and community integration.

4. Provide basic education to the victim about her/his rights, protections, and services available

to her/him. Use plain, straightforward language. Remember that most victims will not

understand the term “human trafficking.” They may disagree with the labels “trafficked” and

“victim,” and may identify differently. Be sensitive to the fear/mistrust that victims

experience about seeking outside help. Do not overstate your ability to protect the victim.

5. Ask the victim for her/his consent to contact federal, state, and local resources. Empower the

victim to choose the services s/he needs most. Respect the decisions of victims who decide

not to contact law enforcement or participate in the investigation and prosecution of their

trafficker(s). Give victims the time they need to decide what next steps they are willing to

take. When a mandated reporter is working with a minor victim, inform them both that law

enforcement will have to be contacted.

6. Engage law enforcement only after obtaining the victim’s consent. Assist and support law

enforcement in their efforts to protect the victim while remembering that the victim’s

wellbeing is your primary priority.

7. Prioritize the victim’s confidentiality as much as possible. Confidentiality is especially

important in securing shelter for the victim.

8. Collaborate with other organizations and public agencies to ensure the victim is connected to

services that will support her/his independence from traffickers. Be cautious about offering

to provide assistance that is outside your area of expertise. The services that trafficking

victims require are many and varied. For this reason, no single organization or person will

be able to meet all of the victim’s needs.

9. Document your communications. Documentation may be valuable in the event that the

victim chooses to seek services or report to law enforcement now or in the future.

10. Be mindful of your own personal safety while assisting a victim of human trafficking.

Traffickers are not above targeting advocates who are “interfering in their business.” Staff

should consider having unlisted phone numbers, unpublished home addresses, different

routes home, and alternative places to stay when it appears their homes are unsafe. Be

prepared to shut down for a day to a week in an emergency. Screen people before letting

them into the agency. Some programs have cameras to monitor entry into their offices.

Document threats on voice mail, phone calls, email, and notes.

11. Develop a policy for mandated reporting for minors. Certain individuals whose employment

brings them into contact with children are required by law to report any suspected abuse or

neglect or threatened abuse or neglect to a child seen in the course of their professional

duties. Anyone who suspects a child is being maltreated may make such a referral. Reports

are made to the county in which the child or the child’s family resides. It is important to note

that not all types of child maltreatment will be accepted for follow-up with county service

providers. Many child victims will be screened out and will require additional resources.

In addition to the guidelines provided above, human service and other system-based agencies

should also develop and follow their own protocols for assuring safety and providing services

that are applicable to any case in their jurisdiction.

Organizational Preparedness

As the number of trafficking victims increases in the US and Wisconsin, it becomes more

necessary for service providers to be prepared to identify, assist, and advocate for victims.

Organizations interested in developing a victim-centered approach to addressing human

trafficking should consider the following recommendations:

a) Train staff on the dynamics of human trafficking and laws, protections, and services

available to trafficking victims. Invite organizations that serve trafficking victims to

present at an in-service to describe their services.

b) Review organization policies to ensure that trafficking victims are included as being

eligible for services.

c) Develop policies that outline how to identify trafficking victims and steps that staff

should take when they encounter a trafficking victim.

d) Meet with representatives from your district attorney’s office victim witness program and

law enforcement victim assistance unit to discuss how to collaborate when assisting

victims, as well as other healthcare and service providers.