

In 2000, The United States signed the “Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)” which provided the government with tools and equipment needed in order to eradicate sex slavery as well as modern slavery Nationally as well as internationally. In 2010 Obama declared January to be National Human Trafficking and Slavery Awareness month (U.S Department of State, 2023). Human trafficking refers to when traffickers manipulate and profit off of a person(s) by having them engage in involuntary sexual acts or forced labor.

When discussing sex trafficking and forced labor there are three elements involved; acts, means, and purpose (U.S Department of State, 2022). Acts is when the trafficker recruits or transports a person for their labor, means is when the trafficker uses a force, threat of force, and or coercion towards the trafficked person, lastly purpose is the goal of the trafficker and what they want to exploit from the trafficked person. In 2021 Illinois identified 243 human trafficking cases and helped 355 survivors from those cases (Human Trafficking Hotline, 2021). Out of the 243 cases identified, 177 cases were sex trafficking, 27 cases were labor trafficking, and 15 cases included both.

Ways you can help:

Understand the language used in human trafficking:

- Debt bondage: is when the traffickers main use of force is debt manipulation. The trafficked person is told they will pay off their debt if they serve and listen to the trafficker.
- Domestic servitude: when a trafficked person is forced to work privately in a home. The perpetrator usually controls the victims finances, food, and transportation. This form of labor trafficking has little risk of detection.
- The Game/The Life: The subculture of prostitution and or the lifestyle involved with sex trafficking.

Recognizing the indicators of human trafficking can help save a life. (DHS, 2022):

- Person is disconnected from family, friends, community, etc.
- Is the person fearful, anxious, submissive?
- Dramatic change of behavior?
- Is the person lacking personal belongings and or unsuitable living conditions?
- Does the person have bruising or markings?
- Does the person have a script or seems coached on what to say?

Not all of these indicators will be present in every human trafficking case nor the absence of indicators. Do not approach said persons, instead call the National Human Trafficking Hotline 1(888)-373-7888. The hotline provides services to survivors in their area, training, and assistance.

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