Addressing Child Sex & Labor Trafficking in Healthcare Settings

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Objectives

1. Identify risk factors and possible indicators of sex or labor trafficking of minors

2. Describe the developmental aspects particularly relevant to trafficking of minors that may impact provider-patient interactions

3. Be familiar with a screening tool for adolescent sex trafficking risk
Trafficking Examples

• Hector is a 17 yo male from a small village near Villa Nueva. His parents wish to get him out of Guatemala due to violence. His mother works with an employment agency to get him a job in Akron, in construction.

• Louisa is a 10-year-old female whose mother lost her job during COVID. The family is now facing eviction. The mother tells Louisa to ‘go with the landlord and do whatever he wants…”

• Sophia is a 14 yo female who has a boyfriend in a gang. She is made to sell sex at a local motel as part of her affiliation with the gang.
Severe Forms of Human Trafficking

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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
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<th>Purpose</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recruits</td>
<td>Force</td>
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TVPA, 2000; Justice for Victims Trafficking Act, 2015
# Sex Trafficking of a Minor

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TVPA, 2000; Justice for Victims Trafficking Act, 2015
Individual
- Hx maltreatment
- Homeless/runaway
- LGBTQ+ status
- Substance misuse
- Hx with JJ, CPS
- Unaccompanied minor

Relationship
- Family violence
- Familial poverty
- Family dysfunction
- Forced migration

Community
- Tolerance of sexual exploitation
- High crime rate
- Lack of community resources/support
- Transient male populations

Societal
- Gender-based violence & discrimination
- Cultural attitudes/beliefs
- Natural disasters
- Political/social upheaval
Do Trafficked Persons Seek Medical Care?

- 82.5% seen at the local children’s hospital within past year
- 42.9% had received health care within the 2 months prior to identification
- Persons seek care in variety of settings
  - 63% Hospital/ED
  - 57% any type of clinic
  - 30% Planned Parenthood
  - 23% Regular doctor

1 Horner 2017; 2 Varma 2015; 3 Lederer & Wetzel, 2014
Sex and Labor Trafficking

Chronic Conditions

PTSD

Depression/Suicidality

Work-related injuries

Malnutrition

Chronic Pain

Greenbaum, 2015; Lederer, 2014; Turner-Moss, 2014; Dank 2016
How might Hector, Louisa, & Sophia present for care?
Why might Hector, Pat and Louisa NOT disclose their exploitation?

Developmental:

- Adolescents unlikely to tell adults about risky behavior
- Increased desire for autonomy
- Lack of experience and insight
- Limited executive functioning
- Feelings of responsibility
- Dependency, emotional needs
- Don’t ‘rat’ on others

Lavoi, 2019; Barnert, 2019; Barnert, 2019
Possible Indicators of Trafficking: First Impressions

Unfamiliar with city or where staying

Companion domineering, controlling  Patient intimidated, submissive

False Information
Possible Indicators of Trafficking

- Consider adverse health effects of trafficking….
  - Work-related injuries
  - Malnutrition
  - Multiple STI’s
  - Pregnancies, abortions, or miscarriages
  - Illicit drug use
  - Current or past history of:
    - Sexual assault
    - Inflicted Injury
- Visible signs of physical abuse
Screening for Human Trafficking

Using Trauma-Informed, Rights-Based Approach
Keep Your Goals in Mind….

- Obtain disclosure (marked with a cross)
- Assess risk
- Educate & offer resources

GOALS
Adolescents: 6-Item Screen

1. Drug/alcohol use in past 12 months
2. History running away
3. History with police
4. History broken bones, knocked unconscious, cuts needing stitches
5. History STI
6. Number of sex partners (>5 is ‘Yes’)

> 2 Yes answers = positive screen

(Greenbaum, 2015; Greenbaum, 2018; Kaltiso, 2018)
Follow-Up After Screen

1) Follow up on positive answers from screen (open-ended questions)

2) Have you ever been in a position where you’ve had to consider exchanging sex for something you wanted or needed (money, food, shelter or other items)?

3) Has anyone ever asked you to have sex with another person?
Universal Education and Resources

• Talk about
  – Healthy relationships
  – Impact of violence on health
  – Harm reduction techniques
  – Human trafficking

• Community resources, national resources

(Futures Without Violence, 2017)
Conclusions

- Working with trafficked minors presents challenges related to developmental factors and status of children/adolescents in society
- Screening for risk may be helpful in the health setting
- Universal education with resources also beneficial
Thank you!

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Institute on Healthcare and Human Trafficking:
www.vIHHT.org


Bibliography


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