



HER CAMPAIGN

IDENTIFY THE SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

How to Identify Patterns of Control,
Exploitation, and Vulnerability in
Your Community



Human trafficking in the United States often hides behind everyday settings.

It can occur in neighborhoods, schools, hotels, farms, private homes, online platforms, and legitimate businesses. Because it is built on control, the warning signs usually reflect patterns of restriction, fear, and dependency rather than dramatic scenes.

1

Loss of Freedom and Control

Trafficking is built on control. When a person's independence is restricted or their voice is silenced, it may signal coercion or manipulation.

- Not allowed to speak for themselves
- Someone else insists on answering questions
- Appears coached, fearful, anxious, or hypervigilant
- Expresses fear of "getting in trouble"

2

Restricted Access

Limiting access to identification, communication, and finances is a common tactic traffickers use to maintain dependence.

- No access to personal ID, passport, or Social Security card
- Someone else holding identification "for safekeeping"
- No control over money, bank account, or phone
- Does not know their address or current location

3

Sex Trafficking Indicators

Sex trafficking frequently involves coercion, manipulation, or the exploitation of individuals in commercial sex.

- Any minor involved in commercial sex
- Controlling or significantly older partner
- Frequent hotel stays or online ads managed by someone else
- Sudden expensive items with no clear source
- Signs of physical abuse, exhaustion, or untreated medical issues

4

Labor Trafficking Indicators

Labor trafficking often appears as extreme workplace exploitation combined with threats or debt that prevent someone from leaving.

- Unpaid wages or wages far below legal standards
- Excessive hours with few or no breaks
- Ongoing “debts” that keep increasing
- Living at the worksite or dependent on employer for housing
- Threats of deportation, arrest, or harm for trying to leave

4

Youth Specific Red Flags

Young people are particularly vulnerable to grooming and online recruitment tactics that can quickly escalate into exploitation.

- Repeated running away or homelessness
- Sudden behavior changes or withdrawal
- Truancy or secretive online activity
- New older “boyfriend” or online contact providing gifts

Recognizing these patterns is the first step toward prevention and intervention. Awareness can help interrupt exploitation and connect individuals to safety and support.

If someone is in immediate danger, call emergency services. In the United States, the National Human Trafficking Hotline is available 24/7 at 1-888-373-7888 or by text at 233733. For survivors looking for safe housing, call Rescue America’s 24/7 rescue hotline at 833.599.FREE

To support survivors of human trafficking with life saving services, [join our giving community today.](#)



HER CAMPAIGN