

Sex Trafficking and Traditional Advocacy: Protecting Alaska Native Women

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What is Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a part of human trafficking.

Under federal and state law human trafficking includes *recruiting, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bond, or slavery.*

Trafficking occurs in labor exploitation - often in restaurant work, sweatshop factory work or migrant agricultural work.

Sex trafficking victims are forced through fraud, threats, beatings, physical and psychological torture to engage in prostitution, pornography and exotic dancing/stripping.

Sex Trafficking is Not New or Unique

Sex Trafficking is part of the continuum of violence against women and children

It's about power & control, and cultural beliefs

In Indian Country, sex trafficking began with colonization and has the same root causes as battering and other forms of rape

Safety and accountability are priorities

Trafficking may be part of battering.

Women/survivors may not call it trafficking, but batterers have been reported to prostitute their wives and girlfriends

Women and other survivors who are battered rarely talk about the sexual violence they've experienced because of shame, self/victim-blaming and the impact of the trauma itself or identify it as trafficking

The majority of domestic violence shelters have/are working with victims of trafficking without knowing it or meeting this part of healing

The federal government estimates that between 18,000 and 50,000 persons are trafficked in the U.S

Within the U.S., traffickers also target people who are vulnerable because they are homeless, are juvenile runaways or have substance abuse problems

People from other countries, as well as from the U.S., can be trafficked

People can be trafficked within the U.S. as well as into and out of the country

Traffickers target reservations and urban areas because of poverty and addiction levels

Who Are Victims of Sex Trafficking?

Victims of sex trafficking are vulnerable, isolated, “invisible” to most of society

The majority are young and female

The many of victims of sex trafficking have been victimized sexual and other forms of violence previsouly

Many are “throw away kids,” or chronic runaways that no one is looking for

Non-citizens or people without legal status have an increased risk

Many are vulnerable because of emotional or mental instability or disabilities

Severe poverty can make many targets for trafficking.

Potential Indicators:

signs of drug addiction

coached or rehearsed responses to questions

sudden change: attire, behavior, relationships or

possessions/expensive items

uncharacteristic promiscuity and/or references to
sexual situations

discomfort with being touched—avoidance of touch

a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older

and/or controlling

an attempt to conceal scars, tattoos, or bruises

a sudden change in attention to personal hygiene
tattoos (a form of branding) displaying the name or
symbol of a trafficker
hyper-arousal or symptoms of anger, panic, phobia,
irritability, hyperactivity, frequent crying, temper
tantrums, regressive
behavior, and/or clinging behavior
hypo-arousal or symptoms of daydreaming, inability
to bond with others, inattention, forgetfulness,
and/or shyness

Chris Stark; 2014 Advocacy for Sex Trafficking Victims

Impact on Victims

Devastating, long-term consequences, including physical and psychological trauma, disabilities, disease (including HIV/AIDS), brain injuries, chronic pain, drug addiction, unwanted pregnancy, unwanted abortions, malnutrition, social ostracism, and death.

Lack of personal safety, isolation, emotional distress, homelessness, poverty, drug and alcohol additions, mental illness, difficulty forming healthy relationships.

The core of advocacy remains the same:

Become well-informed about the dynamics and impact of sex trafficking, they are constantly changing

Know available resources; build allies and other resources

Build a trust-worthy relationship

Listen. Let the person who's been trafficked guide advocacy

Use trauma-informed approaches and methods

Remember there is no quick fix. That's the nature of trafficking, not necessarily a sign you're not doing your job

How to Respond: What to Say, What to Not Say

Do not personalize how victim/survivors react to you

Many will not see you as a “savior” or “rescuer” and will react toward you with hostility

Do not respond negatively or with hostility

Do not challenge and use direct questioning right away—need to build rapport

Do not show signs of disbelief, shock, doubt or treat her as a suspect

United Nations Guide to Ethics & Human Rights in Counter-Trafficking

Do no harm

Prioritize personal safety and security: identify and minimize risks

Get informed consent, with no coercion

Ensure anonymity and confidentiality to greatest extent possible

Prepare referral information, be prepared for emergency intervention

Do not hesitate to help others: put your information to good use

Language

- Remove shame and blame through language
- Victim, survivor, harmed, prostituted (not prostitute, whore, etc)
- You don't deserve this

Provide hope

- There is a way out, people care, I/we can help you
- You can change your life

Create trust

- Do not lie, do not overstate what you can do, your actions must back up your words
- Listen to them, use active listening techniques

Do not judge

Safety First- defined by woman or child

Find commonalities if you struggle with judgment

What do you need or want right now?

What would make you feel safer, more comfortable now?

Coming to us/Working with us will help you.

You are a victim, not a criminal.

What happened to you was wrong, and the person who did this to you should be in jail

How to Respond: What to Say:

You have a right to live without being abused.

You deserve the chance to become self-sufficient and independent.

By helping us, you are helping yourself.

We can help get you what you need.

We can help to protect your family

And be sure to back up what you say by acting in a trustworthy manner!!

Providing Advocacy for Victims of Trafficking & Prostitution

Be prepared for common reactions to trauma:

- memory lapses
- need for a reconstructive phase for survivors
- Discrepancies in “story”
- outbursts and disorientation even after being removed from situation
- inability to remember some or many details
- blocking out major events
- continuing anxiety
- needing breaks and rest

From Rescue and Restore

Advocacy for Victims of Trafficking & Prostitution

Use knowledge & skills you have when working with sexual assault & domestic violence victims

Patience

Do not use a “savior mentality”

Build trust

Be real

Stand back in self/space

Do not take away her agency

Providing Advocacy for Victims of Trafficking continued

Maintain strict confidentiality

No judgment—be aware of your own reactions of shock and disgust

Model love—ask if she would want abusive behavior for someone she cared for, then why is it okay for her to go through it

Language—do not force language upon her

Ask about her dreams & goals

Encourage her strengths

Gently reframe her experiences in context of exploitation

Safety Planning

Victim knows situation best

Ask her what she needs and then prioritize

What are her concerns, i.e., may need to flee, but won't leave child/pet?

What has she done in the past?

What are possible outcomes if this action is taken? If it is not taken?

Identify who else can help—in her life, in the system?

What is she comfortable with? Who is she willing to engage?

Identify possible options.

Use What You Know About Trauma-informed Advocacy!

GO SLOW

Healing is a process & victimization is exhausting

Holistic healing:

Acupuncture

Massage

Meditation

Traditional ceremonies

Indigenous medicines

Cope by desensitizing social stigma and messages

Learn to calm self

Nature, animals

Physical activities

Safety:

Confidentiality
is key

Sometimes
Family and
Community
aren't safe.

Cultural Factors for Healing

Culture can
give us
purpose

Belonging

Support
System

Find Comfort

Find
Championship

Encourage
Building
Relationships

Unity

If there is one thing the Alaska Native community teaches, it is unity. We look out for the collective well-being rather than individual well-being. We know that we must take care of each other to survive in the harsh environments we live in. Today we may have many more comforts, but we are facing social issues and must rely on each other to heal and move forward as a community.

These cultural practices are skills, strengths, resources, supports, and coping strategies that can all help a person deal more effectively with stressful situations, and reduce and/or eliminate risks to individuals, families, and communities as a whole.

What are seen as cultural barriers when accessing services in HUB communities can also be seen as protective factors in rural Alaska Native communities. We should not have to choose our homes based on access to services.



Traditional Roles



Storytellers to carry on history and identify Protocol/Behaviors
How to live ,both spiritually and common day to day tasks.
Care for the young ones.



Have Children(carry on the families)
Hunting, Gathering, Preserving and the Work of the family. Protecting the Elders, Teaching the Young People and Preserving the family



Being cared for, playing, (most play was related to adult work), Keeping joy in the Family/Tribe.
Learning, Watching



Learning, Finding who they are becoming,
Helping care for elders and infant children.
Working with Adults to learn skills. Exploring what their role and identity are.

National Human Trafficking Resource Center

If you think you have come in contact with a victim of trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.3737.888

This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, identify local resources to help victims, and help coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives.

For more information on human trafficking visit
www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking

Much of the power point on sex trafficking was adapted from one created by Christine “Chris” Stark, survivor activist, university instructor, artist. Her books include “Nickels: A Tale of Dissociation” & “Not For Sale.”

Some of this presentation was also adapted from a National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center Power point titled: Sex Trafficking & Domestic Violence: Intersections

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