

What to do if You or Someone You Know is a Victim of Human Trafficking

Remember: Always call the police in an emergency.

If you suspect you or someone you know is a victim of trafficking;

- Consult local law enforcement.
- Do not take any perceived risk or try to intervene in a situation that has the potential to turn violent.
- If you approach the victim, always choose the right time and place to have a full discussion, when you know you are both safe.
- Establish rapport with the victim. He or she may have been taught to distrust outsiders, including law enforcement. Listen carefully and let the person tell the story at his or her own pace.
- Be aware and understanding of symptoms of trauma, as trafficked victims have likely dealt with traumatic experiences such as violence, isolation, persistent fear and psychological manipulation. Symptoms of trauma may include memory loss, irritability, depression, hyper-vigilance and anti-social behavior.
- Ask only questions that are necessary to provide assistance. Do not ask questions out of simple curiosity, as recounting details may risk re-traumatizing the victim.
- Focus on determining what the person's immediate needs are, for example food, water, medical care, shelter, a phone call, etc.
- If possible, enlist the help of someone who speaks the person's language and understands their culture. If available, trained translators are the best option.
- When providing support services, provide the option of a female or male staff member whenever possible.
- Provide information on the services available in your community and through federal and provincial government programs.
- Remember: Confidentiality is essential for the victim's safety.

Trafficking victims should first and foremost be treated with dignity and respect, as persons needing protection and services but able to make choices for themselves. Provide as much information as possible (your role, what you can offer, what services are available, and what will happen next) so the person can make an informed decision and begin to regain control of his/her situation.