



Human Trafficking Update

August 2018

Doctors, Hospitals Get Trained on Trafficking

Our nation is keenly focused on the opioid epidemic, which kills tens of thousands of people each year. One consequence of the epidemic that doesn't receive as much attention is the increase occurrence of sex trafficking that can accompany addiction.

Emergency rooms can become a place of first contact for people who are addicted, trafficked, or both. That's why legislators and medical groups are stepping up efforts to ensure doctors and hospital staff are trained to recognize and report suspected human trafficking.

Polaris, an anti-trafficking organization, [reported](#) a 13 percent increase in the number of trafficking cases it identified in 2017. Nearly 88 percent of self-identified sex trafficking survivors had been seen by a health care

provider while being exploited, according to a 2014 [study](#) published in the Annals of Health Law. More than 40 percent were seen by a primary care practitioner and about a quarter by a dentist.

Lawmakers are also taking action with new laws. The House passed bipartisan legislation, [H.R. 767 \(115\)](#), calling for the Department of Health and Human Services to create a program to train providers to recognize human trafficking victims and refer them to social services. The Senate has not yet voted on the measure. Several states are taking legislative action as well.

To identify victims, doctors can look for recurring chest pains, injuries without easy explanations, or uncertain answers to basic questions.

Learn more (subscription required):

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/health-care/article/2018/08/anti-sex-trafficking-activists-enlisting-providers-667106>



**NATIONAL HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
HOTLINE - OPEN 24/7
1-888-3737-888**

U.S. Forces Assist In Anti-Human Trafficking Operation in Colombia

Sometimes, it takes a global village to bring down a crime ring. In July 2018, U.S. and Colombian law enforcement came together to bring down more than a dozen sex trafficking operations in Cartagena

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Bogota, the HSI Bogota Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU), and the Colombian Attorney General's office came together as part of Operation Vesta. Operation Vesta targeted businesses, homes, and hotels that were known to support human trafficking, sex tourism, prostitution and child exploitation.

About 250 people were rescued. Seven traffickers were arrested, including a high-ranking Colombian Naval officer, two Colombian National Police (CNP) officers, and three Israeli nationals.

Learn more: <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/18-arrested-largest-anti-human-trafficking-operation-colombian-history>

Safe Home for Boys Honors Its First Year of Service

The U.S. Institute Against Human Trafficking honors the one-year anniversary of its first and only boys safe homes in the country for young male victims of sex trafficking. Opened in July 2017, the safe home project is designed for biologically born males, who identify anywhere on the gender spectrum, aged 10-17.

The safe home offers many support services, including residential, academic, social, mental health, supportive living, advocacy, and transportation services. Church services and spiritual support are also made available.

Since it opened, the safe home has been able to enroll many of the boys in public school, integrating them into mainstream society as an important step to rebuilding their lives.

Those who wish to support the boys' safe home can donate at: <https://usiaht.org/get-involved/>

New Documentary Lifts the Curtain on Trafficking

At the Tribeca Film Festival earlier this year, a new documentary was released. "Blowin' Up" focuses on the story of Judge Toko Serita, who presides over the Human Trafficking Intervention Court in Queens, NY.

In her courtroom, women are offered the choice between going to trial, or participating in counseling.

If the individual has not been arrested again within 6 months, her charges are dropped and the case is sealed, with no admission of guilt. Serita reports that nearly 80 percent of the women in her court room opt for counseling.

This special court is designed to help women exit the life of trafficking and start fresh.

Learn more about the film and request a screening: <https://www.blowinupfilm.com/>



Just Ask Prevention Launches Safe Zone Campaign

Just Ask Prevention, an organization based in northern Virginia that focuses on educating communities to prevent human trafficking, has launched a new fundraising campaign. Funds will support its Safe Zone Program, which identifies key parts of the community that would be accessible to victims of exploitation.

Learn more and give here:

<http://justaskprevention.org/donate/>

Restoration One Ninety-Nine Needs Arts Therapy Specialists

Restoration One Ninety-Nine is a Christian-based organization that houses sex trafficking survivors and helps them along the road to recovery. The organization is looking for mental health practitioners who treat sexual trauma, and who would like to learn more about how various art forms can help a survivor heal.

Free workshops are being held on September 21 and October 26 from 3-4:30 at The Lodge @ McLean Presbyterian Church.

To reserve your space, please send an RSVP at least 24 hours before the workshop to info@R199.org.

Warrenton Town Hall on September 5

Just Ask Prevention will participate in a town hall on human trafficking at Taylor Middle School in Warrenton, VA on Wednesday, September 5 at 6:30 pm. The event is open to the public.

Speakers will include representatives of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the local sheriff's office, the Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force, and the mother of a child who was trafficked.

The event will include an outline their plan to bring awareness to local children and families. Tactics include:

- An "in-school" curriculum for sixth- through 12th-graders.
- A curriculum for elementary-school students.
- Creating "safe zones" for kids with trusted adults to talk to.
- Training community leaders about what to look for and how to handle it.
- Educating parents about what to look for and how to prevent it.

Learn more:

https://www.princewilliamtimes.com/news/confronting-sex-trafficking-not-one-more-victim/article_5a2bbe63-0328-52a7-9355-646ec1a4f05c.html

A New Ally In the Fight? Uber

Uber has nearly a million drivers across the United States. They are active 24-7, and they can see people at some of the most vulnerable times of their lives. Uber recognizes the unique ability this gives the company to make a difference in stopping human trafficking. As a result, it has started educating its drivers on how to recognize trafficking, and what to do if trafficking is suspected.

Its driver app and its larger-market [Greenlight hubs](#) where offers Uber drives tips, hotline numbers and other information. Several reports have credited Uber drivers with identifying and stopping trafficking from occurring.

Uber is also working on ways to identify when someone is requesting a ride to a john, and to refuse service as a way to make trafficking more difficult – and less profitable – for the pimp.

Learn more: <https://www.modbee.com/news/local/crime/article216738345.html>

Two Trafficking Activists Awarded by U.S. State Department

This past June, two trafficking survivors, now activists, were honored by the U.S State Department at the launch of its 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report in Washington, D.C. The report looks at how foreign governments are fighting trafficking.

Blessing Okoedion became an activist fighting trafficking in Italy and Nigeria after she herself was trafficked. Okoedion travels to rural areas in Nigeria to educate women and girls about the risks and how to avoid being trafficked. She also helps survivors to exit the life and begin their journey to healing, connecting them with other services.

While Nigeria has declared trafficking one of its top priorities, at least 40 countries have identified trafficking victims from Nigeria within their borders.

Learn more about her story: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/07/30/625786252/she-was-tricked-into-a-computer-store-job-that-wasn-t-there>

Another honoree was Francisca Awah, who was a domestic slave in Kuwait. Awah now tells her story to raise awareness of the issue, and she established a nonprofit organization called Survivors' Network. The organization provides interim employment for trafficking survivors on a poultry farm, as well as microfinance, so women can set up their own businesses.

Learn more about her story: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/30/world/francisca-awah-tip-report-hero/index.html>

Human Trafficking Update

*A regular newsletter
created by the*

*Human Trafficking Task
Force of the Annandale
United Methodist Church*

*Submit story ideas to
Kristine Grow, Editor,
krstngrow@gmail.com*

School's In Session: What to Watch For

This information is provided by Just Ask Prevention, which focuses on education and awareness as the key to preventing victims of trafficking.

Traffickers will look for children who:

- Lack a sense of belonging to others
- Don't feel respected or valued by family or friends
- Base their self-worth on popularity or relationships
- Are willing to keep secrets, including the relationship
- Do not have a good relationship with parents
- Are looking for a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Are often bored with not much to do
- Spend a lot of time away from family or friends
- Are willing to take directions and believe the lies and false promises.

Parents and other adults can protect children by:

- Knowing what your teen is doing
- Being involved
- Talking with your teen about sensitive topics
- Building your teen's self-esteem and confidence
- Talking to your teen about friendship
- Keeping an open dialogue
- Providing ongoing support for your teen

Learn more at justaskprevention.org