

VICTIM SUPPORT

Law Enforcement,
First Responders, and
Healthcare Professionals

What You Can Do

1. **Get to know HSI in your area.** Call the HSI Tipline at **1-866-347-2423** to get connected to the HSI Special Agents and Victim Assistance Specialists working on human trafficking in your area and build a relationship with them, even before you have a case that can be investigated jointly or you have a victim who needs services. Collaborate to develop leads and share case information and intelligence.
2. **Get to know the task force in your area.** Human Trafficking Task Forces comprise federal, state, local, county, and tribal law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as NGOs providing victim services. Find out whether or not there is a Human Trafficking Task Force in your area by visiting www.bja.gov. If one exists, establish a relationship and join their efforts.
3. **Learn from a survivor.** Watch our video featuring human trafficking survivors describing their experience and the importance of immigration relief. Show this video to those you work with and encourage them to find out more. Go to: www.uscis.gov/humantrafficking.
4. **Learn more about T and U visas.** For more information about T or U visas, or to watch a video describing the steps in the T and U visa process, or to download helpful Law Enforcement Certification Guides, or to get in touch with USCIS with more questions:
 - Visit www.uscis.gov/humantrafficking;
 - Contact us at 802-527-4888; or
 - LawEnforcement_UTVAWA.vsc@uscis.dhs.gov.
5. **Watch our Roll-Call Videos.** These videos explain the importance of immigration relief and your role in the process. Watch them and ask your department or agency to show them to others. Go to: www.dhs.gov/Bluecampaign.
6. **Visit the Blue Campaign website.** For more training, outreach materials, victim assistance materials, and information on how you can join the fight to end human trafficking, go to: www.dhs.gov/Bluecampaign. “Like” us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/bluecampaign. Or, contact us at BlueCampaign@hq.dhs.gov.

MAKE THE CONNECTION. CLOSE THE CASE.

Supporting and stabilizing victims to enable case investigations and prosecutions

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Collaboration between Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement

Most states now have their own laws criminalizing human trafficking, making this form of modern-day slavery a violation of not only international and federal law, but also state laws. As a result, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in particular U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), pursues collaborative investigations with other law enforcement agencies at the international, federal, state, local, county, and tribal level. We also work with those that have investigative authority, such as code inspectors, labor officials, and child welfare investigators. Our goal is to work with our law enforcement colleagues to protect and stabilize victims, prosecute offenders, and prevent additional human trafficking cases.

Working with Victims: A Victim-Centered Approach

A victim-centered approach places equal value on the identification and stabilization of victims and the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. Victims are crucial to investigations and prosecutions. Each case and every conviction changes lives. We understand how hard it can be for victims to come forward and work with law enforcement because of their trauma. They need help to feel stable, safe and secure.

A victim-centered approach to investigation and prosecution is essential to accomplish our law enforcement mission. To successfully conduct a human trafficking investigation and prosecution, you need a victim who can tell their story and testify as a witness. When you begin working with trafficking victims they may:

- Fear law enforcement
- Not identify themselves as a victim
- Not tell a complete story, or will use rehearsed responses
- Identify with the trafficker

These behaviors can be frustrating to deal with initially. It is crucial to understand **these behaviors are indicative of the level of control traffickers exert over victims**, and that victims need support and understanding in order to help you make the case investigation—and subsequent prosecution of the perpetrator—a success.

When you encounter a potential victim of trafficking in the course of your law enforcement duties, you can begin to develop rapport and establish trust by:

- Immediately connecting the victim to a victim specialist who can connect them to support services. Assistance is not tied to successful prosecution.
- Taking time to explain who you are, answer questions they might have, and acknowledge and address their fears.
- Being sensitive to cultural differences and language barriers. Use an interpreter when needed.
- Conducting interviews in a neutral location only after their needs have been assessed and any urgent needs have been met.
- Being patient and giving the victim time to stabilize and begin their recovery process.

Victim-Centered Resources

In addition to collaborating with you on investigations, DHS offers additional victim assistance programs and services. If you need assistance working with a victim or don't have resources available to you, or you want to connect a victim to services in your community we can help you. Contact the HSI Tipline (information on the back).

Victim Assistance Specialists – can help by connecting the victim to community-based groups to provide medical, mental health, legal assistance, case management, and other services. DHS has an emergency assistance fund, which is available for emergency victim assistance needs in the absence of other resources.

Forensic Interview Specialists – can conduct developmentally appropriate, legally defensible, and victim and culturally sensitive forensic interviews. If the victim is a child or extremely traumatized, these Forensic Interview Specialists can aid in your investigations.

Immigration Relief: A Critical Tool for Law Enforcement

Many foreign victims do not have legal status in the United States, which is a reason victims may not come forward to work with you. Traffickers also use victims' lack of legal status to exploit and control them. Immigration relief is a critical tool that helps you because it provides a way for victims to feel secure and stabilize their status in the United States. This means that victims can become strong and active participants in an investigation or prosecution.

Without legal status, victims may not be able to stay in the United States to continue working with you. DHS provides three types of immigration relief in order to encourage victims to come forward and work with you.

Continued Presence (CP) – is a form of short term immigration relief that you can request through your local ICE office (Call the HSI Tipline to get connected to an agent locally). CP allows potential witnesses to remain in the U.S. during an investigation. CP should be made available as soon as you identify a victim; the investigation does not have to be complete prior to requesting CP. If you later determine that the individual is not a victim, CP can be terminated.

T or U Nonimmigrant Status (T or U visa) – are longer term forms of immigration relief that the victim applies for through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), often with the assistance of a community advocate or attorney. The T visa is for human trafficking victims. The U visa is for victims of a variety of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, involuntary servitude, and other serious offenses. Both require the victim to assist or cooperate with you in an investigation or prosecution (unless in T visa cases the victim is under 18, or suffers trauma).

Law Enforcement Declaration or Certification

Even though the victim, or the advocate or attorney completes the main portion of the T or U visa application, you play a role in telling USCIS how the victim has assisted you. The applicant may ask you to fill out a USCIS law enforcement declaration or certification form, which informs USCIS about the victim's in your case. For the T visa this is not required evidence. You can learn more at www.uscis.gov/humantrafficking. This form alone does not grant any immigration benefit. It is only one piece of evidence USCIS reviews before making a decision on an application. You always have discretion to complete a declaration or certification. USCIS requires additional evidence of eligibility and does a full background check. Only USCIS has the authority to grant or deny this immigration benefit.