



The Fight Against Human Trafficking in the United States

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According to the International Labor Office, an estimated 40 million people are victims of human trafficking. Although it seems shocking that anyone in today's world would be forced into child labor, sex trafficking, or other similar situations, it's something that happens in nearly every country, including the United States. Approximately two million children are sold each year through sex trafficking, and this crime has been reported in all 50 states. Sex traffickers target children from all races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and zip codes.

Strong prevention and prosecution measures are needed to combat this growing problem in the United States, and human trafficking prevention and sex trafficking prevention have recently been addressed by the United States government. [Selah Freedom's](#) Prevention Program provides a major solution in the fight to end sex trafficking, as their curricula for K-12th grade students and adults, helps train them on how to stay safe and recognize sex trafficker's tactics through an age appropriate format.

94% of trained youths indicated that they know the body safety rules to keep themselves safe; 92% can name three safe adults they can talk to if they feel unsafe; 91% know the difference between a secret and a surprise.

Selah Freedom has trained 24,729 youth and adults to stay safe and take action against sex trafficking.

The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking

In October 2020, President Donald Trump released a National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, which directs the federal effort to end human trafficking and sex trafficking throughout the United States. The plan announced a focus on the implementation of a whole-government approach to fighting human trafficking.

The National Action Plan approved a large grant package to fight human trafficking, administered through the Department of Justice (DOJ); this package includes the first-ever grants for safe housing for trafficking survivors.

The National Action Plan also prioritized funding to enhance prosecution of human trafficking and enhance states' front-line sex trafficking prevention efforts and prosecution of traffickers.

To further this goal, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) created the Center for Countering Human Trafficking, which established a centralized location for experts who fight trafficking to coordinate from, and expanded its efforts in the fight against trafficking and forced labor.

The National Action Plan also calls on U.S. Government agencies to commit to strengthening the prevention of human trafficking, including protection of victims through support and intervention and holding traffickers accountable through investigative efforts and effective prosecution.

Specifically, it calls on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to take the following action steps:

- Establish an HHS certification to enable trafficking victims who are foreign nationals to be eligible to apply for federal and state benefits and services if they meet certain criteria.

- Bund resources for human trafficking and sex trafficking prevention, including HHS's Office on Trafficking in Persons, Children's Bureau, and Family and Youth Services Bureau. These offices and bureaus also facilitate community-coordinated responses to human trafficking of youth through programs, grants, training, partnerships, and other resources. HHS will provide training for HHS professionals working with child welfare programs, health care systems, the homeless, domestic violence victims, runaways, adolescent pregnancy prevention programs, unaccompanied children, as well as community programs for Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and other indigenous peoples of North America.

- HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) will implement the ACF National Human Trafficking Prevention Action Plan, which provides a framework for federal agency collaborations to improve the quality and scale of the United States' human trafficking prevention efforts. Utilizing a "collective impact" strategy grounded in the HHS principle of violence prevention, ACF will coordinate with government and private sector partners to reduce human trafficking in the United States.

Getting Involved

Although these government initiatives are an important first step, everyone has the ability to shine a light on the darkness that is sex trafficking. Unique ways to get involved include volunteering with anti-sex trafficking organizations like Selah Freedom, and donating to support their programs for survivors and at-risk youth.

Fundraising for anti-sex trafficking organizations is another way to get involved with human trafficking philanthropy. Raising money for anti-trafficking organizations can mean everything from participating in a fund drive to meeting with members of local civic organizations to offer information and request donations.

Perhaps most importantly, everyone can be on the lookout for human trafficking victims and can help law enforcement identify and catch traffickers. Since victims of human trafficking often cannot seek help on their own, it's absolutely critical for everyone to be aware of the signs of trafficking and to take action when they see them. For those who work in the public sector or the medical field, knowing what to look for is especially important, as the nature of this work makes it more likely that they will come in contact with trafficking victims.

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Red Flags of Trafficking

Here are some of the signs a person may be a trafficking victim:

- ☐ Has unusual or harsh restrictions at work, such as no breaks
- ☐ Works excessively long hours or days
- ☐ Lives and works at the worksite
- ☐ Exhibits a great deal of anxiety or depression
- ☐ Shows fear at the mention of law enforcement or government officials
- ☐ Offers a seemingly scripted story to explain abuse
- ☐ Does not speak for themselves
- ☐ Exhibits signs of poor hygiene, fatigue, malnourishment, or abuse

Recognizing the signs of human trafficking and sex trafficking is only the first step in the prevention of these unthinkable crimes. To truly help sex trafficking victims, everyone must do their part to become better informed, to raise awareness, and to speak up and take action. Volunteering, fundraising for sex trafficking philanthropy, spotting the red flags of trafficking, or dedicating a career to preventing and ending trafficking are all ways to get involved and make a difference. If you see something, say something. Call Selah Freedom's intake hotline at 1-888-8-FREE-ME.

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