

MODULE

15

# “let’s talk”

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION



### LEARNING GOALS

During this module, participants will:

- Learn the definition of human trafficking and recognize that human trafficking experiences vary greatly.
- Identify common signs that someone may be experiencing or may be being recruited into a human trafficking situation.
- Understand when it is necessary to reach out to a trusted adult or peer about a potential trafficking or exploitation situation and learn how to initiate that conversation.

## DEFINE THE ISSUE

It is difficult to provide reliable statistics related to human trafficking, but it is estimated that 27.6 million people were victimized worldwide during 2021 (International Labour Organization, 2022). The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) is a federal law that defines human trafficking in the United States into two categories: sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Trafficking occurs when an individual is required to work or engage in commercial sex through force, fraud or coercion. An important exception is that anyone under the age of 18 that is induced into commercial sex is considered to be experiencing human trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud or coercion is present.

Sex and labor trafficking can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from sex or labor exploitation. The biggest way to distinguish trafficking and exploitation is by whether or not a person has the ability to leave the situation without harm or threats of some type of harm. There may not always be enough information to determine whether a situation qualifies as exploitation or trafficking, but the steps for providing support and reaching out to a trusted adult or authority figure for help are similar.

Factors such as unstable living situations, migration, substance use, abuse, mental health, child welfare system or juvenile justice involvement, unstable housing, and homelessness increase one's vulnerability for exploitation and trafficking. In fact, many young people who reach out to the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) for support cite one or more of these factors in relation to their current crisis, desire to leave home, runaway episode, or homelessness experience.

In this module, participants will learn about trafficking and exploitation, how traffickers leverage vulnerabilities to recruit and exploit victims, to identify potential trafficking situations, and when to seek help or notify a trusted adult about a situation of potential trafficking or exploitation.

Please note the topics covered in this module have the potential to re-traumatize individuals who have experienced similar trauma. To address these sensitive issues, it is important to use a trauma-informed approach, which can include:





- Providing a listening ear free of judgment;
- Sharing content cautions throughout the module to flag specific content;
- Informing participants, they can excuse themselves if they need to, and providing support as needed;
- Monitoring participants for signs of reaction; and
- Creating a safe and supportive environment where participants feel comfortable opening up, should they choose to do so.

## ICONS

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



## MODULE ACTIVITIES

	ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
	A. What is Human Trafficking?	10 minutes	Discussion
	B. Human Trafficking Mythbuster	10 minutes	Discussion/Activity
	C. Know the Signs	20 minutes	Discussion/Activity
	D. Having a Conversation with Someone You Trust	20 minutes	Discussion/Activity
	Total time required: <b>60 minutes</b>		

## MATERIALS

- “A-M-P Model” Handout
- “Human Trafficking Mythbuster” Worksheet
- “Know the Signs Scenarios” Handout
- “Having a Conversation with Someone You Trust Scenario” Handout
- “Active Listening Techniques” Handout

## ACTIVITY 15A

### WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?



10 minutes

**INTRODUCE** the topic of human trafficking and exploitation.

**HAND OUT** the “A-M-P Model” handout.

**STATE** Human trafficking can look like a lot of different situations and can affect anyone, but it is common for the victim to know their trafficker. In fact, many individuals in trafficking situations do not realize they are experiencing trafficking because they are being manipulated by someone they know and trust, and oftentimes even love. Young people who have left home, have unstable housing, or have involvement with the juvenile justice or child welfare system are particularly vulnerable. The A-M-P Model on your handout is a way to break down the definition of human trafficking and help us understand what elements human trafficking situations have in common. Trafficking occurs when a trafficker takes an **Action**, uses **Means** like force, fraud, or coercion, for the **Purpose** of compelling someone into labor services or commercial sex. Labor services means some type of work. Commercial sex means the exchange of a sex act for something of value – that could be money, a place to stay, food, a ride somewhere, etc. An important exception is that anyone under the age of 18 that is in a situation where they are providing commercial sex is considered to be experiencing human trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud or coercion (the Means) is present. An example of this could be a 16 year-old who ran away from home agreeing to provide sex acts in order to couch surf at the home of someone they recently met.

**READ** through the “A-M-P Model” chart section by section from the handout.

**ASK** Are there any questions?

**DISCUSS** responses.

## THE A-M-P MODEL

THE A-M-P MODEL		
ACTION	MEANS*	PURPOSE
Induce Recruits Harbors Transports Provides or Obtains	Force Fraud or Coercion	Commercial Sex (Sex Trafficking) or Labor/Services (Labor Trafficking)

\*Minors induced into commercial sex are human trafficking victims – regardless if force, fraud, or coercion is present.

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From *Polaris | National Human Trafficking Hotline*. Retrieved 2023 from <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking>

## ACTIVITY 15B

### ACTION PLAN



10 minutes

**INTRODUCE** the “Human Trafficking Mythbuster” activity.

**HAND OUT** “Human Trafficking Mythbuster” worksheet.

**STATE** Human trafficking and exploitation are very complex subjects that can be hard to understand, so it is common for misinformation and myths to circulate. It is important that we debunk myths about human trafficking so we can better understand the realities of the situations people are experiencing and so we can start to recognize signs that may cause concern. Let’s test what we just learned. The worksheets that were just handed out list four statements about human trafficking. Please fill out the worksheet with your answers to the statements listed. We will then go over the statements and answers together.

**ALLOW** 3 minutes for participants to fill out their worksheets.

**READ** each statement one by one to the participants.

**ASK** participants to raise their hand for whether they believe the statements are myth or fact.

**READ** the answer after responses are shared for each statement.

STATEMENT	MYTH OR FACT?
Traffickers target people they don't have relationships with.	<b>Myth!</b> It is common for traffickers to target those they have trusting relationships with, such as romantic partners, family members, and friends/acquaintances.
Child labor laws exist in the United States, making it a country where youth labor trafficking does not occur.	<b>Myth!</b> Although laws prohibit child labor, labor trafficking still happens in the United States. It is reported less than sex trafficking but this does not mean it happens to a lesser degree.
Only women and girls experience trafficking.	<b>Myth!</b> While women and girls are more frequently reported to be victimized through trafficking, anyone can be victimized through trafficking including men and boys.
If someone consents to a sex act for a place to sleep it is not considered sex trafficking.	<b>It Depends!</b> Any young person under 18 years old involved in commercial sex, regardless of consent, is legally considered to be experiencing sex trafficking. For adults, this situation would not be considered sex trafficking if they were not forced, coerced, or defrauded into providing sex acts for something of value.

**ASK** Does anyone have any questions?

**DISCUSS** responses.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING MYTHBUSTER

Traffickers target people they don't have relationships with.



MYTH



FACT

Child labor laws exist in the United States, making it a country where youth labor trafficking does not occur.



MYTH



FACT

Only women and girls experience trafficking.



MYTH



FACT

If someone consents to a sex act for a place to sleep it is not considered sex trafficking.



MYTH



FACT



## ACTIVITY 15C

### KNOW THE SIGNS



20 minutes

**INTRODUCE** the importance of knowing and recognizing the signs of human trafficking, exploitation, and recruitment.

**STATE** Before we start, I want to emphasize that this topic can be sensitive and difficult to discuss. If at any point during the activity you feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed, it's okay to take a break or step away from the conversation.

As we previously discussed, sex and labor trafficking can occur in many different types of situations. Therefore, it is important to recognize what some of the common signs are and what you can do if you or someone you know may be in a trafficking situation. Common signs that trafficking or exploitation is occurring or recruitment or grooming is taking place include, but are not limited to:

- Anyone under the age of 18 engaging in sex acts for something of value;
- Receiving sudden or frequent gifts from an individual or romantic partner that recently became a part of one's life;
- Developing an intense relationship quickly over social media without having met the individual in person;
- Disclosing providing sex acts for something of value and feeling like they can't stop the behavior;
- Feeling pressured to stay in a situation or job where one has expressed interest in leaving;
- Receiving threats of physical or some other type of harm after expressing desire to leave a situation or job;
- A job that pays or has benefits that exceed those routinely provided for the same or similar type of work;
- A job that requires an individual to move without providing adequate details about the work;
- An employer or someone else that withholds access to one's identification or legal documents;
- Monitoring and/or isolation at the hands of an employer or someone associated with the situation; and
- Working in dangerous or inhumane conditions.

More information about the signs of human trafficking can be found on the National Human Trafficking Hotline website at [humantraffickinghotline.org](https://humantraffickinghotline.org).



The National Human Trafficking Hotline is a 24/7 confidential hotline that provides support and resources to people that are experiencing human trafficking. If you or someone you know might be experiencing trafficking you can call them any time at 1-888-373-7888 for information and help. NRS works very closely with the National Human Trafficking Hotline. NRS is available to discuss the situation with you first and help you get connected with the National Human Trafficking Hotline if that is a more comfortable option. Remember, you can call or text NRS at 1-800-RUNAWAY or chat with them online at 1800RUNAWAY.org.

Individuals who experience trafficking should have agency over their choices and steps for handling their situations, but this can be tricky with young people under 18 years old. As much as possible, we should try to direct individuals to trusted adults or resources like the National Human Trafficking Hotline or NRS that can help them explore their options and get them connected with appropriate programs or services that can help more directly.

**STATE** Now we are going to do an activity where we review example scenarios of young people who are experiencing or are at risk for experiencing human trafficking to practice identifying some of the signs we just discussed. As you read through and start to recognize some of the signs, try to put yourself in their shoes. Consider who you would trust to share your experience with and who you might turn to for help.

**HAND OUT** the “Know the Signs Scenarios” handout.

**READ** Scenario 1:

Hannah is 18 years old and dreams of a modeling career and frequently posts pictures of herself on social media striking a pose. She is contacted in her DMs by someone who claims to be a modeling agent. After talking briefly, he sends her a plane ticket to come to his studio. When Hannah arrives, he takes her out and tells her she has to show some people in the business “a good time” to get contracts and they would be meeting with them soon.

**ASK** What are the signs this could turn into a potential trafficking situation?

**DISCUSS** responses.

Sample responses might include:

- An unsolicited message from an unknown person on social media offering her something
- The person purchases a plane ticket for her without meeting or knowing her
- Telling her she has to show some people in the business “a good time”

**READ** Scenario 2:

Damon is 16 years old and was kicked out of his home last year. He dropped out of high school to get a job but he is struggling to provide for himself making minimum wage. While browsing online for a new job, Damon finds an ad for an entry level door-to-door sales job with the potential to earn commissions that could pay way higher than any similar job he had seen. And it says he would get to travel! There is not any information listed about where he would travel, other than it would be by bus and his lodging would be paid for. Damon thinks this is a good option because then he wouldn't have to worry about paying rent either. Damon met someone briefly at a drop-in center in the past that said he accepted a similar job, and since he hadn't seen him in a while he assumed the job was going really well. The ad only provided a phone number to call, so Damon is considering reaching out for more information.

**ASK** What might have seemed off about the nature of the job advertisement? Do you think this has the potential to turn into a situation of labor exploitation or trafficking if Damon takes the job? Why or why not?

**DISCUSS** responses.

Sample responses might include:

- The job advertisement was posted with a pay rate or potential commission that exceeds the amount typically associated with that type of work
- Minimal job details listed in the job posting
- Limited contact information listed in the job posting
- Damon has not heard from his friend who took a similar job

## KNOW THE SIGNS SCENARIOS

**Directions:** Read the scenarios listed below. Consider what parts of the scenario could be potential signs of human trafficking or recruitment for human trafficking.

### SCENARIO 1

Hannah is 18 years old and dreams of a modeling career and frequently posts pictures of herself on social media striking a pose. She is contacted in her DMs by someone who claims to be a modeling agent. After talking briefly, he sends her a plane ticket to come to his studio. When Hannah arrives, he takes her out and tells her she has to show some people in the business “a good time” to get contracts and they would be meeting with them soon.

### SCENARIO 2

Damon is 16 years old and was kicked out of his home last year. He dropped out of high school to get a job but he is struggling to provide for himself making minimum wage. While browsing online for a new job, Damon finds an ad for an entry level door-to-door sales job with the potential to earn commissions that could pay way higher than any similar job he had seen. And it says he would get to travel! There is not any information listed about where he would travel, other than it would be by bus and his lodging would be paid for. Damon thinks this is a good option because then he wouldn't have to worry about paying rent either. Damon met someone briefly at a drop-in center in the past that said he accepted a similar job and since he hadn't seen him in a while he assumed the job was going really well. The ad only provided a phone number to call, so Damon is considering reaching out for more information.

## ACTIVITY 15D

### KNOW THE SIGNS



20 minutes

**INTRODUCE** “Having a Conversation with Someone You Trust” activity.

**STATE** When you or someone you know is, or you think might be, experiencing sex or labor trafficking, talking to someone about it can be very challenging. You could feel embarrassed, a lack of control, or be worried about getting yourself or someone you care about in trouble.

In this activity, we will break into smaller groups and practice having a conversation with someone who trusts you enough to tell you about their situation that they may or may not know is a trafficking situation. The goals of this activity are to consider how you could 1) offer support to them in a time of need and 2) encourage them to reach out to a trusted adult for help.

I will be handing out two hand outs: one with the scenarios and the other with some tips to help you listen and communicate more effectively in difficult or serious situations. You may have already received the “Active Listening Techniques” handout in a previous module.

As with the previous activities, if you feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed at any point during the activity, it’s okay to take a break or step away from the conversation.

**DIVIDE** participants into groups of 2-4.

**HAND OUT** “Having a Conversation with Someone You Trust Scenario” and “Active Listening Techniques” handouts.

**READ** the “Having a Conversation with Someone You Trust Scenario”:

Your friend, Amanda, is 16 years old. She met a guy briefly at a party and they began following each other on social media. After the party, he contacted her because he saw she posted about a breakup with her baby’s father. They quickly began going on dates. He is older, 19 years old, and everything Amanda ever dreamed of. He is a great listener, very supportive, and he frequently buys gifts for her and items she needs for her baby. Amanda has fallen in love and believes she has found the person she will build her family with. One night he takes Amanda to a party and he tells her that she has to be “nice” to his friends because the money that he uses to buy things for her and her baby doesn’t grow on trees. Amanda does not want to but does so reluctantly because he makes it seem like no big deal and because she feels indebted to him since he does help her out with her baby. But then it becomes more frequent. He keeps all the money Amanda earns and tells her he is saving it so she can move out of her parents’ house and they can buy a house to live in together. When Amanda told him she did not want to do it anymore he hit her and said she needed to contribute to their life together if she wanted to be with him. He says he will stop loving her and will tell her parents what she has been doing if she keeps making trouble.

**ACTIVITY 15D** →

## ACTIVITY 15D CONTINUED

**STATE** Now, in your group, practice having a supportive conversation with Amanda about what she has shared with you and how you could try to encourage her to talk to a trusted adult about what is going on. After you discuss in small groups, we will come back together and discuss as a larger group.

**ALLOW** 7 minutes for participants to discuss in small groups.

**MONITOR** the activity. Answer questions as they arise and track the time.

**RECONVENE** the larger group.

**DISCUSS** the scenario and responses as a larger group. The large group discussion should be 10 minutes and cover the following elements:

- The importance of non-judgment and creating a safe space for open communication - making sure Amanda knows you are a supportive friend she can reach out to talk to;
- Talking to Amanda about her comfort with reaching out to a trusted adult;
- Identifying any potential trusted adults in Amanda's life (parents, teachers, coaches, friends' parents, etc.);
- Providing Amanda with the phone number for the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888) so she can talk more about what she is experiencing and her options;
- Providing Amanda with the phone number for the National Runaway Safeline (1-800-RUNAWAY) if she leaves home or finds herself needing transportation back home after leaving; and
- Informing Amanda about her options to report her situation to law enforcement if she is comfortable.

**ASK** Does anyone have any questions?

**DISCUSS** responses.

## HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE YOU TRUST SCENARIO

**Directions:** Review the scenario below as if your friend has shared the information with you. Your friend may or may not know the situation she is experiencing is considered to be human trafficking. Consider how you would have a safe and supportive conversation with your friend and how you could try to encourage her to talk to a trusted adult about what is going on.

Your friend, Amanda, is 16 years old. She met a guy briefly at a party and they began following each other on social media. After the party, he contacted her because he saw she posted about a breakup with her baby's father. They quickly began going on dates. He is older, 19 years old, and everything Amanda ever dreamed of. He is a great listener, very supportive, and he frequently buys gifts for her and items she needs for her baby. Amanda has fallen in love and believes she has found the person she will build her family with. One night he takes Amanda to a party and he tells her that she has to be "nice" to his friends because the money that he uses to buy things for her and her baby doesn't grow on trees. Amanda does not want to but does so reluctantly because he makes it seem like no big deal and because she feels indebted to him since he does help her out with her baby. But then it becomes more frequent. He keeps all the money Amanda earns and tells her he is saving it so she can move out of her parents' house and they can buy a house to live in together. When Amanda told him she did not want to do it anymore he hit her and said she needed to contribute to their life together if she wanted to be with him. He says he will stop loving her and will tell her parents what she has been doing if she keeps making trouble.

## ACTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

Active listening involves demonstrating interest, empathy, and understanding. Using active listening techniques can help create a safe and supportive space for someone to share their experiences and feelings. The pillars of this pyramid are key elements of active listening.





## Door Openers

Start the conversation with open-ended questions or statements that show you are ready to listen and provide support. For example, you could say, “What’s going on?” or “I’m here to listen if you want to talk.”

## Minimal Leads

Use verbal cues like “Mhmm,” “I see,” or “Alright” to show that you are engaged and attentive during the conversation. These small responses encourage the person to continue sharing their thoughts and feelings.

## Closed Questions

While open-ended questions are essential for encouraging deeper conversation, closed questions that can be answered with a yes or no can also be helpful at times. For example, you might ask, “How long has this been going on?” or “Have you told anyone else about this?”

## Open-Ended Questions

Encourage the person to share more by asking open-ended questions that show you genuinely want to learn about their experiences. For instance, you could ask, “Can you tell me more about what is happening?”

## Clarifying

If the person mentions something unfamiliar or unclear, ask clarifying questions to ensure you understand their perspective fully. For instance, you might ask, “What do you mean by that?”

## Paraphrasing/Summarizing

Repeat some of the words and phrases the person used during the conversation. This technique can help them feel heard and understood. For example, you might say, “It sounds like this has been going on for a long time.”

## Reflection

Go deeper in understanding their emotions and feelings by reflecting back on what they said. This can show that you’re actively trying to comprehend the underlying emotions. For instance, you could say, “It seems like you’re feeling overwhelmed by everything that’s going on.”

## Tone and Pace

Be mindful of your tone and pace during the conversation. Speak with a calming and supportive tone and allow the person to speak at their own pace.

## Silence

Be comfortable with moments of silence. Sometimes, the person may need time to process their thoughts or emotions, and silence allows them the space to do so.

## HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

- A. The A-M-P Model
- B. Human Trafficking Mythbuster
- C. Know the Signs Scenarios
- D. Having a Conversation with Someone You Trust Scenario
- E. Active Listening Techniques

## REFERENCES

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## RESOURCES

National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888. The National Human Trafficking Hotline is operated by Polaris. They have an extensive list of resources on both sex trafficking and labor exploitation

<https://polarisproject.org/>

The Office on Trafficking in Persons operates under the Administration of Children and Families and provides numerous resources for survivors of trafficking.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/victim-assistance/services-available-victims-trafficking>

Polaris offers the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's guide for victims and survivors of trafficking to block adverse information from their credit reports that resulted from their trafficking experience.

<https://polarisproject.org/resources/new-credit-repair-process-for-survivors/>

U.S. Department of State provide in-depth information about the laws behind trafficking and exploitation.

<https://www.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/>