

Is it Human Trafficking? You Might be Surprised.



Housekeepers, Nannies and Other Domestic Workers Have Rights You Should Know About

Many families depend on domestic workers like nannies, housekeepers, and home health aids to help them manage their busy lives and households. And in most cases, these arrangements benefit everyone involved.

But occasionally, things can go badly wrong resulting in situations that amount to labor exploitation and, in the worst cases, to labor trafficking. **Labor trafficking** is defined as the use of force, fraud or coercion to compel someone to work for your benefit or profit against their will.

So right about now you might be thinking “that’s not me. No one I know would ever be involved in human trafficking.” But it’s more complicated than you think.

HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Labor exploitation is the act of treating a worker unfairly for your own benefit. In situations involving domestic workers, this might include:

- Isolating the worker, keeping her or him away from family, friends or others outside the home
- Having a live-in worker sleep on the floor, or live in a garage, closet, laundry room or other place in your home not intended for sleeping
- Not paying the worker what he or she had been promised before taking the job or is owed for performing labor



These situations become labor trafficking if the worker reasonably believes she or he has no choice but to stay in the bad situation.

For example, threatening - even casually or in an offhand way, to

- “call immigration” or have a worker deported
- Call friends or family members to embarrass or shame them
- Throw them out with no money or no resources
- Harm them in some way

May constitute labor trafficking because a threat may be used to coerce someone into working

Holding, restricting, or otherwise making a foreign national workers’ passport or other legal documentation unavailable to them at any time is an element of labor trafficking.

Deliberately lying about or misrepresenting a workers’ wages, job duties or working conditions to recruit them into your employ might, in some contexts, be an element of labor trafficking.