

Human trafficking is a complex crime. The elements of the crime itself can be difficult to prove, and victims may be hesitant to or unable to report to law enforcement. Even in cases where a victim is identified, securing victim cooperation continues to be a struggle for law enforcement. Training law enforcement on how to identify victims and investigate the crime of human trafficking is vital for the eradication of this crime. Law enforcement officials are not the only government employees likely to encounter a victim of human trafficking. Those employees, such as educators and those working in social services departments, also have a high likelihood of encountering a victim or a potential victim should also receive training on how to identify human trafficking. This training should also include information on what services are available to victims.

Training for Law Enforcement

Ensuring that law enforcement officials are properly trained on the issue of trafficking is vital. All fifty states and the District of Columbia have anti-human trafficking laws. Patrol officers need to be trained on indicators of human trafficking, types of trafficking networks, and ways to interview potential victims. Investigators and detectives should be trained on how to interview potential victims in a way that recognizes and is sensitive to the trauma experienced by victims. These officers should also be trained on the complexities of the law and the tools available for investigating these cases. In many cases, training will be necessary as part of a larger paradigm shift in treating victims of human trafficking as victims and not as criminals.

Training for Educators

Educators play a significant role in identifying victims of human trafficking and also in helping those victims receive services. Training educators on the warning signs of human trafficking and how to respond to these signs will help to not only identify and assist current victims but also help to prevent future exploitation and victimization. Educators aware of warning signs and behaviors are in a position to intervene before a potential victim is trafficked.

Training for Department Health and Human Services/ Child and Family Services

State agencies, like Departments of Health and Human Services or Child and Family Services, play a key role in providing assistance to victims of trafficking. Training for officials in these departments will help to ensure that victims are receiving the type of services that they need. Services that help victims recover can also benefit law enforcement, because victims may be more likely to assist in investigations once they are free from their trafficking situation and feel some security.

Training is critical to an anti-trafficking response because it ensures that victims are identified, cases are brought to justice, and that anti-trafficking laws are actually implemented.