

# **Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) Human Trafficking Screening Tool**

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## Introduction

### **Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) Human Trafficking Assessment**

Human trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of obtaining labor or commercial sex act. However, force, fraud, and coercion are not necessary when the victim is under the age of 18 for sex trafficking. Force, Fraud, and Coercion are necessary in labor trafficking regardless of age.

**Goal:** Primary objective of this tool is to identify and support victims of human trafficking in RHY.

Human trafficking is a crime that exploits people with increased risk; such as individuals who do not have a stable positive support system.

#### Guiding Principles:

1. Clients will be met with the same integrity regardless of what's disclosed.
2. Not all victims of human trafficking identify as being "victims" especially if they are unaware of risk class and unequal power dynamics.
3. Trauma shows up non-linearly, so may the responses.
4. The response, from first contact to long-term services, should be trauma-informed.

5. Only verbalize or promise assistance you can provide (*ie housing or shelter referral*).

## Tips for administering:

### Logistics

- Utilize screening tool as talking points in conversation, not a script. Make sure your conversation is focused as such to be answering intake questions and framed to poise screening questions.
- Be mindful of unconscious bias in your assessment and administered screening tools regardless of perceived gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.
- Create a comfortable, welcoming and safe environment allowing for a calm and trauma-informed environment.
- Offer food and beverages, if possible.

### Conceptual

- Focus on active listening and avoid leading the conversation. Let your client do the talking.
- Be clear about your role, **and** limitations.
- Being mindful of the stages of change and be able to assess where your client is at. This is helpful in guiding the conversation.
- Victims of trafficking rarely self-identify as victims. If they refer to their trafficker as a boyfriend or boss, mirror their language.

## Facilitation

- Ask who else, where else, and what else questions to avoid leading the conversation and to build additional context (more details on this in the following section).
- Try to not take many notes; The more relatable and less scripted you can be the more they will be open in talking. Engage in lighter topics throughout the conversations to help in building trust.
- Utilize context clues in conversation to gauge appropriate time for screening questions.
- Make sure you have an open stance in body language. Don't fold arms, be engaged, and posture yourself in a way that communicates openness.
- Match eye levels with the client to de-escalate any power imbalance moments.
- Avoid wow's, oooh's, and ahhhh's as they guide conversation and can be reactive for the client as this can be retraumatizing.

## Safety

- Check in on a client's safety, i.e "Are we safe to talk in this space" "Is there anything I can do, or anywhere we can go while we talk for you to feel safer?"
- Prioritize your clients needs based on safety. Remember that you are coming alongside the client, it is important that they still have agency over their choices of engagement.

## **UNDER 18 - Mandated Reporting is Necessary**

Report if you suspect or have reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused or neglected. Answers to many of the questions in this screener may trigger a mandated report. When administering this tool, it's important to be upfront about your obligation to mandated reporting. Refer to your agency and states guidelines for making a report.

## Advocacy Tips and Tools:

Stages of change has a significant body of data that supports implementation during service provision and delivery. They have been included in this screening tool for those reasons. Included on pages 2 - 4 are diagrams and explanations for the stages of change. Assessing which stage a RHY is within the stages of change is helpful when determining which questions are relevant. Think of the stages of change as guidance through the conversation.

Understanding which stage RHY are at can provide some translation to pushback or seemingly undesirable behavior. For instance, if providing a referral to housing, post-secondary scholarships, and free transportation to a RHY who is in stage 1 of “no not me” may result in them saying no or pushing back on the referral; however, someone in stage 4 of the action phase would likely be willing to accept the referral.

## Who Else, Where Else, What Else Questions

- Who else has been impacted in this way? (you are not alone)

- Where else have you been able to stay in the past? (identify where people have supported you and could possibly support you again)
- What else can I provide for you? (I am here for you)

Asking who else, where else, and what else questions can facilitate conversations to add context without leading the conversation. These are questions that guide runaway and homeless youth to lean into their natural support systems. They offer comfort by expressing interest in the runaway homeless youths perspective without overly asserting our own perspectives of their life. Adding objectivity to our analysis of the presence of trafficking in their life.

*“Being mindful of the stages of change, being able to assess where your client is at is helpful in guiding the conversation.”*

- Jacquelynn Loos Community Advocate Supervisor R.E.S.T.

## Stages of Change

### **Stages of Change Introduction:**

Goals of the following human trafficking screening tool is to identify red flags, indicators, and risk class and to engage the potential RHY in services throughout a continuum of care. RHY experiencing human trafficking need providers who understand the difficulties and barriers faced when exiting a trafficking experience, making understanding the stages of change imperative to supporting RHY experiencing trafficking.

Runaway and Homeless Youth can enter, exit and re-enter at any stage of the stages of change and often do.





## *Detailed Stages of Change*



### *Relapse:*

We can expect relapse throughout a survivor's journey through and out of the sex trades. When a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation decides they want to pursue recovery, relapse is a large piece of recovery, such as returning to their trafficker, even multiple times. While this can feel discouraging, most people who successfully exit exploitation do not immediately enter a lifetime free of sexual exploitation. We can expect survivors of human trafficking to cycle through these 5 stages several times before stability becomes sustainable and long term.



### *"No not me" or Pre-Contemplation:*

In this phase people are typically not interested in any type of help. People in this stage typically are defensive about their engagements or situation. They may deny that it's an issue or may see it as their only option. During this phase, one can typically present as defensive against support efforts and exit plans out of the sex trades or exploitive labor situations. They are not interested in these plans at this time; however, it doesn't mean they won't be later. This is a phase where consistent outreach efforts may be effective in building trust.



### *"Maybe Me" Or the contemplation phase*

People are spending time contemplating their current situation and problems. During this stage of change people often evaluate the options they have outside of the exploitative situation. During this phase, they may contemplate escaping the exploitation or begin to plan how this can be accomplished. This is the phase where they may be open to some type of engagement, *example* harm reduction or street outreach services.



*“Now what?” or Preparation Phase*

Manifests in statements such as and similar to “Things have got to change” or “Where can I get help?” This is the optimal stage to give resource referrals as people are gathering information such as by talking to social service providers or calling a hotline. Coming alongside someone in this phase and helping them navigate and identifying resources helps them build ownership, accountability, and agency over their exit plan. You can add value to a survivors feeling of safety in their plan in a trauma informed way.



*“Let’s make it happen” or the Action Phase*

“I know anything can mess up at this point and I just want to be prepared and set up for success.”

People are empowered and believe they can make it out and start envisioning a positive future in this phase. They engage in services and feeling hopeful. It is imperative to have regular engagement with the client

during this phase. Keep in mind this is the shortest stage, making it essential to make a tangible safety plan during this phase. Survivors of the human trafficking often pursue healing in a variety of ways. This is a great time to make warm handoffs to additional service referrals from vetted agencies and therapists.



### *Totally Possible or the Maintenance Phase*

People in the maintenance phase are engaged in services, building a stable support system, skill building, and actively avoiding relapse. Stability is setting in and survivors are learning to heal and move forward with hope. People in the maintenance phase can anticipate situations that would lead them back to the exploitation or their trafficker and prepare to avoid them in advance. We start to see the deeper healing, positive self-talk and believing that long term exit is possible. In this phase survivor peer to peer mentoring or survivor support groups are recommended. Seeing others with lived experience, that have achieved long term sustainability and healing is a very effective practice.

\*Adapted from the [“Possible” Campaign](#)

## **Safety Plans**

Safety planning is focused on increasing the safety of human trafficking victims and potential at risk RHY. Safety plans provides an evaluation of dynamics/situation, gathers information to better prepare, and create backup plans to further a RHY safety.

*Components of a Successful Safety Plan:*

1. Clear, concise and direct about tangible options for responding when concerns for safety are present.
2. Understanding that trafficking may not be tied to the survivors current needs or safety plan. Facilitate a client driven safety plan.
3. Evaluation of potential threats, harms, or risks and named safety concerns.
4. Divert the client away from threats of harm by avoiding or reducing the threats.

Safety planning can have lifesaving implications such as avoiding suicide, overdose, homicide, and other violent and dangerous situations. When serving survivors of human trafficking, safety planning can be useful during any stage of someone's trafficking experience, whether they are currently being trafficked or are exiting.

*Principles of a Client Driven Safety Plan:*

1. Each individual is the best experts in their own lives and as such are experts in their own recovery.
2. Assessor should tailor the safety planning to the individual's unique situation and circumstance.
3. Utilize a safety plan for conceptualizing a future where the RHY can and deserves to be safe.

Safety planning is a necessary component of serving survivors of human trafficking. Look online for a safety plan that fits your agencies and programs needs as they vary greatly. Utilize a strength-based tool to further your response to human trafficking.

### *Sample Safety Plans and Tips*

We have included samples of safety plan questions and reasonings behind this model:

- [Workforce Curriculum ACWE Additional Information Toolkit](#): Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Youth
- Information on what to include on a [safety plan for a child](#)

## **Power and Control Wheel**

We have included the power and control wheel. Use this as a reference for power dynamics that are often present in trafficking scenarios. This tool should help answer what does physical and sexual violence look like with further context of coercive, controlling and abusive relationships as well as human trafficking.

Abusive situations occur outside of what's represented on the power and control wheel. These forms of power and control should also be considered when administering these tools, mental, emotional, and chemical/addiction abuse are often just as present and relevant in the lives of survivors of human trafficking. It is important to understand that not all traffickers use the same tactics to control their victims. Therefore, it is important to understand that the abuse can look very different and the reaction and understanding survivors of abuse may have is nonlinear.

## (Polaris Project Power and Control Wheel)



## Red Flags, Indicators, and Basic Vernacular

*Instructions:* There are 17 paths for screening covering an array of life domains pertinent to trafficking survivors case management. Ranging from safety to transportation and follow up questions in each subject. These questions are designed as a guide for engagement and should not be read as a script. Should any of these questions not apply, skip over them.

These questions are designed to be asked to any runaway and homeless youth regardless of Commercial Sexual Exploitation presence. They are designed for general and specific screenings in such a way that adds value to case management for any case without any accusations of engagement in the sex trades or trafficking. They are also designed to engage in meaningful service-oriented dialogue without requiring a full disclosure.

The indicators below are not exhaustive or cumulative in nature and each indicator taken alone may not indicate a potential trafficking situation. Many of these signs may be common for runaway and homeless youth but may also indicate human trafficking.

Sex Trafficking Indicators				
Evidence of a controlling partner	Lying about age	Won't make eye contact	Multiple cell phones	New unidentified source of income
Secrecy and vagueness	Untreated medical/dental problems	History of travel to	Scripted responses	False ID



		multiple cities.		
Multiple ID	Sexually explicit profiles on social media	Multiple social media/dating accounts	Multiple healing stages of bruising: purple, red, blue, brown.	Under 18 involved in commercial sex
Highly deflective: frequently changing the direction of conversation away from what is being asked.	Signs of physical abuse	Multiple hotel keys	Tattoos or brandings of money signs, names with "B" after . ie. John Smiths Bitch or Bottom JSB	Tattoos of diamonds or crowns
Over-expression of Bondage Domination Slave Master lifestyle. Especially in public spaces.  Wearing bondage gear or other intimate attire typically reserved for bedroom settings in public spaces.	Much older romantic partner ie minor with person in 30's or older	Is in the commercial sex industry and has a controller (boyfriend, pimp, manager, or "daddy") or mentions having to meet a nightly quota.	Presence of expensive material items by unexplained source	Inconsistencies in their story regarding where they live, when they came to their current location and lack of knowledge about the city or state they are in.

Labor Trafficking Indicators				
Not allowed to speak for themselves – a 3rd party speaks, interprets or translates for the individual	Scripted or rehearsed responses	Surveillance cameras on workers	Untreated physical injuries	Signs of physical abuse
Was recruited with false promises concerning the nature and conditions of the work	Bars on windows	Paid only in tips	High security measures at work site	Has been engaged in door-to-door sales and expresses being abandoned by his/her crew
Employer holds ID	Appearing malnourished and/or fatigued	Not paid directly or paid in housing/food	Not allowed to leave a living or working situation unless monitored.	Forced to live in employers housing
Restricted movement	Is not allowed breaks	Respiratory infections	Lack of safety equipment at work	Living and working on site.

**Scoring:** Each red flag represents 1 point on the vulnerability index with a scale of 1-25. 1-9 is light case management 10-18 is medium to crisis case management, and 18-25 long term and crisis case management. Although, any range can call for crisis case management, this is just a general guide.

Light, engagement in services is likely once or twice a month.

Medium, engagement in services is likely once a week.

Long Term, engagement is multiple times a week to daily.

Crisis, engagement is dictated by emergent need and requires dedicated staff time, attention, and resources usually on a 1-1 staff to client ratio. Utilizes drop-in centers with walk in case management and shelters with low barrier case management on site.

## Full Screening Tool

1. Safety
A. Are we safe to talk in this space?
B. What can we do while we talk to feel safer?
C. Do you need anything?
D. Are you provided the safety equipment necessary to work?
E. Is someone restricting your access to condoms, clean needles/supplies, or holding back other safety equipment you need?
Notes:
2. Dependencies
A. Has anyone or anything made you feel like you need them or depend on them to survive out here?
B. Is there anything you wouldn't do for that person or thing?
C. What would happen if you stopped doing things for this person?
Notes:

3. Risk Factors
A. Have you ever provided work or services for anything other than money?
B. What are some of the ways that you've kept yourself safe?
C. Has someone ever controlled the money or resources you earned, or kept money/resources you earned in exchange for transportation, food or rent with/out your consent?
Notes:
4. Identification
A. Do you have an I.D.?
B. Is the I.D. in your possession? Can you access it anytime?
C. Does someone hold your ID for you?
Notes:
5. Medical
A. Anything going on with your body right now?
B. When's the last time you saw a medical provider outside of the emergency room?
C. There is medication and testing available if you've been exposed to HIV, Sexually Assaulted, Assaulted, or have medical needs would any of those services interest you?

Notes:

### 6. Force and Coercion

A. Were you ever pressured or forced into doing anything you didn't want to do to pay back any money or substance(s)?

B. Have you ever worked or done other things, in a place that made you feel scared or unsafe?

C. Are you able to move throughout your day and meet your needs independently and without consequence?

Notes:

### 7. Transportation

A. How are you getting around?

B. Is that method of transportation safe?

C. What areas of town are (un)safe to transit through?

Notes:

### 8. Housing

A. Where did you sleep last night?

B. Do you have somewhere safe to stay tonight? Safe way to get there?

C. Would you like a referral to a commercially sexually exploited/domestic violence shelter? (explain differences) if not shelter where would be safe(r) for you to stay?

Notes:

### 9. Protection/Restraining Order and Safety

A. Are you avoiding someone that's looking for you or currently being pursued?

B. What areas of town are (un)safe to be in? What areas of town are (un)safe to transit through?

C. What would happen if you filed for a protection or restraining order? What would you need to be able to? Would you like assistance?

Notes:

### 10. Labor Trafficking Specific

A. Have you done work in which you thought you would have been paid and weren't paid fairly or at all?

B. Did anything surprise you about this job/relationship? What?

C. Has your employer ever threatened or made you feel unsafe? If so how?

Notes:

### 11. Sex Trafficking Specific

A. Has someone or something on the streets or at work made you feel uncomfortable or pressured?

B. Have you ever felt pressured to touch or have unwanted physical touch with another person?

C. Has someone asked you to engage in sexual activity in exchange for anything?

Notes:

### 12. Protection and Restraining Order

A. Would you like some help to obtain a protection or restraining order?

B. What would happen if you filed for a protection or restraining order?

C. Would you be safe if a police officer came to that person's house and informed them that you filed a protection order?

Notes:

### 13. Disclosure, Safety, and Shelter

A. If you were unsafe could you and would you tell me?

B. What would you need to be able to tell me?

C. If I told you there was a place you could stay, a ride there, and free food would you want to go?

Notes:

#### 14. Force and Coercion

A. Has the person you worked for ever made you feel scared or unsafe?

B. Were you able to leave at any time you wanted to? Take breaks?

C. Has someone you've worked for threatened or harmed you?

Notes:

#### 15. Work Hours

A. What are your normal work hours?

B. How many hours a day do you work?

C. What would happen if you didn't work those hours?

Notes:

#### 16. Force, Fraud, Coercion Sex Trafficking

A. Are you sexually intimate to meet a basic need?

B. Do you control your own finances?



C. Has anyone offered to manage your money for you?

Notes:

### 17. Online/App Based

A. Do you ever go on tinder, grindr, or other apps/online dating to meet your basic needs?  
i.e. money, food, housing?

B. Have you ever used snapchat or Instagram for anything other than social purposes like talking to friends?

C. How many hours a day do you spend on those apps/sites?

D. Were you asked or forced to use these apps/sites to trade sex?

E. Ever drop trap or give money/dope to someone after meeting someone else for sex?

Notes:

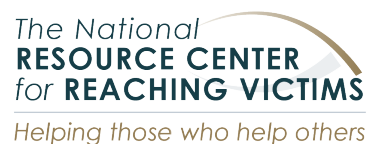
### 17. Sex Work

A. Have you ever had sex for things such as money, housing, food, dope, favors, protection?

B. Are you now or have you ever been involved in sex work?

C. Do you work for or with your significant other?

Notes:



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