Trafficking of Youth with Disabilities
What Human Trafficking Service Providers Need to Know

Presented by
Jody Haskin, MA, Program Director, IOFA
Jae Jin Pak, Self Advocate, Project Coordinator, IOFA
Meet the Presenters

Jae Jin Pak
Project Coordinator
International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA)

Jody Haskin
Program Director
International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA)
The Trafficking of Youth with Disabilities
Outreach & Education Project

► International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA)
► National Human Trafficking & Disabilities Working Group (NHTDWG)

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Learning Objectives

Participants will gain:

► Increased understanding of the role of a human trafficking provider serving youth with disabilities
► Increased awareness of disabilities
► Improved ability to identify and support potential or confirmed youth survivors of human trafficking with disabilities
► Increased understanding of the intersection between human trafficking and disability
Why do human trafficking providers need to learn about youth with disabilities?
Youth, Children, & Minors
Children with disabilities are at least three times more likely to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities. 

What Do You Know About Disability?
True or False?

Please reply to the following statement as True or False:

STATEMENT 1

In the United States, the term “disability” has a clear definition that is used across all disability service organizations, government agencies and policies and within cultures.

ANSWER:
FALSE – There are several definitions and understanding on what qualifies as a disability and approaches to providing services.
What Do You Know About Disability?
Part 2
True or False?

Please reply to the following statement as True or False:

STATEMENT 2

All youth with a disability are required to take social classes, such as sex ed in school

ANSWER:

FALSE – Youth who participate in special education classes are often overlooked for classes on relationships and sex education
Please reply to the following statement as True or False:

**STATEMENT 3**

Some youth with a disability do not know they have a disability – whether they’ve been diagnosed or not.

**ANSWER:**

TRUE – Some youth do not know they have a disability.
How do we define disability?

The ADA is the legal way to define disability.

► Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity
► Record of impairment
► Is regarded as having an impairment
How do we define disability?

This is NOT the only way to define disability.

The social model of disability considers the role our attitudes and inaccessibility have on functional differences.¹

¹Thomas, P., Gradwell, L., & Markham, N. (n.d.). Defining impairment within the social model of disability.
Medical Model of Disability

Physical & Mobility

- **Movement** is functionally limited
- May use a mobility device (cane, wheelchair, walker)
- Examples: amputation, paralysis
Medical Model of Disability

Sensory Impairment

- One or more senses are functionally limited
- May use an adaptive device (glasses, hearing aid)
- Examples: blindness, Deaf
Medical Model of Disability

Developmental & Intellectual

- Physicality, learning, behavior, or communication may be functionally limited
- Needs will vary
- Examples: cerebral palsy, Autism
Medical Model of Disability

Mental & Emotional

- Functional limitations vary
- Needs will vary according to impairments
- Examples: mood, eating, personality, or behavioral disorders
Why are youth with disabilities at higher risk for trafficking?

- Able-bodied = Authority
- Social Powerlessness & Isolation
- Myths & Stereotypes
Risk Factor: **Gaps in Education**

- Personal Safety
- Online Safety
- Healthy Relationships
- Human Trafficking
- Legal Rights
- Value of Labor
Risk Factor: Supports

- Communication
- Assistive/Mobility Devices
- Personal Care
- Educational
- Housing
- Benefits
Traffickers Can Be Anyone

Case Example: Interfamilial Trafficking
Recruitment of Youth with Disabilities

Traffickers recruit victims:

- Online
- Malls
- Schools
- After school/youth programs
- Social Security offices
- Group homes/foster care
Grooming of Youth with Disabilities

Case Example:
Youth Programs
Maintaining Control in Youth with Disabilities
Role of the Provider

- Prevention
- Identification
- Follow Protocol/Report
- Support & Referral
Red Flags of Human Trafficking in Youth

Red flags can be:

- Behavioral
- Physical
- Situational

IMPORTANT: What do you know about them already? And has something changed?
Red Flags of Human Trafficking in Youth

**Behavioral**
- Frequently missing school
- Reduced or changed communication
- Fear, exhaustion, or depression
- Sudden inability to perform tasks
Provider Role: **Follow Protocol**

- **Safety** is first priority
- Explain **mandated reporting**
- Interpreters and supports ready **before** you need them
- Provide **choice** and autonomy
- Trauma-informed language and take your time

Contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline for further guidance.
Supporting Youth with Disabilities

- Staff trainings
- Connect with community supports
- Acquire assistive technology
- Put myths and perceptions aside
- Make eye contact
- Ask to help. Wait for acceptance. Follow instructions
- Respect a person’s equipment
- Accepting and welcoming tone
Referral of Youth with Disabilities

► Housing/Shelter/Transportation
► Medical/Dental
► Legal Advocacy
► Case Management
► Mental Health Support
► Substance Abuse Services
► Educational Services
► Employment Services

Keep referrals trauma-informed, survivor-focused, youth-friendly, and accessible.
Community Supports: Centers for Independent Living

Fund your local CIL
Community Supports: Protection & Advocacy Centers

For more information, about Protection & Advocacy Centers
Community Supports: Regional ADA Centers

For more information about Regional ADA Centers
Community Supports: Vocational Rehabilitation

To find your state’s VR program, simply use any search engine and type: “your state” + “vocational rehabilitation program”
Community Supports: Advocacy Programs

Sibling Leadership Network

► Provide siblings of individuals with disabilities information, support, & tools
► Family resources
Community Supports: Advocacy Programs

ARC of U.S. and State Chapters

- Services, classes, & support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Research/resources
Self Advocates Being Empowered (SABE)

- Advocacy services for people with all different types of disabilities
- Promotes self-advocacy
National Human Trafficking Resource Center

(Report online)

- **Call:** 1-888-373-7888
- **Text:** “Help” to BeFree (233733)
HEAL Network

Email: healtraffickingnow@gmail.com
Freedom Network USA
Call: 202-504-9602
Email: info@freedomnetworkusa.org
Resources

National Human Trafficking and Disabilities Working Group

Email: nhtdwg@iofa.org
We are here to help!

If you need assistance with:

- Identifying Human Trafficking
- Resources
- Training
- Technical Assistance

Contact info@iofa.org
Thank you to our partners

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