



WHY IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING an Under Reported Crime?

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Victim cooperation is crucial to the successful outcome of a human trafficking charge. From the initial statement to testimony in court, the victim provides key evidence to prove the charges. The process of converting a sex trafficking victim into a cooperative witness can often be volatile and intense.

Victims often fear for their safety, or that of their families', and are often ashamed or embarrassed about their ordeal, fearing being exposed and stigmatized. Some sex workers do not recognize themselves as victims and have accepted their predicament, especially those who have come to tolerate exploitive circumstances.

These victims may also display symptoms of "Stockholm Syndrome" – an emotional bond with their trafficker that is believed to be a survival strategy for victims of abuse. They do not recognize the benefit of cooperating with authorities and may feel that the punishment received from those who exploited them outweighs the benefit of their cooperation.

Victims are usually coerced, threatened, abused and often have a sincere distrust toward law enforcement. As such, some may be afraid to come forward to police or other organizations that could provide assistance. Due to these circumstances, victims rarely come forward and this makes identifying additional victims more difficult.

Sex exploitation can happen in any community and it is not always easy to spot. Traffickers will use a wide variety of venues and properties of all types, including Airbnbs, budget and luxury hotels, or even resorts.

Indicators of human trafficking activity in hospitality establishments include:

- A lot of male visitors entering and leaving one room;
- Guests who do not want their rooms cleaned;
- Guest rooms with several condoms or condom wrappers, lubricants, lingerie, sex toys, drugs or drug paraphernalia; and
- A person who refuses to leave a credit card imprint and insists on paying cash, or uses disposable or reloadable credit/gift cards.

Indicators of human trafficking victims include:

- Appearing disoriented or disheveled;
- Appearing withdrawn, intimidated and fearful (rarely smiles);
- Rarely leaves the premises or are escorted when they do;
- Person(s) they are with seem to be preventing them from moving about freely;
- Make-up is applied to appear older;
- Signs of physical abuse;
- Person(s) they are with are significantly older;
- Do not have their own credit card or personal identification;
- May have tattoos that would represent ownership;
- May speak limited English.

Human trafficking is a complex, multi-jurisdictional crime that requires a diverse approach to bring together stakeholders from across all segments of society. The Saskatchewan RCMP remains committed to working with law enforcement partners and the private sector in a concentrated effort to identify and investigate this heinous crime.

If you are a survivor of human trafficking, or believe someone else might be, please call the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-833-900-1010 or visit their website at <https://www.canadiancentretoendhumantrafficking.ca/nationalhotline>.