The Connection Between Substance Use and Human Trafficking
Presenter: Claire Openshaw, PhD, LCPC

Our state representatives are pushing for safe injection sites, do you any statistics that show an increase in trafficking of addicts at these sites?
A: I do not know of any research in this specific area.

What are the recommended # of weekly “In Person” SUD recovery meetings for a survivor of trafficking in residential aftercare?
A: This really depends on the individual.

What is the type of branding traffickers use?
A: This really varies, but ultimately the branding shows ownership. They may have the traffickers name, the traffickers name and a symbol, barcodes, or the brand of the gang that is connected to trafficking,

When looking for signs in children, are they living with family? or "family"?
A: Yes, they could be living with their family of origin at the time.

Does sex trafficking also contribute to the alarming statistics of missing African American women? Native American?
A: Yes. Answered.

Does ethnicity play a large part in vulnerability to human trafficking, i.e., more African Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities being trafficked?
A: Yes. Answered.

Have you seen in your research/studies that victims who become dependent have been forced "physically" to quote on quote be easy to control?
A: There is this aspect of physical abuse, especially when substance use is involved.

How is fentanyl impacting human trafficking victims?
A: Although there is no specific research connecting the two, the impact of fentanyl is having a significant impact of dependance, so I can imagine it would be impacting the rates of vulnerability to trafficking more generally.

Do you have any data on Substance Use Recovery once Sexual Trafficking victims turn the corner into Sexual Trafficking Survivors?
A: Although more research needs to be done, data shows that peer support groups have been very effective.
https://nhttaac.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/Peer%20Support%20Groups%20Exploratory%20Brief%20508c.pdf

Is there any program targeted on relocating survivors of trafficking so that their traffickers can’t find them to coerce them back into the lifestyle?
A: Yes, there are, for example in Illinois we have STOP-IT which assists with safe shelter and other case management needed. The Office of Justice Programs recently was awarded $13.5 million to assist with this housing need, and expect the get another $20 million. Victims can even obtain some compensation to assist with relocation.
Please explain what you meant in one of the slides where it states, "There is no such thing as a child prostitute"?
A: Answered, but in summary: In Illinois a child cannot be charged with prostitution as they are legally not of age to consent to sex, so this notion of a child prostitute that you hear of just cannot be.

If we meet an adult and believe they are being trafficked or maybe they even admit to it, do we notify Police? We can give them resources if they agree to access help of course, but it makes me wonder what else can we do?
A: Answered.

If we ask questions and get answers; would we be putting these victims in more danger? Even if we tell the police; would these victims be willing to testify against their abuser with the information you have given?
A: No, victims often do not want to testify. Unless of course there is immediate harm to the individual, if they are sharing information with us-it shows we have gained some trust, therefore it’s very important that we continue to build that trust and honor their autonomy. But yes, it is very risky individuals speaking out, that’s why we need to conduct safety planning with an individual.

A lot of the slides and conversation today reference traffickers and victims being opposite gender and red flags/questions reference cis gender identity and male-female relationships. Can you speak to how non-binary individuals and diverse relationships play into trafficking? I feel like it may be important to think more broadly about what to watch for and questions to ask with non-gendered pronouns for example.
A: Thank you for highlighting this. Yes, it’s especially important to highlight the vulnerability of non-binary individuals, who many have been rejected by their families of origin. They may become unhoused or displaced. So, we want to remember that traffickers target those who want to be loved, making non-binary individuals prime targets for traffickers to exploit.

Where can I find clinical resources in the Atlanta, GA area for a child who was groomed and brainwashed?
A: This Referral Directory may will be helpful to find resources: https://humantraffickinghotline.org/training-resources/referral-directory

Are there any simple brochures to hand out when giving a presentation to educate people? Any readings that you recommend?
A: https://humantraffickinghotline.org/get-involved/downloadable-resources

What is the 12-month program?
A: The Salt and Light Coalition offer a 12-month program.

Is there a difference in approach for someone who is in a coercive control/domestic violence relationship as opposed to someone who is being trafficked? Many of these warning signs are similar.
A: The difference is that you may not know the relationship that the trafficker has with the victim, this would be very important to distinguish, how did they meet, how long have they known each other, who else is involved etc.

How would one notice this is going on in a residential area?
A: Answered, but in summary look at some of the signs.

Based on the addiction continuum, where would a victim of trafficking be placed? The continuum is abstinence, experimental, social, habitual, drug abuse, and addiction.
A: That really depends on the stage of addiction. Answered and explained.

What are instances on male trafficking?
A: As I said, these instances are under reported, but also stigma plays a significant role, but a report in 2016 from UNODC found about 21% are male-identified.
Is the relatively small number of victims (17,000 in a country of 379 million) due to under-reporting?
A: Yes, under reporting and often not recognizing that it is sex trafficking.