The Connection Between Substance Use and Human Trafficking

Presented by Claire Openshaw, PhD, LCPC

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AGENDA

- Describe the connection between human trafficking and substance use
- Discuss the indicators that assist in identifying exploitation
- Apply some interventions that could be used to assist in anti-trafficking efforts

To be considered human trafficking, three actions need to take place:

1. **ACT**: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a person
2. **MEANS**: the use of threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of vulnerability or power, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim
3. **PURPOSE**: these actions should be conducted for the purpose of exploitation

Thus, there are various forms of exploitation that are considered human trafficking:

- Labor trafficking
- Sex trafficking
- Organ trafficking
- Debt bondage
- Child soldiers
- Children obtained through illegal adoption
- Individuals in domestic servitude
- Those forced into begging, criminality, and marriage

Sex trafficking refers to a commercial sex act that is "induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age" (Office of Justice Programs, 2019, p. 1).

A commercial sex act includes prostitution, pornography, and sexual performance done in exchange for any item of value, such as money, drugs, shelter, food, or clothes (Trafficking Victims Protection Act [TVPA], 2019).
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**Myth or Fact**

- Human trafficking is the same as smuggling
- Trafficked persons are typically woman and girls
- Trafficked persons are immigrants
- Trafficked persons are kidnapped and forced to have sex
- Trafficked persons work in underground industries
- Trafficked persons are in the country illegally

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**PREDICTIONS**

- The epidemic of trafficking is on the rise in all fifty states of the U.S. (UNODC, 2018)
- Due to the insidious nature, it is difficult to get exact statistics
- 10,615 individuals were trafficked in the U.S. in 2017 (U.S. National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline, 2019)
- Sex trafficking (along with labor) is said to be the third most profitable organized crime in the world (Drug (1st) & Arms (2nd) trafficking) (Transnational Crime in the Developing World Report, 2017)
- Anyone is susceptible to trafficking: despite their age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, immigration, and socio-economic status
- However, traffickers specifically target vulnerable populations (UN, 2008)
- Risk factors include:
  - Homeless/runaways/natural disasters
  - Family dysfunction/abusive backgrounds
  - Mental health or substance use issues
  - Lack of social support/personal safety
  - Youth/foster care system
  - Unemployed
  - Promotion of sexual exploitation by family members or peers
  - LGBTQIA+ population
  - Isolation/need for love
  - Marginalized communities
  - Poverty

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CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAFFICKER

- Traffickers lure individuals under false pretenses of shelter, work, security, love, and safety
- They purposefully implement forceful, fraudulent, and coercive tactics making it extremely difficult for trafficked persons to simply escape their situation
- Common tactics include gang rape, torture, and forced drug usage (FBI, 2011)
- Top Recruitment Tactics (in order):
  1. Intimate partner/marriage proposition
  2. Familial
  3. Posing as a benefactor
  4. Job offer
  5. False promises/fraud

(U.S National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline, 2019)

KNOW THE INDICATORS

- Sudden change in attire, behavior, relationships, or material possessions (e.g., expensive items)
- References made to frequent travel to other cities
- Frequent running away from home
- A "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" who is noticeably older and/or controlling
- Coached or rehearsed responses to questions
- Uncharacteristic promiscuity and/or references to sexual situations or terminology beyond age-specific norms
- Tattoos (a form of branding) displaying the name of a trafficker, such as "daddy"
- An inability to attend school on a regular basis and/or unexplained absences
- Frequently running away from home
- Bruises or other signs of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, anxiety, or fear
- Lack of control over a personal schedule and/or identification or travel documents
- Hunger, malnourishment, or inappropriate dress (based on weather conditions or surroundings)
- Signs of drug addiction
- An attempt to conceal scars, tattoos, or bruises
- Hypersensitivity or symptoms of anger, panic, phobia, irritability, hyperactivity, frequent crying, temper tantrums, regressive behavior, and/or clinging behavior
- Hypersensitivity or symptoms of hypervigilance, inability to bond with others, sadomasochism, and/or enuresis
- Giving a large debt and being unable to pay it off
- Not being in control of their own money

What is Addiction?

- Fisher and Harrison (2018) define it as “compulsion to use alcohol or other drugs regardless of negative or adverse consequences”
- A Substance Use Disorder (SUD) can be defined as a progressive disease that causes people to lose control of a/some substance/s despite worsening consequences of that use
- SUDs can be life-threatening

Levels of Substance Use

Use: ingestion of a substance (no consequences)

Misuse: experiencing a negative consequence

Abuse: continuing to use despite consequences—think impulsive use

Dependence: compulsive use, continued regardless of negative consequences (what we think of as addiction)

Connecting Substance Use

Substance use within the context of trafficking is complex:
- Trafficking of illegal drugs and human trafficking often happen together
- Drug traffickers may also be transporting people as another source of money
- Human traffickers may also force their victims to smuggle drugs across borders
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CONNECTING SUBSTANCE USE

In the human trafficking arena, drugs are used for multiple purposes and in a variety of ways:

1. Substances may be used by the victim as a way of coping with their trauma.
2. An individual’s substance use can exacerbate their vulnerability to being trafficked, and a trafficker feeds off this habit.
3. Traffickers use substances to entice or lure in an inexperienced victim to get them “hooked.”
4. Substances are then used as a reward and punishment (for compliance).
5. Traffickers also force the consumption of addictive substances.

FORCED SUBSTANCE USE

Traffickers sometimes force the consumption of addictive substances:

1) Guarantees the victim will become dependent.
2) Drug dependencies will make the victim incur debt to the trafficker.
3) This incapacitates the victims, so they comply with demands.
4) This enables the victim to work harder and/or for longer hours.
5) The victim may become unduly influenced to stay due to trauma bonding, despite the exploitation.

- 82% of participants trafficked into Israel (Cwikel, Iian, & Chudakov, 2003)
- 96% were smokers
- 24% had problem with alcohol
- 31.5% had tried drugs
- Lack of current drug use was explained by a policy imposed by brothel owners (traffickers)
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EFFECTS: SUDs

- More than 70% of trafficking victims surveyed reported using substances (Reichert & Sylwestrzak, 2013)
- Many meet the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) of Mental Disorders clinical criteria for substance use disorders
- Commonly used drugs with sex trafficking victims include tobacco, alcohol, hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, sedatives, and marijuana (Kara, 2009; McGaha, 2011; Raymond & Hughes, 2001)
- Heroin and other opioids are frequently used drugs by trafficking victims (Office on Trafficking in Persons of the Administration of Children and Families)
  - Addictive, as well as impairment properties
- Substance misuse can have devastating results, including addiction, overdose, self-harm, infections from needle use, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B/C, and brain or liver damage

EFFECTS: CRIMINALITY

- Strong links between prostitution and other criminal activities, such as distribution and use of drugs
- Many victims are forced to engage in criminality, such as illicit drug production and transportation (U.S. Department of State, 2014), which may lead to involvement with the criminal justice system
- Meshelemiah, Gilson and Prasanga (2018) argue, that traffickers utilize drugs to set up the trafficking victim in case they are ever arrested on prostitution and/or prostitution-related charges-if apprehended by law enforcement while under the influence or in possession, drug using victims may lose their credibility and presumed innocence-the trafficker knows that their arrest will distract them from their victimization
- Some of the reported occupations of child labor include drug production and trafficking
  - There is NO SUCH THING AS A CHILD PROSTITUTE
- Street-involved children remain one of the most vulnerable, marginalized and stigmatized groups
- They are exposed to abuse and violence, drug use and other behaviors that put them at high risk of HIV and tuberculosis infection, and other conditions including malnutrition and general poor health

DEBT BONDAGE

- Debt bondage: forced to pay off debts (often trafficker sets unrealistically high debt amount)
- Most recruits work in remote areas as street dealers or runners, or by arranging accommodation, hiring cars or booking train tickets, among other minor activities
- Expected to regularly travel between the urban hub and the county market to replenish stock and deliver cash
- Individuals are exposed to varying levels of exploitation:
  - to achieve the storage or supply of drugs, movement of cash proceeds and to secure the use of dwellings
  - the exploitation may include physical, mental and sexual harm, sometimes over protracted periods
  - some individuals are also trafficked into remote markets to work, and others have their homes taken over (a process known as being “cuckooed”) through force or coercion
- Many children are also lured by the promise of earnings and valuable assets
- Social media is often used to recruit members, and young women are often involved in recruiting other young people who may be vulnerable and in crisis

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U.S. Department of State, 2014
UNODC, 2018
So, what can you do?

- KNOW THE INDICATORS
- ASK QUESTIONS
- KNOW ABOUT AVAILABLE RESOURCES
- REPORT THE INDICATORS
- END THE CYCLE

ASK QUESTIONS

- Have you ever left home without a parent or guardian knowing? Why? How long?
- How do you take care of yourself when you are away from home?
- Do you have a boyfriend? How old is he? What are some things you enjoy doing together?
- Ask about their tattoo (if visible). When did you get it? What does it mean? Where did you get it?
- How often do you get to see your friends? What do you enjoy doing with them?
- Have you ever been forced to have sex to pay off a debt?
- Are you in debt to your employer? Do you live with them?
- Were you threatened with jail or deportation if you tried to leave your situation?
- Can you leave your job if you want to?
- Does anyone hold your passport or identification?
- Has anyone lied to you about the type of work you would be doing?
- Have you traded sex for money, a place to stay, or other items?
- Have you or has your family member been threatened?
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WHEN IN DANGER

- If you think you might be in immediate danger or you are experiencing an emergency, contact 9-1-1 first.
- In some cases, leaving or attempting to leave a trafficking situation may increase the risk of violence.
- During violent or explosive situations avoid dangerous rooms: kitchen (knives, sharp utensils, pots, garage (tools, sharp objects), bathroom (hard surfaces, no exits), basement (hard surfaces, no exits), rooms where weapons are kept and rooms without an exit.
- Examples of safer rooms: front room, yard or apartment hallway where a neighbor might see or hear an incident.
- If you are unsure of your current location, try to determine any indication of your locality such as street signs outside the residence or place of employment, or newspapers/magazines/mail that may have the address listed.
- If it is safe to go outside, see if the address is listed anywhere on the building.
- If there are people nearby and it is safe to speak with them, ask them about your current location.
- Recognize that the person in the situation knows their situation best, and it is necessary to honor their requests to ensure their safety.
- Maintain open and non-judgmental communication, ensuring they know they can reach out at any time, and end the call when they need to.
- Try to speak in person if possible.
- If that is not possible, try to speak on the phone first (rather than use text or social media messaging) and ask if the person is alone, and then use yes/no questions until they indicate it is safe to communicate more freely.
- If they are alone, try to establish safety words: one word to indicate it is safe to talk/the person is alone (for future communications) and one to indicate it is no longer safe to talk and what the person in the situation would like done (please communicate immediately/contact law enforcement/etc.)
- Try to learn more about safety concerns.
- Try to learn more about their needs/wishes moving forward (reporting, shelter, counseling, legal services, etc.)

When communicating with someone in a dangerous or potential trafficking situation:

- Maintain open and nonjudgmental communication, ensuring they know they can reach out at any time, and end the call when they need to.
- Try to speak in person if possible.
- If that is not possible, try to speak on the phone first (rather than use text or social media messaging) and ask if the person is alone, and then use yes/no questions until they indicate it is safe to communicate more freely.
- If they are alone, try to establish safety words: one word to indicate it is safe to talk/the person is alone (for future communications) and one to indicate it is no longer safe to talk and what the person in the situation would like done (please communicate immediately/contact law enforcement/etc.)
- Try to learn more about safety concerns.
- Try to learn more about their needs/wishes moving forward (reporting, shelter, counseling, legal services, etc.)

COMPLEX NEEDS

- Survivors often experience severe trauma and financial hardship.
- They may have medical and shelter needs, immigration and other legal issues, but safety concerns should always be a priority.

Emergency Services:
- Crisis Intervention and Counseling
- Emergency Shelter and Referrals
- Urgent Medical Care
- Safety Planning
- Food and Clothing

Social Services:
- Case Management
- Interpretation
- Housing
- Job Training and Education
- Court Accompaniment
- Employment Assistance
- Transportation
- Healthcare

Legal Services:
- Immigration Status
- Criminal Case Services
- Civil Case Services
- Witness Protection
- Family Court Services
- Legal Representation
- Vacatur of Convictions

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INFORM YOURSELF
Appropriate, credible, and practical support

Victims of human trafficking can get help with:
- Safe housing
- Healthcare
- Food
- Income and employment
- Legal and interpretation services
- Immigration visas
- T visas are available for survivors of human trafficking who are willing to assist the enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of acts of trafficking

Referral Directory: https://humantraffickinghotline.org/training-resources/referral-directory

REPORT THE INDICATORS

If you suspect that someone is being trafficked report it to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, which is a 24/7, confidential, multilingual hotline for victims, survivors, and witnesses of human trafficking

The hotline can be reached by:
- Phone: (888) 373-7888
- Email: help@humantraffickinghotline.org
- Text: Text HELP to 233733 (BEFREE)

End the Cycle

- Talk to others about the issue
- Be aware where you are purchasing goods from (https://knowthechain.org)
- Become informed so that you can help identify those entrapped
- Encourage trainings in your own institutions/organizations
- Offer low-cost or free services to survivors
- Raise awareness with your colleagues
- Provide job skills training to survivors
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CASE STUDY
- Maria was struggling financially to support her two children in Mexico. She saw a newspaper advertisement for an agency that arranged jobs in the U.S. for $8 an hour and offered a plane ticket to Chicago.
- Maria arrived in Chicago, where she was picked up at the airport and brought to a house in the suburbs, where a woman took her passport for safekeeping. The woman told her that the factory job had been cancelled due to the recession and that she would work in the labs instead, producing crystal methamphetamine.
- When Maria arrived, her new employer explained that she needed to work off the cost of the visa and the plane ticket. He told her that she would start on her passport and visa. He brought her to a house where he said all the foreign employees lived together. She noticed that the windows were boarded up and that there were security cameras both inside and outside the house. She felt scared and trapped.
- Maria had to work very long hours, all her wages went to paying off the cost of her visa and plane ticket. She tried to quit, but Maria grew very concerned that she would be seen as a criminal for working in an illegal drug lab. When Maria asked for her passport back because she wanted to leave, the woman said, “No, you know too much, if you try to leave, we will kill you.”

Was Maria Smuggled, Trafficked, neither, or both?

Who were Maria’s traffickers?
- a) The people who operated the job agency
- b) The man who picked her up at the airport
- c) The woman who took away her passport
- d) All of the above
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What are some of the signs that Maria is being trafficked?

What are some of the things you could do to support Maria?

CASE STUDY

- You work in the case management department of a youth residential setting, and are presented with the following case:
- Carly is a 17-year-old Caucasian who identifies as female. She was born in Chicago, Illinois, but has no recollection of her family since she entered the foster care system at the age of two. Since Carly has resided in various foster homes, "too many to recall." She reports being physically and sexually abused by numerous members of the various foster homes she resided. Carly was brought to the residential facility after she was arrested for prostitution, during an undercover police operation.
- At the age of 15, Carly ran away from her foster home to live with her boyfriend who she met online, Daddy. She claims that since she met him, she has been the "happiest" she has ever been. Carly claims that Daddy "loves her like no one else has ever loved her." She reports that Daddy provides a place for her to live and gives her food and protection. Carly reports that she "and the other girls who live with Daddy" have sex for money to help him financially look after them.
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Is Carly being trafficked?

What are some of the signs she is being trafficked?

What are some of the things you could do to support Maria?
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