

## Human Trafficking of Individuals with Disabilities Fact Sheet

### Overview of Human Trafficking:

As defined under U.S. federal law, human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery where people profit from the control and exploitation of others. Victims are forced, defrauded, or coerced into trafficking. Even if victims initially offer consent, that consent is rendered meaningless by the actions of the traffickers to exploit them for *labor, services, or commercial sex*. Victims of human trafficking include children involved in the sex trade, adults age 18 or over who are coerced or deceived into commercial sex acts, and anyone forced into different forms of labor “labor or services” such as domestic workers held in a home, or farm-workers forced into labor against their will. In each of these situations the elements of force, fraud, or coercion are used to control people. (Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, 2012)

### Risk Factors for Human Trafficking:

- Prior abuse in the home; including sex abuse
- Involvement with county children services
- Previously living in a home where one or both parents were abusing drugs
- History of running away from home
- Involvement in illegal activities
- Drug Use
- Mental or physical disability

### Specific risk factors for individuals with an intellectual disability:

- Social powerlessness
- Communication skill deficits
- Diminished ability to protect oneself due to lack of instruction and/or resources
- Inability to detect who is safe to be around

### Vulnerability of Human Trafficking in Ohio:

The fact that Ohio has large urban centers and rural counties that encompass a large transient and immigration population makes it more difficult for law enforcement and regulatory officers to understand and combat the problem. Ohio’s five major highways are used as a tool for traffickers to transport and sell youth and adults among other states and the Canadian Border.

### Ohio Statistics:

It is estimated that 1,078 Ohio children are victims of human sex trafficking every year, with thousands more who are at risk of becoming potential targets every year. It is estimated that since 2008, 21% of the 260 victims that received services from the Salvation Army in Central Ohio were victims of forced labor. An additional 3% were both labor and sex trafficking victims. While 76% of victims receiving services were victims of sex trafficking. (Columbus Dispatch- JoAnne Viviana, 2013) More information is needed to determine the approximate amount of

men, women and children involved in labor servitude or the number of adults who are trafficked in the sex industry in Ohio.

### **Individuals with Disabilities and Human Trafficking:**

There have not been many studies on the impact of human trafficking on individuals with disabilities in the United States. From a global perspective, studies have shown that in the developing world where there are limited social welfare services, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are vulnerable to human trafficking. Often, the children are bought from impoverished parents with false promises that the children will be provided with work and an education. Many are placed in organized begging rings, brothels or factories. There have been claims by the UNICEF that human traffickers at times will deliberately target deaf girls and women. These individuals are targeted because they are less able to report that they are victims of human trafficking. (Yea, 2009)

While there are more supports in place for individuals with disabilities in the United States, individuals with disabilities in the U.S. are not exempt from the horrific realities of human trafficking. There are a number of similarities in regard to the characteristics of human trafficking of individuals with disabilities domestically and abroad. The common characteristics of human trafficking are controlling and limiting the victim's movements, threatening to harm the victim or his/her family, and physically harming the victim, promises of employment or housing, controlling the victim's finances, exorbitant travel and recruitment fees, the withholding of victim's visas and other identifying documentation, threatening deportation. (Hidden in Plain Sight, 2010)

The term human trafficking is a relatively new term used in the United States the past 10 or so years. In looking at some human trafficking of individuals with disabilities cases in the United States, many are reported as sexual assault/sexual abuse, mistreatment or simply prostitution.

### **Case Examples:**

#### **Case Example 1:**

##### **Philadelphia "Basement of Horrors" 5 charged in hate crime, murder of mentally disabled victims**

A group of individuals targeted mentally disabled adults and confined them in a basement, forcing some into prostitution, causing the death of two victims, in a scheme to steal their social security check.

[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504083\\_162-57345633-504083/alleged-philadelphia-basement-of-horrors-victim-testifies/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504083_162-57345633-504083/alleged-philadelphia-basement-of-horrors-victim-testifies/)

#### **Case Example 2:**

##### **Man Forced Disabled Girl into Prostitution**

A 25 year-old illegal immigrant is accused of forcing a developmentally disabled girl into prostitution. The girl was taken to migrant labor camps in eastern Hillsborough County where she had sex with men for \$25 each. The alleged perpetrator said he had been dating the 17 year old girl who has an IQ of 58.

<http://tbo.com/plant-city/feds-man-forced-disabled-girl-into-prostitution-51379>

#### **Case Example 3:**

##### **Woodbury Guardian Allegedly Allowed Disabled Teen to Engage in Prostitution**

The guardian of a developmentally disabled woman has been charged with criminal neglect after she allowed the 19 year old to engage in prostitution. The victim was taken to a hotel

[http://www.twincities.com/localnews/ci\\_22306627/woodbury-woman-prostituted-teen-at-roseville-motel-charges](http://www.twincities.com/localnews/ci_22306627/woodbury-woman-prostituted-teen-at-roseville-motel-charges)

#### **Case Example 4:**

##### **Peninsula pimping suspect turned in by victim's mother**

A 27 year old woman who suffers from Fragile X syndrome, was allegedly forced into prostitution by her boyfriend which whom she met online. Prosecutors said that due to her condition and the love connection she thought she had with the alleged perpetrator, she "readily agreed when he wanted to have her prostitute herself to bring in money" <http://www.sfoxaminer.com/blogs/law-and-disorder/peninsula-pimping-suspect-turned-victim039s-mother>

#### **Case Example 5:**

##### **Abused disabled Iowa plant workers awarded \$240 million**

32 Mentally disabled Iowa turkey processing plant workers were subjected to harsh discipline and a buse at home and work by their supervisors. They were forced to work through illness and injuries. Denied bathroom breaks, locked in their rooms, kicked in the groin and, in one case, handcuffed to a bed. Supervisors also subjected the men to random acts of cruelty, such as making them eat hot peppers. The men were paid \$65 per month regardless of how many hours they worked. The company also docked the men's wages and Social Security disability benefits, telling them it was to pay for the cost of their care and lodging.

[http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/business/2013/05/01/Abused\\_disabled\\_Iowa\\_plant\\_workers\\_awarded\\_240\\_million\\_.html](http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/business/2013/05/01/Abused_disabled_Iowa_plant_workers_awarded_240_million_.html) (Columbus Dispatch)

#### **Other Factors to Consider:**

As is the case for people without disabilities who experience sexual abuse, those most likely to be abused are those who are known by the victim, such as family members, acquaintances, residential care staff, transportation providers and personal care attendants. In the above human trafficking case examples, those victims of human trafficking were trafficked by their guardian, boyfriend or authority figure. Research suggests that 97 to 99 percent of abusers are known and trusted by the victim who has developmental disabilities (Baladerian, 1991).

#### **What should I do if I suspect an individual with disabilities is being trafficked?**

- If you believe the person is in immediate danger, **call the police.**
- If you think an individual with developmental disabilities is being trafficked contact your local county board of developmental disabilities.
- You do not need proof to file a report.
- All states have laws requiring professionals, such as case manager, direct care workers, police officers and teachers to report a buse.

The Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Major Unusual Incident (MUI) and Registry Unit provides oversight to County Boards and Providers to help assure the health and safety of individuals receiving services in Ohio.

A Major Unusual Incident (Rule OAC 5123:2-17-02) is defined as any alleged, suspected, or actual occurrence of an incident that adversely affects the health and safety of an individual. There are nineteen different types of MUI's defined in rule including but not limited to: abuse, neglect, exploitation, misappropriation, medical emergency, hospitalization etc. It is required that immediate action be taken to protect individuals from further harm, that a thorough investigation is conducted to determine the cause of the incident and that a prevention plan is developed to reduce the likelihood of future occurrences. Human Trafficking of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities would be considered a MUI in the developmental disability system.

MUI's are reported to the local County Boards of DD, which then reports the information to DODD through a web-based reporting system called Incident Tracking System (ITS) County Boards of DD are responsible for providing immediate action, investigation, and prevention planning for each incident.

#### **Human Trafficking Resources:**

- **National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-3737-888 or Text INFO or HELP to BeFree (233733)**  
This is national, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, everyday of the year.

- **Anti-human trafficking organizations**

**Central Ohio Rescue and Restore Coalition**  
[www.centaloiorescueandrestore.org](http://www.centaloiorescueandrestore.org)  
Michelle, MSW, LISW-S  
The Salvation Army in Central Ohio  
966 East Main Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43205  
614-437-2149

**Gracehaven**  
<http://www.gracehavenhouse.org/>  
Dr. Jeffrey Barrows, DO, MA (Bioethics)  
P.O. Box 541  
Dublin, Ohio 43017  
937-210-1503

**Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force**  
[www.humantrafficking.ohio.gov](http://www.humantrafficking.ohio.gov)  
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#### **References:**

- **Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, 2012**
- **Columbus Dispatch- JoAnne Viviana, 2013**
- **Human Trafficking-A Geographical Perspective, Sallie Yae 2009**
- **Hidden in Plain Sight: Human Trafficking in the United States, Stephanie J. Simon 2010**
- **Balderian, N. (1991) Sexual abuse of people with developmental disabilities. Sexuality and Disability 9(4), 323-335.**