



HHSC Health Care Practitioner Human Trafficking Training Guide

Categories & Standards

The standards are adapted from a comprehensive and evidence-informed training assessment tool created by Health, Education, Advocacy, Linkage (HEAL) Trafficking and the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking. The assessment tool is widely accepted as the gold standard of training criteria.

The standards are broken into five categories:

- I. Design
- II. Overview: definitions, types of trafficking, dynamics, and vulnerability factors
- III. Health Impact
- IV. Identification and Assessment
- V. Response and Follow Up

Each category contains specific standards targeting key components required for each training. The standards seek to provide guidance on developing comprehensive, trauma-informed, and survivor-informed trainings.

This guide describes each standard and offers resources that include information addressing the standards.

Please note: The online resources are provided for informational purposes only. They are not meant to provide legal advice or substitute the advice of an attorney. If you have specific legal questions, you should consult with your attorney. Approval of a training does not constitute an endorsement of that training by HHSC. Additionally, submitting entities are not required to use these resources.

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I. Design

I.1. The training excludes sensationalized imagery.

The training course must exclude shocking or disturbing images to depict human trafficking. Such images promote myths and misconceptions about this crime and can re-traumatize survivors.

The following resource includes information on this topic:

- ["Word And Image Choices And Why They Matter." Polaris Project](#)

I.2. The training is designed with human trafficking survivor consultation.

People with lived experiences of human trafficking can provide a unique perspective on recognizing and responding to potential human trafficking persons seeking health care. Additionally, survivors can help improve a training by ensuring there is a survivor-centered approach. The training must describe how a survivor was consulted in the design of the course.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Partnering with Survivors." National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- ["Request a Consultation / Training from Survivor Alliance." Survivor Alliance](#)

1.3. The training content is evidence-based and free from factual errors.

The training must consist of observable, verifiable information. Slides or pages with data, statistics, or generalizations about human trafficking or groups of people must include a citation.

I.4. The learning objectives are clear, and objectives are met.

The training must include a summary or list of learning outcomes that specify what knowledge or skills the learners will gain, and these objectives must be met within the training.

I.5. The training must produce an individual certificate of successful completion.

Upon completion, the participant should have access to a downloadable or printable certificate of completion that includes:

- the participant's name,
- date of completion,
- title of the course, and
- title of the training organization as it appears on the application.

Texas licensing boards will compare the health care practitioner's certificate to the approved course information listed on the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) website to verify that it is an approved course. Once the course is approved, submitters may include a statement on the certificate indicating that the course is approved by HHSC in accordance with House Bill 2059, 86th Legislature, Regular Session, 2019.

I.6. If offering continuing education credit, the training grants a minimum of one hour of verified accredited continuing education credit and produces an individual certificate of successful completion.

Courses are not required to offer continuing education (CE) to be approved by HHSC. HHSC is not an accrediting body and cannot accredit courses for CEs. If the course offers CEs, the completion certificate must include each designated type of CE credit granted, the name and contact information of the credit provider, and all other information as required for the profession by the credit provider.

II. Overview: definitions, types of trafficking, dynamics, and vulnerability factors

II.1. The training describes the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), as amended (22 U.S.C. Section 7102).

The TVPA of 2000 created a foundation for the federal response to human trafficking. The training must describe the purpose of the TVPA and provide definitions of terms associated with human trafficking, such as sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The definition of labor trafficking is according to 22 U.S.C Section 7102(11)(B). The definition of sex trafficking is according to 22 U.S.C Section 7102(12).

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [22 U.S. Code Section 7102 – Definitions. Legal Information Institute](#)
- [“3Ps: Prosecution, Protection, and Prevention.” U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons](#)
- [“Key Legislation. Human Trafficking.” U.S. Department of Justice](#)

II.2. The training describes the concepts of force, fraud, or coercion within the context of human trafficking.

Human traffickers use force, fraud, and coercion to exploit people for their labor or commercial sex. The training must describe each of the three concepts within the context of human trafficking and include information on how one of these concepts must be present for a situation to be considered human trafficking. The training must also explain that force, fraud, or coercion are not required when a minor is involved in a commercial sex act because minors cannot legally consent to commercial sex.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Trafficking in Persons 101.” U.S. Department of Defense](#)
- [“Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families](#)

II.3. Major forms of trafficking (including labor and sex) are identified and discussed.

There are many forms of trafficking; however, the training must describe major forms of sex and labor trafficking, such as peonage, debt bondage, slavery, child soldiering, and involuntary servitude.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [Understanding Human Trafficking - United States Department of State](#)
- ["What is Modern Slavery?" Office To Monitor and Combat Trafficking In Persons](#)

II.4. Clarifies that trafficking does not require crossing international or state borders.

A common myth is that human trafficking requires moving, traveling, or transporting a person across state or national borders. The training must explain that border crossing is not required to commit human trafficking.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Myths & Facts." National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)
- ["Understanding Human Trafficking." U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons](#)

II.5. Differentiates between human trafficking and smuggling.

A common myth is that human trafficking and human smuggling are the same crime; however, they are distinctly different. The training must explain how human trafficking is a crime against a person, and human smuggling is a crime against a country.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families](#)
- ["Smuggling vs. Trafficking: Understanding the Difference." Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking in Texas Gateway and Destination Cities](#)

II.6. Differentiates between human trafficking and consensual commercial sex.

Consensual commercial sex is different from sex trafficking. Both involve a commercial sex act; however, sex trafficking involves force, fraud, or coercion. The course must explain the difference between consensual commercial sex and sex trafficking. It must also include an explanation that minors cannot legally consent to commercial sex acts. Therefore, the elements of force, fraud, or coercion are not required to be present in situations involving minors.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Prostitution & Human Trafficking: What's the Difference?" United Against Human Trafficking](#)

- [“Myths & Facts.” National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

II.7. Includes a discussion of data limitations on human trafficking.

In recent years, there has been an increase in information on human trafficking. However, data reliability is still a problem due to several factors. The training must explain why it is difficult to gather reliable data on human trafficking.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Gaps in Reporting Human Trafficking Incidents Result in Significant Undercounting.” National Institute of Justice](#)
- [“Data & Research.” Polaris Project](#)

II.8. Includes a discussion on vulnerabilities to trafficking.

Labor and sex trafficking affect people of all ages, races, nationalities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and citizenship statuses. However, some populations are at a higher risk of exploitation. The training must discuss the wide range of vulnerabilities that create a higher risk of exploitation, such as homelessness.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Vulnerabilities & Recruitment.” Polaris Project](#)
- [“Trafficking in Persons 101.” U.S. Department of Defense](#)

II.9. Includes a variety of trafficker profiles and their recruitment techniques

Traffickers can be anyone, including family members, intimate partners, business owners, and community leaders. They assert various tactics to manipulate and maintain physical and psychological control over trafficked persons. The training must identify the differing characteristics of human traffickers and the methods often used to force, defraud, and coerce people into trafficking situations.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Signs of Trafficking.” Texas Office of the Attorney General](#)

- [Recognizing the Signs. National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

III. Health Impact

III.1. Describes acute injuries.

A trafficked person may face many health risks, such as acute health conditions resulting from sexual or physical abuse. Acute injuries are medical conditions that develop quickly and need medical intervention, such as a broken bone or an asthma attack. The training must describe acute injuries that trafficked persons may present in a clinical setting.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Recognizing Human Trafficking Victims in the Emergency Department." Emergency Medicine Reports](#)
- ["Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking in a Healthcare Context." National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

III.2. Describes chronic medical problems.

Trafficked persons are often denied access to adequate medical care. Minor medical conditions are sometimes left untreated and eventually become severe. Chronic illnesses, such as tinnitus or diabetes, develop and potentially worsen over time. The training must describe chronic medical conditions for which trafficked persons may seek medical help.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Recognizing Human Trafficking Victims in the Emergency Department." Emergency Medicine Report](#)
- ["Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking in a Healthcare Context." National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

III.3. Describes mental health issues.

Mental health issues affect a person's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. Mental health issues are common among trafficked persons, often due to trauma and abuse. The training must describe mental health issues that may affect trafficked persons.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Human Trafficking & Health Professionals: Questions and Answers.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [“Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking in a Healthcare Context.” National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

III.4. Describes reproductive and sexual health concerns.

Trafficked persons may face medical concerns due to commercial sexual exploitation, such as sexually transmitted infections. These concerns may manifest immediately or gradually and can potentially become permanent. The training must describe the reproductive and sexual health concerns a provider may detect when examining trafficked persons.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Human Trafficking Resource Paper.” Office for Victims of Crime Training & Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [“Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking in a Healthcare Context.” National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

III.5. Describes the impact on quality of life, autonomy, and independence.

Human trafficking can have a persistent negative effect on a trafficked person or survivor in terms of the following:

- Overall feelings of well-being, happiness, and purpose.
- Ability to make decisions free from external control or influence.
- Self-determination and self-reliance.

The training must discuss how human trafficking can disrupt or negatively influence the experience of a trafficked person or survivor.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Human Trafficking Resource Paper.” Office for Victims of Crime Training & Technical Assistance Center](#)

- [“Addressing the Needs of Victims of Human Trafficking: Challenges, Barriers, and Promising Practices.” Office of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation](#)

IV. Identification and Assessment

IV.1. Provides a clear patient-centered approach.

The patient-centered approach integrates a patient’s values, dignity, and respect in clinical decision-making and outcome assessments. The training must define the patient-centered approach and explain how it is beneficial when providing care to a trafficked person. Additionally, the training must ensure the course consistently uses patient-centered and victim-centered language throughout.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Human Trafficking Task Force E-Guide: Victim-Centered Approach.” Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [“Core Competencies for Human Trafficking Response in Health Care and Behavioral Health Systems.” National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

IV.2. Describes clinical settings in which trafficked persons may be encountered.

Trafficked persons may seek medical attention for various ailments in different health care settings. The setting can range anywhere from an emergency room to a dental office. The training must describe the places trafficked persons may visit for treatment.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking in a Healthcare Context.” National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)
- [“Human Trafficking and the Health Care Industry.” Polaris Project](#)

IV.3. Describes the challenges and opportunities when interfacing with trafficked persons.

When interacting with trafficked persons, health care providers will most likely face obstacles or challenges in supplying necessary care. Additionally, these interactions provide opportunities to connect with and serve trafficked persons in ways only a health care provider can. The training must discuss the challenges providers may encounter and offer suggestions for overcoming challenges and using those opportunities to better serve trafficked patients' well-being.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Human Trafficking Resource Paper." Office for Victims of Crime Training & Technical Assistance Center](#)
- ["Human Trafficking." National Library of Medicine](#)

IV.4. Describes survivor barriers to disclosure.

The goal of health care providers when caring for a survivor should be focused on the patient's well-being rather than pursuing disclosure. Often survivors do not disclose their victimization for reasons such as fear of their trafficker, arrest, deportation, or being stigmatized. The training must describe reasons a survivor may hesitate or refuse to disclose some or all details of their trafficking situation.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Human Trafficking Resource Paper." Office for Victims of Crime Training & Technical Assistance Center](#)
- ["Barriers That Prevent Identification." National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

IV.5. Describes provider challenges to identification and response.

Trafficked individuals are not easy to identify. Many people in the health care field do not recognize the signs of trafficking or are unsure how to help. Providers may not identify and respond to trafficking situations due to many factors, including personal biases, lack of training, and hesitation to intrude in a person's private life. The training must describe potential factors that could contribute to a provider's inability to recognize and appropriately render aid to trafficked persons.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Barriers That Prevent Identification.” National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [Educating Paediatric Health-care Providers about Human Trafficking.” Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health](#)

IV.6. Describes potential indicators of trafficking in persons.

Health care providers can see human trafficking indicators or “red flags” if they know what to look for. Indicators may present themselves differently based on the type of trafficking. The training must describe signs that indicate a patient is being trafficked.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Potential Indicators of Human Trafficking.” National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)
- [“Human Trafficking Task Force E-Guide: Recognizing the Crime.” Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

IV.7. Describes the role of trauma-informed care in trust-building and communication.

Trauma-informed care incorporates fundamental trauma principles into the organizational culture. The training must describe trauma-informed care and how this approach can improve health care practitioners’ trust-building and communication with potential trafficked persons.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“What is Trauma-Informed Care?” Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center](#)
- [“Human Trafficking Task Force E-Guide: Using a Trauma-Informed Approach.” Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [“What is Trauma-Informed Care?” Center for Health Care Strategies](#)

IV.8. Discusses measures to keep oneself and patients safe.

Creating a safe environment is vital to the protection of patients and practitioners. Additionally, a safe environment will help foster an open interaction for disclosure of trafficking. Health care organizations and practitioners should take every precaution

to ensure the clinical settings are safe for patients and staff. The training must explain the actions health care organizations and practitioners can take to maintain safety for both patients and staff.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Create and Maintain Safety.” National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [“Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool and Guide.” National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

IV.9. Discusses the importance of the use of professional interpreters.

Trafficked persons whose primary language is not the same as the health care practitioner may need a professional interpreter. The training must describe how a professional interpreter is essential to the communication between a potential trafficked person and the provider. The training should also include why it is vital to never use the potential trafficked person’s companion as their interpreter.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Human Trafficking Task Force E-Guide: Interpreters.” Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [“Language Accessibility.” National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

IV.10. Provides strategies to have private conversations with potential trafficked persons.

In suspected trafficking situations, the practitioner should speak with the patient outside the presence of third parties. Private conversations between patient and practitioner will help establish trust and maintain safety. The training must describe safe ways to separate the patient from their companion to have a private conversation.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Health Care Settings.” HEAL Trafficking](#)

- [“Human Trafficking.” National Library of Medicine](#)

IV.11. Provides samples of appropriate language to assist with identification.

Speaking with a person about abuse and trauma can be complex and sensitive. Asking the right questions can establish trusting relationships for patients to divulge their situation. The training must provide examples of questions or language to use when screening for trafficking.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Resources: Messages for Communicating with Victims of Human Trafficking.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families](#)
- [“Human Trafficking Victim Identification and Response Within the United States Healthcare System.” International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety Foundation](#)

IV.12. Describes the importance of appropriate documentation.

Collecting a medical history from a potential trafficked person may be difficult, and documentation of this information in the medical record may have legal ramifications. Because of the complexity of medical/legal issues around human trafficking cases, entering more or less information in the patient’s chart can either be helpful or harmful. For example, the records may be subpoenaed for the purpose of prosecuting a trafficker. The training must describe appropriate documentation and why it is crucial.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool and Guide.” National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [“Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Health Care Settings.” HEAL Trafficking](#)

V. Response and Follow Up

V.1. Describes the importance of the health care provider's role in intervention and response.

Health care providers are uniquely positioned to identify trafficked persons, provide medical care, provide needed resources, and contact authorities when required or requested. The training must describe the health care provider's role in intervening and responding to trafficking situations they may encounter and why their role is important.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Human Trafficking: The Role of the Health Care Provider." National Library of Medicine](#)
- [On-Ramps, Intersections, and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking. Polaris Project](#)

V.2. Describes the importance of survivor-centered, multidisciplinary referrals within the health care organization and with community partners.

Trafficking survivors have a high prevalence of complex health and social needs. Health care organizations can provide survivors with referrals and options helpful to navigate resources available within their organization and in the community. The training must discuss the benefits of health care systems collaborating within their organizations and with community partners to make numerous survivor-centered resources available.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Human Trafficking Task Force E-Guide: Forming a Task Force." Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- ["Multidisciplinary Treatment and Referral Team." National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

V.3. Includes a discussion of mandated reporter obligations.

Each state has different mandatory reporting laws requiring providers to identify and report the abuse of children, persons 65 years and older, and adults with disabilities. Health care staff should know their state and local mandatory reporting laws and understand how they relate to human trafficking. The training must discuss Texas-mandated reporter obligations, including those for children, persons 65 and older, and adults with disabilities. It must include when to report suspected abuse and where to submit the report. Also, it should mention that the reporter obligation cannot be delegated because the provider that suspects abuse is responsible for making the report.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Investigations and Protective Services for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities." Human Resources Code Section 48.051.](#)
- ["Investigation of Report of Child Abuse or Neglect." Family Code Section 261.101](#)

V.4. Includes a discussion of the implications of law enforcement involvement.

Involving law enforcement can have both positive and negative perceptions for the trafficked person. Sometimes the trafficked person may be fearful of law enforcement or may have concerns about the consequences of involving law enforcement due to a variety of reasons. The training must discuss the possible outcomes of involving law enforcement.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Health Care Settings." HEAL Trafficking](#)
- ["Law Enforcement." National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

V.5. Provides information on how to contact community, local, and/or state resources.

Health care practitioners should maintain a list of resources for trafficked persons. The training must provide a list of community, local, and/or state and ways to contact them.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Referral Directory.” National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)
- [“TAASA Service Directory.” Texas Association Against Sexual Assault](#)
- [“Child Sex Trafficking – Recover.” Office of the Texas Governor](#)

V.6. Includes a discussion of the importance of organizational protocols.

Health care organizations should establish clear policies, guidelines, and protocols for responding to human trafficking. Clear policies can prevent situations that may place the patient or staff in harmful conditions. The training must discuss what makes creating and incorporating policy and procedures in a clinical setting beneficial to trafficked persons and the organization’s staff.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Health Care Settings.” HEAL Trafficking](#)
- [“Human Trafficking.” National Library of Medicine](#)

V.7. Provides the National Human Trafficking Hotline number and text number along with any local hotlines.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) is a 24-hour, toll-free, anti-trafficking hotline that improves the federal response to protect trafficked persons and maintains a nationwide database of anti-trafficking agencies and resources. The training must list the NHTH phone number (**888-373-7888**) and the text number (**233733** or **BeFree**). Also, it should provide phone numbers and/or text numbers to local community hotlines, if applicable. Please note that the National Human Trafficking Resource Center is now NHTH.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- [“Referral Directory.” National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

- ["TAASA Service Directory." Texas Association Against Sexual Assault](#)

V.8. Includes a discussion on the importance of building a trusted local network of resources.

An effective way of combating trafficking is to ensure that trafficked persons are equipped with the necessary help to recover from trauma and be empowered to make informed decisions. The training must discuss the advantages of organizing and maintaining a support system dedicated to combating human trafficking and best serving those directly affected.

The following resources include information on this topic:

- ["Multidisciplinary Treatment and Referral Team." National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- ["Human Trafficking Resource Paper." Office for Victims of Crime Training & Technical Assistance Center](#)

Tips for Designing a Training Course

Below are some general recommendations for designing a training course:

- **Bullet Points:** Sometimes, the best way to present information is in a bulleted list. If appropriately used, bulleted lists can shorten the text and show the relationship of items in the list.
- **Citations:** Citations are required when delivering information gleaned from an external source. There are multiple formats or styles for citing information, as in a reference list and/or in-text. The selected style should be consistent throughout the presentation. *You must cite all data and statistics.*
- **Grammar:** Correct grammar ensures the learner can comprehend the message and easily follow along. It avoids grammatical distractions and aids the learner's comprehension of the intended message.
- **Presentation design:** No single presentation meets the needs of every audience. The design of a presentation is structured best in a way geared toward the intended audience. Also, using speaker notes allows the presenter to ensure the learner's comprehension of the training.

- **Punctuation:** Using punctuation properly helps the reader understand the message. Wrongly used or missing punctuation can change the entire meaning of a sentence.
- **Web accessibility:** A presentation should be designed in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA. Accessibility allows those with visual or auditory impairments to interact with and understand the conveyed message.

Below are optional resources that may help you design your presentation:

- ["Add Speaker Notes to Your Slides." Microsoft 365](#)
- ["Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA." U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, ADA.gov](#)
- ["MLA Formatting and Style Guide." Purdue University Writing Lab](#)
- ["Effective Writing Practices Tutorial." Northern Illinois University](#)
- ["Research and Citation Resources." Purdue University Writing Lab](#)
- ["Tips for Making Effective PowerPoint Presentations." National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
- ["PowerPoint for Windows training." Microsoft 365](#)