



Stop Trafficking!

Awareness Advocacy Action

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FOCUS: During this Domestic Violence Awareness Month we look at the nexus of domestic violence and human trafficking.

October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and is also the anniversary of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), passed in 1984, which supports lifesaving services for victims of domestic violence and their children. These events call our attention to the intersection of domestic violence and human trafficking, exacerbated by the normalization of violence against women and girls.

The Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Task Force lists domestic violence as a crime that may intersect with human trafficking. The grooming that traffickers use to acquire their victims often mimics that of intimate partner relationships.

According to the [Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services](#), when domestic violence in intimate relationships includes trafficking, it represents a double victimization. Victims are most often trapped in sex trafficking; however, they can also be involved in labor trafficking, including forced work on farms or orchards, in family-owned restaurants, in mom-and-pop businesses, and begging rings. With domestic violence, the abuse happens in private; with trafficking, it sometimes happens in public.

Domestic violence and human trafficking are issues that deserve their own individual recognition. However, by recognizing the intersection of domestic violence and human trafficking, we can identify how abusive behavior patterns create environments that support and perpetuate violence. Notably, we can help ensure that victims are recognized and connected to the resources they need to get the help they deserve.

When we treat these issues as entirely distinct, we risk misidentifying victims, providing inadequate and uninformed services, and missing out on crucial collaboration between the domestic violence and human trafficking fields.

Domestic Violence Defined

The Department of Justice defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that one partner uses to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.

Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

Domestic violence impacts a person's self-esteem. Traffickers frequently exploit the already lowered self-esteem of trafficking victims who have experienced abusive family lives. Meanwhile, trafficking survivors are often vulnerable to future incidences of domestic violence.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Awareness

Similarities and Differences Between Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking

Human trafficking and domestic violence are expressions of power and control on the perpetrator's part. Human trafficking and domestic violence can occur on a continuum of violence, and the dynamics involved in human trafficking are frequently interwoven with those of domestic violence.

Power and control exist in domestic and sexual violence as well as trafficking. Similarly, victims are subject to physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse and isolation. Traffickers, like abusers, use cyclical violence to control victims by making promises of love or a better life and using shame and manipulation.

Few people self-identify as a victim of human trafficking or domestic violence. Therefore, they are usually unaware of their legal protections, rights, and the resources that are available for them to aid in their healing. Those who are new immigrants to a country and are survivors of trafficking and domestic violence may suffer from additional barriers such as limited language ability, fear of law enforcement, lack of awareness of rights and laws, lack of understanding of available services, fear of deportation, and specific cultural considerations.

Despite the similarities, it is essential to note how domestic violence and human trafficking differ.

Their core difference is their legal definition. At the core of human trafficking is exploitation, where another person benefits or gains profits from another person's abuse. A victim of human trafficking must prove force, fraud, and coercion. Domestic violence is a pattern of abuse in intimate relationships, and the abuser may also use force, fraud, or coercion to manipulate the victim.

Additionally, human trafficking is more likely to exploit men than domestic violence.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Impact of the Pandemic

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the first calls for assistance received by [Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center](#) in Florida were from domestic violence victims whose abusers started to traffic them sexually.

There are cases nationwide where domestic abusers force their intimate partners and children into labor trafficking situations. Data collected by Polaris released in 2020 shows that the proportion of victims recruited by intimate partners jumped from 22% in 2019 to 27% in 2020. Those recruited by a family member or caregiver also increased significantly—from 21% of all victims in 2019 to 31% in 2020, or a 47% increase.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in human trafficking globally. With millions of people out of work and children out of school worldwide, lacking social support, they were left at a greater risk for human trafficking.



Behaviors of Abusers and Traffickers

The behaviors that domestic violence perpetrators and traffickers use to groom and control their victims are often similar. Both abusers and traffickers isolate victims, often making them feel like there is no one to turn to and no means of escape. Frequently, victims are denied access to money and lack the financial resources necessary to leave an abuser/trafficker.

Victims new to the country and lacking legal documentation are often threatened with deportation if they refuse to comply with an abuser's/trafficker's demands.

They also may fear interaction with law enforcement because they may be deported. The Violence Against Women Act could protect them and allow them to apply for a T-visa.

In another effort to control, abusers/traffickers will impregnate a victim or claim existing children as their own so they can use the threat of violence or separation as another tool to manipulate a victim into compliance. Other methods include psychological manipulation, physical abuse, substance abuse coercion, and sexual violence, which can involve forcing victims to participate in pornography and sharing images.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



When the Two Intersect

Traffickers of human beings can also be domestic violence abusers. Conversely, domestic violence and human trafficking can occur together in the same victim.

Categorizing individuals as either a survivor of human trafficking or a survivor of domestic violence may limit a survivor's options for social services and legal remedies. Additionally, legal solutions and criminal convictions do not solely determine the type of violence perpetrated against an individual.

Many of the first social services responders to human trafficking were domestic violence and sexual assault advocates, who offered services to trafficked persons even before the federal TVPA law was passed in 2000.

Domestic Violence and Forced Labor

“A husband forces his wife to work, taking all of her wages and beating her if she loses her job.”

One of the myths regarding human trafficking is that intimate partners, especially husbands and family members, for example, parents, have a right to force their loved ones to work.

This may inhibit victims from recognizing that they are victims.

Natalya and Joe had an online two-year relationship, during which they vacationed twice. Joe proposed and brought Natalya and her 16-year-old daughter to his farm in California. Natalya and her daughter were involuntarily forced into heavy labor on the farm and suffered verbal and physical abuse.

They escaped and brought charges against Joe under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA). Joe claimed that the TVPRA did not apply to married parties. The court noted no basis for the proposition that marriage eliminates a claim under TVPRA.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Domestic Violence and Sex Trafficking

Boyfriends, husbands, and romantic partners have forced their victims into commercial sex. It is not always the case that the relationship between a trafficking victim and trafficker is a fraud at its inception; however, in some sex trafficking cases, a marriage or intimate relationship may be a fraud instigated by the trafficker from the start. Young victims are lured into marriages or romantic relationships only to be exploited by their partners through forced prostitution.

In 2019, a Utah woman who had been married to her husband for nineteen years was forced into sex trafficking to help pay rent. The man locked his wife out of the house and told her she couldn't return until she had made enough money. When she finally returned with enough money, he told her it wasn't enough, and she needed to get back out and make more money.

In one case where the defendant eventually pled guilty to sex trafficking, the defendant forced his girlfriend, a young woman from the State of Puebla, Mexico, into prostitution in the United States. The victim's children remained under the care of the defendant's relatives in Mexico. The defendant used physical force to coerce the victim into prostitution. He also instructed his relatives to hold her children hostage. After a violent physical assault, law enforcement authorities arrested the defendant in what they considered a domestic violence case. The defendant was first convicted of assault and harassment. Subsequent law enforcement interviews revealed that the defendant had forced the victim into commercial sex and was sentenced for sex trafficking.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



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Advocacy

Human Trafficking Involving Other Family Members

Human trafficking for labor can occur alongside domestic violence, particularly when other family members direct the forced labor. Traffickers may use the victim's fear of retaliation by her community or extended family as coercion.

[The Human Trafficking Legal Center](#) shares the example of the case of *Mistry v. Udawadia*. The plaintiff alleged that her parents-in-law forced her to perform domestic work by confining her and controlling her diet. They also allegedly threatened to have their son divorce the plaintiff and send her back to India.

Family-controlled human trafficking may also include identity theft, tax fraud, and filing false tax returns. These fraudulent tax returns can result in Internal Revenue Service enforcement actions against the trafficking victims even years after they escape.

Trafficker-perpetrated tax fraud is a risk for all trafficking victims, but the danger is especially prominent in situations of domestic violence and family-controlled trafficking.



Action

Human Trafficking Toolkit for Domestic and Sexual Violence Agencies

To meet the goal of improving services to survivors of the related and often co-occurring traumas of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, the Human Trafficking Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School and the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence has formed a partnership and created this [Human Trafficking Toolkit for Domestic and Sexual Violence Agencies](#), to assist domestic violence and sexual assault advocates in better serving survivors of human trafficking.

By presenting an overview of human trafficking and its relationship to domestic violence and sexual assault, the authors of this document hope that advocates will be better prepared to plan for, recognize, and support survivors of human trafficking, who they are often already serving, although sometimes unknowingly.

The Intersectionality of Domestic Violence & Human Trafficking

This presentation highlights the intersectionality of domestic violence and human trafficking. Participants will learn to recognize significant similarities, differences, and intersections between domestic violence, sex trafficking, and labor trafficking. Unique challenges facing this field are discussed, including homelessness, economic insecurity, individuals of diverse backgrounds, cultural differences, and much more. Learn about how 3Strands Global Foundation has built a program using trauma-informed and culturally aware practices that not only assist survivors and at-risk populations in crisis but address long-term gaps in education and employment to assist survivors in living lives of self-determination.

Click [here](#) to view the presentation.

Question: *What is better than being rescued from traffickers?*

Answer: *Not being trafficked in the first place.*

There may be only one program that keeps orphans from being trafficked for sexual exploitation, and that is the Aids Orphan Sewing Project of the St. Maria Goretti Organization in Bukoba, Tanzania, operated by the Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. For three years, girls are taught how to sew, use computers, and decorate with fabric, along with English, basic math, cooking, gardening, morals/ethics and most of all, how to become self-reliant and self-assured. These young women will not be duped when traffickers seek out victims to be trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Sr. Stella Storch, a Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa, has supported this program for 20 years. In that time 500 young women have completed the program and are now earning a living for themselves, their siblings and families. They receive their own treadle sewing machine at graduation. Many are independent seamstresses; others work for schools where they sew and mend school uniforms.

The work could not be done without the generous donors and grants. Each year an appeal letter is sent out. It is a challenge to raise enough money for the 60 students enrolled annually. Of late they are boarding at the motherhouse which means more money must be raised. Covid turned out to be a challenge as well. No student has been infected.

Besides the Sewing Project, the St. Maria Goretti Organization also has a Carpentry School for boys and provides other services for orphans.

You can find much more information at www.stmgo.org

Contributed by Sister Stella Storch, OP



Addressing Domestic Abuse in the Digital Realm

Technology abuse, mainly using software like “stalkerware” to track domestic partners or monitor their online behavior, is an often overlooked part of domestic violence. In 2022, Norton expanded its long-term partnership with The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) to address this need.

One of the partnership’s most significant outputs was the creation of Securing Devices and Accounts, a new privacy- and security-focused resource for survivors. The guide builds upon Norton and NNEDV’s previous work to increase device and account security and privacy knowledge.

It addresses survivors’ concerns about standard devices and accounts, including considerations for whether the abusive person may or may not have physical or remote access. The guide was created to increase survivors’ knowledge about and comfort with technology, empower them to improve their security and privacy and help them make decisions based on their individual needs and circumstances.

Based on average views of toolkits on TechSafety.org, we estimate that at least 30,000 individuals will access the guide annually.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

**NATIONAL DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

PO Box 90249 Austin, Texas 78709

Administrative Line: 737-225-3150

More Shelters Needed Specifically for Trafficking Victims

There are currently some 3,000 shelters in the U.S. designated for survivors of domestic violence, many of which have programs designed for human trafficking survivors.

Few emergency shelters or transitional housing programs are uniquely prepared to serve victims of human trafficking. Moreover, access to safe and affordable housing can be a challenge for victims of human trafficking. Many victims face unique barriers to accessing and maintaining housing due to their victimization.

In 2017, 35% of programs for Asian domestic violence survivors addressed international trafficking and 22% addressed Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST). Learn more [here](#).

Key National Legislation Affecting Victims and Survivors of Violence

[The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) outlines the following three pieces of legislation that most impact victims and survivors of Domestic Violence.

1. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

In 1994, Congress passed Title IV of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, better known as the Violence Against Women Act or VAWA. VAWA was passed not only to stem the tide of ever-increasing violence against women but also to encourage societal change.

VAWA created new programs to help law enforcement fight violence against women, provided grant money for the same purpose, strengthened penalties, and prohibited criminal activities that had not been previously recognized legally. It has been reauthorized three times.

Its reauthorizations expanded VAWA to combat sex-trafficking, gave some tribal courts jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators who committed violence against women on tribal lands, authorized money to address the rape-kit processing backlog, established a nondiscrimination requirement for programs receiving VAWA grant money, and created a 'rape shield' law. Since the implementation of VAWA, intimate partner violence against women declined 72%!

2. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) is the primary source of federal funding for domestic violence direct service providers. It was created by Congress as part of the Child Abuse Amendments of 1984 and is reauthorized every five years.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau oversees FVPSA and administers grants to states/territories, tribes, state domestic violence coalitions, and resource centers.

3. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

In 1984, Congress passed, and President Reagan signed into law, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). VOCA established the Crime Victims Fund to assist and compensate victims/survivors of crime. The fund is comprised of federal criminal fines, forfeited bonds, forfeiture of profits from criminal activity, and donations by private parties.

The Office for Victims of Crime oversees the fund and distributes the money in the form of formula grants to states and territories. The states then use this money to fund victim services including domestic violence shelters other domestic violence direct service providers and to compensate victims for crime-related losses including medical and counseling costs and lost wages.



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