

“Red Flags” That May Indicate Human Trafficking

A variety of “red flags” can be indicators of trafficking. The examples listed here are not a definitive list, nor will every individual present the same red flags.



Physical Red Flags

- Untreated or undertreated workplace injuries
- Bruising and burns
- Exposure to toxic chemicals
- Respiratory issues
- High number of sexual partners
- Multiple pregnancies/terminations
- Physical impacts of long-term trauma
- Frequent treatment for sexually transmitted infections and injuries
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Communicable and noncommunicable disease (e.g., TB, hepatitis)
- Substance use
- Dental issues
- Tattoos, burns, or scarring to indicate branding

Behavioral Red Flags

- Confusing or contradicting stories
- Inability to focus or concentrate
- Unaware of location, age, time
- Protects the person who hurt them, minimizes abuse
- Guilt and shame about experience
- Reserved/avoiding interaction or providing limited information
- Psychological trauma
- Depression and anxiety disorders
- Sexual acting out in children and young adolescents
- Knowledge and behavior outside of typical range for age

Environmental Red Flags

- Accompanied by another person who answers for them, preventing them from speaking freely
- Constantly accompanied by a person who will not leave them alone
- In school settings, changes in behavior, students no longer coming to school when they should, wearing the wrong clothing based on the season
- Living at work or living in overcrowded locations
- Not allowed to take adequate breaks, eat, or drink at work
- Recruited for different work than currently doing
- Homeless minors and those not living with relatives or foster parents (i.e., living in motel, living with non-relatives who are several years older)
- Sexual harassment at work