

# RESPONDING TO TRAFFICKING CONCERNS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

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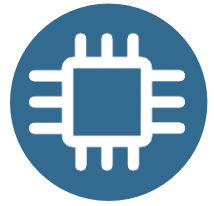
**OFFICE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**MAY 9, 2023**



# Office on Trafficking in Persons

*Mission, Goals, and Organization*

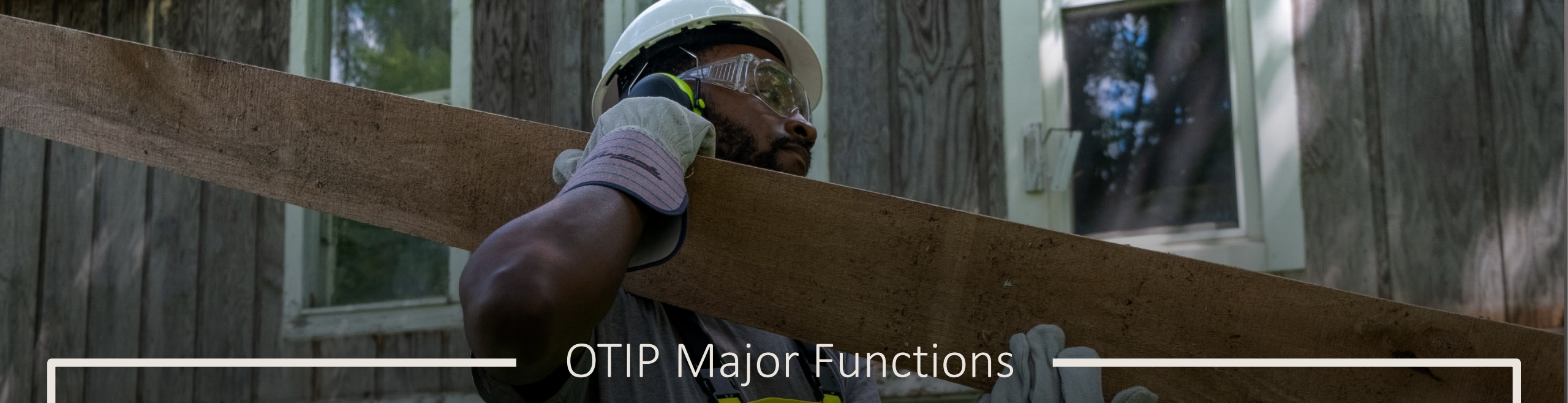


# Mission and Primary Goals

**Mission:** To combat human trafficking by supporting and leading systems that prevent trafficking through public awareness and protect victims through identification and assistance, helping them re-build their lives and become self-sufficient.

## Primary Goals:

- Establish a cohesive national human trafficking victim service delivery system that serves victims of all forms of trafficking by leveraging existing service systems, public-private partnerships, and federal and local coordination
- Develop a culture of data-informed anti-trafficking programming and policy-making by standardizing data collection, targeting evaluation, and publishing quality reports
- Integrate anti-trafficking efforts into HHS prevention strategies through survivor-informed public awareness messaging and addressing demand for human trafficking



## OTIP Major Functions

### **Protection**

Victim service and assistance activities, grant programs, Child Eligibility and Adult Certification programs, child victim coordination activities, and the National Human Trafficking Hotline

### **Prevention**

Training and technical assistance, survivor engagement, public awareness, regional coordination, and prevention education

### **Research and Policy**

Identification, coordination, and implementation of anti-trafficking research agenda, and supports program and policy development



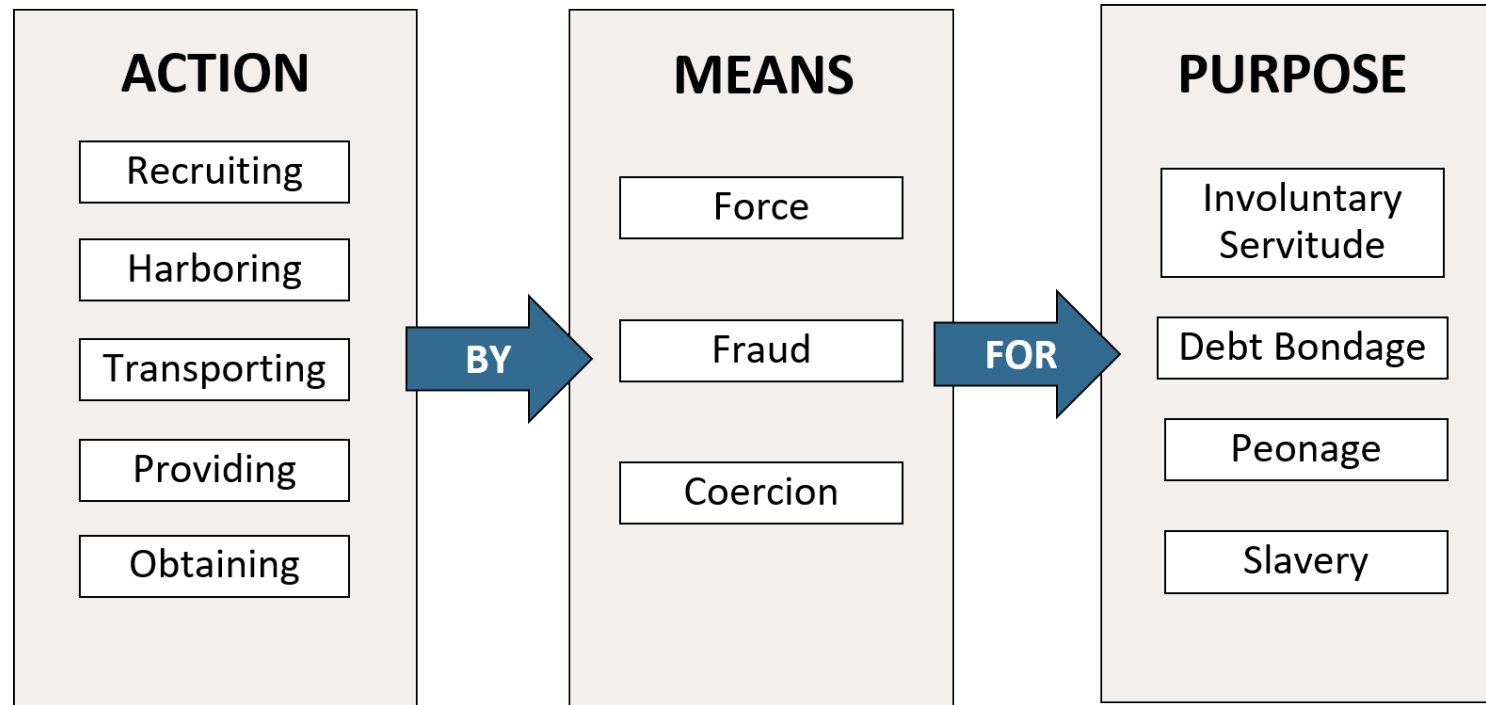
# Human Trafficking among Unaccompanied Children

*Definitions and Common Trends*



# Labor Trafficking of Minors

The recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining of a child for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

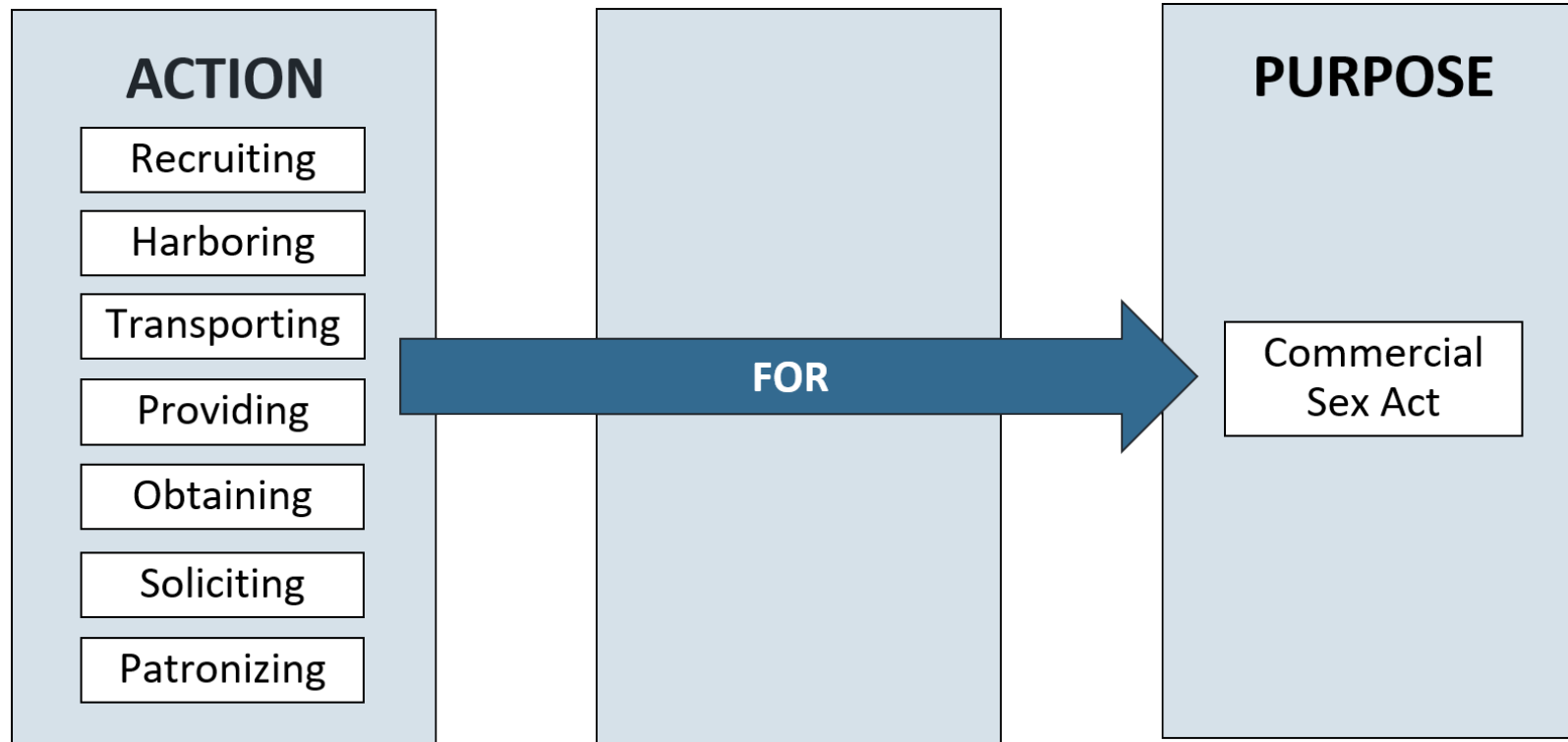


22 USC. § 7102 (11)



# Sex Trafficking of Minors

The recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining, soliciting, or patronizing of a child for the purpose of engaging in a commercial sex act.



22 USC. § 7102 (12)



# Labor Trafficking and Exploitation

## Labor Exploitation

- Paid less than promised
- Withheld pay
- No written earnings statement

- No meal breaks
- Hazardous work environment
- Lack of safe water or toilet

- Movement to work controlled

- Individual lives at work site

- Threatened to pay debt and expenses
- Threats or use of violence
- Demoralizing
- Held against will

- Intimidation and control
- Sexual assault
- Use or threatened use of law
- Physical beatings

## Labor Trafficking





# Common Trends

## Commercial Sex and Smuggling

Child solicited to engage in sex acts in exchange for cost of journey, shelter, immigration documents, food, etc.

## Forced Labor and Smuggling

Child forced to work to pay off a debt related to their journey and/or for various expenses by their caregiver.

## Forced Criminality

Child forced to perform services for gangs or cartels with threat of harm for non-compliance.



The minor disclosed that since he reunified with his sponsor, he has had to pay for rent, food and other basic needs. The minor feels that he has to work or he won't be able to live with the sponsor. The minor is not enrolled in school because he is working during school hours. The minor reports that he is working voluntarily because he wants to be able to send money back home to his family.



The minor reported that she has been approached multiple times at school by gang members pressuring her to sell drugs. The minor reported that they have threatened to harm her and she thinks they would kill her if she doesn't do what they ask. She reports that she has refused, but she is afraid to go to school because they continue to approach her.

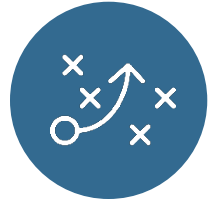


The minor disclosed that he was contacted by a man through social media offering to pay for his journey to the United States. The minor stated that at first, he was asked to send nude photos, and later, he was told that he would have to engage in sex acts with the man upon arrival in the U.S. The minor reported that he feared the man because he owed him a debt for his journey and felt that he didn't have a choice.



# Assessment and Response

*Utilizing a Trauma Informed Approach and Safety Planning*



# Trauma Informed Approach Principles



SAFETY



TRUSTWORTHINESS  
AND TRANSPARENCY



PEER  
SUPPORT



COLLABORATION AND  
MUTUALITY



EMPOWERMENT,  
VOICE, AND CHOICE



CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND  
GENDER CONSIDERATIONS



# Protective Factors

As you work with unaccompanied children, consider these protective factors that may prevent trafficking (or re-trafficking):



Positive Relationships



Connection to Culture



Hobbies



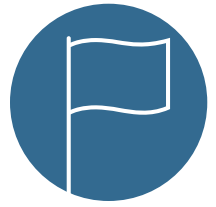
Safety and Stability



Education



Comprehensive Resources



# Potential Red Flags



Physical

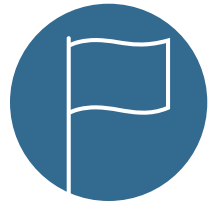


Behavioral



Environmental





# Potential Red Flags

- Living with multiple individuals, many of whom are not family
- Living with a sponsor, caregiver, or individual who serves as an employer or offers the minor's services to an employer
- Traveling to work alone or with other adults who are not immediate family members
- Having fraudulent documents or not having possession of their documents
- Isolation from outside support
- Unable to enroll in or attend school regularly
- Concern about repaying a debt for their family
- Worry that their family needs money
- Unable to communicate or interact with others without a sponsor or caregiver present
- Accompaniment by a caregiver who hovers at and answers all questions; or if minor is not allowed to attend appointments or speak to a case manager alone
- Frequent moves



# Your Role in Inquiring about Trafficking

- Assess for risk and plan for safety.
- Seek to understand and provide support.
- Ask open-ended questions (TED), rather than detailed questions about the trafficking experience.
- Stick to facts needed to identify needs and provide services.
- Refer children with potential indicators to OTIP and community resources.
- Remember, disclosure is not the goal.





# Using the TED Approach

## **T: Tell Me About**

Tell me about your journey to the United States.

## **E: Explain**

You mentioned your guide was mean to you. Explain to me how he was mean to you.

## **D: Describe**

Describe what happened next after your guide told you that you had to work.



# Assess for Risk and Plan for Safety

- Interview minor in a private space.
- Inform minor about confidentiality, mandated reporting, and informed consent.
- Ask minor about their sense of safety (physical, mental, emotional).
- If there are placement concerns or concerns of abuse and neglect, coordinate with child protective services, ORR National Call Center, OTIP, the URM foster care program, and other community resources as appropriate.

Remember: The goal in having these conversations is not disclosure of a trafficking experience, but rather to learn how you can provide support and refer the minor to appropriate services.



# Safety Planning

**Goal:** Explore practical options to increase safety and decrease harm.

A safety plan should:

1. Assess current and potential concerns.
2. Develop strategies to avoid or reduce harm.
3. List concrete ways to stay safe in unsafe situations.
4. Incorporate strategies for emotional safety, grounding, and regulation.





# Supporting a Child Experiencing Trafficking

As a case manager, you can support children in various ways as it relates to human trafficking– both through prevention and protection efforts:

Potential ways to support:

- Safety plan
- Report trafficking concerns accordingly (child welfare, OTIP, ORRNCC, etc.)
- If minor has an OTIP letter, help them in connecting to benefits and services (SSA and other entities)
- Reach out to OTIP/Aspire if needs expand or if technical assistance is needed
- If minor is aging out and needs ongoing services, reach out to OTIP/Aspire





# OTIP Child Eligibility Process

*Reporting, Requesting Assistance, and Benefits and Services*



# Reporting Requirements

- **Federal Reporting Requirements**

“Not later than 24 hours after a federal, state, or local official discovers that a person who is under 18 years of age may be a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons, the official shall notify HHS to facilitate the provision of interim assistance.” *(Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as amended)*

- **ORR Reporting Requirements**

“If a care provider suspects that a child may be a trafficking victim, the care provider must refer the child’s case to OTIP for further assessment. This referral is appropriate if there are concerns of trafficking at any point in the child’s life and in any country.” *(UC Policy Guide, Section 3.3.3)*

- **State and Local Child Welfare Reporting Requirements**


Human trafficking is now included in the definition of child abuse. Therefore, mandated reporters are now required to follow their state and local child welfare reporting requirements and report trafficking accordingly. *(Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015)*





# Child Eligibility

- **Reporting and requesting assistance:** The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, as amended requires all federal, state, and local officials to report potential trafficking concerns on behalf of foreign national minors (including unaccompanied children) to HHS within 24 hours (22 U.S.C. 7105(b)).
- **Benefits letter:** Upon receipt of credible information that a foreign national minor experienced human trafficking, OTIP issues an Eligibility Letter to the child, making them eligible to apply for benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee.

 ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office on Trafficking in Persons | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201  
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/otip

IHHS Tracking Number:  
DOB:

Irving, TX 75062

**ELIGIBILITY LETTER**


Dear

We have determined that you were subjected to a severe form of trafficking in persons. In accordance with 22 U.S.C. § 7105(b)(1)(G), this Eligibility Letter confirms that you are eligible to apply for benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee. This letter does not confer immigration status.

You can start applying for benefits and services on **May 24, 2022**.

If you wish to apply for benefits and services, it is important that you seek assistance as soon as possible because some of the benefits are time-limited and may expire. When you access benefits, bring the original copy of this letter to the benefit-issuing agency.

See the attached packet for further information on accessing benefits and services, descriptions of the benefits and services you are eligible for, and information about the comprehensive case management services that are available to support you in this process. The National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to connect you with available services in your area.

Sincerely,  
  
Katherine Chon  
Director  
Office on Trafficking in Persons

This letter serves as official notice from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that the individual listed in this letter is eligible and in need of a non-work Social Security Number (SSN Card) as HHS determined that this individual is a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons (VSFT) under 22 U.S.C. § 7105(b)(1)(G). Reference the SSN PIN: B01 1021 0750 to confirm that an IHHS Eligibility or Inactive American's Letter is sufficient to establish the identity and age of a foreign national minor VSFT applying for a non-work SSN.

Benefit-issuing agencies: To instantly verify this letter online, visit [this link](#) and select Verify an IHHS letter.

Questions? Call IHHS at 1-866-401-5519 during regular business hours.



# Child Eligibility Process

An individual has concerns that a foreign national minor may have experienced forced labor or commercial sex at any point in the minor's life.



The individual submits a Request for Assistance on the minor's behalf in Shepherd, OTIP's online case management system, within 24 hours of identifying the potential concerns.



The OTIP Child Protection Team reviews the case, corresponds with the requester, and assesses whether the minor experienced trafficking in accordance with the TVPA of 2000, as amended.



If OTIP determines that the minor experienced trafficking, an Eligibility Letter is issued. OTIP may issue an Interim Assistance Letter if OTIP needs more information or the trafficking situation is not clear.



# OTIP Reporting and Requesting Assistance

1. Create an account in OTIP's online system, Shepherd.

2. Submit a Request for Assistance to OTIP in Shepherd.

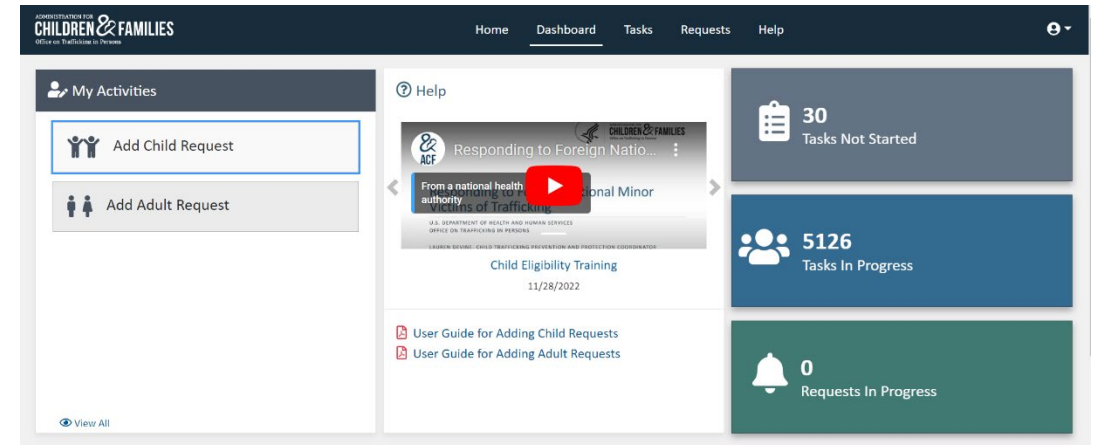
3. Monitor email and Shepherd for updates and requests for additional information.

- Report and request assistance through OTIP's online [Shepherd Case Management System](#).
- For questions or to staff a case before submission, contact the Child Protection Team by email at [ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov) or by phone at 202-205-4582.



# Shepherd

- Case requesters can use Shepherd as a secure platform to report trafficking concerns and submit electronic Requests for Assistance (RFAs) on behalf of foreign national minors in order for them to receive Eligibility Letters and be connected to needed benefits and services.
- Shepherd is also used by OTIP grantees to connect individuals to case management services, by DHS to submit T Visas and Continued Presence, and to consult with federal law enforcement and non-governmental organizations during the Interim Assistance process.





# Child Eligibility Benefits

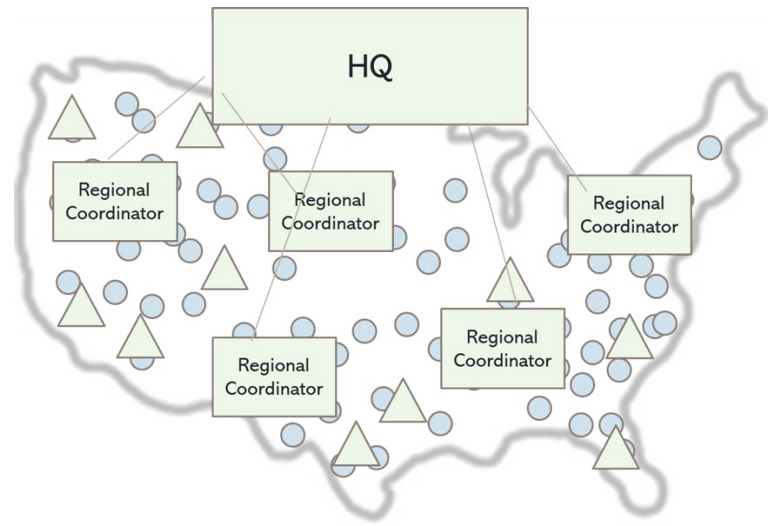
Monetary Assistance	Nutrition	Medical Services	Education	Employment	Housing	Multiple Needs Assistance
Refugee Cash Assistance	Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program	Children's Health Insurance Program	Title IV Federal Student Financial Aid	Job Corps	Public Housing Program	Refugee Social Services and Targeted Assistance
Supplemental Security Income		Medicaid				Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Foster Care Program
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families		Office of Refugee Resettlement Medical Screenings				Voluntary Agency Matching Grant Program
		Refugee Medical Assistance				



# Aspire Case Management Services

Aspire provides **child-friendly, trafficking-specific comprehensive case management services** through a nationwide network of providers for foreign national minors who have experienced human trafficking. These case managers help minors access a range of supportive services, including but not limited to the following:

- Emergency needs
- Housing, rent, utilities
- Education
- Transportation
- Medical expenses
- Mental health counseling
- Food and clothing
- Personal care items
- Cell phone
- Legal rights
- Employment
- Life skills training
- Interpretation and translation
- Financial support





# PRS Coordination with Aspire

## **Regional Coordinators**

Assist PRS workers with troubleshooting access to benefits, placement breakdown concerns, and identifying trafficking-specific contacts with state child welfare.

**[aspire@uscrimail.org](mailto:aspire@uscrimail.org)**

## **Case Management**

Available for minors who are not already receiving federally funded case management services. Refer to Aspire upon case closure when there are ongoing needs or concerns.

**1-800-307-4712**

## **TVAP**

Available for youth and adults 18+. PRS case managers can refer to TVAP upon case closure (when minor is aging out of services).

**[tvap@uscrimail.org](mailto:tvap@uscrimail.org)**



# Benefit Application Process

*Tips and Resources to Support you in Connecting Minors to Benefits and Services*

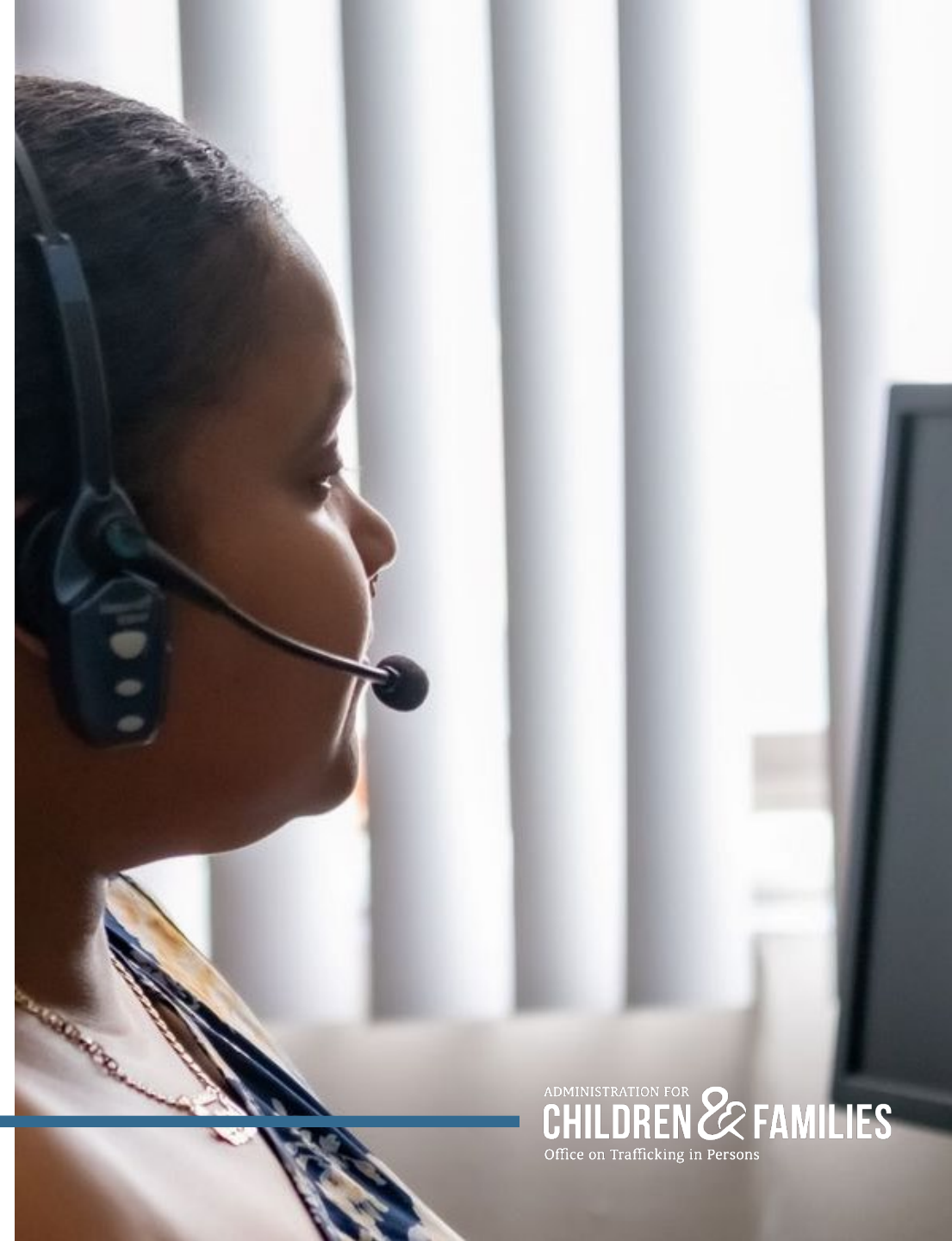




# Benefits Process

To access benefits and services, take the following steps with your client:

1. Determine the type of letter the minor has (Interim Assistance or Eligibility).
2. Apply for benefits online or visit a local benefit-issuing agency (Medicaid, TANF, food stamps, etc.).
3. If needed (in some states), apply for a non-work Social Security Number (SSN) and revisit the local benefit-issuing agency to reapply for benefits with the non-work SSN.





# Applying for Benefits

Apply online or find a benefit-issuing agency near you. When you go to a benefit-issuing agency, bring:

1. Your client's Eligibility or Interim Assistance Letter.
2. Proof of household income\* for all working household members. Proof of income\*\* may include:
  - Recent paystubs
  - Employment offer letter
  - Bank statements showing regular income
  - W-2 form

Your client's original Eligibility or Interim Assistance Letter should be sufficient for evidence of age and date of birth.

Additional documents are not required, but to avoid delays, you should bring any identifying documents you have, such as:

- Photo ID, such as a state ID, non expired passport, or school ID.
- Refugee resettlement documents, such as the Verification of Release (VOR) Form for unaccompanied children.

\*A household member is any person the client lives with or share expenses with, related or unrelated.

\*\*If the client does not have proof of income, benefit-issuing agencies may accept a written, signed letter from your client or family member's employer stating their income and employment.



# What to do if Client is Denied Benefits

If your client is denied at the benefits-issuing agency because they do not have a non-work Social Security Number (SSN), you should request an official letter from the benefit-issuing agency explaining that they denied your client for this reason. The denial letter must:

- Be dated and on agency letterhead.
- Include your client's name.
- Include the non-work reason an SSN is required.
- State the **ONLY** reason your client was denied is because they do not have a non-work SSN, but otherwise meet all requirements.
- Include the relevant statute or regulation requiring the SSN as a condition to receive the benefit or service.
- Include the name and telephone number of an official to contact so the information provided may be verified.
- Be signed by hand (not electronically).



# Applying for a Social Security Number

Certain states require a non-work Social Security Number (SSN) to access many of the benefits and services a minor is eligible for. To access a non-work SSN, take the following steps:

1. Visit [ssa.gov/locator](https://ssa.gov/locator) or call 1-800-772-1213 to find your nearest Social Security Administration (SSA) office.
2. Make an appointment, if necessary.
3. When you go to the SSA office, bring your client's Eligibility or Interim Assistance Letter and letter from the benefit-issuing agency.
4. Your client should receive the card with their non-work SSN within two weeks of applying. Once they receive it, you can take them to visit the local benefit-issuing agency to reapply for benefits and services.

**Tip:** Additional documents should not be required, but to avoid delays, you should bring any identifying documents your client has, such as:

- Birth certificate
- Photo ID, like a state ID, non-expired passport, or school ID
- Verification of Release Form



# OTIP Support during Benefit Process

Reach out to OTIP or Aspire regional coordinators if you have need assistance obtaining benefits for any reason, including:

- If your client is unable to access benefits after attempting to apply at the benefit-issuing agency.
- The benefit issuing agency will not provide a denial letter for your client to access a non-work SSN.
- The denial letter provided does not match the requirements of SSA, and therefore SSA will not accept the letter that was provided.
- SSA will not issue a non-work SSN even after your client presented required documentation.





# Child Eligibility Resources

Training and Technical Assistance	<a href="#">Recorded Child Eligibility Webinar (45 minutes)</a>	This webinar provides an overview of the child eligibility process, including screening and identification, reporting, benefits and services, and case trends.
	<a href="#">Overview of Child Eligibility Process (3-minute video)</a>	This informational video provides a brief overview of the child eligibility process, including referring, benefits and services, and determination letters.
	<a href="#">Monthly Child Eligibility Webinar</a>	These webinars occur the first Wednesday of every month from 2:00 -4:00 p.m. ET on Zoom.
	<a href="#">SOAR Training Module: Working With Foreign National Minors Who Have Experienced Trafficking</a>	This is an advanced training designed for providers who work with children and youth under the age of 18 who are foreign nationals and who may have experienced human trafficking before, during, or after their journey to the United States.
Screening and Reporting	<a href="#">Shepherd</a>	Shepherd provides a secure, streamlined way for individuals to request assistance for victims of human trafficking and check the status of their request.
	Case Staffings	To discuss a potential case of trafficking on behalf of a child, ORR UC staff and volunteers can contact the OTIP Child Protection Team at by phone at 202-205-4582 or by email at <a href="mailto:ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov">ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov</a> .
Prevention, Public Awareness, and Benefits	<a href="#">Unaccompanied Children Resource Center: Child Trafficking Resources</a>	The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) Unaccompanied Children Resource Center provides information and resources to support unaccompanied children with trafficking concerns, including three toolkits specific to working with foreign national child and youth survivors of trafficking.
	<a href="#">Look Beneath the Surface Campaign</a>	Through the HHS Look Beneath the Surface campaign, OTIP works with grantees and partners to raise awareness of human trafficking and risk factors for human trafficking.
	<a href="#">Child Eligibility Benefits Handout</a>	This document explains how to use an Eligibility Letter or Interim Assistance Letter to apply for benefits and services. This handout is also available in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Chinese.

# Questions?

Contact:  202-205-4582

 [ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov)

 [acf.hhs.gov/otip](https://acf.hhs.gov/otip)