The Office for Victims of Crime Human Trafficking Collective

Shifting Current Practices in the Anti-Trafficking Field

The "Red Flag" Framework

The Purpose of This Resource

The Human Trafficking Collective (HTC) developed this resource to encourage the anti-trafficking field in moving away from using red flags as identifiers and consider alternatives to improve identification and responses to incidences of trafficking.

All anti-trafficking professionals can use this resource to improve person-centered, culturally relevant, trauma-informed, and community-specific identification and outreach in their communities. This resource promotes building relationships with survivors and referral partners. It encourages difficult conversations about challenges and inconsistencies when red flags are used as an identification tool. Our goal is to improve the individual, agency, and system's response to people with lived experience.

We are responsible for evolving to support the survivors we serve.

The Use Of Red Flags and How We Shift

Red flags, also called indicators, symptoms, and signs, have been used as a tool to help identify survivors of human trafficking. Throughout the anti-trafficking movement, professionals in the field and the general public have been taught there is a specific list of indicators that inform you if someone may be a victim or perpetrator of human trafficking.

Recognizing red flags were once believed to be the best way to educate about human trafficking and identify survivors, we have since learned that vulnerability to trafficking and trafficking situations can look very different and is often based upon many factors (e.g., financial position, culture, and geographical location).This knowledge calls for a more comprehensive approach to identifying and meeting the needs of survivors.

Red flags are rooted in discriminatory assumptions that rely on stereotypes which are foundationally racist, gendered, and poverty-shaming in nature. Because of this, reliance on red flags has made it hard for providers to reach and support all survivors because they fail to convey the current context and nuance of the crime.

We must ensure that our approach to identifying and responding to trafficking fosters access, inclusivity, trust, and belonging. To do this, we acknowledge that solely using red flags as tools for identification:

- Leads to training that can have negative impacts on agencies and misidentification of survivors.
- Fails to build intentional relationships with those we hope to serve because we are not asking the right questions.
- May re-traumatize survivors by passing judgment on their experiences.
- Sees people as a checklist rather than a whole person, which will not allow all of their needs to be identified.
- Is not an adequate screening or assessment methodology to use.

We can start this shift by:

- Learning about the impact of generational, community, and historical trauma on individuals.
- Identifying systematic barriers to address challenges in services and support.
- Changing the red flag framework in our screening and training practices.

A Shift in Framework

Red flags are often used in two ways: training and screening. Shifting how we talk about *red flags* in training, screening, and with partners increases identification and creates more pathways to healing and justice for survivors. Using the *red flag* framework approach is a learned skill that we all must work to change. We must dedicate time and intention to understanding the community- and society-level conditions that create risk factors for individuals. Below are some tips for implementing change in your training and screening practices to enhance data-driven knowledge and more effective responses to human trafficking.

Training

Training is a way to educate and build understanding around what human trafficking is, the scope of how it impacts survivors in communities, and your role in responding. When considering your training objectives, ask yourself: "How am I framing the most current context of trafficking?" If we shift the framework and our partners and communities think about trafficking differently, we can increase identification and change responses to trafficking to better serve those in need. Consider discussing topics that specifically apply to the training audience and are based on current data and best practices such as:

- Identifying barriers to survivors accessing resources
- Engaging and incorporating a diverse range of survivor expertise
- Increasing specialized training to build skills and awareness for partners
- Building community relationships and increasing service options for victim safety

For additional information on training best practices, you can visit OVC HTC's website at www.ovchtc.com or check out our Developing Effective Human Trafficking Training Materials.

Screening

Screening is a process used to signal whether or not a person needs additional support, referrals, and/or a more thorough assessment. As a reminder, OVC grantees have time to confirm eligibility and with that in mind, initial screening should focus on asking questions that allow for relationship and rapport building to better understand a person's immediate needs. For example, do we need to know when the last time an individual exchanged sex for food or shelter when they walk through our doors, or do we need to know if they are hungry or need shelter?

Consider these questions as we shift away from the red flag framework:

- Is the question I am asking informing me whether or not an individual is experiencing trafficking, and is it my professional or community role to know that now?
- Would asking these questions help build trust and rapport within my role and my partners' roles as applicable?
- How do my questions provide the most informed response to an individual's immediate needs?
- Is the question I am asking duplicative across community partners? i.e., if I ask a question that our medical provider will also ask, am I causing re-traumatization to the survivor by having them repeating sensitive information and/or creating challenges for engagement with my partners?

Asking these questions when thinking about the implications of using red flags can help us understand the "why" we are moving beyond this approach. To think more about the impact of our initial screening questions refer to the Supporting the Whole Person Pre-Screening Guide Accompaniment.

For more information on screening tools:
- PEARR Tool | HEAL Trafficking: Health, Education, Advocacy, Linkage
- Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool | National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center
- Quick Youth Indicators for Trafficking
- Trafficking Victim Identification Tool | Vera Institute of Justice
- CAST Screening Questions for SS Providers

Reminders

Staying informed about recent trends and current best practices will ensure you are effectively supporting survivors of human trafficking. Consider how you are learning about human trafficking and current trends in your community and with resources you are using/sharing, how do you ensure they are relevant and factual?
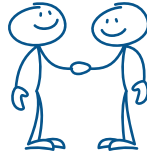
To dive deeper into these concepts and resources available to you, connect with the OVC Human Trafficking Collective at www.ovchtc.com.

To learn more about resource relevancy: Key Considerations for Developing and Assessing Human Trafficking Resources

Supporting the Whole Person
Pre-Screening Guide Accompaniment

*This guide is part of the **Developing Effective Human Trafficking Training Series** and provides examples when moving from the red flag framework to one that is more centered on the whole person and a larger context of the crime. The old framework references the types of questions that would arise from using red flags, and the new framework suggests thinking more broadly about the person you are working with, which can lead to response enhancements. Please note this is not a screening tool but a framework to consider when first encountering a possible victim of human trafficking.*

Old Framework

- Have you ever had sex in exchange for food or shelter?

- Does an employer control your wages, housing, or transportation?

New Framework

- How have you been caring for yourself when you're hungry or need somewhere to stay?

- Do you understand your rights as a worker? Would you like me to explain them?

Response Enhancement

- Ensure basic needs are accessible.

- Provide information on worker and/or victim rights and identify resources.

Old Framework

- Are you forced to live where you are also employed?

- Do you have any charges or felonies?

New Framework

- What would you like to change about your housing or employment?

- Do you have any challenges due to past convictions/ current charges?

Response Enhancement

- Build on what the person with lived experience identifies as needs.

- Address barriers created by legal systems and identify alternative forms of justice (i.e., vacatur).

Old Framework

- Are you here illegally? Can you go back "home"?

- Is your job safe?

New Framework

- Do you have questions related to your legal status? Would you like me to explain your options or refer you to someone who can i.e. an immigration attorney?

- When do you feel safe at work? When do you feel unsafe at work?

Response Enhancement

- Effectively identify needs and actions based on an individual's legal status and their desired outcomes.

- Address immediate safety concerns at places of employment, help the client understand healthy work environments and their rights.

For more information on best practice screening tools, please visit:

- PEARR Tool | HEAL Trafficking: Health, Education, Advocacy, Linkage
- Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool | National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center
- Quick Youth Indicator for Trafficking
- Trafficking Victim Identification Tool | Vera Institute of Justice

A Shift in Framework: Training Resource

This resource provides examples for sharing information about human trafficking using community *drivers* and *opportunities* to replace the context of trafficking previously shared within the Red Flag framework. **Drivers** help provide a different context to identifying the crime and an understanding of "why" it can occur. **Opportunities** provide pathways of action for your training audience and your agency and potential partners.

Training on human trafficking in this way - focusing on community, and relational factors - increases the likelihood that your audience will leave with actionable ways to join local anti-trafficking efforts. The relational factors can also provide tangible avenues for your agency and partners to incorporate in their delivery of services.

This resource intentionally does not focus on individual drivers and opportunities as agencies and communities have historically placed the burden on an individual and their disclosure of being a crime victim that can cause harm and prevent intentional relationship building and access to immediate services.

Examples of Community Drivers
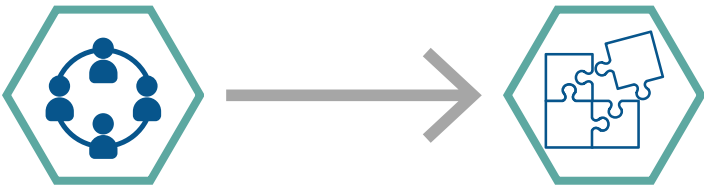
Unequal or unattainable criteria to access:
- Food resources
- Social capital
- Free and public education
- Recreation
- Employment opportunities
- Wellness and medical services
- Gender-affirming care

Absence of:
- Safety at work
- Inclusion and belonging
- Information on victim rights
- Adequate accessible transportation
- Financial literacy resources
- Shared commitment to equity, inclusion, and allyship

Stigmatization and policies around:
- Mental health
- Immigration
- Gentrification
- Disability
- Encounters with law enforcement
- Public assistance programs
- Addiction

Examples of Community Opportunities

Partner with:
- Local food banks/farms. Volunteer drivers to assist with food delivery
- Local businesses and workforce centers to support options for employment, financial literacy, and microloans.
- Local foundations to support monetary educational scholarships for clients
- Comprehensive health service providers, in both traditional and non-traditional modalities
- Transportation services to provide rides to/from medical appointments. Or provide rideshare gift certificates to local non-profits.
- Local substance use/disorder clinics and/or sobriety support groups for outreach opportunities
- Local cultural organizations and community groups for outreach and mentor/peer to peer opportunities

Host (Free):
- Labor rights training and events.
- Name-change clinics
- Legal aid clinics with local pro-bono attorney's and legal partners
- Depression and anxiety screenings with community wellness advocates

Provide:
- Accessible resources in multiple languages and to those with disabilities
- Volunteers to support survivors navigating and applying for social assistance programs.
- Free tax preparation and information on credit repair
- CLE accredited training to law enforcement partners

Relational Drivers
(Barriers in Service Delivery)

- Lack of **tools for human trafficking identification** by systems, service agencies, and survivors

- **Sobriety requirements** that make services inaccessible.

- Expecting survivors to **restate their trauma narrative**, or self-identify as a victim of trafficking.

- Intakes and procedures that **feel impersonal or complicated**.

- Staff **burnout** and **turnover**

Relational Opportunities
(Service Enhancements)

- **Utilize** evidence based screening tools and integrate local data related to current context of human trafficking in your community.

- **Adapt** person first and empowerment models that do not penalize survivors and focus on basic needs being met.

- **Train** on providing low barrier access to services and supporting the whole person. Assure meeting spaces are private, confidential, and feels safe to the survivor, as they define it.

- **Develop** agency policies and procedures to ensure a healthy self and team care culture i.e. flexible work schedules and consistent training and access to supervision.

A Shift in Framework: Training Resource

The following resource is part of the Developing Effective Human Trafficking Training Series and provides examples of what it could look like if you added community and relational drivers and opportunities into your trainings.

| **Start** with a community or relational driver | **Consider** contributing societal factors and barriers to access | **Reflect** on existing resources, partnerships, services, internal processes, and support | **Discuss** barriers to programmatic service delivery | **Formulate** a response to increase community opportunities |

Drivers: Examples of barriers in the community and service provision

Questions to engage your audiences on creating sustainable opportunities

Opportunities to counteract vulnerabilities and barriers

Community Driver Example

Difficulty accessing food resources

Consideration Questions

- Do you have existing relationships with food banks/farms? If not, what local ones exist?
- What food delivery services already exist?
- What steps does my organization need to take to establish regular volunteer delivery drivers?

Community Opportunity

Partner with local food banks/farms. Volunteer drivers to assist with food delivery

Relational Driver Example

Expecting survivors to restate their trauma narrative or self-identify as a victim of trafficking

Consideration Questions

- Do our policies and procedures reflect current best practices in screening and assessment procedures?
- Are all assessments/screenings done by qualified staff?
- Are all screening/assessments done in ways/locations that ensure confidentiality and privacy?
- Have we established what information is essential for partner referrals to avoid re-traumatization?
- Do agencies have disclosure/confidentiality agreements and policies that are shared with clients and referral partners?

Relational Opportunity

Properly train all staff and partners on best screening and assessment processes and that disclosure is not essential