
HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION

A WHITE PAPER FROM THE DEMAND REDUCTION COMMITTEE

The Demand Reduction subcommittee of Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine's Human Trafficking Commission is working to reduce the demand for forced labor and compelled commercial sexual activity in Ohio, with a focus on both potential consumers and the traffickers.

This paper is intended as an introduction to the prevention of human trafficking and as a first step to provide a framework for further research, discussion and development of ways to prevent human trafficking.

“Demand Reduction” was originally a concept developed in the field of addiction services. Within this context, it is used as a broad term for a range of policies and programs which seek a reduction in desire and opportunity to obtain and use illegal drugs. Applying this concept to human trafficking provides a lens to broaden our prevention approach to thinking about the economic basis in which sex and labor trafficking occur, and societal and cultural norms that contribute to the problem.

Context for trafficking prevention

Trafficking occurs within a continuum of issues for which other prevention efforts are in place. Sex trafficking has multiple intersections with sexual and intimate partner and family violence. For example, the sexual conduct perpetrated against a trafficking victim against her/his will is sexual violence; traffickers are known to act as a potential victim's consensual partner in order to gain access and control of the victim, and sometimes it is a family member who is the trafficker. Sex and labor trafficking of child victims clearly is a form of child abuse and maltreatment, and victims of labor trafficking are also at serious risk for sexual violence as they are already vulnerable and powerless to stop unwanted sexual conduct.ⁱ Prevention efforts for all of these forms of abuse will benefit from a coordinated approach, including reinforcement of messages across issues, learning from experience gained within each area, cross-training, and partnerships in outreach and programming.

Similarly, labor trafficking has overlaps with efforts to address labor exploitation and child labor. Future work on labor trafficking may benefit from coordination with those working in these related areas of prevention.

Background: What is prevention?

Historically, work on violence prevention originated with attention being placed on the victim. Prevention strategies focused on ways to help people who had been victimized by violence to stay safe and begin to healⁱⁱ. These are important strategies – when done well, they empower victims to take action in a positive way. A lesson learned from the experience of doing this work is to be aware of the potential for creating blame (or self-blame) when victimization occurs, as strategies to reduce future risk may be inaccurately heard as what the victim should have done differently in the past.

A different way of approaching prevention comes from a public health frameworkⁱⁱⁱ which introduces the concept of “primary prevention.” In this framework, primary prevention means turning attention to the perpetrator – what can be done to keep that person from choosing to commit the violence and abuse in the first place. If this question can be answered and the answer effectively implemented, those vulnerable for victimization have no need to be concerned with preventing the violence – they are safe because no one is trying to abuse them.

Primary prevention may be focused on individuals – how to stop them from choosing to perpetrate violence and abuse – or on society – how to create cultural and societal change so that committing an act of violence is not something anyone chooses to do and children grow up in a culture that teaches them healthy relationship skills.

What does prevention look like?

Prevention means “flipping the script” about how the issue is addressed:

- Putting the focus on traffickers, pimps and johns.
- Stopping the perpetrators from ever choosing these paths that hurt others.
- Changing how we as a society think about prostitution and forced labor. Instead of ignoring the issue or resigning to the believe that it cannot be stopped, society must declare: “It is totally unacceptable that people can still be enslaved – actually bought and sold – today!” *Changing the way we think as a society is unquestionably difficult, but unless we do, this problem will never stop completely.*
- Making sure our societal laws, policies and practices promote dignity for all people and ensure effective justice.
- Being willing and intentional in “checking” ourselves, our families and our friends when something is said or done which could make a victim feel ashamed, blamed and/or blame themselves if they weren’t able to stay safe.
- It is essential for us to assist victims where they’re at risk by offering services they need (and those they ask for) so that all victims can safely become survivors.

What can I do?

Today, next week, next year – what can I do to end trafficking?

Take action: as an individual

- Learn and model healthy relationships.
- Respectfully speak out or take action when you observe language or action which contributes to degradation of someone's perceived self-worth.
- Explore trafficking related websites, books, and movies.
- Listen to public speakers and attend trainings and awareness events on trafficking.
- If you observe something concerning, call the national trafficking hotline at 1-888-3737-888, local children's services or law enforcement agency as appropriate. Do not attempt to confront the trafficker or buyer as that can make the situation worse for the victim and potentially for you.

Take action: in your community

- Share what you have learned with friends and family through conversations and social media.
- Sponsor trafficking related programming to your school, religious organization, community, and workplace.
- Organize a local collaborative group to end trafficking.
- Be a mentor to youth.

Take action: provide support

- Build justice into your spending as much as possible; consider fair trade options for food and clothing.
- Support businesses that benefit survivors of trafficking.
- Consider donating to anti-trafficking organizations.
- Organize a fundraiser to support anti-trafficking efforts.
- Volunteer at local anti-trafficking organizations and/or programs that support at-risk youth.
- Advocate at the local, state and national level for laws and policies that support survivors, hold traffickers accountable, and reduce demand for trafficking.

Acknowledgements

Demand Reduction sub-committee: Debra Seltzer, Chair; Aryn Banks, Maggie Billings, Terry Heck, Corina Klies, David MacDonald, Linda McNelly, David Schermerhorn, John Schmoll, Rick Wagner.

Other key contributors: Beth Malchus, Rebecca Cline, Jasmine Finnie

ⁱ http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/NSAC11_Handouts/NSAC11_HT_VAW_09-16-11_Smirnova.pdf

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ⁱⁱ Kilpatrick, D. (2000). Rape and Sexual Assault. Retrieved August, 20, 2014, from <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/sapp/Rape1.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexual violence prevention: beginning the dialogue. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2004.