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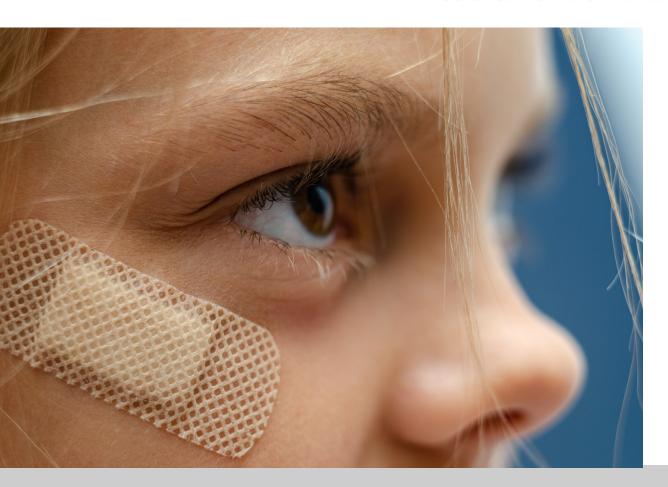
SCIENCE FOR A SMARTER WORKPLACE

Be the Eyes: Training Employees to Recognize Industry-Relevant Indicators of Sex Trafficking

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Special thanks or other notes...

Table of Contents

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Over the past 2 decades, human trafficking has become more of a problem than ever before (Pourmokhtari, 2015). Sex trafficking specifically is one of the most prevalent and far-reaching sexually based offenses (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012). Although not new, sex trafficking—human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation—has garnered increased attention from the public eye in recent years thanks to movements such as #metoo and, moreover, generally increasing social and organizational concerns for issues surrounding gender equality. Yet, despite increased workplace sexual harassment trainings (Perry et al., 2019; Powell et al., 2017), far fewer trainings are targeted at teaching employees how to identify critical signs of trafficking in their places of work. This leaves many employees who are otherwise on the "front lines" of jobs with the potential for intercepting trafficking rings without the information or resources necessary in order to do so (Mills et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, organizations, industries, and statewide governments alike are increasingly recognizing the need for anti-trafficking training. Indeed, at the time of this writing, at least 15 U.S. states now require, or are in the process of requiring, such training for certain types of employees and in certain industries. Several of these laws also include civil or even criminal liability for firms and employees that—whether by omission or commission —allow trafficking to occur on their property. To that end, many industries and organizations now have policies and guidelines for recognizing and reporting trafficking, and a wide variety of training programs have surfaced over the past few years. In particular, employees in transportation, healthcare, and hospitality industries, broadly defined, are disproportionately likely to encounter trafficking victims and thus warrant training regarding recognizing key trafficking indicators and resources for how to deal with a trafficking situation once identified.

Industries of Particular Relevance

Transportation

Transportation modalities such as airplanes, buses, taxis, ride-sharing programs, and commercial trucks are common means by which traffickers transport their victims, as well as means used by victims in attempts to escape the trafficking trade. Likewise, transportation hubs such as train stations, bus depots, truck stops, and airports are popular locations for traffickers to target new victims. Moreover, businesses more peripherally involved in the transportation industry are similarly affected. This includes convenience stores and gas stations along major thoroughfares, which may serve as hand-off areas for traffickers to exchange or facilitate the movement of victims. Further, as victims sometimes travel unaccompanied, transportation employees are uniquely positioned to encounter victims away from their traffickers, and as such may be better able to openly communicate with the victim, offer aid, or even safely intervene.

Healthcare

Due in part to the health hazards inherent in the trafficking trade, most victims seek medical (Egyud et al., 2017) and/or dental care (Syme et al., 2017) at some point, making healthcare workers at increased likelihood of encountering trafficking victims. As much of this care is necessitated on an emergency basis, a wide range of medical personnel, including paramedics, social workers, and emergency room employees (doctors, nurses, intake clerical staff) must be prepared to encounter trafficking victims seeking care as a result of health problems arising from and/or injuries sustained while being trafficked. In some cases, patients seek care during or after having escaped the trafficking trade. However, it is also the case that many seek medical care while still deeply

entrenched in the trade—often with their traffickers accompanying them to the hospital or clinic. As such, it is critical that healthcare workers be able to surreptitiously identify trafficking indicators, refer the victim to the relevant resources or services (e.g., social/case worker), and report the trafficking to the appropriate authorities. Importantly, medical personnel bear a somewhat unique burden in this regard, as their roles necessarily designate them as mandatory reporters, and therefore the responsibility of reporting reaches beyond simply a moral duty into a role requirement (though such a designation may also have the unintended side effect of compromising trust; see English 2017).

Hospitality

It is relatively common knowledge that hotel rooms are a popular location for commercial sex, thus making the hospitality industry a particularly pertinent one in considerations of sex trafficking. Findings from the Polaris Survivor Survey suggest that 75% of reported sex trafficking cases were connected to a hotel in some regard (Polaris Project, 2018), and as such, it is not at all unlikely that employees in these businesses witness and need to report such incidents. Indeed, 2007 and 2017, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received 3,596 cases involving a hotel or motel (Polaris Project, 2018), further highlighting the critical role played by hospitality workers in curbing sex trafficking.

Key Trafficking Indicators to Look for (by Industry)

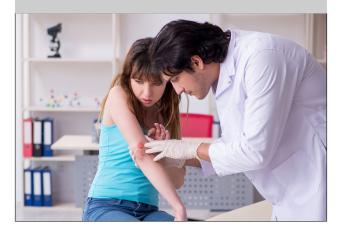| |
|---|
| *Transportation* |
| • Loitering |
| • Repeated entering/exiting of vehicles |
| • Lack of awareness of one's locale and/or destination |
| • Repeated and lengthy use of single-stall restrooms |
| *Healthcare* |
| • Patient not allowed to speak for themselves |
| • Unexplained & repeat injuries |
| • Lack of identification and/or health insurance |
| • Under age 18 yet not attending school |
| *Hospitality* |
| • Patrons paying large sums in cash |
| • Guests with little or no luggage |
| • Steady flow of visitors to the same room |
| • Requests for rooms near exits |

As mandatory reporters, medical personnel's reporting responsibilities reach beyond a moral duty into a role requirement

As evident in the inset table, there are a fairly standard set of conditions and situations encountered in each industry that raise suspicions of trafficking (e.g., Annals of Emergency Medicine, 2016; ECPAT-USA, 2017). Although some of the noted suspicious behaviors may seem obvious once explicitly identified as trafficking indicators, they are nonetheless easily overlooked by workers who lack training to attune to them and recognize them as red flags. Thus, the importance of explicit and targeted training programs that give employees the tools, resources, and—not negligibly—the confidence and efficacy to pursue reporting of suspected trafficking instances when suspected cannot be overlooked.

Examples of Industry-Specific Anti-Trafficking Training Initiatives

Truckers against Trafficking	https://truckersagainsttrafficking.org
Blue Lightening Initiative (airlines)	https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/blue-lightning-initiative
Airline Ambassadors	https://airlineamb.org/
Convenience Stores Against Trafficking	http://inourbackyard.org/csat/

Communalities of Trainings

Many anti-trafficking trainings focus on a general awareness of human trafficking. Produced by anti-trafficking organizations such as the Polaris Project, as well as government agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, these are intended for multiple audiences and tend to be relatively inexpensive and brief. Although these may lack industry-specific actions or recommendations, even rudimentary education on trafficking is beneficial—and although awareness of sex trafficking has certainly increased, it is only relatively recently that it has begun to emerge more prominently into the social and organizational consciousness. Indeed, U.S. federal anti-trafficking laws only date back to 2000.

Examples of Anti-Trafficking Organizations and Nonprofits

The Polaris Project	www.polarisproject.org
In Our Backyard	www.inourbackyard.org
Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST)	www.bestalliance.org

> **Even within trafficking-heavy industries, published sex trafficking curricula are limited.**

A growing number of industry-specific training programs have also emerged, yielding added value via more specific information and indicators. The earliest efforts in this regard were in law enforcement in the early 2000s, and healthcare professionals now have more than 20 training programs targeted toward health fields specifically (Ahn et al., 2013). Industry-focused anti-trafficking organizations such as BEST (Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking), Truckers Against Trafficking, and In Our Backyard (which focuses on convenience stores) also develop educational content, sometimes alongside anti-trafficking organizations such as the Polaris Project or with business associations such as the American Hotel and Lodging Association. Nevertheless, even within these trafficking-heavy industries, published sex trafficking curricula are arguably limited (e.g., Talbott et al., in press).

Although the specific content of training modules varies somewhat, even within industries (Powell et al., 2017), they typically follow a similar pattern. Specifically, they first seek to expand workers' knowledge of trafficking in general, ranging from the global to the local level. This often includes brief online modules lasting anywhere from 15 minutes to over an hour (Mills et al., 2019). Building on this knowledge base, they then turn to more industry-specific context specifying how an employee may be most likely to encounter a trafficking situation. That is, employees are generally walked through some of the main "red flags" that may indicate trafficking behavior in their specific place of work or industry. Such training programs also typically provide employees with actionable information regarding the proper action channels through which to report a suspected trafficking situation (e.g., notifying a supervisor, calling a trafficking hotline or law enforcement). Many also include tangible reference materials (e.g., pocket- or wallet-sized reference cards highlighting key indicators and hotline information),

which workers can keep and to which they can refer when the circumstance arises, or signage to post for employee reference (e.g., ECPAT-USA, n.d.). Providing such resources is critical in facilitating knowledge transfer and skill utilization beyond the training program (Salas et al., 2012). It is likewise critical that employees are confident in the security and anonymity of the reporting channels so as to allay fears of retribution and related hesitancy in reporting, as ultimately, employees' own privacy and personal safety concerns are often of paramount importance in deciding whether to report (Annals of Emergency Medicine, 2016; Atkinson et al., 2016).

Some organizations and industries (e.g., healthcare, air travel) have gone beyond static training programs, offering simulation-based trainings that provide a more realistic environment in which face validity of the training is enhanced (e.g., Stoklosa et al., 2017). This is in line with common recommendations from other industries (e.g., Hill et al., 2003) and behavioral modeling training more broadly (e.g., Taylor et al., 2005), which suggests that the potential effectiveness of trainings is enhanced when such programs are interactive, including role playing and qualitatively varied behavioral modeling opportunities. In the case of trafficking, this may mean having paid actors (or training confederates, other employees, etc.) play the part of trafficking victims and/or traffickers, evidencing the behaviors of concern, allowing the trainees (employees) an opportunity to practice how they would behaviorally respond to such a situation.

Indeed, practicing one's planned reactions to a situation in a simulated condition has been shown to increase the likelihood that individuals feel enabled and empowered to manifest those same behaviors when faced with the situation in reality (Grossman & Salas, 2011). For example, a healthcare simulation training may center around a standardized patient who reports indicators that should arouse suspicion in the trainee (e.g., evasive affect, younger than 18 years yet not attending school, reports unstable relationship with parents, cigarette burns revealed upon physical examination), with the goal being that the trainee should practice and/or evidence (a) the knowledge needed to identify a trafficking victim, (b) the appropriate approach and skills to effectively communicate with the patient, and (c) the resources to refer the potential victim to appropriate resources or agencies (e.g., Stoklosa et al., 2017). In so doing, trainees are also advised to adopt a multidisciplinary, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed approach to dealing with potential trafficking victims, so as to avoid retraumatizing them, attend to their multiplicity of needs (e.g., psychological, safety, legal), and refer to appropriate external sources or agencies for needs that they themselves cannot meet (Annals of Emergency Medicine, 2016).

It is also often the case that more intensive workshops are offered to managers and supervisors in a "train the trainers" fashion, with the idea that they will then in turn share the information, resources, and skills with their subordinates in a pyramid-like fashion. For example in the hotel industry, these programs more intensively educate managers on some of the broader issues relating to trafficking in their industry as well as their particular geographic area, such as legal issues related to trafficking (e.g., potential liability concerns, police searches) as well as proactive measures to make their business less attractive to potential traffickers (e.g., not accepting cash payments, actively patrolling guest room floors 24/7, greeting and engaging with guests; ECPAT-USA, n.d.). In many cases, workshops also serve as a venue to foster relationships between managers and the relevant law

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enforcement personnel. Such programs thus provide increased depth and also equip managers to better represent their industries within the community.

Additional Recommendations for Training Design and Implementation

Despite the increased interest as of late in organizations and industries offering trafficking training, it remains the case that many of the resulting trainings have notable room for improvement, as would be expected in something so nascent. To this end, we build upon the common training features noted above to offer two further recommendations for ensuring successful trafficking training programs. This includes increased reliance on trafficking experts (broadly defined) and ensuring an organizational culture that is fundamentally supportive of anti-trafficking actions on the part of employees.

Of course, relying on topical experts to facilitate the trainings is best practice for any kind of training. Trafficking researchers, training and development specialists, and law enforcement professionals specializing in trafficking or embedded in trafficking task forces can each contribute uniquely critical perspectives and valuable resources to anti-trafficking training design. Moreover, given the often sensationalistic press coverage of trafficking as well as the somewhat limited public knowledge of the realities of trafficking (Bonilla & Mo, 2019), experts are useful in providing balanced, data-driven information that can offer an optimally accurate picture of the complex nature of sex trafficking.

However, we also recommend incorporating the perspectives of former trafficking victims when possible (Mills et al., 2019) or, at a minimum, utilizing case examples that are particularly relevant to the targeted audience and industry. The uniquely specific insights offered by survivors are likely to provide a welcome complement to the perspectives of those with positional power such as the trainers themselves and/or members of law enforcement. Moreover, giving former victims a platform in the training is also likely to help trainees internalize the importance of the training, thus motivating transfer (in much the same way that Grant [2008] recommended outsourcing inspiration to the end recipient).

Finally, ensuring a supportive organizational culture is also critical to facilitating training transfer and ensuring that employees follow through on implementing what they learned in the training. That is, it is critical to "align systems" in such a way that the organizational culture both enables and empowers individuals to act on their new knowledge and skills (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). For instance, for maximum benefit (training transfer), employees must believe that they can implement their new skills without fear of negative ramifications, either personal or professional. To this end, organizations (and, by extension, the downstream culture enacted daily by midlevel managers and coworkers) must refrain from punishing or shaming employees for identifying red flags or taking action—for example, in the event that a trafficking suspicion is unsubstantiated or their report ultimately yields a "false positive."

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Checklist for Developing and Implementing Sex Trafficking Training in Organizations

Before the training
• *Needs assessment*. Determine the extent, nature, and practicability of training needs via needs assessments (e.g., organizational analyses, task analyses, person analyses).
• *Plan ahead*. Proactively plan for an evaluation method that measures a variety of outcomes in a traceable way (e.g., a pre/post design assessing knowledge and attitudes about, as well as common indicators of, sex trafficking).
• *Applicability*. Ensure that the training is applicable to employees at all levels of the organization. Understand that this may require slightly modified trainings for different levels.
• *Expert input*. Consult with trafficking experts (law enforcement, researchers, etc.) to ensure a training curriculum that is accurate, relevant, and up-to-date. Outsource the training in whole or in part to trafficking training experts or organizations as needed.
• *Explicit goals*. Document explicit goals of the training, stating what trainees are expected to learn/do and under what conditions.
• *Cultural buy-in and motivation*. Organizational leaders should invite employees to the training while communicating its importance as well as its relevance and prevalence within the particular industry.
• *Sensitivity*. Approach the training from a sensitive mindset (e.g., as one would a sexual harassment training). *Appreciate* that the training itself might be triggering for some employees, and be willing to navigate necessary accommodations to that end.
During the training
• *Informational content*. Provide background information on sex trafficking (e.g., definition, prevalence, statistics, resources, myths, and relevance to the specific industry) as well as relevant state/local issues and statutes. Other types of trafficking should also be introduced given some similar indicators across the multiple types of trafficking.
• *Delivery methods.* Employ varied modalities of training delivery (e.g., guest speakers, online videos, in-person training, etc.).
• *The survivor voice*. Include testimony from or a case example of a trafficking survivor(s) (ideally a guest speaker to increase personalization and provide a Q&A opportunity, though video narratives are an option if a survivor is not available).
• *Interactive simulations and workshops*. Include role-play scenarios that involve identification of a potential sex trafficking victim using different scenarios applicable to the specific industry. Specifics of the scenarios used should vary so as to indicate the wide range of potential indicators and circumstances.
After the training
• *Trainee feedback*. Solicit trainee feedback shortly following the training. Revise future trainings based on feedback as necessary and practicable.
• *Follow-up surveys*. Conduct follow-up surveys (e.g., at 1, 3, 6 months post-training) to assess the extent of training transfer as well as to refresh employees' knowledge and reinforce the salience of the information provided in the trainings.
• *Tangibly facilitate transfer*. Provide materials that employees can refer to on the job (e.g., pocket reference cards, visible signage, etc.).
• *Culturally facilitate transfer*. Support employees in reporting suspected incidents in trafficking, even in the face of "false positives."
• *Recurrent*. Revisit training periodically, offering recurring training opportunities and refresher content as needed.

Unique Considerations, Challenges, and Scope of Benefit

Of course, the sensitivity of the subject matter means that anti-trafficking trainings require some unique considerations that at times differ from typical training best practices. For instance, typically training is advised to be "just in time," such that trainees are exposed to the training as close in time as possible to needing to utilize

their new knowledge and skills on the job. Indeed, training best practices explicitly advise against "just in case" training, whereby trainees receive training "in case" they need to employ the skills or knowledge at some point in the future but with no specific timeline for doing so. However, anti-trafficking trainings are almost necessarily offered on a "just in case" basis, as opposed to a "just in time" basis: If an organization waits to offer such training until the first instances of trafficking have passed through their place of business, it is already too late. Therefore, such training must be provided proactively ("just in case"). However, although one risk of "just in case" training is compromised employee motivation, it may be that the unique societal benefit of trafficking training is able to compensate for the "just in case" nature of trafficking trainings via an intrinsic desire to benefit humanity and contribute to something greater than oneself (Mills et al., 2019; Ryff, 2018).

Another important consideration is that despite the recent progress regarding anti-trafficking training programs, such programs remain in their relative infancy. Although many of the industries covered here involve international travel or commerce, and many of these firms operate globally, training still has a decidedly local focus, and programs are not offered to employees in foreign affiliates. Moreover, these programs face several fundamental challenges. The inherently clandestine nature of trafficking presents a challenge for training programs (Furnham, 2016), in particular the ability to adhere to best practice requirements in both program design as well as the ability to thoroughly and rigorously evaluate a program's success by traditional standards (Powell et al., 2017). Indeed, although it is possible to accurately gauge results in such areas as increases in employee awareness and knowledge of the subject matter, this type of program evaluation is rare when it comes to trafficking trainings (Preble et al., 2016). Evaluation is even more difficult—sometimes impossible—at the macro level, as it is rarely feasible to establish reliable criteria and metrics for what qualifies as "success" in regard to such societal or humanitarian issues (e.g., Bates, 2004). This results from a number of context-specific constraints, such as measurement difficulties, limited publicly accessible data, often anonymous data sources (or organizations concerned about being associated with trafficking), and the covert nature of the populations involved.

Nevertheless, despite these inherent challenges in regard to anti-trafficking trainings, it is also worthwhile to take a broader view of the potential benefit of such trainings in also serving other socially conscious goals. For instance, an employee trained to detect signs of sex trafficking may as a result be more attuned to identifying indicators of domestic abuse in patrons or guests. So, in this way, in the case of anti-trafficking training, we would do well to loosen the rigid requirements that our field traditionally holds for best practice training program evaluation, recognizing that impact often reaches beyond the limitations of the measurable (Mills et al., 2019). To the extent that organizations can become more comfortable with such a broadened interpretation of impact and program success, the better—at least when it comes to anti-trafficking training.

Next Steps (That We Can All Take)

The increased regard for gender issues and harassment considerations in society in general and in organizations more narrowly makes now an optimal time to incorporate anti-trafficking training into one's employee training repertoire. This is particularly the case for organizations in the aforementioned industries, as workers in those sectors are particularly likely to encounter trafficking situations. However, as evidenced, those industries are somewhat broadly defined (e.g., convenience stores in regard to transportation industry concerns). Moreover, even employees, organizations, and industries not directly relevant to the trafficking trade can still do their part in stifling it. For instance, The Exchange Initiative has set up an online portal (www.traffickcam.com), which allows for individuals to upload photographs of their hotel rooms so as to aid in the investigation of trafficking. This is an easy-to-implement, no-cost way that individual employees can make their mark in combatting the evils of the trafficking trade during business trips and other work travel. More broadly, indus-

tries can facilitate usage of this tool by promoting it at conferences and trade shows. Certainly, such a tool does not take the place of more targeted and instructive training programs—particularly for the most at-risk industries—but it does serve to empower all employees across industries, regardless of access (or lack thereof) to anti-trafficking training, to make a small dent in combatting the trafficking trade.

Important I-O-Relevant Research Questions and Practice Considerations Regarding Sex Trafficking Training

Needs analyses
• From an ethics perspective, should economic/resource needs analyses come into play in determining whether to conduct trafficking training?
• If so, what are the ethical and legal implications of foregoing trafficking training on those grounds?
Ethics of training opt-outs
• To what extent should trafficking trainings be optional for employees?
• For example, if an employee expresses that they may be triggered by such trainings—perhaps as a result of being a trafficking survivor themselves, or a victim of sexual harassment or abuse more broadly—should they be waived out of the training?
• What are the ethical and/or legal ramifications of allowing employees to opt out of trafficking training?
Delivery methods
• To what extent do different training delivery methods, options, and frequency improve the effectiveness of trafficking training?
• For example, does having a trafficking survivor recount their personal experience as part of the training significantly improve its effectiveness? Does it do so enough so as to justify what might be a traumatic experience for the survivor?
Training transfer
• To what extent is training transfer from sex trafficking trainings facilitated similarly to other types of trainings—and to what extent should it be?
• What factors unique to sex trafficking trainings are most likely to facilitate (or thwart) transfer?
Incentivized reporting
• Do reporting incentives as undertaken by some anti-trafficking organizations increase rates of reporting?
• Is incentivized reporting associated with an increased incidence of false positive reports?
Training evaluation
• How can we best evaluate the success and effectiveness of trafficking trainings, given that many traditional objective indicators of such success are uniquely unavailable for largely covert operations such as trafficking? To what extent are out-of-the-box approaches to evaluation—for example, "planting" trafficking incidents for employees to identify – practicable and/or ethical?
• To what extent does Kirkpatrick's (1976) recommended evaluation criteria (reaction, learning, behavior, results) differentially apply to sex trafficking training—especially the 'results' criteria, given the need to consider broad humanitarian and societal ends (e.g., Bates, 2004)?

**If you or someone you know is a victim of trafficking,
contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline
www.humantraffickinghotline.org   1-888-373-7888**

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