

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NURSES ASSOCIATION



Position Statement	Human Trafficking
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ISSUE

Trafficking of any person is an extreme form of violence.

Trafficked persons are being forced into prostitution (80%), domestic service, food service, and forced marriages.

The currency used to attract trafficked workers includes cash, drugs, protection and deceit. Once engaged in the lifestyle, women are bound by protection, housing, threats, language barriers, and the inaccessibility of safe escape and transition to secure living arrangements.

Trafficked persons who are bartered, bought, and sold from inside Canada are most often from backgrounds which tend to be marginalized (Aboriginal, having other distinct ethnic identities, immigrant and abuse survivors).

The anonymity of the Internet supports trafficking by creating conditions that enable luring and trafficking of vulnerable persons for the purposes of forced prostitution.

Youth under 18 years of age are more attractive to patrons of prostitution, making them particularly vulnerable to traffickers.

Canadian girls are trafficked and introduced to prostitution as young as 9 years of age and many service agencies who work with trafficked women believe the average age of introduction to prostitution is between 13 and 14 years of age.

Sex trafficking may be regarded as “modern day slavery.”

NENA POSITION

Emergency Nurses should have an index of suspicion when patients report injuries or illnesses in the context of other markers which suggest a potential of being trafficked. These might be, but are not limited to:

- youth, homelessness
- having no contact phone number
- being a member of a marginalized population group
- being accompanied by someone who refuses to permit time alone with the patient

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- unexplained scars and injuries—especially bruising around the face and burns
- malnutrition
- lacking English skills
- untreated illnesses or STIs
- overall poor health
- deficits in normal hygiene

Emergency care of the suspected or known trafficked person should include safety, privacy, sensitivity, and competence.

Trafficked persons should expect to receive comprehensive care of physical, social and emotional needs.

Emergency Nurses should have knowledge of provincial statutes regarding reporting of exploited minors and should ensure that reports are made to appropriate agencies.

Emergency Nurses should work to develop coordinated responses among Emergency Departments, Social Work, Security, local policing agencies, and human service agencies to ensure that secure escape and protection can be arranged for trafficked persons.

Emergency Nurses should collaborate to promote community awareness of human trafficking.

RATIONALE

Emergency nurses are in a unique position to assess for at risk persons and to isolate them from their traffickers with sufficient privacy to offer tangible help to escape. Most hospitals have sufficient resources to arrange protection and safety for these patients.

Human trafficking is a crime. Sexual exploitation of minors is an offence which mandates reporting by hospital personnel. Failure to report is a liability issue for both nurses and the agency in which they work.

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