

## Human Trafficking and the Hospitality Industry

Every day, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) responds to calls of potential human trafficking situations across the country, in which hotels and motels are frequently referenced. Human trafficking, a form of modern slavery, is estimated to be a \$150 billion dollar industry impacting the lives of 20.9 victims worldwide.<sup>1</sup> From the woman forced to clean rooms for little to no pay to the young man compelled to engage in commercial sex, victims face abuse, violence, and psychological manipulation at the hands of their traffickers.

Human trafficking is fueled by a demand for cheap labor, services, and commercial sex. Traffickers reap substantial monetary gains with relatively low risk of getting caught. In some circumstances, traffickers use legitimate businesses to further their illicit activity. The hospitality industry is one of the many venues that traffickers use to exploit their victims and affords them a degree of anonymity. Trafficking victims, both sex and labor trafficking, often have a low profile among hotel guests and hotel staff, giving little opportunity for external parties to notice a potential trafficking situation.

Therefore, it is important for staff in the hospitality industry to recognize the signs of human trafficking and be prepared to act if they observe a potential human trafficking situation in their establishment.

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*“Human trafficking is one of the world’s biggest and fastest-growing crimes. It affects every industry sector, including the hotel sector, and every service level within the hotel sector from budget to luxury. Hotels thus need to take action to reduce the risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation in their premises, and the risk of forced labor through the use of unscrupulous labor providers.”*

*~ Fran Hughes, International Tourism Partnership*

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### What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is a crime federally and in all 50 states<sup>2</sup>. It occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel another person to provide labor and services or engage in a commercial sex act<sup>3</sup>. For minors engaged in a commercial sex act, it is not necessary to prove force, fraud, or coercion.

Human trafficking affects every state in the U.S. and cuts across all demographics. People of any gender, nationality, age, socio-economic status, ability, or race and ethnicity can be affected by trafficking. Traffickers and victims may be strangers to one another, may be domestic partners, family members, or friends.

Traffickers use violence, threats, blackmail, false promises, deception, manipulation, and debt bondage to trap vulnerable individuals in horrific situations. Sex trafficking occurs in a wide variety of venues within the commercial sex industry, including residences, truck stops, fake massage businesses, strip clubs, and hotels or motels. Labor trafficking has been found in industries such as domestic homes, small businesses, large farms, and the hospitality industry<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> International Labor Organization, “Forced Labor, Human Trafficking, and Slavery,” <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> For more information about state laws on human trafficking, visit [polarisproject.org/state-laws-issue-briefs](http://polarisproject.org/state-laws-issue-briefs)

<sup>3</sup> Trafficking Victim’s Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/10492.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> For more information about human trafficking, visit [www.traffickingresourcecenter.org](http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org)

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### Labor Trafficking Case Highlight: US v. Giant Labor Solutions<sup>5</sup>

“This Federal labor trafficking case, US v. Giant Labor Solutions, involved a criminal enterprise that fronted as a labor subcontractor for housekeeping, recruiting hundreds of workers from overseas. The traffickers used false information to acquire work visas and after the worker signed contracts, they intentionally allowed these visas to expire – resulting in the workers having illegal status in the United States.

The victims were coerced to work against their will with threats of violence, deportation, and the withholding of wages. The traffickers deducted exorbitant fees from their paychecks for alleged costs of transportation, housing, uniforms, and food.

The victims worked as front desk staff, housekeepers, and even in the hotel’s marketing department at eight Ramada Plaza properties who were unaware of human trafficking or that these workers were being exploited.

The traffickers were caught and charged with Racketeering Influenced & Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act offenses related to human trafficking, labor racketeering, and illegal immigration. Of the 12 individuals arrested, eight were convicted and imprisoned from five to 12 years. The remaining four defendants fled the country to avoid criminal charges.”

*“As an industry, we recognize that hotels can play an important role in fighting human trafficking networks which often rely on legitimate businesses, including hotels, to sustain their illegal operations and infrastructure.”*

*– Katherine Lugar,  
AH&LA president & CEO*

### Sex Trafficking Case Highlight: US v. Traylor, et al<sup>7</sup>

“This Federal sex trafficking case involved 38 gang members, hotel owners, hotel staff, and others who worked together to operate a sex trafficking ring. The particular gang involved in this sex trafficking ring were various Crips sets including the ‘Insane Crip Gang,’ ‘Deep Valley Crips,’ and ‘Crook, Mob, Gangsters.’

The traffickers targeted vulnerable women and girls through well-known social networking websites with promises of better lifestyles. After recruiting the victims, the traffickers provided drugs and alcohol to maintain control over the victims as well as with the use of force and threats. The victims were required to provide commercial sex at multiple hotels in the Oceanside area of San Diego.

Unfortunately, hotel owners and staff were found to be complicit in this case because they were found to be providing gang members access to hotel rooms at higher rates, used other people’s identification to rent rooms, segregated rooms for sex from legitimate customers, allowed the use of hotel computers to post online sex advertisements for minors, and warned of any law enforcement activity or inquiries. Two of the defendants were sentenced to 10 years to prison each and six others pled guilty and received additional sentences.”

### NHTRC Statistics<sup>6</sup>

Cases involving Hotels  
or Motels:

**1,434**

Victims and Survivors  
identified:

**1,867**

Sex Trafficking:

**92%**

Labor Trafficking:

**5%**

Sex & Labor Trafficking:

**2%**

<sup>5</sup> “Eight Uzbekistan Nationals among 12 Charged with Racketeering, Human Trafficking, Immigration Violations” by U.S. Department of Homeland Security, <https://www.fbi.gov/kansascity/press-releases/2009/kc052709.htm>

<sup>6</sup> The data displayed on this site is generated from information communicated to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center via calls, emails, or webforms. The NHTRC cannot verify the accuracy of the information reported. This is not a comprehensive report on the scale or scope of human trafficking involving hotels and these statistics may be subject to change.

<sup>7</sup> “Two San Diego Men Sentenced to 10 Years Each in Sex Trafficking and Racketeering Cases,” by Federal Bureau of Investigations, San Diego Division, <https://www.fbi.gov/sandiego/press-releases/2011/sd041811.htm> and <https://www.fbi.gov/sandiego/press-releases/2011/two-san-diego-men-sentenced-to-10-years-each-in-sex-trafficking-and-racketeering-cases>

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*“The first step is to recognize that this problem exists and no business is immune. One of the most effective ways hotels can address these risks is to engage and train staff to spot the signs. The International Tourism Partnership’s working group on human trafficking was established specifically to raise awareness of the issue and share best practices. We know there is no threshold of tolerance on this issue and we all need to work together to tackle this crime.” ~ Fran Hughes*

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## Indicators of Human Trafficking\*

### Sex Trafficking

- ✓ Room is paid for with cash or pre-paid card
- ✓ Room requested with view of parking lot
- ✓ Heavy foot traffic in and out of room
- ✓ Dressed inappropriately for the climate
- ✓ Frequent requests for new linens and towels
- ✓ Presence of excessive alcohol, drugs, or sex paraphernalia

### Sex and Labor Trafficking

- ✓ No knowledge of current or past whereabouts
- ✓ Signs of physical or sexual abuse
- ✓ Signs of poor hygiene, malnourishment, or fatigue
- ✓ No freedom of movement or monitored movement
- ✓ No control of money, identification, or phone
- ✓ Exhibits fearful, anxious, or submissive behavior

### Labor Trafficking

- ✓ Doing different work than was contracted
- ✓ Recruited through false promises
- ✓ Living and working on-site
- ✓ Number of guests exceeds room limit
- ✓ Group transport to/from job site
- ✓ Unpaid or paid very little
- ✓ Exorbitant fees deducted from paychecks

*\*Every situation is unique; all or none of these indicators may be present in a particular human trafficking situation. However, if several of these indicators are present, it may be reason to contact the NHTRC for further assessment.*

## Responding to Human Trafficking Situations

If you believe you have identified a potential trafficking situation, it is important to assess the immediate safety and welfare of the potential victims, guests, and staff. If you have witnessed or been informed there were incidents or threats of violence, alert security and/or law enforcement. If you have the opportunity to speak with the victim alone, ask if they would like assistance and provide them the NHTRC number.

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## The National Human Trafficking Resource Center

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The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a national anti-trafficking hotline and resource center serving victims and survivors of human trafficking and the anti-trafficking community in the United States. The NHTRC can provide emergency assistance, take and report tips to law enforcement, provide service referrals, and provide training and technical assistance. The NHTRC hotline is answered 24/7 by trained advocates in over 200 languages. All communications with the NHTRC are confidential and tips may be made anonymously.

### **NHTRC Contact Information:**

Hotline: 1-888-373-7888

Email: [nhtrc@polarisproject.org](mailto:nhtrc@polarisproject.org)

Website: [www.traffickingresourcecenter.org](http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org)

## Additional Resources

- American Hotel and Lodging Association, [www.ahla.com/content.aspx?id=30645&terms=human+trafficking](http://www.ahla.com/content.aspx?id=30645&terms=human+trafficking)
- Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking, [www.bestalliance.org](http://www.bestalliance.org)
- End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) USA, [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)
- International Tourism Partnership, [www.tourismpartnership.org/human-trafficking](http://www.tourismpartnership.org/human-trafficking)
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, [www.missingkids.com/Exploitation](http://www.missingkids.com/Exploitation)
- Polaris, <http://polarisproject.org/initiatives/hotels>