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DETECTING AND PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Prepared by OLRGC Staff for Rep. Ballard

As a presenter and participant in the 2026 G20 Interfaith Summit, Rep. Ballard asked the Utah Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel (OLRGC) to create an informational packet on human trafficking. This document serves as a guide to what Utah and other U.S. states are doing to detect and prevent human trafficking, and provides readers with ideas on how to implement anti-human trafficking efforts in their regions. The information included summarizes the types of human trafficking, laws on human trafficking in Utah and other U.S. states, best practices, and potential policy options.

Document Highlights

- Human trafficking occurs when an individual uses force, fraud, or coercion to make a victim engage in labor, sexual acts, forced criminality, or undergo surgery to harvest and sell an organ. Human trafficking happens to individuals regardless of age or sex.

- State and federal human trafficking laws focus mainly on labor and sex trafficking. However, federal law also prohibits acquiring, receiving, or transferring human organs for "valuable consideration for use in human transplantation if the transfer affects interstate commerce."[1]

- Most U.S. state definitions of human trafficking include recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, and the receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation. A majority of U.S. states also provide affirmative defenses, expungement opportunities, and restitution funding for victims.

- Since 2021, Utah's Legislature has passed at least 21 laws related to human trafficking. These laws concern the tracking of illicit money, changes in technology, identifying victims or criminal organizations, data collection, creating new criminal offenses, education, and parental rights.

- Agency best practices suggest providing human trafficking training, partnering with agencies to provide victims with services, implementing ways to report human trafficking, and using trauma-informed language when speaking to or referencing victims.

- Human trafficking legislative ideas, compiled from U.S. state statutes and stakeholder conversations, include mandating human trafficking training for employees, mandating cryptocurrency investigation training for law enforcement, requiring owners of massage parlors and salons to post signs about human trafficking at their businesses, creating a special fund dedicated to anti-trafficking efforts, implementing court diversion programs for victims, creating a national database to share information, and federally prohibiting citizens from traveling abroad to participate in organ tourism.

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TYPES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Overview

Below is an overview of the types of human trafficking around the world, including sex trafficking, labor trafficking, child trafficking, forced criminality, and organ trafficking. The examples provided are from real cases, and the examples in which the perpetrator(s) were charged with a crime usually involved a multi-agency approach to investigate or prosecute the case.

In some of the examples provided below, the perpetrator(s) were charged with crimes other than human trafficking. One reason for this could be that the type of conduct, such as forced criminality, illegal adoption, or forced marriage, is not an element of human trafficking in areas were the crime took place. However, these examples were included because the actor's conduct illustrates what human trafficking in these situations may look like.

1 Sex Trafficking

Individuals are forced, defrauded, or coerced into performing commercial sex acts.[2]

Example 1: An actor in Utah was charged with sex trafficking after offering to help victims he met online, but instead would get the victims addicted to drugs then force them to perform sexual acts with clients. The actor would arrange the meetings with clients and kept all of the money earned from the encounters.[3]

Example 2: Actors running a nationwide prostitution business that trafficked women throughout the United States were charged with racketeering, sex trafficking, and other crimes. The actors kept the victims' immigration documents as a method of control and instigated physical assaults that were video recorded and circulated among victims to create fear and prevent the victims from leaving.[4]

2 Labor Trafficking

Individuals are forced, defrauded, or coerced into providing labor or services.[5]

Example 1: An actor in Utah was charged with labor trafficking of more than 20 foreign nationals who worked for a traveling carnival.[6] The actor withheld the victims' immigration documents and used threats to prevent the victims from leaving. The victims were required to work nearly 70 hours a week without meal or water breaks and required to live in unfavorable conditions.[7]

Example 2: Four actors were charged with participating in a labor trafficking scheme at laundry facilities. The actors recruited foreign nationals as young as 13 and forced them to work long overnight shifts before attending school during the day. One victim was threatened with deportation and physical violence while being forced to pay rent to live in the laundry facility.[8]



Some human trafficking cases may include a combination of labor and sex trafficking. One example of this is an illicit massage business. Victims are recruited under false pretenses to work in what appears to be legitimate massage businesseses, but once the victims arrive, they are forced to perform sexual acts in addition to providing massage services. Victims typically have their immigration documents taken away, receive compensation only through tips, are forced to endure physical and sexual abuse, required to perform unwanted labor through sexual acts, and may be forced to live in the business establishment.

3 Child Trafficking

Children are forced, defrauded, or coerced into sexual exploitation, labor, marriage, armed conflict, or illegally sold through adoption.[9]

Example 1: An actor pleaded guilty to human smuggling, conspiracy to smuggle illegal aliens, and fraud. The actor ran an adoption agency that targeted women in need of money, with little education, or who worked in prostitution camps in the Marshall Islands. These women were brought to Arizona, Utah, and Arkansas where they stayed in overcrowded housing, with some sleeping on floors, until they gave birth. Once the baby was born, the women were paid between $7,300 and $10,800 and given a plane ticket back to the Marshall Islands or another U.S. location. The babies were then adopted out to U.S. families for roughly $40,000.[10]

Example 2: An actor was sentenced to 50 years in prison for crimes related to child sexual abuse that occurred in Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and Nebraska. Victims as young as nine years old were given to the actor as brides and both coerced and forced to participate in sexual acts with adults and children. Eleven other participants were also charged with related conduct.[11]



Human smuggling is not human trafficking. Human smuggling relates to the transportation of an individual across states or international borders. Often, however, a situation that begins as human smuggling can turn into human trafficking. For example, a human smuggler will impose a debt on the individual that they had smuggled across a border. The debt is so large that the victim cannot pay off the debt and thus are coerced into providing labor, performing sexual acts, committing crimes for money, and more. This is known as debt bondage, which is another element of human trafficking.

4 Forced Criminality

Individuals are forced, defrauded, or coerced into committing crimes.[12]

Example 1: Actors recruit and hire victims through false job advertisements then force the victims to engage in work that involves scamming other individuals. Victims are forced to work long hours and are punished through salary reductions or physical abuse if they do not reach their targeted goal. When one victim asked how they could go home, the actors told the victim that they owed a large amount of money and threatened to sell the victim to an organ-harvesting group.[13]

Example 2: An actor in Utah was charged with human trafficking for the forced labor of a child. The actor offered teenage boys free alcohol and drugs then sexually abused them, and used fear to force the victims to participate in drug trafficking.[14]

5 Organ Trafficking

Individuals are forced, defrauded, or coerced into the removal and sale of their organs.[15]

Example 1: Actors recruited a victim by saying they would help the victim find work and transfer them to Europe. The victim's children were sick from not eating, so they agreed to travel with the actors. Once they arrived in the other country, the actors told the victim they would not be transferring the victim to Europe but instead were going to harvest the victim's kidney. They offered the victim $2,000 to comply, but if the victim refused, the actors said they would take the kidney by force.[16]

Example 2: Five actors, including three juveniles, were arrested for allegedly killing a victim for a scheme to make money by selling an organ. The overall conspiracy was run by an individual who posed as a doctor and befriended minors to implement the plan.[17]

UTAH'S CURRENT STATUTES RELATED TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Overview

Utah's human trafficking offenses fall under two categories: labor trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Utah also has a separate offense, sale of child, which can have some nexus to human trafficking but is not technically part of Utah's human trafficking code. Details on Utah's current human trafficking offenses and Utah legislation that relates to human trafficking that has been enrolled since 2021 are highlighted below.[18, 19]

OFFENSE	ELEMENTS AND PENALTIES
76-5-308, Human trafficking for labor	Enlists, harbors, transports, obtains, or uses an individual for the purpose of procuring or using the individual's labor through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. The use of force, fraud, or coercion must fall within certain defined categories. • Knowingly committed: Second degree felony (1-15 years in prison) • Recklessly committed: Third degree felony (no more than 5 years in prison)
76-5-308.5 Human trafficking of a child for labor	Enlists, harbors, transports, obtains, or uses a child for the purpose of procuring or using the child's labor through the use of force, fraud, or coercion of either the child or an individual who has the ability to control the actions of the child. The use of force, fraud, or coercion must fall within certain defined categories. • Knowingly committed: First degree felony (not less than 10 years to life in prison if the child is 14 years old or older but younger than 18 years old, or not less than 15 years to life in prison if the child is under 14 years old) • Recklessly committed: Second degree felony (1-15 years in prison)
76-5-311, Human trafficking of a vulnerable adult for labor	Enlists, harbors, transports, obtains, or uses a vulnerable adult for the purpose of procuring or using the vulnerable adult's labor through the use of force, fraud, or coercion of either the vulnerable adult or an individual who has the ability to control the actions of the vulnerable adult. The use of force, fraud, or coercion must fall within certain defined categories, in addition to some awareness that the individual was a vulnerable adult. • Knowingly committed: First degree felony (not less than 10 years to life in prison) • Recklessly committed: Second degree felony (1-15 years in prison)
76-5-310, Aggravated human trafficking for labor	Human trafficking for labor is aggravated if the offense: • results in the death of a victim; • results in serious bodily injury of a victim; • involves rape, rape of a child, object rape, object rape of a child, forcible sodomy, sodomy on a child, aggravated sexual abuse of a child, or aggravated sexual assault; • involves trafficking 10 or more individuals; or • involves an individual who is trafficked for more than 30 consecutive days. ◦ First degree felony (not less than 10 years to life in prison)

76-5-313, Patronizing a victim of human labor trafficking	Knowingly requests or accepts labor or services from an individual and knows, or is reckless as to whether, the individual's services or labor is being provided as a result of another person's force, fraud, or coercion over the individual.
	  ◦ Knowingly committed: Third degree felony (no more than 5 years in prison)
	  ◦ Recklessly committed: Class A misdemeanor (no more than 364 days in jail; Third degree felony for a subsequent conviction)

OFFENSE	ELEMENTS AND PENALTIES

76-5-314, Patronizing a child victim of human labor trafficking	Knowingly requests or accepts services or labor from an individual; knows, is reckless, or criminally negligent as to whether the individual is a child; the individual is a child; and the actor:
	• knows, is reckless, or is criminally negligent as to whether the individual's services or labor is being provided as a result of another person's force, fraud, or coercion over the individual.
	  ◦ Knowingly committed: Second degree felony
	  ◦ Recklessly committed: Third degree felony (Second degree felony for a subsequent conviction)
	  ◦ Criminally negligent: Class A misdemeanor (Third degree felony for a subsequent conviction)

76-5-315, Patronizing a vulnerable adult victim of human labor trafficking	This offense is the same as "Patronizing a child victim of human labor trafficking" (for both the elements and penalties) but concerns a vulnerable adult.
76-5-308.1, Human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation	Enlists, harbors, transports, obtains, patronizes, or solicits an individual for the purpose of procuring the individual's labor in the form of a commercial sexually explicit performance or a commercial sexual act through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. The use of force, fraud, or coercion must fall within certain defined categories. • Knowingly committed (commercial sexual act): First degree felony • Knowingly committed (commercial sexually explicit performance): Second degree felony • Recklessly committed (commercial sexual act): Second degree felony • Recklessly committed (commercial sexually explicit performance): Third degree felony
76-5-308.6, Human trafficking of a child for commercial sexual exploitation	Enlists, harbors, transports, obtains, patronizes, or solicits a child for the purpose of procuring the child's labor in the form of a commercial sexual act or a commercial sexually explicit performance. (It is not a defense if the actor believed the child was 18 years old or older or was unaware of the child's true age.) • Knowingly committed: First degree felony (not less than 10 years to life in prison if the child is 14 years old or older but younger than 18 years old, or not less than 15 years to life in prison if the child is under 14 years old) • Recklessly committed: Second degree felony
76-5-312, Human trafficking of a vulnerable adult for commercial sexual exploitation	Enlists, harbors, transports, obtains, patronizes, or solicits a vulnerable adult for the purpose of procuring the vulnerable adult's labor in the form of a commercial sexual act or commercial sexually explicit performance. • Knowingly committed: First degree felony (not less than 10 years to life in prison) • Recklessly committed: Second degree felony
76-5-310.2, Aggravated human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation	This offense is the same as "Aggravated human trafficking for labor" (for both the elements and penalty) but relates to commercial sexual exploitation.
76-7-203, Sale of child *A separate offense not under Utah's human trafficking statutes	While having custody, care, control, or possession of a child, sells, or disposes of the child, or attempts or offers to sell or dispose of the child, for and in consideration of the payment of money or another thing of value; or offers, gives, or attempts to give money or another thing of value to encourage a person, with the intent to induce or encourage a person" to sell or dispose or attempt to sell or dispose of a child. • Third degree felony

UTAH HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND RELATED LEGISLATION, ENACTED 2021-2026

IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OR CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

H.B. 354, Rescue Tracking Equipment Amendments (2026)

- Created a criminal offense for tampering, damaging, or removing rescue tracking equipment, which dispenses GPS trackers. Rescue tracking equipment may be placed in truck stops, airports, train terminals, and bus station restrooms. When a tracker is taken, an alert is passed on to law enforcement to help locate the victim.

H.B. 278, Massage Therapy Amendments (2025)

- The Division of Professional Licensing (DOPL) must deny a registration application if 1) the massage business owner has a criminal conviction or pending charges for a sexual crime, 2) the location or owner had a registration revoked or suspended in the last two years, or 3) the location or business advertised in a way that implies sexual services are offered.
- Requires massage business owners to sign a form stating the establishment does not engage in illegal activities like human trafficking or sex advertising.
- Allows the suspension of an individual's license without notice if the individual is engaging in human trafficking or attempting to operate a prostitution enterprise.
- Requires massage establishments to register with DOPL and provide an address. If a massage establishment is sold, subleased, or changes legal possession, DOPL must be notified within 30 days.
- Created penalties for unlawful conduct of a massage establishment.

TRACKING MONEY THAT IS USED FOR OR MADE BY ILLICIT ACTIVITY

SAR0012 (funded in H.B. 2), Statewide Financial Crimes Intelligence Center (2026)

- Established a statewide task force focused on investigating and prosecuting financial crimes. The Utah Legislature funded $1,708,400 in ongoing funds for this center.

H.B. 72, Criminal Use of Cryptocurrency Amendments (2026)

- Requires training related to cryptocurrency investigations for law enforcement officers.
- Requires local law enforcement agencies to report cryptocurrency investigation data to the Department of Public Safety.

ADDRESSING TECHNOLOGY CHANGES

H.B. 358, Criminal Sexual Conduct Amendments (2025)

- Creates the offense of unlawful sexual activity with a child or a minor using virtual reality. Penalties range from a misdemeanor to a felony depending on the child and actor's age.

H.B. 207, Sexual Offense Revisions (2025)

- Expands the definition of child sexual abuse to include a minor observing or being used for sexually explicit conduct.
- Expands sexual exploitation of a minor to include when an actor accesses child sexual abuse material (CSAM) with intent to view the material.
- Removes a lesser penalty for when CSAM depicts an individual who is 14 years old or older and pubescent.

DATA COLLECTION AND INFORMATION SHARING

H.B. 19, Child Labor Amendments (2025)

- Requires the Labor Commission to inform the State Bureau of Investigation if a person being investigated for child labor may have committed other criminal acts.
- Allows the State Bureau of Investigation to investigate or forward the suspected criminal act to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Classifies child labor acts as different crimes.

H.B. 403, Justice Reinvestment Initiative Modifications (2022)

- Required Utah's Division of Technology Services and the Department of Criminal Justice to create a Criminal Justice Database that includes human trafficking statistics.

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

H.B. 499, Education Reporting Amendments (2024)

- Changes the requirement for child sexual abuse and human trafficking prevention training that is provided to school personnel and parents to be once every three years (rather than every other year).

S.B. 205, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Amendments (2024)

- Amends the options on how to provide child sexual abuse and human trafficking training to school personnel, parents, and students. This includes allowing local education agencies to create the materials, allowing the State Board to contract with a provider for the training, and establishing a grant program for local education agencies that want to use an alternative provider to implement the training.

CREATES A NEW CRIMINAL OFFENSE

H.B. 103, Underage Marriage Amendments (2026)

- Creates the offenses of: unlawfully marrying a minor, transporting a minor out of state for an illegal marriage, and traveling out of state to marry a minor.
- Provides that the statute of limitations for these offenses is 15 years from the day on which the minor to the marriage turns 18.
- Makes a marriage in another country, state, or territory, in which one of the parties to the marriage is a minor, invalid in Utah. The marriage may be valid if the minor was 16 or 17 at the time of marriage, the parties' age difference is no more than four years, the minor's guardian consented, the minor voluntarily entered the marriage, and a court provided authorization.

H.B. 148, Child Sexual Abuse Amendments (2025)

- Creates an aggravating factor for certain child sexual offenses, including human trafficking, if the actor, to commit the offense, travels more than 45 miles from their principal place of residence, or facilitates the victim to travel more than 45 miles from the victim's principal place of residence.

H.B. 66, Ritual Abuse Amendments (2025)

- Requires that advanced training courses for officers who investigate sexual assaults or abuse include identifying factors of a ritual.
- Creates an aggravating factor for certain offenses, including human trafficking, against a child or minor as part of, or to facilitate, a ritual.

H.B. 38, Criminal Offenses Modifications (2025)

- Increases the fine for an individual convicted of patronizing a prostitute.
- Amends the enhancement for offenses committed in relation to a criminal street gang to include offenses committed in relation to other organized criminal groups.

H.B. 122, Sex Offender Registry Amendments (2023)

- Adds that an attempt, solicitation, and conspiracy to commit certain human trafficking offenses qualifies for the registry.

H.B. 81, Sexual Solicitation Amendments (2022)

- Increases the penalty for patronizing a prostituted individual who is a child from a third degree felony to a second degree felony.
- Decreases the penalty for sexual solicitation from a class A misdemeanor to a class B misdemeanor on a first or second violation.
- Makes it a class A misdemeanor on a first or second violation and a third degree felony on a subsequent violation for an individual paying a fee for sexual activity.

S.B. 117 Human Smuggling Amendments (2021)

- Increased the penalty for human smuggling from a third degree felony to a second degree felony and increased the penalty for aggravated human smuggling from a second degree felony to a first degree felony.
- Removes the requirement of "in a single episode" when there are 10 or more victims from Utah's aggravated human trafficking and aggravated human smuggling offenses.

PARENTAL GUARDIANSHIP

H.B. 303, Family Court Amendments (2026)

- Provides that courts may consider evidence of coercive control when making decisions related to child custody and parent-time of a child.
- Coercive control is defined as "an individual's pattern of behavior that, intentionally or in effect, unreasonably interferes with another individual's ability to make or act on independent decisions." Coercive control includes isolating an individual from family and friends, depriving an individual of basic necessities, controlling an individual's finances, and more.

H.B. 140, Amendments to Custody and Parent-Time (2024)

- Provides that the court can modify child custody or parent-time for a child if a parent resides with an individual, or provides an individual with access to the child, knowing that the individual was convicted of kidnapping, human trafficking of a child, or sexual exploitation against a child.

H.B. 305, Child Abuser Education Restrictions (2023)

- If a parent or guardian is convicted of child abuse, including human trafficking, or a court has made a substantiated finding of child abuse against the parent or guardian, the parent or guardian may not assume responsibility for the child's education.
- A school board may not exempt the child from attendance because the parent or guardian intends to home school the child.

SUMMARY OF U.S. STATE HUMAN TRAFFICKING LAWS

The following information provides a high-level summary of human trafficking laws in U.S. states. This information was obtained from the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Human Trafficking State Laws report series, which is current as of January 2026.[20] As such, it may not include legislative changes that went into effect after the update period.

Human Trafficking Definitions

Type of conduct that human trafficking entails

Most U.S. states provide that human trafficking entails the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation."

Some state definitions, also include conduct such as "purchasing", "benefitting", or "profiting."

To be convicted of human trafficking

Most U.S. states require some form of force, fraud, or coercion for a case to be prosecuted as human trafficking. Examples of force, fraud, or coercion include:

- debt bondage;
- abusing a position of power;
- threatening legal action; or
- using or threatening force.

Business Penalties

Some states penalize a business if the entity committed, or was used to commit, human trafficking. This may include dissolution of the business or fining the entity.

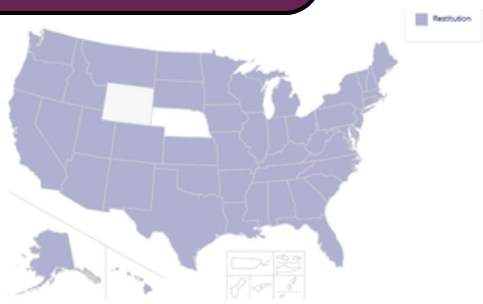
State example: After a labor trafficking conviction, Hawaii allows the court to revoke any state business license issued to the entity that was used to facilitate the trafficking.

Criminal Penalties

Penalties vary by state, but some states have increased penalties if human trafficking is committed against children, an individual with a mental illness, or undocumented immigrants, or if violence is used.

State example: For trafficking that involves commercial sexual activity, Florida increases the penalty from a first degree felony to a life felony if the trafficking is committed against an individual who is "mentally defective or mentally incapacitated."

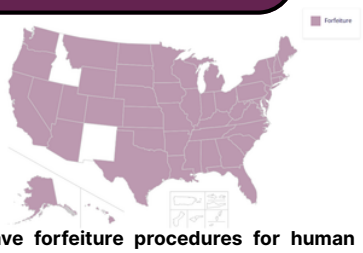
Restitution



48 states provide some type of restitution for trafficking victims. Restitution can be used towards medical and psychological services, childcare, housing, property costs, and in some cases the cost of labor that was provided.

State example: Texas requires that if a person is convicted of compelling prostitution that person must pay restitution equal to the cost of medical and psychiatric treatment for any victim younger than 18.

Forfeiture



48 states have forfeiture procedures for human trafficking crimes. Forfeiture includes seizing property and assets of individuals or businesses convicted of human trafficking. Forfeiture proceeds may be used for restitution or given to governmental agencies for the cost of investigating or prosecuting human trafficking.

State example: Rhode Island requires any person convicted of sex or labor trafficking to forfeit proceeds, profits, or property interest that was acquired or maintained from the trafficking. The forfeited proceeds go into the general fund.

Affirmative Defenses

41 U.S. states, including Utah[21], provide some type of affirmative defense for trafficking victims. Many laws provide an affirmative defense for crimes related to prostitution, loitering, and solicitation. An affirmative defense means if there is sufficient evidence showing the alleged actor was in fact a victim, criminal charges may be dismissed.

State example: Colorado provides an affirmative defense if an individual was coerced into committing crimes as a direct result of that individual's trafficking.

Expungement

47 states enable human trafficking victims to vacate, expunge, or seal criminal records that are a result of being trafficked.

State examples:

- Kansas and South Dakota only provide this option to individuals who were minors at the time of their trafficking.
- Florida's expungement law applies to arrests, charges, or convictions that occurred from being trafficked.

AGENCY BEST PRACTICES TO ADDRESS AND PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The following information is a summary of best practices to prevent and address human trafficking for businesses, faith-based communities, victim service providers, and educating the public. This information was gathered from agencies such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Truckers Against Trafficking, the Department of Homeland Security, research articles discussing best practices, and more. This summary is a high-level overview and mostly includes practices that were provided by a number of agencies or articles. It does not include every best practice that an agency may implement to help detect and prevent human trafficking.



BUSINESSES

- Adopt an anti-human trafficking policy and educate employees about human trafficking.[22]
- Implement ways for employees to report human trafficking.[23]
- Partner with law enforcement and government agencies to prevent human trafficking.[24]
- Prohibit the purchase of sexual services while traveling for work.[25]
- Provide human trafficking victims with employment opportunities.[26]



FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES

- Educate faith leaders and their community about human trafficking.[27]
- Build partnerships with community members and agencies to prevent trafficking and provide victims with resources or referral services.[28, 29]
- Create a welcoming environment and safe space for victims.[30]
- Practice active listening with congregations to identify signs of human trafficking.[31]
- Report incidents of suspected human trafficking to the appropriate agency.[32]



VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Partner with other agencies to provide a full-range of services to victims, including access to health professionals, legal teams, law enforcement, and other victim service providers.[33, 34, 35, 36, 37]
- Prioritize providing victims with basic necessities first. This includes housing, health care, food, and more.[38, 39, 40]
- Establish trust with victims and use trauma-informed language when assisting victims.[41, 42, 43, 44]
- When appropriate, connect victims with mentors to assist the victim with reintegration. Ensure mentors are not individuals who participated in the abuse.[45]
- Provide training to a victim's family and friends on how to understand the victim's needs and emotional responses.[46, 47]



EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

- Identify the target audience and tailor the training or public awareness campaign to that audience's needs.[48, 49]
- Incorporate victim input into trainings or public awareness campaigns.[50, 51]
- Use evidence-based information and resources rather than emotional or stigmatizing messaging to develop trainings or public awareness campaigns.[52, 53, 54, 55]
- Use empowering rather than stigmatizing language in trainings and public awareness campaigns. Stigmatizing language may further exploit victims.[56, 57, 58, 59]
- Evaluate the training or public awareness campaign's effectiveness by comparing the target audience's knowledge before and after the training or campaign.[60, 61, 62, 63]

POTENTIAL POLICY OPTIONS TO ADDRESS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Below is a list of legislative ideas related to human trafficking. These policy options were created based on stakeholder conversations and information obtained from U.S. state laws related to human trafficking. The options listed are separated by policies that relate to victims, businesses, investigations, and policies that relate on a national level. Policies with an asterisk at the end indicate ideas that could potentially be applied in Utah.

Policy ideas related to victims

- **Create an affirmative defense to criminal charges if an individual was forced to commit the act as a result of trafficking.**

- **Create a civil cause of action against traffickers for victims of human trafficking.***
  - Utah's H.B. 200, Human Trafficking, Transporting, and Harboring Amendments, which was introduced in 2026, adds aggravated exploitation of prostitution involving a child to the list of human trafficking offenses for which a victim can file a civil cause of action.[64]

- **Create a court diversion program for potential or current human trafficking victims.***
  - New York's court system implemented human trafficking intervention courts that provide a trauma-informed response to victims of sex trafficking. Court staff are specially trained to address victim needs.[65] Ohio similarly implemented a diversion program for victims that is directed at rehabilitation rather than jail.[66]

Policy ideas related to businesses

- **Mandate that massage parlor and salon owners post signs in their businesses regarding human trafficking, including how to report suspicious activity.***
  - Texas and California both have laws requiring certain businesses to post signage about human trafficking. Signs must include a phone number to report suspicious activity.[67, 68]

- **Mandate human trafficking training for hotel workers and transportation workers, and other workers that may intersect with human trafficking victims.***
  - California requires employees in hotels, motels, and transit jobs to receive at least 20 minutes of human trafficking awareness training.[69]

- **Implement a similar process to Utah's 2025 H.B. 278, Massage Therapy Amendments.**
  - A summary of what H.B. 278 accomplishes can be found on page 6 of this document under "Identifying Victims and Criminal Organizations".[70]

POTENTIAL POLICY OPTIONS TO ADDRESS HUMAN TRAFFICKING CONTINUED

Policy ideas related to law enforcement investigations

- **Develop minimum standards and best practices for law enforcement investigations. Require each agency to adhere to these standards and practices.***

- **Create a special fund dedicated to anti-trafficking efforts such as law enforcement training and victim services.***

- **Create and fund a human trafficking task force.**
  - 37 U.S. states have legislation that creates, or grants the authority to create, a human trafficking task force, work group, or similar effort.[71] Many states also have a separate task force dedicated to the exploitation of children.

- **Require law enforcement training on cryptocurrency investigations.**
  - Utah's H.B. 72, Criminal Use of Cryptocurrency Amendments requires law enforcement to receive cryptocurrency investigation training and share data related to cryptocurrency investigations.

Policy ideas for the federal government

- **Create a national database in which law enforcement can share and access information on human trafficking organizations, suspects, victims, and financial activity related to trafficking.**
  - While there are currently national information sharing networks that share information on violent criminal activity or child trafficking with law enforcement, there is not a database that shares information related to human trafficking organizations whose victims may be adults or foreign nationals traveling to the U.S. for work.[72, 73]

- **Prohibit citizens from traveling abroad to participate in organ or transplant tourism.**
  - Transplant tourism involves an individual traveling across borders to obtain organ transplants illegally, and involves some form of organ trafficking. Transplant tourism can result in a country's resources being devoted to non-resident patients and impact resources that are available to that country's own population.[74]

- **Develop clear definitions, minimum standards, and best practices for how financial institutions (including cryptocurrency institutions) track and report incidents of suspicious financial activity to law enforcement.**

Citations

1 LII, 42 U.S. Code § 274e - Prohibition of organ purchases. Amended 2007. Legal Information Institute. https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/274e

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