



Identifying Survivors of Sex Trafficking

About the Amara Legal Center

The Amara Legal Center provides free legal services to individuals whose rights have been violated through commercial sex. We serve anyone with a history of commercial sex who has a legal issue, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, or how the individual entered into commercial sex (*i.e.*, whether by coercion, circumstance, or choice). We do not require that a client identify as a survivor of sex trafficking in order to receive services. Our client population includes both individuals currently or recently involved with commercial sex and those who have not been involved with commercial sex for years but still have legal issues arising from their past. The most common legal issues we handle include expungement of criminal records, advocacy and representation in criminal cases, custody and child support, civil protection orders, as well as representation and brief legal advice on a variety of civil issues. If a legal issue is beyond our expertise, we will work to secure a referral for the client.

How to Use This Screening Tool

The purpose of this screening tool is to assist service providers in identifying survivors of sex trafficking. Most U.S. citizens who are survivors of sex trafficking will not readily self-identify as such, and may be reticent to acknowledge the abuse and exploitation they have experienced. This tool is not designed as a set of questions to be directed at an individual undergoing intake but rather as a list of items that intake staff can pay attention to while working with a client. In other words, service providers need not disrupt their normal intake procedures in order to use this screening tool, but may wish to use it as a guide in directing an intake conversation as appropriate. If the intake staff observes any of the items listed in the screening tool, the staff may check off the “Yes” box for that item at a later time rather than disrupting the intake process. The staff can also use the “Notes” section provided at the end of the checklist to note any observations that are not specifically listed but that may be pertinent.

There is no set formula for when a service provider should contact Amara for a referral. In general, if the intake staff checked off multiple “Yes” boxes, the individual may be an appropriate candidate for referral. However, not every combination of checked “Yes” boxes means that an individual is a survivor of sex trafficking or otherwise involved in the commercial sex industry. If you are unsure whether a particular individual falls within Amara’s client population, please contact Amara to discuss whether a referral would be appropriate.



Screening Tool

Physical Appearance and Demeanor

The person has a tattoo or branding.¹ Yes No

The person is wearing revealing clothing that may be inappropriate for the weather. Yes No

The person is accompanied by another person who does not allow the potential client to speak. Yes No

The person acts fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous about the interaction. Yes No

The person exhibits signs of physical trauma such as unusual bruising or marks or strong reactions to any form of touch. Yes No

The person exhibits fear of any reference to law enforcement. Yes No

The person exhibits reluctance to talk about their life or relationships. Yes No

The person exhibits fear of reporting his/her situation or of filing for a protection order. Yes No

The person talks about or mentions being “in the life” or uses terminology associated with commercial sex such as “trick,” “john,” “track,” or “bottom.” Yes No

Possessions

The person has very few personal possessions. Yes No

The person has no identifying documents or false identifying documents. Yes No

The person has no control of her/his own money or no bank account or records. Yes No

¹ Some pimps or traffickers will “brand” their victims with tattoos of their name or a particular symbol. Often, a tattoo by a pimp will be across a survivor’s chest, but may be in another location as well. A survivor may indicate that the tattoo is her boyfriend’s or baby daddy’s name. Additionally, some tattoos indicate that an individual is involved in gang-controlled trafficking. These tattoos are usually on a survivor’s hand between her thumb and index finger, but may be in another location as well.



Living Conditions

- The person is homeless or lives in otherwise impoverished conditions. Yes No
- The person lives in foster care or in a group home. Yes No
- The person often stays in a hotel or motel. Yes No
- The person travels frequently. Yes No
- The person is not free to come and go as he/she wishes. Yes No
- The person is unwilling or unable to say where she/he slept last night. Yes No
- The person's living situation is connected to her/his work (i.e., the person works for the individual(s) who controls her/his living situation). Yes No

Employment Conditions

- The person is not allowed to keep his/her own money. Yes No
- The person must work to pay off a debt but cannot seem to pay it off. Yes No
- The person does not get a break or rest during working hours, or has to pay to take a break. Yes No

Personal Background

- The person has any type of criminal record, including arrests only. Yes No
- The person has been arrested for prostitution or solicitation.² Yes No
- The person's employment history includes adult entertainment.² Yes No
- The person is or was a victim of childhood sexual abuse. Yes No
- The person is a minor and is sexually active, or is now an adult but was sexually active as a minor. Yes No
- The person is or was a victim of domestic violence. Yes No
- The person has poor attendance in school or has dropped out. Yes No

² If yes, the person automatically falls into Amara's client population.



The person uses or abuses drugs or has done so in the past. Yes No

Personal Relationships

The person has an older boyfriend (or girlfriend). Yes No

The person lacks close ties to his/her family. Yes No

The person or the person's family or friends have been threatened. Yes No

The person is pregnant.³ Yes No

The person has children with an older man she may call her "boyfriend" or "baby daddy."
 Yes No

The person has had custody or child support disputes with the father of her child(ren).
 Yes No

Additional Notes

Referring Clients to Amara

For questions regarding referrals, or to make a referral, please send an email to referrals@amaralegal.org with the name of your organization, a brief description of the issue, and contact information.

We can also be reached via phone at the either of the below numbers:

Stacie Reimer, Co-Executive Director: 202-603-0957

Cara Gardner, Co-Executive Director: 202-681-2391

³ A pregnancy may be an impetus for a survivor of sex trafficking to seek a way out of her situation.