



RESOURCES: THE MINDSET OF A HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM



The following points illustrate how victims of trafficking may see themselves and their situations. It highlights the challenges that you may face as a law enforcement officer when interacting with potential victims.

- Victims are taught by their traffickers to distrust outsiders, especially law enforcement. They have a sense of fear and/or distrust toward the government and police because they are afraid they will be deported. Sometimes they feel that it is their fault that they are in this situation. As a coping or survival skill, they may develop loyalties and positive feelings toward their trafficker or may even try to protect them from authorities.
- Victims of human trafficking are hesitant to come forward because of their fear of being deported. While many of these victims are women and children who have been beaten and/or raped, their current situation may still be better than where they came from.
- Victims come from different social and ethnic backgrounds than the investigating officers. There may be significant cultural differences between the victim and U.S. law enforcement officials.
- Victims may be completely unaware of their rights or may have been intentionally misinformed about their rights in this country.
- Many victims do not self-identify as victims. They also do not see themselves as people who are homeless or as drug addicts who rely on shelters or assistance. Victims may not appear to need social services because they have a place to live, food to eat, medical care and what they think is a paying job.
- The victims may fear not only for their own safety but also for that of their families in their home countries. Some traffickers threaten that they will harm their victims' families if the victims report their situation to, or cooperate with, law enforcement.
- Criminal prosecution should empower the victims and should facilitate their healing process so that they see the crimes committed against them condemned and the people who harmed them punished.

If you think you have come in contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.3737.888**. This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking.