

Indicators of Child and Adolescent Trafficking

Indicators are signs or signals that a person may be a trafficking victim. Indicators may be based on conversations and interactions with the individual, as well as observation of their behavior, appearance, or circumstances. Indicators signal the need for further inquiry and must be applied with care and caution. No single indicator can provide a definitive answer or “proof” of trafficking in persons. The presence of several indicators is a stronger indication that someone may be a trafficking victim. However, even if only one indicator is detected, it is important to assess whether the child or adolescent is a possible trafficking victim or in a situation of vulnerability or abuse.

Behaviors that a child or adolescent may exhibit while trafficked or after trafficking.

Behavioral

Signs on a child or adolescent’s body and/or in their physical development that may result from trafficking.

Physical

Situations involving a child or adolescent who may be a trafficking victim.

Situational

Community-Based

Indicators observed in the community setting where a trafficking victim may live or work.

The presence of indicators does not establish that someone is a trafficking victim – the presence of indicators should lead to further inquiry. Equally, the absence of indicators does not mean that an individual is not a trafficking victim. Presence of any of the indicators in this handout should lead to a careful examination of the situation to determine if a child or adolescent may be a trafficking victim.

Indicators will differ in relevance and usefulness depending on the situation in which an interaction with a child or adolescent takes place.

Whenever a child or adolescent is at risk or being harmed, PANI should be notified to trigger a protection response.

Children and adolescents should immediately receive protection and assistance regardless of whether they are a trafficking victim.



Behavioral

Behaviors that a child or adolescent may exhibit while trafficked or after trafficking.

- ✓ Depression or distress (anxiety, apathy, crying, disorientation, fear, self-harm)
- ✓ Behavior not typical of children their age
- ✓ Alcohol or drug use, risk taking
- ✓ Conflict with family members, running away from home
- ✓ Memory loss or confusion (such as not remembering where they come from)
- ✓ Not adhering to limits, including schedule and/or responsibilities
- ✓ Difficult to communicate with, withholding of information
- ✓ Talks about sexual or physical abuse
- ✓ Drowsiness, not concentrating, falling behind in school or activities, low motivation
- ✓ Telling stories that don't make sense or appear to have been coached
- ✓ Expressing self-criticism (such as anger for bad decisions), lack of confidence
- ✓ Suspicious of and/or lacking trust in others
- ✓ Difficulty speaking in the local language
- ✓ Appearance, behavior, or clothing inconsistent with age, culture, and/or environment
- ✓ Showing signs of intimidation or fear
- ✓ Resistant to speaking with professionals and/or answering questions
- ✓ Negative and/or aggressive behavior (such as use of foul language or screaming)
- ✓ Fearful or nervous about discussing their relationship with another person

<https://aprendizaje.warnathgroup.com/indicators/>



Physical

Signs on a child or adolescent's body and/or in their physical development that may result from trafficking.

- ✓ Bruises, scars, broken bones, untreated medical problems
- ✓ Signs of physical restraint, confinement, or torture
- ✓ Deprivation of food, water, sleep, and/or medical care
- ✓ Chronic injuries or illness that are consistent with abuse or exploitation
- ✓ Sexually transmitted infections
- ✓ Signs of alcohol or drug use
- ✓ Signs of rape and/or sexual abuse
- ✓ Pregnancies, children, miscarriages, and/or abortions
- ✓ Poor hygiene, malnutrition, poor vision, poor hearing
- ✓ Scars or physical signs of self-harm
- ✓ Anorexia, bulimia, disordered eating

Community-Based

Indicators observed in the community setting where a trafficking victim may live or work.

- ✓ Houses with unusual movement of people and/or little communication with neighborhood
- ✓ Homes where a person never leaves
- ✓ Excessive security
- ✓ Persons present from outside the community who are associated with commercial sex
- ✓ Concentration of individuals of similar ages (such as groups of adolescent girls or adolescent boys)
- ✓ Groups of people being transferred to or from a location
- ✓ Locations where drug sales are known to occur
- ✓ Homes where individuals have drug or alcohol addiction
- ✓ Homes or locations where officials are not well-received or face threats

Situational

Situations involving a child or adolescent who may be a trafficking victim.

- ✓ Without a parent or guardian
- ✓ Handling large amounts of money or goods inconsistent with the family economy
- ✓ Without identity documents and/or without a fixed address
- ✓ No freedom of movement and/or unable to leave a living or working situation
- ✓ Living at place of employment
- ✓ Staying in places linked to illicit activities
- ✓ Wandering or staying regularly in the street and/or public places
- ✓ Foreign and living in Costa Rica without family or a guardian
- ✓ In bars or nightclubs accompanied by adults
- ✓ Spending time with a foreign tourist
- ✓ Offered a job or study opportunity without information about the destination or arrangements
- ✓ Travel costs or travel documents paid for by someone unknown
- ✓ Constantly accompanied by an adult
- ✓ Being threatened (in person, by phone, by text, by email, on Facebook, etc.)
- ✓ Irregularly attending school or no longer attending school
- ✓ In an improper relationship
- ✓ Trying to recruit other children or adolescents into trafficking
- ✓ Not getting healthcare when needed
- ✓ Performing odd tasks at odd hours and/or working excessive hours
- ✓ Transported to or from a work site by another person
- ✓ Eats separately from other "family" members, receives only leftovers or limited food