

Faith-Based Partnerships to Combat Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery affecting communities all across the United States. Human trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar crime that can occur in any labor market, from local restaurants to domestic homes to venues for commercial sex. Traffickers use violence, threats, blackmail, false promises, deception, and debt bondage to trap vulnerable individuals in horrific situations.

Communities of faith have a crucial role in the anti-trafficking field. As integral members of the community, faith communities are in a position to identify situations of trafficking, report tips to law enforcement, and connect victims with life-saving resources. Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Mormon, Baha'i, and Hindu communities across the U.S. have launched successful initiatives to educate the broader community about the dangers of human trafficking and equip community members to identify victims and respond to suspected trafficking situations appropriately.

Once identified, victims of trafficking must begin the long path towards recovery. Victims may be left with very little and must start over: locating safe shelter, basic necessities, and means for providing for themselves, all while recovering from the trauma they faced and interacting with the criminal justice system. When communities of faith welcome survivors with open arms and without judgment or mandates, they can create an environment that promotes healing and engagement. Many survivors have communicated how important their faith community was to them as a social and spiritual support system.

Furthermore, faith communities are powerful agents for social change. Faith communities are well positioned to advocate for strengthened legislation and increased resources. Communities of faith are also positioned to turn the table on the demand that fuels sex and labor trafficking. By encouraging members to use their purchasing power, votes, and social capital to hold corporations accountable for their supply chains and not buy sex, faith communities can reduce the demand for sex and labor trafficking.

What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is a crime federally and in all 50 states¹. 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 act¹. 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.

What is the National Human Trafficking Resource Center?

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a national anti-trafficking hotline and resource center in the United States. Our mission is to provide human trafficking victims and survivors with access to critical support and services to get help and stay safe, and to equip the anti-trafficking community with the tools to effectively combat all forms of human trafficking. 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.

**The National Human
Trafficking Resource Center**

1-888-373-7888

www.TraffickingResourceCenter.org

ACTION STEPS FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Educate

Learn and share the facts about labor and sex trafficking

Discover how trafficking affects your community by learning about sex and labor trafficking. You can find [educational resources](#) and [hotline statistics](#) on the [NHTRC website](#). Then find opportunities to educate your faith community on how to identify, respond to, and prevent trafficking by hosting experts from the field (including survivors), sharing materials, or discussing films and documentaries about sex and labor trafficking.

Welcome

Create a welcoming environment for trafficking survivors

Cultivate a welcoming community for survivors, whether they have disclosed their history or not. For many survivors, having a strong faith community is a critical aspect of their social and spiritual support. However, faith communities should keep in mind the power dynamics and coercion that survivors may have experienced. Avoid judgment about survivors' experiences and do not be prescriptive about conditions for services or support.

Partner

Build partnerships with anti-trafficking organizations

Combating human trafficking requires the collaboration of actors from the entire community. All 50 states have trafficking initiatives or organizations that you can support. Join your local task force or interfaith coalition and partner with civic organizations or local anti-trafficking organizations to further anti-trafficking initiatives. You can also strengthen the anti-trafficking field by introducing your current partners to the issue.

Report

Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center

If you believe you have information about a potential trafficking situation call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Hotline advocates are available 24/7. All reports are confidential and you may remain anonymous. Promote the NHTRC by [posting the hotline number](#) and include it in community resource lists.

Prevent

Engage in prevention work for human trafficking

Faith communities are especially equipped to support prevention by addressing the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty, barriers to employment, culture, demand for sex and labor, and gender inequality, among others. Efforts to educate members about the commercial sex industry and meet basic needs can reduce the risk of exploitation.

Advocate

Advocate for stronger protections for survivors

Faith communities can play an influential role in advancing anti-trafficking efforts by advocating for strengthened legislation. You can demonstrate that trafficking is a priority issue by contacting your legislators and encouraging them to support trafficking legislation and allocate resources to combat human trafficking at the federal, state, and local levels.

Volunteer

Volunteer your time and skills to local organizations

Encourage members of your faith community to volunteer their time and talents for local anti-trafficking initiatives. Many anti-trafficking organizations are in need of tutors, mentors, teachers, clinicians, attorneys, drivers, and many more.

Donate

Support anti-trafficking organizations financially

Your faith community can play an important role in strengthening the human trafficking response network by donating to local, national, or international organizations working on human trafficking. Funds and resources can make a lasting impact for victims and survivors.

Purchase

Shop fair trade and support ethical business practices

Communities of faith can influence corporate policies and practices by pushing for companies to develop ethical business practices as they relate to human trafficking. Faith communities can commit to purchasing goods that are fair trade or known to be made without slavery.