

Providing Dignified Healthcare to Individuals Affected by the Sex Trade



"A doctor was the first person that I told about my abuse. Because he listened, I started to tell others."
- Survivor of sex trafficking

Definitions:

- > Sex trade: any sex act that is traded for something of value (money, food, housing, etc.)
- > Sex trafficking: when the sex act is required by force, fraud, coercion -or- when the sex act is performed by a minor

Identifying sex workers in healthcare settings:

- > Anxious, hypervigilant, distrustful, distracted
- > Signs of physical or sexual harm
- > Signs of reporting to a controlling person
- > Difficulty remembering and/or explaining their situation
- > Excess amounts of cash, fancy clothes/hair/nails but lack of basic necessities
- > All ages and genders

A visit to the clinic can feel similar to being sold for sex:

- > Power dynamic: the Healthcare worker (HCW) tells the patient what to do throughout the encounter with the expectation that the patient will comply
- > Private room with the door closed
- > Patient may be undressed, often in a flimsy gown with no underwear
- > Patient may be laying on their back in a vulnerable position
- > Patient may be touched without consent

Offer trauma-informed care to every patient:

- > Maintain a non-judgmental and empathetic demeanor
- > Emphasize patient's autonomy
- > Emphasize confidentiality and medical privacy laws
- > Inform the patient of their right to ask questions and refuse treatment
- > Explain the reasons for the questions you ask
- > Only touch patients when needed and with their consent
- > Shift clothing out of the way instead of removing completely
- > Stop and offer to complete the exam at a later time if patient is uncomfortable



Reporting:

- > Anyone under 18 engaging in sex work is considered a victim of sex trafficking, and the HCW is legally obligated to call CPS
- > For those over 18, force, fraud, or coercion must be proven for a survivor to take legal action, and the HCW is not obligated to report even if fraud, force, or coercion exist and must have consent of the individual to call authorities

Referrals:

Discreetly share a referral to keep the patient safe

- > REST Hotline: (206) 451-REST (7378)
- > National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888

