

Trafficking in Persons: Information for U.S. Citizens

Did you know?

“Trafficking in persons,” “human trafficking,” and “modern slavery” are umbrella terms—often used interchangeably—to refer to a crime where traffickers exploit and profit at the expense of adults or children by compelling them to perform labor or engage in commercial sex. It includes sex trafficking and forced labor.

Mexico is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking.

Vulnerable groups, including orphans and fostered children, indigenous persons, and migrants, are most at risk. However, **anyone** can be a trafficking victim. U.S. citizens can be trafficking victims in Mexico.

Most trafficking cases occur among family, intimate partners, acquaintances, on social media, or through employment-related traps.

In Mexico, traffickers exploit adults and children in forced labor in agriculture, domestic service, child care, manufacturing, mining, food processing, construction, tourism, begging, and street vending.

Human trafficking and human smuggling are different. Smuggling is the deliberate evasion of immigration laws and the illegal crossing of an international border. Trafficking involves force, fraud, or coercion to compel someone into sex trafficking or forced labor. No movement is required for human trafficking, whereas smuggling requires movement across an international border. However, smuggled migrants may be vulnerable to human trafficking for a variety of reasons; they may face threats and intimidation by smugglers and are thus less likely to report abuse and may experience isolation being outside of their countries of origin.

U.S. citizens in Mexico are subject to Mexico's laws and can be prosecuted in the United States for some crimes, including human trafficking, committed abroad.

Special message on domestic workers

It is important to provide fair treatment to domestic employees in Mexico.

- Ensure that domestic workers employed in your home are treated fairly and provided employment conditions in accordance with local law.
- Consider Mexican labor laws as a minimum standard, not a ceiling.
- Abide by the provisions of any written contracts or oral agreements with personal domestic workers, in accordance with local law.
- Remember that in Mexico children under 15 are prohibited from working, and teenagers over the age of 15 and under age 18 may work no more than six hours a day nor night shifts.

What to do if you suspect human trafficking

- Contact local authorities or 911.
- Contact Mexico's human trafficking hotline (01800 5533 000). If you believe there is a U.S. connection, contact the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline (001-881-373-7888).
- DO NOT attempt to approach a potential trafficker or otherwise personally intervene. Traffickers often keep watch and it is imperative you do not inadvertently jeopardize the individual's safety.

- The U.S. government can help U.S. citizen victims in Mexico: <https://mx.usembassy.gov/victims-of-crime/>
- Call 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (001-883-347-2423 from Mexico) or visit <https://www.ice.gov/webform/ice-tip-form> to report human trafficking activity to federal law enforcement. Even if the trafficking activity occurs outside of the United States, the ICE hotline will refer it to the ICE office working in the relevant area. Highly trained specialists take reports from both the public and law enforcement agencies. The information provided will be routed to the appropriate international office and the Homeland Security Investigations Representative will coordinate with local authorities.

How to learn more

- Visit <https://findelaesclavitud.org> to learn more about trafficking in persons in Jalisco.
- Become familiar with local government and civil society resources in your area.
- Learn the indicators of human trafficking: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/indicators-human-trafficking#>

Indicators of human trafficking

(Download a printable copy from https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/bc-indicator-card-english_1.pdf)

- Does the person appear disconnected from family, friends, community organizations, or houses of worship?
- Has a child stopped attending school?
- Has the person had a sudden or dramatic change in behavior?
- Is a juvenile engaged in commercial sex acts?
- Is the person disoriented or confused, or showing signs of mental or physical abuse?
- Does the person have bruises in various stages of healing?
- Is the person fearful, timid, or submissive?
- Does the person show signs of having been denied food, water, sleep, or medical care?
- Is the person often in the company of someone to whom he or she defers? Or someone who seems to be in control of the situation, e.g., where they go or who they talk to?
- Does the person appear to be coached on what to say?
- Is the person living in unsuitable conditions?
- Does the person lack personal possessions and appear not to have a stable living situation?
- Does the person have freedom of movement? Can the person freely leave where they live? Are there unreasonable security measures?