



INDICATORS TO DETECT AND IDENTIFY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

It is important to know how to detect possible victims of human trafficking in order to refer them to specialized services and receive assistance. Moreover, if they are under 18, there are specific procedures to follow. Therefore, in case of doubt, they should be presumed minors and provide them with assistance, support and protection. Their exact age will be determined by the competent authority, when appropriate.

There are signs that could help professionals to identify children who may be victims of human trafficking. These indicators are the following:

General indicators

- Fear and difficulty to talk about the situation they are going through or to freely speak with their families or friends.
- Social Isolation: limited contact with other people non- related to the exploitation network, not knowing where they live or what is their address.
- Not having passport or other type of ID document. In case there is any, documents seem falsified (including the state of birth)
- Not be allowed to move freely, being accompanied to any appointment.
- Being on a situation of multiple dependence (to get accommodation, food or any other service)
- Not being in education or training

Emotional indicators

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Isolation
- Regressive behaviour
- Lack of emotional control
- Repeated and varied phobia
- Psychosomatic problems or affective lability

Behavioural indicators

- Reticence to talk; they lie or act following instructions
- Extremely nervous or specially sensitive or impressionable
- They give evasive answers or show apprehension
- They avoid eye contact in matters that are not related to cultural issues.

Health indicators

- Bruises, broken bones or other signs of health issues that have not been treated. .
- Visible signs of cuts, bruises or burns.
- Bad health conditions, in general.

Psychological indicators

- Post-traumatic stress disorder or psychological alterations (trauma, depression, anxiety)
- Frequent symptoms: headaches, sleep alterations, somatization disorders, anxious or uneasy appearance, low self-esteem and tiredness.

Apart from these indicators, there are some specific signs depending on the type of exploitation that children and young people may be suffering that could help professionals to identify possible victims.

Specific signs of victims of human trafficking for SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

General indicators

- Same tattoos, marks or clothes/accessories among several girls/women.

Behavioural indicators

- Excessive intake of alcohol and drugs.
- Self harm behaviours or suicide attempts.

Health indicators

- Rape or sexual abuse signs.
- Enforced medical procedures like terminations or pregnancy tests against their will or under coercion.
- Sexually transmitted infections or illnesses.

Psychological indicators

- Personality disorders, adaptive disorders, drugs and alcohol related disorders, amnesia, dissociation or sleep disorders.
- Frequent symptoms: cephalgia, sleep imbalances, eating disorders, distress, hands tremors, easy crying, lack of clarity, suicide thoughts, stomach discomfort, etc.
- Feeling of guilt or extreme shame.

Specific signs of victims of human trafficking for LABOUR EXPLOITATION

There are major difficulties to detect children who are victims of labour exploitation because of the invisibility they are subjected to. Their lack of access to any kind of service jeopardise the opportunities to identify them. Trafficked young people usually have false IDs where they appear as over 18. Therefore, they are not as hidden as younger children so professionals have more chances to identify them as victims.

General indicators

- Children or young people live and work in the same place, where there are control systems, such as camera surveillance, inaccessible/iron bar windows or locked doors.
- The workplace is located in a remote area with difficult access.

- Children or young people have limited access to contacts (telephone or internet)
- Employers monitor contacts with other people or insist in translating and answering for them.
- There is not a work contract or proofs of salary. If there is a salary, payments are irregular and often, delayed.

Behavioural indicators

- Not engaged on leisure and free time activities suitable for their age
- Introversion

Health indicators

- They may present work- related illnesses without proper treatment.

Specific signs of victims of human trafficking for BEGGING and CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

In cases of children accompanied by adults while begging, it is difficult to establish whether they are being exploited by their parents or other adults. However, it is easier to recognise children than young people victims of this type of exploitation, where besides the obstacles to identify them as victims there is the difficulty to establish their age.

General indicators

- There are people nearby when carrying out criminal activities or begging,
- There are control systems in their accommodation, such as camera surveillance, inaccessible/iron bar windows or locked doors
- They are taken from the accommodation to the area where they carry out criminal activities or begging.
- They belong or pretend to belong to a discriminated group (for instance, because of their ethnicity, disability or being an orphan)

Behavioural indicators

- They are in public places at school times.
- Minors on the street without apparent adult supervision.

Health indicators

- Children or young people that have never received health care or have emergency services to treat serious injuries.
- Lack of hygiene habits.