



Human Trafficking Under Massachusetts Law



Essential quick guide for first responders and frontline teams

Know the Crime

Spot the Indicators

Act Quickly and Document

What Is Labor Trafficking?

Under **Massachusetts law**, labor trafficking is obtaining or maintaining a person's services using any of these means:

- serious harm or threats of serious harm
- physical restraint or threats of restraint
- abuse or threatened abuse of the law or legal process
- confiscating passports, immigration documents, or other identification
- extortion
- financial harm



Massachusetts trafficking laws do not require proof of force, fraud, or coercion.

What Is Sex Trafficking?

Sex trafficking occurs when a person **directs, facilitates, or profits from the commercial sexual activity of another person, or the victim is under 18. This can include:**

- "pimping"
- acting as a middleman between a trafficker and victim
- knowingly driving someone to a commercial sex date
- knowingly providing a place where commercial sex occurs
- internet-based escort activity
- illicit massage businesses or brothels

Potential Signs of BOTH Sex and Labor Trafficking

- Poor, crowded, or mandatory living conditions
- Limited control over movement or decisions
- Little or no pay
- Excessive work hours
- High security measures
- Threats or intimidation by employer
- Fearful or unusually nervous
- Spoken for by another person
- Not free to leave
- No control of ID or money
- Multiple phones/accounts
- Control-related tattoos or markings
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing for existing weather or workplace conditions

What To Do

For law enforcement personnel only:

- Separate and interview privately, when safe
- Use trauma-informed, nonjudgmental questioning
- Document indicators, statements, locations, vehicles and persons involved
- Preserve evidence and make appropriate referrals
- Reach out to your PSAP as needed

For non-law enforcement:

- Follow your agency reporting protocols

For victim services, use the National Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888 / text 233733, or www.mass.gov/WorldCup for more information

All Mandated Reporters MUST file 51As for victims under 18



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Know the Reality

Understand the Law

Respond Appropriately

Myths and Realities

Myth: Trafficking is always violent.

Reality: Traffickers often use manipulation, threats, fraud, and psychological control.

Myth: Trafficking always involves commercial sex.

Reality: Labor trafficking is common and often underrecognized.

Myth: Trafficking only happens in illegal businesses.

Reality: Cases occur in hotels, restaurants, spas, construction, cleaning services, and factories.

Myth: Only women and girls are victims of sex trafficking.

Reality: All genders can be victims, men and boys may be underidentified.

Myth: Trafficking requires movement across borders.

Reality: No movement is required. A person can be trafficked in their own community.

Myth: Victims are always physically unable to leave.

Reality: Many remain because of fear, coercion, dependence, or lack of safe alternatives.

Myth: Labor trafficking mainly happens in other countries.

Reality: Labor trafficking also occurs in the United States.

Myth: Traffickers are usually strangers.

Reality: Traffickers may be intimate partners, family members, or other known individuals.

Penalties Under Massachusetts Law

Mandatory minimum: 5 years

No release before 5 years served

Maximum: 20 YEARS TO LIFE

Fine: Up to \$25,000 fine

Businesses: Up to \$1 MILLION

Responder Reminders

- Victims may not self-identify.
- No visible restraint does not rule out trafficking.
- Watch for control, fear, dependency, and limited freedom.
- Labor trafficking can occur in lawful workplaces.
- Consent is not a defense in sex trafficking.
- A youth under the age of 18 is always considered a victim.
- Trafficking does not require movement.