



A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO ADDRESS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a violation of an individual's basic rights and personal freedom. Successful approaches to address trafficking must protect all the rights of survivors and respect their individual agency. Focusing on the rights of each individual is the only path to restoring their dignity and giving them the opportunity they deserve to pursue a better life. Freedom Network USA is committed to a human rights-based approach to human trafficking.

Our approach includes the core elements below.

INCLUSION OF SURVIVOR VOICE

Survivors' perspective must guide prevention, define effective investigations, and inform how and what services are delivered. Anti-trafficking professionals have an ethical obligation to cultivate leadership opportunities for survivors and work with them as equal partners. FNUSA includes survivors as equal members, engages paid survivor consultants in all of our programming, and supports survivor leadership efforts in our field building efforts.

COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS

There is no one face of human trafficking. All ages, genders, races, religions, and nationalities are exploited by traffickers into all forms of labor and services. We must support programs and systems that address this diversity, ensuring that all survivors have access to the services and support that they need. When focusing on women and girls, we cannot ignore the needs of men and boys, and transgender and gender non-conforming survivors. While developing services for sex-trafficked youth, we cannot fail to support labor-trafficked youth. FNUSA works to build capacity to address the needs of all survivors, working with providers who serve diverse communities, and partners with a diverse group of survivors to better inform our work.

SEEKING JUSTICE

Every individual defines justice in their own way. Survivors may wish to work with law enforcement to prosecute their trafficker, seek criminal restitution, or file a civil lawsuit for unpaid wages and damages. Others may focus on moving past their exploitation. They may seek access to immigration relief, educational support, or file to vacate criminal convictions they received as a result of their trafficking. FNUSA is committed to protecting the right of survivors to engage in all, or none, of these definitions of justice; and to making their rights real through increased access to advocacy and representation.

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PERSON-CENTERED SERVICES

The trafficked person's priorities and narrative must be at the center of the work, using voluntary, nonjudgmental assistance with an emphasis on self-determination to best meet an individual's short- and long-term needs. Services should be designed to prioritize the personal safety and well-being of each survivor while protecting their choice and autonomy, including a strong emphasis on harm reduction techniques. Information is always provided in a language that the client can understand and is culturally appropriate. FNUSA provides training and technical assistance to providers to assist them in implementing person-centered services.

PREVENTION: CREATING EQUITY

Traditional approaches to human trafficking prevention rely heavily on the criminal justice system. However, human trafficking is fueled by complex and interconnected factors including poverty and economic injustice, racism, discrimination, and weak worker protections. True prevention must address the root causes that make people vulnerable in the first place and create equity in those spaces.

EXPLORING AND ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES OF TRAFFICKING

POVERTY

Poverty and homelessness leave many with few options to provide for themselves and their families. Traffickers take advantage of these realities and lure people with the promise of a good job or a place to live. Making affordable housing and access to a living wage accessible can ensure that individuals can meet their basic needs without risking exploitation.

POOR WORKER PROTECTIONS

There are some forms of work, such as agriculture, domestic work, or sex work, that do not provide the same labor protections as other sectors. Additionally, many migrant workers are working in systems that create power dynamics that are ripe for exploitation. In many cases, stronger labor laws, enforcement, and workers rights education can create transparency and level the playing field between employees and employers.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Institutionalized racism and discrimination creates barriers to education, sustainable employment, safe housing, and quality healthcare. The barriers create vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Advocating for strong anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBTQ populations, people of color, immigrants, and others is essential for addressing human trafficking.