

**UMOS**

*Building Better Futures*

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**NEWS**

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## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING HAPPENS EVERYDAY**

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. The two major forms of human trafficking are sex and labor trafficking.

The term “sex trafficking” is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. “

“Labor trafficking” is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Worldwide, human trafficking is a \$150 billion industry with an estimated twenty-five million victims.

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, over 11,000 human trafficking victims were reported in the United States in 2020. But the key word is reported. Most human trafficking cases go unnoticed and unreported therefore, the suspected actual numbers are much higher.

In March of 2018, Milwaukee conducted a study on human trafficking. The report notes that the study was intended to estimate the magnitude of sex trafficking in the city of Milwaukee based on data gathered by the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD).

The study identified 340 individuals in Milwaukee under the age of twenty-five who had been reported by the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) as confirmed or “believed” between January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2016.

First, the study analyzed the human trafficking statistics based on the victims’ last known residences to determine whether victims were trafficked in their own neighborhoods or elsewhere. The report found that 97 percent of the 288 subjects with city and state residence information were last known to reside in Wisconsin.

The 3 percent of subjects not trafficked from Wisconsin came from Illinois, Indiana, South Dakota, and Ohio. Approximately 88 percent of those included in the study last resided in the city of Milwaukee; 9 percent came from other cities in Wisconsin; and 3 percent last resided in cities outside of Wisconsin. According to the report, seventy-one subjects reported being trafficked outside of Wisconsin in forty-two different cities and twenty states.

Although the study focused on Milwaukee, thirty other Wisconsin cities were also identified. Human trafficking continues to take place in our cities and neighborhoods, at truck stops, major sporting events, street corners, hotels, and nightclubs throughout the state and throughout this country.

Each of us has an obligation and a responsibility to look out for each other, to protect each other and our neighborhoods, especially our children. We can do that by knowing the signs of human trafficking.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Justice the following signs could indicate sex trafficking:

- Any minor engaged in sex acts for anything of value
- Individual of any age or gender appears to be watching and approaching youth, systematically trying to befriend strangers, promoting 'modeling agencies,' traveling crew employment, talent search websites or other employment
- Crimes (theft, drug crimes) appear to be committed under the watch and for the benefit of someone else
- Tattoos that indicate branding of a victim by a trafficker
- Youth in possession of motel keys/cards, lots of cash, prepaid credit cards
- Individuals being constantly monitored, having no control over money or ID, with few or no personal items
- Minors under the influence of drugs/alcohol in the company of adults or much older youth
- Signs of physical abuse, fear, or malnourishment
- Lack of knowledge of his or her whereabouts or destination, numerous inconsistencies in his or her story

According to the Wisconsin Department of Justice the following signs could indicate labor trafficking:

- Signs of physical abuse, force, restraint, sleep deprivation, untreated injuries, or illness
- Groups of traveling sales or work crews sleeping in vehicles in parking lot
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts or destination, numerous inconsistencies in their story
- Individuals being constantly monitored by someone, not allowed to speak for themselves, seem fearful or submissive to a person who is speaking for them
- Individuals without their own transportation, who do not seem to be allowed to come and go on their own
- Individuals who do not carry their own identification or money, or have few or no personal possessions
- Mention of work conditions or wages being different than what was advertised or promised
- Individuals selling items or begging

One of the top industries for labor trafficking is the agricultural industry where 69% of those who are trafficked are Hispanic, including migrant farm workers and H-2A temporary agricultural workers.

The UMOS Wisconsin Regional Anti-Trafficking Project staff trained 631 law enforcement personnel, medical providers, social workers, youth workers and community advocates between 2020 and 2021 on how to recognize human trafficking.

If you come across a situation you believe to be human trafficking, do not intervene. Instead, document as much information as you can, and contact law enforcement immediately.

If you or someone you know needs immediate help call the UMOS 24-hour hotline at 414-389-6510.

Although January is recognized as human trafficking awareness month, human trafficking takes place every month, every day. It's up to each of us to help law enforcement bring traffickers to justice and give survivors the justice they deserve.

Lupe Martinez  
President and Chief Executive Officer,  
UMOS