

Hospitality & Trafficking Fact Sheet

Safe Passage
An Initiative of:



Native Women's
Association of Canada
L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

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What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking “involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in order to exploit that person, typically through sexual exploitation or forced labour” (Department of Justice, 2020).

This can look very different from what you might expect. It isn't always obvious and there might not be any clear signs a person is a victim of trafficking. Some individuals might not even realize they are being trafficked yet.

Trafficking & Hotels/Motels

HOW TRAFFICKING & HOTELS/MOTELS ARE CONNECTED

The main reason hotels/motels are used as hubs for human trafficking is because of the anonymity they provide.

This convenient invisibility has only increased since the introduction of, and greater reliance on automated services. Rooms can be booked and people come and go through the hotel/motel without staff ever knowing the real identity or activities of their guests.

Individuals being trafficked are trained to enter and access hotels/motels without drawing attention to themselves. These victims may be extremely well-dressed and seem to ‘belong.’ They are taught to blend in and may have briefcases, be on a phone call, or visibly showing a key card (that may only look similar to an actual key card for that hotel).



What to Look For:

Guests with few personal items

Guests without ID

A “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door all the time

Individuals loitering in hallways

Little to no eye contact from customers

Many guests going in and out of the same hotel/motel room

Guests who pay with cash or a preloaded credit card

Guests who frequently request new linens and towels, but decline cleaning services

Guests who request rooms in areas with the least visibility

What to Do if you Suspect Trafficking

- Do not directly engage with the suspected trafficker or victim, as it may put the victim in danger
- Call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010)
- Contact a local organization that supports victims and survivors of trafficking. This is preferred over law enforcement because there is a risk that officers may hold racist views or stigma against Indigenous women, girls or 2SLGBTQQIA+ people involved in trafficking.



Next Steps

SUGGESTIONS FROM A SURVIVOR

- Lobby elevators that can only be accessed with key cards
- Front desk staff dedicated to engaging customers
- Greeters at entrances trained to look for cues of trafficking
- Cameras and warnings placed in visible areas that extend outside the parking lots
- Post a symbol or sign that lets customers know they support anti-trafficking initiatives and are affiliated with law, and/or local organizations working against this issue

PREVENTATIVE STEPS

- Ensure hotel/motel staff are trained to recognize signs of trafficking (that is specific to the type of work they do at the hotel/motel, e.g. front reception will have different cues to look for than cleaning staff)
- Ensure hotel/motel staff have a safe and optionally anonymous way to report suspected trafficking. Some staff don't report suspicious activity for fear of reprisal
- Be aware if your hotel(s)/motel(s) are located on a trafficking route and put safety measures in place accordingly
- Consult with organizations that support victims and survivors of trafficking
- Engage in full reference checks for new hotel/motel staff
- Design a clear plan of action if staff identify a possible trafficking situation

It's important to note the difference between providing safety versus being responsible for over-surveilling individuals in need. In practice, this can look like being open in offers to be of help, and/or being engaged with guests, particularly trafficking victims while still respecting their privacy and activities.

Challenge Colonial Narratives

- Learn about colonialism and colonial violence and understand how that affects Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people being trafficked.
- Tell others about how Indigenous women and girls are marginalized, exploited, and made vulnerable by colonialism.
- Treat Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people with respect, approach them as equals and see that they are sacred.
- Value the lives of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, believe they are deserving of protection and safety, and act on that.
- Ask women who may be in need if they want help, and if so, how they may be helped.
- End the cycle of perpetrators enacting violence with impunity.

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