

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Human trafficking impacts individual health (e.g. traumatic injury, infections, unwanted pregnancy, malnutrition, exposure to toxins, PTSD and depression) and results in family strife/disintegration, community bias/discrimination, business drive for exploitable/unpaid labor, and societal expectations of cheap consumer goods. For all of these reasons, human trafficking is a public health issue.

## Human Trafficking

### Labor Trafficking:

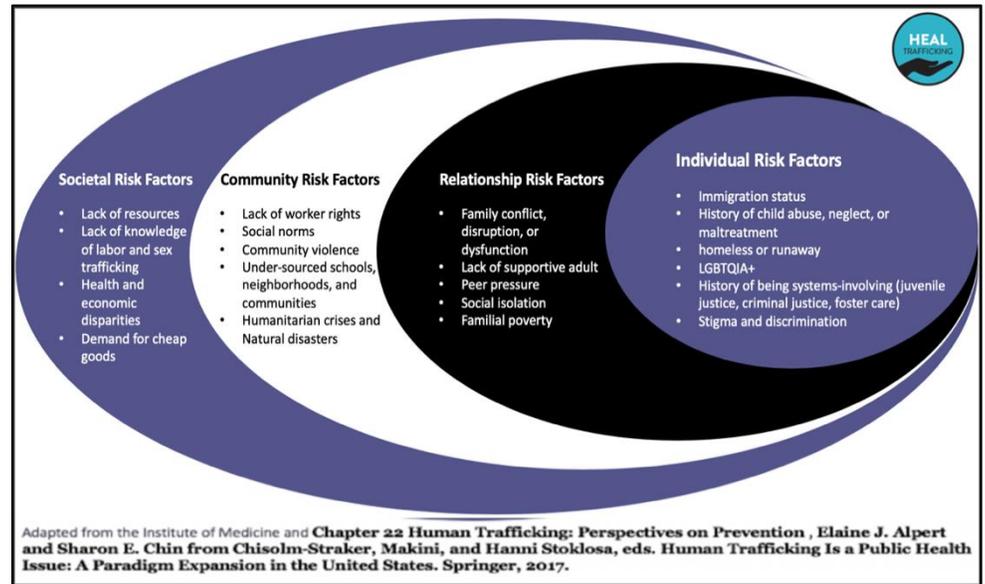
“Individuals are compelled to work or provide services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.”

### Sex Trafficking:

“Individuals are compelled to engage in commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.”

– Office on Trafficking in Persons

## Human Trafficking: A Public Health Issue

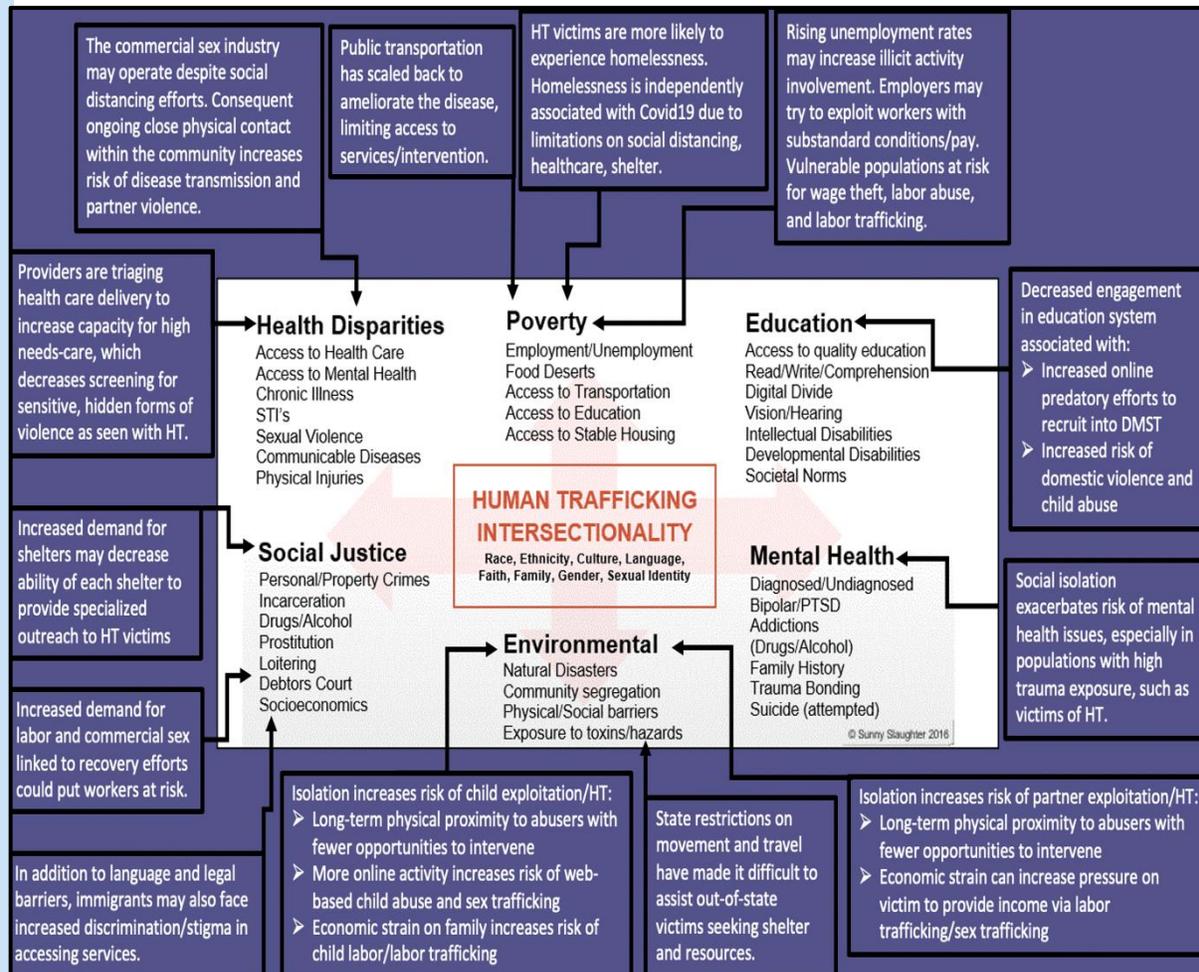


## Effect of COVID-19

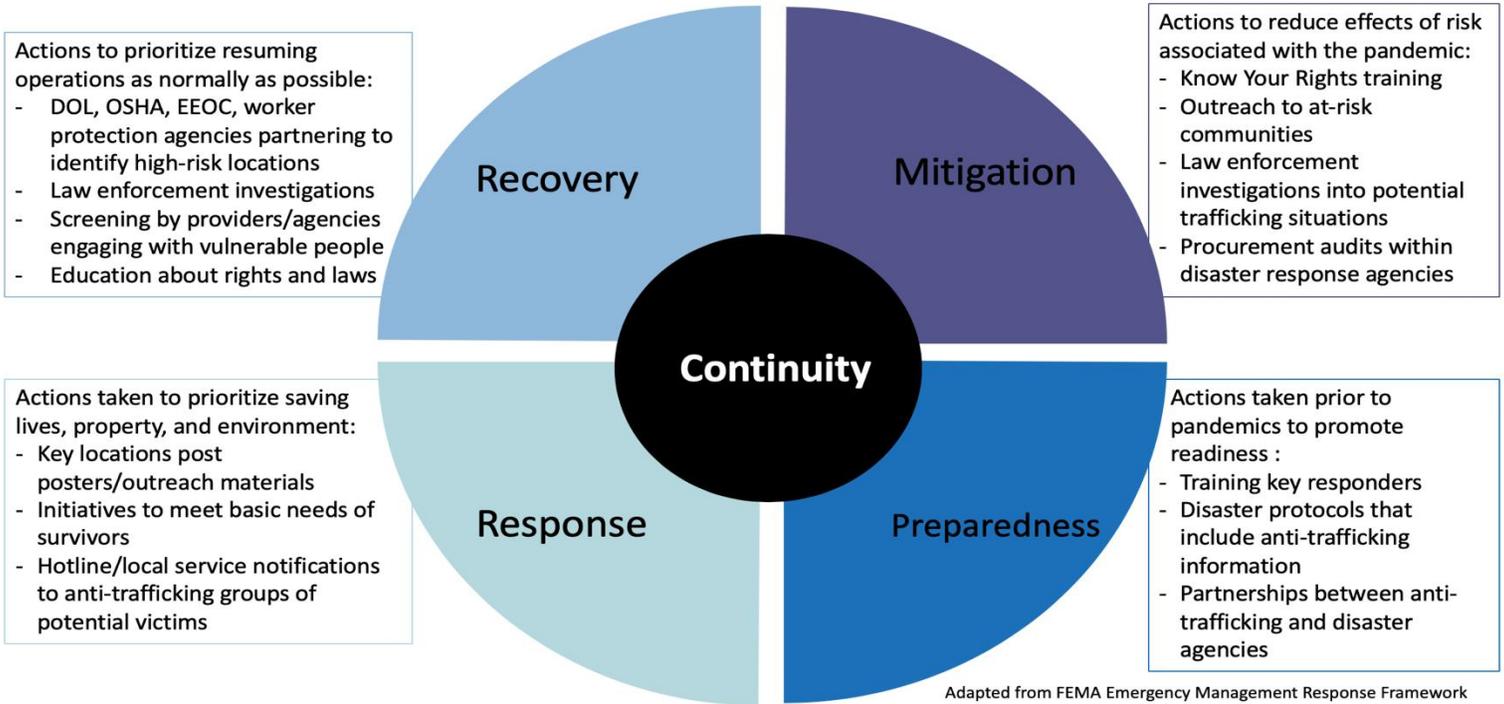
New public social mandates (social distancing, ‘shelter in place’ orders, school/business closures, event/meeting cancellations) have limited in-person interaction and expanded online communication. They have also increased unemployment, poverty, homelessness, and vulnerability. All of these social changes will likely increase the prevalence of human trafficking.

– “Impact of Covid-19 on Human Trafficking”

## How is Human Trafficking Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic?



Integrating Anti-Trafficking Work into FEMA Disaster Management Response Framework



How can health care professionals and other service providers prevent trafficking amidst social distancing efforts?

- Assess high risk patients for trafficking (occupational injuries, substance use patterns, mental health presentations)
- Address social determinants of health and connect patients with resources they need
- Educate other health professionals on trafficking
- Build health systems protocols to respond to trafficking
- Engage with isolated individuals regularly via secure telecommunication
- Teach families to spot both abuse and avenues of recruitment into forced labor and the commercial sex industry
- Conduct Know Your Rights trainings to increase awareness of exploitative circumstances (forced labor)
- Promote harm reduction strategies

What organizational strategies can assist in client/patient support during this pandemic?

- Expand digital avenues for innovative engagement with clients
- Evaluate for new client needs/vulnerabilities arising as a consequence of reduced access to opportunities/services
- Help clients safety plan for themselves and their families
- Integrate client voice and input into program design
- Institute intentional self-care to combat secondary and vicarious trauma
- Coordinate sustainability planning and transition planning in case of provider illness

What resources are available to individuals at risk of suffering violence?

- National Human Trafficking Hotline: Call 1-888-3737-888 or text INFO or HELP to “BEFREE” (233733)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: **1-800-799-7233**
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: **800.656.HOPE (4673)**
- StrongHearts Native Helpline for domestic/sexual violence: **1-844-762-8483**.
- Trans LifeLine staffed exclusively by trans operators with policy against non-consensual active rescue: **1-877-565-8860**
- National Parent Helpline emotional support and advocacy for parents: **1-855-2736**.
- Utilize online recovery options such as NA-recovery.org, eatingdisordersanonymous.org, aa.org

References:

1. Office on Trafficking in Persons. 'What is Human Trafficking?' <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/about/what-is-human-trafficking>. Retrieved April 1, 2020.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 'Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).' <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/summary.html>. Retrieved April 1, 2020.
3. Polaris Project. '2018 Statistics from the National Human Trafficking Hotline.' <https://polarisproject.org/2018-us-national-human-trafficking-hotline-statistics/>. Retrieved April 1, 2020.
4. Federal Emergency Management Agency. 'National Response Framework.' [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1582825590194-2f000855d442fc9f18547d1468990d/NRF\\_FINALApproved\\_508\\_2011\\_028v1040.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1582825590194-2f000855d442fc9f18547d1468990d/NRF_FINALApproved_508_2011_028v1040.pdf). Retrieved April 1, 2020.

