

- may have been sexually abused and traumatized
- may have been trafficked by family members or family friends
- may have family members that are also enslaved in their home country
- may have legitimate fears for the safety of herself and family members

LIRS has developed guidance to help identify child victims of trafficking, which is available at www.lirs.org/what/children/TCIguidance.pdf.

What can my congregation do to help victims of trafficking?

Learning more about the trafficking issue will help you recognize and better serve victims. Start your research by looking at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's 2001 statement and companion study guide, "A Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation" available at www.elca.org/socialstatements/sexualexploitation. You may also learn more about LIRS's work with trafficked children at www.lirs.org/What/children/TCI.htm and about the federal government's efforts to raise awareness about this form of modern-day slavery at www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking.

When a law enforcement agency uncovers a trafficking ring, it will usually ask a social service agency to provide material

and emotional support to the victims it frees. Since victims of trafficking will not immediately be eligible for public services, the social service agency may in turn contact a local congregation such as yours to assist in providing such donations and services. Please contact LIRS for further information.

If you suspect that someone from another country is being forced through physical violence or threat to work in servitude or in the sex industry, call the toll-free number 1-888-373-7888 to refer victims to services in your area

Where can I get more information?

LIRS Trafficked Children Initiative
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The LIRS Trafficked Children Initiative

*A Message
to Lutheran
Congregations*

“Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’” Mark 36-37.

Dear Friends,

For centuries, people of faith have offered safety and sanctuary to those in need. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has a calling to serve and empower the stranger who is most voiceless, forgotten, and vulnerable.

Today’s victims of slavery need your prayerful concern and protection. Please spend a moment to learn more about trafficking and LIRS’ work to help trafficked children. If you suspect that someone may be a victim of trafficking, please call the Trafficking in Persons Information and Referral Hotline—1-888-373-7888—to help victims access services in your area. Lastly, be an advocate for these hidden children by raising awareness in your community about this sinister trade in human beings so victims will no longer remain in the shadows.

What is trafficking?

Human trafficking is modern day slavery. Every day children’s bodies and labor are bought, sold and used for the financial gain and pleasure of others. Children are brutally held captive while they receive little or no pay for their labor. Traffickers prey on the emotional and physical vulnerability of children, making them prime targets of this sinister trade.

The U.S. Government estimates that up to 17,500 men, women and children are trafficked into the United States for forced labor in homes, farms, commercial sex, sweatshops, construction and other work. As many as half of the victims are thought to be children. They are brought from many regions of the world, including countries in Central and South America, Africa, Asia and Europe.

Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000 to prosecute traffickers, prevent trafficking, and protect victims. The TVPA made trafficking punishable as a serious crime and made federal funding available to rescue victims and help them rebuild their lives.

What is LIRS doing about the problem?

LIRS is assisting the federal government with the care of trafficked children who have been liberated. These children are placed in refugee foster care programs across the United States,

which provide them with homes and all the specialized services and support they need to rebuild their lives. Through its Trafficked Children Initiative, LIRS also increases public awareness of this tragedy so more children can be identified and rescued.

How will I recognize a victim of trafficking?

It is very difficult to recognize victims of trafficking, especially those who are children. Children are arguably the most vulnerable victims and will rarely identify themselves as such. If you wonder whether a child you know is a victim of trafficking, consider that he or she...

- may be from outside the United States
- may have been subject to forced prostitution, domestic servitude, debt bondage or labor for little or no pay
- may not have any immigration or identification documents because these may have been confiscated by the traffickers
- may have believed he or she was coming to the United States to be united with family, to work in a legitimate job or to attend school
- may owe a significant debt to a trafficker
- may have been subject to psychological intimidation or threats of physical harm to herself or her family members
- may have someone limiting their ability to meet people/move around freely in public places