



**ESPERANZA
UNITED**



Human trafficking screening tool for Latin@s accessing domestic violence shelters and programs

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Originally published January 2020

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Esperanza United has chosen to use “@” in place of the masculine “o” when referring to people or groups that are gender neutral or both masculine and feminine. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that women, men, and gender-nonconforming people make to our communities.

This publication was made possible by grant number 90EV0431 from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Introduction

Esperanza United mobilizes Latinas and Latin@s communities to end gender-based violence. Formerly Casa de Esperanza, Esperanza United was founded in 1982 by a small group of persevering Latinas as an emergency shelter in St. Paul, Minnesota. We continue to ground our work in community strengths and wisdom, as we serve Latin@s locally and nationwide.

Through the Family Violence Prevention Services division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Esperanza United is the federally designated resource center on ending gender-based violence in Latin@s communities. Nationally we provide training and technical assistance, conduct research, and advocate for policies to promote the health and well-being of Latin@s communities throughout the country.

Although there are several trafficking screening tools available, most do not incorporate a culturally relevant approach. This tool has been built to be flexible, considering that survivors have their own stories, realities, and obstacles. The goal of this tool is to provide domestic violence shelters and programs a series of culturally relevant approaches to identifying and serving Latin@s survivors of trafficking who already access their services. The tool is the result of the collaboration among our staff that daily engage in our communities and provide support to Latin@s survivors. Our local, MN team brings the Latina Advocacy Framework through their experience in El Refugio (shelter) and advocacy in the community. Our national staff brings the research and training experience. Combined, the result is a comprehensive tool that is culturally relevant, trauma-informed, and survivor-centered. It is critical for domestic violence advocates working with Latin@s to be knowledgeable of Latino cultural context and to allow that context to inform their advocacy.

Additionally, we created a **Reference Guide: Human Trafficking Screening Tool for Latin@s Accessing Domestic Violence Shelters and Programs**. This guide complements the screening tool by offering information and references on the context of human trafficking of Latin@s in the U.S.; the intersections of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking; the definitions and federal regulations on human trafficking; and the organizational preparedness for the screening process.



Foundational considerations when working with Latin@s

To effectively serve and respond to the needs of survivors in a mindful and trauma-informed approach, we consider it vital to start with the two following steps:

#1 Build a relationship

In Esperanza United's over 40 years of experience, we can safely say that relationship building is essential to working with Latin@s. Establishing trust is critical when providing services. Our advocates establish relationships and trust with survivors of human trafficking by supporting them in different areas of their lives that lead to overall wellness. We think about these wellness areas as interconnected, overlapping each other, and informing a survivor's decision-making. Our diagram below shows this interconnection. The wellness areas include safety, family and community, housing, economic stability and resources, health and healing, opportunities to advance survivors' futures, and any other aspects the survivor identifies as important

#2 Let the survivor lead

Below we have provided considerations and suggested conversation starters that fit within each wellness area. Esperanza United advocates identified that these common questions could tease out more of a survivor's situation when discussing their safety and well-being, offering them resources, and supporting them to create and reach their goals. These questions can indicate past or present experiences of human trafficking depending on how they are answered. These questions are NOT meant to be asked all at once or when meeting with a survivor for the first time. Rather, once a sense of trust has been established, advocates can use a few questions (two-four or the amount of questions the conversation naturally allows) to screen for indicators (red flags) of human trafficking.

Remember, storytelling is a cultural form of communication. Do not set time restrictions - that way survivors can share freely and disclose as much or as little as they feel comfortable doing. The questions you ask should be related to the topics the survivor requested support in. The purpose of asking only a few at a time is to maintain the survivor's trust, learn about a survivor's history, listen to their story, and provide responsive services. As a note of caution stated by one of our advocates, in order to maintain a trauma-informed framework "never ask a question without a reason in mind, mainly a resource or support to offer." As you continue to meet the survivor, pick a few new questions related to the areas the survivor has identified as in need of support. These questions are fluid and can be implemented into a conversation wherever they seem to connect. In other words, *let the survivor lead*.

Diagram of survivor's wellness areas



Safety

Consider:

- In planning your meeting, think through where and when you are talking with the survivor (phone vs. in-person, public place vs. private).
 - Before the meeting starts, note who they came with/who is monitoring.
 - During the meeting, pay attention to what they say and what they do NOT say. Observe what their body language is telling you.
 - Be sure the survivor knows their rights so they can make informed decisions.
 - Offer help identifying options rather than asking what they want.
 - One person's view of safety may not be another person's view of safety. When discussing safety, consider including a description of harm as well as safety.
 - Being too direct or too "professional" (i.e. having a cold or distant demeanor) can make a survivor uncomfortable and diminish trust. Consider a more conversational approach.
 - Avoid blanket statements that can unintentionally sound victim blaming (i.e. "Sometimes people do unfair or dangerous work because if they don't, somebody might hurt them or others they care about").
 - Make safety plans that include family members abroad if/when necessary.
 - Remember common safety measures (i.e. police reports and criminal prosecution) may be harmful to their situation if it puts their family abroad at risk. Immigrant survivors may feel unsafe seeking help from law enforcement or the courts.
-

Ask two-four of the following:

If you suspect they are unsafe while you are talking to them, either in person or on the crisis line, give them options...

- Do you have a little bit of time to talk?
- We can meet another time or later today if you want.
- If now is inconvenient, you can call me later when you have more time to talk.
- Do you want me to call you a little later?

If survivor arrives to a meeting with an unknown third party...

- Hey, I have to run to the bathroom. Will you come with me?
- (Call them if possible before going into the meeting and ask if the person joining them is a trusted companion.)
- Are you taking the bus/Uber/Lyft, or did somebody give you a ride? Are the kids with you?

When involved/filing a protective order...

- Does anybody else have keys to your home? Do you want to ask the court to order that this person return them to you?
- Do you want your locks changed on your home?

Before arriving to shelter...

- Has anybody had access to your phone? It's possible they are tracking or monitoring you through your device.

Family & community

Consider:

- Family often includes multiple generations and is the core stability and strength of their community.
 - Immigrant survivors are often isolated from family and community supports making it painful for participants to reflect on- use your gut to determine if these questions would be helpful or harmful by reminding participants of their loneliness or isolation.
 - Offer resources and places for participants to make connections to the community.
 - Remind them of their existing supports (i.e. I'm here for you, I will support you. Our whole organization is here to support you).
-

Ask two-four of the following:

- Who can you count on to be there for you?
- Is there somebody who you always feel good being around?
- What do you like to do on the weekends or when you're off work?
- Do you want to meet new people or get to know new places around here?
- Do you want to register for any classes or find out about community events?
- Do you have a way to talk with your family in...?

Housing

Consider:

- Shared living spaces with intergenerational family members, acquaintances, and co-workers may be normal for some survivors.
 - Renting a room/subletting may be common for survivors and their families depending on the area, as well as availability and accessibility to other affordable housing.
 - Asking about the other people that live with a survivor may seem intrusive and uncomfortable, especially if the participant does not know much about the others living in the same space as them or are fearful sharing information may put those individuals at risk.
 - For survivors being accepted into shelters, it is helpful to meet the survivors' immediate needs and concerns (food, showers, rest, doctors, etc.) to make them comfortable and may indicate some of the circumstances they came from.
 - It may become apparent that somebody is actively fleeing when they share interest in finding another place to live.
-

Ask two-four of the following:

When arriving to shelter...

- How are you feeling?
- Do you want to eat?
- I have some forms that we should review together, but do you want to rest, eat, or shower first?
- What do you want us to do if you don't come back or don't show up to our next meeting?
- Is it safe to contact law enforcement for help if we don't hear from you?

When living in a location known to the person using abuse or with the person using abuse...

- Do you feel safe at home with the people you live?
- Do you know your neighbors? Do you feel like you can ask them for help if something happens?
- Is there somebody you could ask to stay with you for a few nights?

When looking for new safe housing...

- Where would you like to live?
- Do you want to live on your own or with other people?
- Do you have family in other places? Do you want to go live with them?

Opportunities to advance your future

Consider:

- Obtaining and maintaining employment is often a primary goal for immigrant survivors.
 - Survivors may be unable or fearful of taking time off work to meet with advocates because they cannot afford fewer hours or are fearful of employers cutting their hours - offer to meet during their lunchtime or breaks.
 - A survivor's availability during work hours can give you an idea of the rules/culture of their workplace.
 - Inform survivors about their labor rights, offer resources and support to enforce labor laws.
 - Offer to connect them with community resources that can advance their education, employment opportunities, and careers.
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Ask two-four of the following:

When talking about employment...

- How many hours do you work in a week?
- Do you have a set schedule, or does it change week to week?
- What's a typical schedule for you?
- Do you like your work?
- Would you like a different job or career in the future?

When talking about dreams...

- Is there something you'd like to go to school for?
- What is your dream job?
- Have you ever thought about running your own business?

When applying for jobs or school...

- Do you have your Passport or state ID?
- Do you want to fill out the application or would you like me to?

Economic stability & resources

Consider:

- Money can be a sensitive topic. Approach talking about finances with an eye toward participant's past and on-going trauma and use trauma-informed approaches in regard to your tone, pace, and responsiveness. Leave room and space for individuals to take their time in answering.
 - Be transparent about why you are asking questions about a participant's financial situation or resources.
 - Asking somebody how they make ends meet can be intrusive and shameful, particularly for those who are experiencing sex or labor trafficking.
 - Talking about budgets and planning for future financial stability can gently lead to conversations about current income, access to resources, and unpaid debts.
 - To avoid initial discomfort, our advocates often start conversations by explaining what resources we have to offer and then letting the survivor elect which ones they would like.
-

Ask two-four of the following:

When talking about creating a budget plan...

- Would you like any resources for food assistance, utility assistance, clothing, or economic support in your area?
- What is your monthly budget?
- Do you have savings set aside that you can use for an emergency? For example, if you get sick and miss work for a few weeks, or if your car breaks down and needs repairs, etc., what would you do?
- Would you like help making a savings plan?
- What expenses do you pay for every month? Like rent, utilities, phone, credit card, car payment, loans, etc.?
- Do you receive any public assistance or child support? Or would you like more information or help applying?
- Do you send money to family or anybody else?
- Do you have debts or money that you've borrowed that you're paying back, or you feel like is urgent to pay back? Would you like help making a payment plan?

When you suspect a participant is involved in sex work...

- I have some resources in mind and if it's okay with you, I'm going to ask a few more questions to see if you'd be eligible for them...
- Can you tell me about...?
- You can take a minute to think about what I've asked...

- It's okay to tell me about and I understand if you had to have sex or do sexual acts to get money or because somebody is forcing you to... or because you need to pay off a debt...

If a participant is concerned about being in the country...

- We can refer you to different agencies that offer free consultations with attorneys. Do you want to talk with an attorney about your legal options to stay in the country?
- If you're worried about being in the country, we could see if you're eligible for continued presence through a T visa. I can explain the T visa and the differences between that and other visas.

Health & healing

Consider:

- There is a lot of stigma around physical, mental, and emotional health, which can make this topic tricky to approach – don't make assumptions.
 - Cautiously talk about medical insurance, do not assume that a survivor has it or that they had access to it before or after coming to the U.S.
 - The term and concept of "self-care" is not known across all cultures and communities. Questions about well-being may be helpful when inquiring about self-care.
 - Many women in Latin@ traditional culture are expected to look after others and not after themselves.
 - Men are expected not to show emotions or express that they are dealing with pain or illness (e.g. diabetes, arthritis, losing vision).
 - Conversations should lead to identifying support systems and strategies/practical recommendations that help the survivor develop and practice self-care and well-being.
-

Ask two-four of the following:

When talking about physical health...

- Do you have a primary doctor? Would you like one?
- Do you want help making an appointment at the clinic or dentist near here?
- Are you experiencing any pain? We can help you find somebody who can help like a doctor, chiropractor, natural medicine doctor, therapist, etc.
- We work with a clinic that offers free services and discounts for people without health insurance. Are you interested in making an appointment?
- Do you have all the medications you need? Or do you need any refills?
- Do you need support with a hormonal therapy? (Transgender)
- Do we need to get you in touch with your previous doctor/ nurse/ counselor?

If a participant is pregnant...

- Would you like to talk with somebody about your options?
- How are you feeling about being pregnant?
- Do you want help getting prenatal pill, nutritional support, etc.?
- How are you feeling about giving birth?
- Are you sleeping or resting enough?
- Are you eating well? Or do you get hungry sometimes?
- Do you have any concerns about the baby's health?
- What resources or people have helped you out during your pregnancy?
- What other resources do you need or want for you and your baby?
- Do you have enough maternity clothes?
- Do you need baby clothes or diapers? Are you missing anything for the baby?
- Do you have a birth plan and individuals who you would like to be there to support you?

When talking about self-care...

- How do you manage stress and worries? What helps you when you feel stress?
- How are you going to take care of yourself?
- If you're willing to share, could you tell me what you'd like a typical day to look like for you?

Look for	Yes	No	Comments
Physical appearance			
Wearing the same clothes over and over			
Having tattoos/marks that brand the person or relates them to a trafficking circle or gang			
Wearing clothes that are not seasonally appropriate			
Behavior			
Not wanting to “leave” a relationship			
Not having breaks or not stopping to eat at work			
Not taking time off work because they are fearful of their employer’s reaction			
Fearful of their employer in general			
Moving residence frequently			
De-sensitized to abuse /not showing concern about injuries			
Working long hours; exhausted, hungry			
Frequently accompanied by a third party or not left alone			
Language			
Rehearsed stories			
Story does not make sense			
Is unsure of the day, date, month, year			
Does not know where they live			
Unable to move freely until a certain sum of money is paid			
Is afraid to answer questions			
Owing a debt			
Agreeing to being smuggled across a border, then smuggler threatened their family and/or held them hostage and sought more payment			

We recommend familiarizing yourself with the other indicators of trafficking by reviewing additional resources listed in our Resources page.

Resources

1. Esperanza United: <https://esperanzaunited.org/en/>
2. Child Abuse Mandatory Reporting State Statues: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/>
3. Child Abuse and Neglect State Reporting Numbers: <https://www.nccafv.org/child-abuse-reporting-numbers>
4. Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking- Los Angeles, California: <http://www.castla.org/home>
5. Department of Homeland Security: Blue Campaign: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>
6. Federal Laws on Human Trafficking: <https://polarisproject.org/current-federal-laws>
7. Freedom Network USA: <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/>
8. National Human Trafficking Hotline: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>
9. National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/training/nhttac>
10. National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project: <http://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/home/technical-assistance/>
11. Office of Human Trafficking; <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/about/accomplishments>
12. Tapestri: <https://tapestri.org/>
13. The Human Trafficking Legal Center: <http://www.htlegalcenter.org/>
14. Resource Library on Human Trafficking: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/resources>

Esperanza United would like to acknowledge the support received from all the advocates and relief staff from El Refugio as of July and August 2018.