

## **Position Statement on Human Trafficking**

### **Statement**

The New Jersey State Nurses Association (NJSNA) stands united as a profession to identify, advocate for, and respond to the needs of patients who are the victims of human trafficking as described in the *Resolution Denouncing Human Trafficking* (NJSNA, 2020).

In 2017, New Jersey implemented the *Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection, and Treatment Act* requiring both clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers to complete a one-time human trafficking educational offering (NJ Admin. Code tit. 8 § 43E-14.1, 2017). Although NJSNA applauds this 2017 legislation, NJSNA recommends and supports biennial human trafficking education for all registered nurses (RN), licensed practical nurses (LPN), and advanced practice nurses (APN) with the goal of increasing awareness of human trafficking, identification of victims, and implementing evidenced-based practices to mitigate human trafficking.

### **Explanation of issues**

New Jersey (NJ) is considered particularly vulnerable to the proliferation of human trafficking due to its dense and diverse population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). NJ is a corridor state, one of the country's prime destinations related to its major points of entry with easy accessibility to the tristate region by car, truck, train, boat, and plane ([New Jersey Human Trafficking Task Force, 2020](#)). Victims of human trafficking are perceived to be young, female, and foreign-born. Both victims and traffickers can be from any community, race, gender, age, religion, or nationality (Long & Dowdell, 2018). Furthermore, per National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) 2015 annual report, 34.7% of all victims of sex trafficking are U.S. citizens. According to the NJ Coalition Against Human Trafficking (NJCAHT, 2019), 25 million people are trafficked worldwide, 11,500 cases were reported to the U.S. National Hotline with 247 identified cases in New Jersey in 2019. Based on 2020 statistics, 14,500-17,500 estimated number of people are trafficked into the United States every year, of whom 50% are identified to be children ([New Jersey Human Trafficking Task Force, 2020](#)). Human trafficking remains a global threat and robs people of their rights and dignity (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020), yet continues to be greatly underreported (U. S. Department of State, 2022).

Individuals who have a history of being abused, living in poverty, being neglected, victims of violence and/or trauma are more vulnerable to being trafficked (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2020). Although there is limited research on exploitation of boys and men compared to girls and women, there are studies reporting on gender biases where boys and men are looked upon as suspicious criminals rather than victims of human trafficking and forced criminality (Beasley, 2018; Chaffin et al., 2020). The Internet, including social media and online platforms for gaming and communication, creates an opportunity for traffickers to connect with children and youth, thus making them extremely vulnerable (O'Brien & Li, 2019).

Human trafficking victims often remain unidentified because when they present in healthcare settings, they are controlled and accompanied by the perpetrators, making it difficult for them to speak up for themselves. Victims of human trafficking can be identified through recognition of the red flags which are **R**eluctant to speak, **E**xhausted, **D**ominated or controlled, **F**earful, **L**ong

work hours, Alienation from family and friends, Gifts from older partner, and Signs of abuse (NJCAHT, 2019). Once patients are identified, the nurse or healthcare provider can intervene through partnering with the forensic nurses, law enforcement officials, social workers, and mental health professionals. A coordinated and collaborative approach will provide holistic services that promotes safety, health, and healing for trafficking victims ([NJ Department of Law and Public Safety, \(2021\)](#))

### **Explanation/Definition of Terms**

**Human Trafficking:** Human trafficking is a worldwide human rights violation that involves the use of force, fraud, deception, harboring, transferring and/or coercion to exploit other human beings to participate in some type of labor including slavery, sexual activity or harvesting of organs (Department of Homeland Security, 2020; U.S. Department of Justice 2020).

**Corridor state:** Densely populated state that contains a major thoroughfare that is crucial in supporting the region's people and economy. The NJ Turnpike, in the middle of other portions of I-95, is the corridor that links the northeast megalopolis of Baltimore/Washington DC, Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

### **Rationale**

Healthcare provider education on human trafficking has proven to have significant impact in identification of trafficked individuals, improvement in community referrals, and empowering the nursing workforce (Parchment & Stinson, 2020). Although, NJ Admin. Code (tit. 8 § 43E-14.1, 2017) currently requires all new health care workers to complete a one-time human trafficking educational offering within six months of the first day of employment at the facility, biennial education for nurses would increase awareness of human trafficking. Human trafficking education would empower and prepare nurses to initiate multidisciplinary approach of care to address human trafficking victims' physical and psychological needs, including basic needs like shelter, housing, medical, legal, and financial needs.

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