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HHS Provides Resources to Raise Awareness in Identifying Human Trafficking Victims, Especially during Disasters

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Given that about 50% of human trafficking victims are seen by a health professional while in captivity, healthcare workers, particularly physicians, should be trained to recognize these individuals when they are patients or when they present for care and to know how to intervene. The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office for the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response has released materials to help healthcare providers when they suspect that a patient may be a victim of human trafficking. Healthcare providers are a "crucial partner" in combating human trafficking; this is especially true during disasters when individuals are vulnerable to human trafficking because children and parents may be separated and systems typically in place to protect people are disrupted, HHS says. Perpetrators of human trafficking exploit the chaos created by disasters to coerce vulnerable individuals. Because of the unique circumstances created by disasters, healthcare providers working both in and outside of a disaster should be more aware of the problem of human trafficking, know how to recognize the signs of human trafficking, be aware of available resources, and know what to do if they suspect a patient is a victim of human trafficking, HHS says. The materials include an extensive list of resources with links to documents such as a description of individuals at risk during emergencies, guidance for providers on assisting homeless individuals, and guidance on the behavioral health needs of survivors of disasters. Other materials include a question-and-answer guide for healthcare professionals on human trafficking and a flyer listing a phone number to report a suspected human trafficking case.

TOPICS AND METADATA

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