Suspected Human Trafficking v1
Definition Factsheet & Technical Brief

Authors: Mia Rosario Milne, PhD[1], Cynthia Nicole White, PhD[1], Ruth Leemis PhD[2], Zachary Stein, MPH[3], Yushiuan Chen, MS[1], Nisha George, MPH[1], Alexis Griffin, MPH[4], Rachel Berg, BA[4], David Atrubin, MPH[5], Rene Borroto, BA[6], Michael Tronske, MPH[7], Emily Kajita, MPH[7], Karen Chang, PhD[7,8], Susie Baldwin, MPH MD[7], Christopher Lamb, PhD[7], Megan Jespersen, MPH[9], Fatema Mamou, MPH[10], Roselyn Thalathara, MPH[11], Percis Drew, DrPH[11], Lindsay Grant, MPH[12]

[1] CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention
[2] CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Office of Science
[3] CDC Office of Public Health Data, Surveillance, and Technology, Detect and Monitor Division
[4] Arizona Department of Health Services
[5] Florida Department of Health
[6] Georgia Department of Public Health
[7] Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
[8] CDC Office of Readiness and Response, Division of State and Local Readiness
[9] Louisiana Department of Health
[10] Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
[11] New Mexico Department of Health
[12] Tarrant County Public Health

Point of Contact:
    Cynthia Nicole White[1] (twp2@cdc.gov)

Definition Description: Human trafficking occurs when a person uses force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of exploitative labor, debt bondage, servitude, or engagement in a commercial sex act (Office on Trafficking in Persons, 2020; Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000). If a person is under the age of 18, then any commercial sex act is considered sex trafficking regardless of the presence of force, fraud, or coercion. The purpose of this definition is to assist state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal public health practitioners in detecting and monitoring trends of suspected human trafficking-related visits among emergency departments and ambulatory healthcare settings.

New or Revised Definition: New

Date Added to ESSENCE: December 2025

Use-Cases for Definition:
Case-finding: Not Intended as Use Case
Trend monitoring: Primary
Early outbreak detection: Not Intended as Use Case
Emergent Condition: Not Intended as Use Case

Justification: A syndrome definition that captures emergency department and ambulatory healthcare visits related to labor trafficking or unspecified human trafficking does not exist. This definition expands the existing suspected sex trafficking definition to include visits related to labor or unspecified human trafficking. A suspected human trafficking definition will be useful in trend monitoring and exploring how the ICD-10 CM and SNOMED codes related to human trafficking are being used.

Data Source During Development: Emergency department visits

Development Methods: CDC subject matter experts on human trafficking created the definition.
1. Using the CDC Suspected Sex Trafficking v1 Definition and the current best-practices literature, the CDC team created a list of diagnosis codes (International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, (ICD-10-CM) and Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine (SNOMED)) and chief complaint terms related to sex trafficking, labor trafficking and unspecified human trafficking.
2. The CDC team added any newly identified diagnosis codes or chief complaint terms related to labor trafficking or unspecified human trafficking to the CDC Suspected Sex Trafficking v1 definition. Exclusion

terms from the CDC Suspected Sex Trafficking v1 definition were removed if they related to labor or unspecified trafficking.
3. Additional negation terms were added based on a careful review of the chief complaint data (e.g., when the term "labor" bought up instances of "labored breathing").
4. Step 3 was repeated, and the definition was refined until the current definition (described in detail below) was finalized in collaboration with participating jurisdictions.

Validation Methods: Eight jurisdictions participated in the validation process. Each jurisdiction followed the following steps:
1. Ran the definition using the Chief Complaint Discharge Diagnosis (CCDD) Parsed field in ESSENCE with the following query parameters:
    a. Start Date: 1/1/19
    b. End Date: 12/31/23
    c. Has Been Emergency: Yes
2. Completed a manual review of 100 random visits identified by the definition, or reviewed all visits if fewer than 100 visits were identified.
3. Classified visits into probable, undetermined, and ruled out for suspected patient victim of human trafficking. See manual review criteria below:
    a. Probable: If any human/sex/labor trafficking-related diagnosis codes were used or if the chief complaint text mentioned the patient being trafficked, and the visit does not include language that indicates trafficking-related delusions or trafficking of someone who is not the patient.
    b. Undetermined: If there was a mention of trafficking in the chief complaint text but it was unclear whether the visit was related to human trafficking (i.e., misspelling) or if the patient was the one being trafficked. If a trafficking-related code was used and there was reason to suspect the code was used in error, but without clear indication that this was a false positive.
    c. False positive/ruled out: A visit was a false positive if the visit concerned a person other than the patient being trafficked, if the healthcare professional notes trafficking mentioned in the context of an episode of psychosis without evidence of actual trafficking, if the visit was pulled due to a drug- or vehicle-related traffic accident, if the patient denied being trafficked, if the visit was pulled due to birth-related labor or labored breathing without mention of trafficking, or if there were any other details in the chief complaint text that suggested this was not actually human trafficking.
4. The CDC team updated the definition based on findings from jurisdictional manual reviews including adding more exclusion terms related to vehicular traffic and adjusting the childbirth-related exclusion terms to be specific to a particular ICD-10 code rather than the whole definition. See appendix for more details on adjustments that were made.

Validation Results: The positive predictive value (PPV) was 90% in New Mexico, 90% in Michigan, 82% in Georgia, 82% in Florida, 82% in Los Angeles County California, 75% in Tarrant County Texas, 73% in Arizona, and 29% in Louisiana. The average PPV across all jurisdictions was 75%.

Limitations: This definition may still capture potential false positive visits related to delusions of trafficking, mentions of people other than the patient being trafficked, and visits related to traffic accidents.

Definition Fields and Structure: Inclusions of ICD-10 and SNOMED codes related to human trafficking. Inclusions of free text related to sex, labor, or unspecified trafficking. Exclusions related to delusions of trafficking, denial of trafficking, vehicular-related traffic accidents, indications of the patient as trafficker, labor referring to breathing, and labor referring to childbirth.

Plain Language Description: This definition identifies visits to an emergency room where the patient is known or thought to be a victim of human trafficking. Human trafficking means that someone is being forced to work or do sexual things against their will, through force, fraud or coercion. If the person is under 18 years old, any kind of commercial sex act counts as sex trafficking, even if the act wasn't forced or coerced. The definition is based on diagnostic medical codes and chief complaint notes about why the patient came in for help. See *Table 1* for individual definition components, and *Table 2* for ESSENCE syntax.

Detailed Definition Components

Table 1. Individual definition components for Suspected Human Trafficking v1.

Terms	Description
Inclusion	
International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM)	
Codes related to sex trafficking	
T74.5	Forced sexual exploitation, confirmed
T74.51	Adult forced sexual exploitation, confirmed
T74.51XS	Adult forced sexual exploitation, confirmed, sequela
T74.51XA	Adult forced sexual exploitation, confirmed, initial encounter
T74.51XD	Adult forced sexual exploitation, confirmed, subsequent encounter
T74.52	Child sexual exploitation, confirmed
T74.52XS	Child sexual exploitation, confirmed, sequela
T74.52XA	Child sexual exploitation, confirmed, initial encounter
T74.52XD	Child sexual exploitation, confirmed, subsequent encounter
T76.5	Forced sexual exploitation, suspected
T76.51	Adult forced sexual exploitation, suspected
T76.51XA	Adult forced sexual exploitation, suspected, initial encounter
T76.51XD	Adult forced sexual exploitation, suspected, subsequent encounter
T76.51XS	Adult forced sexual exploitation, suspected, sequelae
T76.52	Child sexual exploitation, suspected
T76.52XA	Child sexual exploitation, suspected, initial encounter
T76.52XD	Child sexual exploitation, suspected, subsequent encounter
T76.52XS	Child sexual exploitation, suspected, sequelae
Z04.81	Encounter for examination and observation of victim following forced sexual exploitation
Codes related to labor trafficking	
T74.6	Forced labor exploitation, confirmed
T74.61	Adult forced labor exploitation, confirmed
T74.51XS	Adult forced labor exploitation, confirmed, sequela
T74.61XA	Adult forced labor exploitation, confirmed, initial encounter
T74.61XD	Adult forced labor exploitation, confirmed, subsequent encounter
T74.62	Child forced labor exploitation, confirmed
T74.52XS	Child forced labor exploitation, confirmed, sequela
T74.62XA	Child forced labor exploitation, confirmed, initial encounter
T74.62XD	Child forced labor exploitation, confirmed, subsequent encounter
T76.6	Forced labor exploitation, suspected
T76.61	Adult forced labor exploitation, suspected
T76.61XA	Adult forced labor exploitation, suspected, initial encounter
T76.61XD	Adult forced labor exploitation, suspected, subsequent encounter
T76.61XS	Adult forced labor exploitation, suspected, sequelae
T76.62	Child forced labor exploitation, suspected
T76.62XA	Child forced labor exploitation, suspected, initial encounter
T76.62XD	Child forced labor exploitation, suspected, subsequent encounter
T76.62XS	Child forced labor exploitation, suspected, sequelae
Z04.82	Encounter for examination and observation of victim following forced labor exploitation
SNOMED Concepts	
Codes related to sex trafficking	
713834002	Victim of child sexual exploitation (finding)
Codes related to unspecified human trafficking	
734998001	Victim of human trafficking (finding)
Chief Complaint	
Sex traf	
Sexual exploitation	
Sex slave	

Forced prostitution
Forced sex work
Sexual servitude
Labor traf
Labour traf
Forced labor
Human traf
Traffick

Exclusion	
International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM)	
*Z04.82	Encounter for examination and observation of victim following forced labor exploitation (Only excluded when in presence of select chief complaint terms, see chief complaint exclusions below)

Chief Complaint
Traffick accident
Car
Vehicle
Drug traf
Erratic
Psychosis
Psychotic
Delusion
Illusion
Halluci
Denies being a victim of sex traf
Denies being a victim of labor traf
Denies being a victim of human traf
Run into traf
Running in and out of traf
Traffick stop
Running out into traf
Worried about sex traf
Worried about labor traf
Trying to sex traf
Trying to labor traf
Denies sex traf
Denies labor traf
Denies human traf
Hearing voice
Manic
*The following chief complaint excludes visits only when also in the presence of Z04.82 (Encounter for examination and observation of victim following forced labor exploitation)
Labored breath
Contraction
Delivery
Water broke
Suture
Stitch

Table 2. ESSENCE syntax for Suspected Human Trafficking v1 in the CCDD Parsed field.

(,(,^;T7[46]5^,or,^;Z0481^,or,^;713834002;^,or,^Sex traf^,or,^Sexual exploitation^,or,^sex slave^,or,^Forced prostitution^,or,^Forced sex work^,or,^Sexual servitude^,or,^;T746^,or,^;T766^,or,^;Z0482^,or,^labor traf^,or,^labour traf^,or,^forced labor^,or,^forced labour^,or,^;734998001;^,or,^Human Traf^,or,^Traffick^,),),ANDNOT,(,(,^Traffick accident^,or,!Car!,or,^Vehicle^,or,^Drug Traf^,or,^Erratic^,or,^Psychosis^,or,^Psychotic^,or,^Delusion^,or,^Illusion^,or,^Halluci^,or,^Denies being a victim of sex traf^,or,^Denies being a victim of labor traf^,or,^Denies being a victim of human traf^,or,^run into traf^,or,^running in and out of traf^,or,^traffick stop^,or,^running out into traf^,or,^worried about sex traf^,or,^worried about labor traf^,or,^trying to sex traf^,or,^trying to labor traf^,or,^denies sex traf^,or,^denies labor traf^,or,^denies human traf^,or,^hearing voice^,or,^manic^,),or,(,^;Z0482^,AND,^labored breath^,or,^contraction^,or,^delivery^,or,^water broke^,or,^suture^,or,^stitch^,),),)

Utilize this URL and view Configuration Options to see query setup.

References

Office on Trafficking in Persons. (2020). *What is human trafficking?* https://acf.gov/otip/about/what-human-trafficking

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, § 22 U.S.C. § 7101 (2000). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-106publ386/pdf/PLAW-106publ386.pdf

Appendix

Definition Evolution During Development

- Validation partners noticed that many false positive cases were due to misspellings of "traffic" related to vehicular traffic. After testing the additional exclusion terms suggested by partners, we added ^traffick stop^ and ^running out into traf^.
- A partner program noticed that the exclusion term ^car^ led to exclusions of any term with "car" in the word including visits that mentioned "care" such as in "foster care." We updated the code syntax from ^car^ to !car! – using "!" before and after the term means that the query will exclude only visits where the word "car" is by itself and not if car is in a larger word or phrase such as "care." We retained car as an exclusion term due to the high number of false positives concerning vehicular accidents.
- There were a large number of false positive visits using the Z04.82 ICD-10 code (Encounter for examination and observation of victim following forced labor exploitation). These false positive visits were related to childbirth-related labor and to visits related to sutures. It is possible the code Z48.02 (Encounter for removal of sutures) is being mistaken for the labor trafficking-related Z code Z04.82 given their digit similarities. Due to partner feedback, exclusions terms related to childbirth and sutures were added to Z04.82 to address this concern; however, these terms were not applied to the full definition to retain visits where trafficking victims sought care for childbirth or sutures.
- Louisiana's PPV was notably lower than the other validating partners. The reason for this difference is unclear, although it may have been due to the definition only identifying 21 total visits within this jurisdiction. The average number of visits amongst the six other validation partners was 64. Further validation testing and data quality checks will need to occur to better understand this result.