WESTCOAST

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CLINIC

Memorandum Summarizing the Available Screening Tools for Child Labor Trafficking

This memo summarizes the criteria used to evaluate screening tools to identify children and youth who are being trafficked for labor. WestCoast Children's Clinic (WestCoast) conducted a literature review and environmental scan of available tools and evaluated those tools according to specific criteria, as described below.

Similar to our 2014 review of tools to identify commercial sexual exploitation of children, this review was motivated by the need to implement a systematic screening protocol to more quickly identify youth who are being trafficked for labor. Specifically, WestCoast searched for tools that are:
- Evidence-based;
- Used for screening prospectively (i.e. not waiting until signs of exploitation are obvious);
- Concise, and result in data that are easy to analyze (i.e. tools not based only on narrative description); and
- Usable in multiple agencies and systems so that there is a standard, reliable protocol for measurement.

Additionally, we believe it is important that a screening tool be used as a universal screener— that is, that it enables providers to screen all children and youth meeting a specific age criterion regardless of gender, sexual identity, race or ethnicity, country of origin, or other demographic characteristic. Finally, we wanted the screener to trigger follow-up actions when warranted, such as a full assessment of the youth's health, safety, and placement needs and strengths.

All of the tools we reviewed are intended to screen for labor trafficking. No tool met all the criteria outlined below. The attached matrix of tools briefly summarizes the strengths and the challenges posed by each of the tools we found.

LIST OF CRITERIA

Validated: This is indicated as 'yes' in the matrix if there has been some data collection and evaluation of the tool's properties to ensure reliability and validity. Of the 28 tools we reviewed, validation analyses had been conducted on only four of them:
- Vera Institute of Justice Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT)
- Covenant House Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure (HTIAM-14)
- Covenant House Quick Youth Indicators of Trafficking (QYIT)
- Urban Institute Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST)

It is important to note that even if a tool has been analyzed for validation, the results may not support the tool's validity. For instance, the authors of the Urban Institute HTST note that the tool is not sufficiently sensitive to detect trafficking for youth under 18 nor in child welfare settings (Dank, Yahner, Yu, Vasquez-Noriega, Gelatt, & Pergamit, 2017, p. 28).

Length: Tools vary widely in the number of questions or indicators. The number of questions alone is not the most descriptive indicator of how useful a tool might be, especially since for some tools, not all questions are asked of all interviewees/clients. However, length is a helpful heuristic for understanding the time and documentation burden of using the tool. Time and documentation burden affect a tool's ease of use, which is an important consideration for implementing a tool in any system or agency, but especially in a large system. Many of the lengthier tools ask questions that are more suitable to an in-depth assessment.

For example, some tools include questions about traumatic experiences. For the purposes of screening and identification of trafficked youth, detailed information about a youth's trauma (e.g. who was involved, what exactly happened) is not needed, and often not appropriate. The Vera TVIT, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Human Trafficking Screening Tool, the Nevada Governor's Office Law Enforcement Screening Tool for Victims of Human Trafficking, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Screening Interview Form all share this characteristic. Detailed information about the traumatic experience may be more relevant during a formal investigation or in therapy rather than at the initial screening,

Source of information: This refers to what information is used to determine whether a client or potential victim has experienced labor trafficking. While direct questioning or interaction with youth is an important component of information gathering, it should not be relied on as the sole source. Many youth, especially younger youth, do not self-identify as a victim and do not recognize their own situation as one involving force, fraud, or coercion. Thus, relying on self-disclosure alone may result in many missed opportunities to identify when someone is being trafficked. Thus, reliance on self-disclosure is a serious limitation of most existing tools. Only two tools from our search do not solely or primarily rely on self-disclosure by the victim: the London Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit and the Canadian Council for Refugees National Human Trafficking Assessment Tool.

Domain/System Specific: Most of the tools on the list can be used in varied settings. However, a few were developed especially for use in specific settings. For example, the Covenant House HTIAM-14 is tailored to homeless youth seeking shelter services, while the Connecticut Department of Children and Families Human Trafficking Screening Tool is specific to Medical and Behavioral Health Providers.

Guide to Action: Some tools summarize the information gathered and help the service provider determine whether the person being screened is in fact a victim of trafficking, which is essential to prompting action and to support prevention efforts. The guide should then suggest a clear course of action for the screener, depending on the tool's outcome. Of the 28 tools reviewed, only six contained some type of guide to action:
- Polaris Project Human Trafficking Assessment Tool for Medical Professionals
- Connecticut Department of Children and Families Human Trafficking Screening Tool
- National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC) Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool (AHTST)
- Canadian Council for Refugees National Human Trafficking Assessment Tool
- London Safeguarding Children's Board Trafficked Children Toolkit
- Advocates for Human Rights Self-Assessment Card

These tools have a score or summary that integrates the information gathered, helps the provider decide on a course of action, or offers clear guidance for how a provider should

respond if the screening suggests trafficking. None of these scoring methods have been evaluated for accuracy.

Format/Mode: This indicates whether the tool is an interview questionnaire (structured, semi-structured, or unstructured) or whether it follows another format, such as case review or checklists. There are tradeoffs with different formats. Interviews can be helpful in suggesting to the provider what to ask youth. However, they are either inflexible (resulting in irrelevant questions or inappropriate wording for certain situations) or so unstructured that they have no systematic or consistent protocol.

We recommend using a tool that is not an interview questionnaire. Interviewing skills are extremely important and should be developed independently of whatever an agency decides to use. In fact, a provider's proficiency with interviewing and engaging youth in conversation can be hampered by a structured or semi-structured interview protocol, which may interfere with rapport building as well as with the agency's existing intake, interview, or assessment processes. To be authentic and provide a safe space for disclosure of trafficking, providers should use language that is natural to them, that young people can relate to, is sensitive to the trauma youth may have experienced, and is appropriate to the situation and to the victim's development and circumstances. Instead of an interview tool, we recommend that providers use a tool that helps them decide what information to gather and then integrates that information. Checklists of key indicators are more appropriate for this reason.

Case review, while more flexible than interviewing, is retrospective and labor intensive, and therefore not as effective as checklists of key indicators.

Open- or Closed-Ended: Some of the interview tools ask only open-ended questions, meaning they collect narrative data. This makes them unsuitable for use in large agencies or systems since narrative text is not practical for quick analysis or for running frequencies, such as counting how many youth answered certain questions in certain ways. Tools with closed-ended questions or categorical checklists are necessary for these purposes.

Appropriate for Minors: While most tools are suitable for use with minors, some would only be appropriate with significant modifications to the questions and to the language used, such as the Vera TVIT, the Polaris Project Comprehensive Human Trafficking Assessment Tool, and to a lesser extent the Covenant House HTIAM-14. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Screening Tool for Human Trafficking Victims is written for adults and would require significant modification to be workable in a child-serving setting.

Sexual Exploitation/Trafficking: Many of the tools on this list are intended to screen for all forms of trafficking. In practice, this means these tools have longer questionnaires with questions that may be irrelevant to the circumstances of the person being screened. Some providers and advocates have noted that the key indicators for sex and labor trafficking are very similar and largely overlap. However, further research is needed to verify that this is the case.

Notes: This field contains some qualitative notes on the tools. As a general observation on these tools, many of them require suspicion of trafficking in order to screen. However, this defeats the purpose of screening, which is to identify a problem before there are obvious signs.

References and URLs: these are included where available.

While no single tool meets all the criteria we believe are essential in a screening tool, two tools stand out for having particular strengths:

- The Vera TVIT is validated, is applicable across a range of trafficking situations, and explicitly addresses transnational trafficking in persons. The difficulty with this tool is that it is much too long to be practical for screening. It is probably more suited to be used for in-depth investigation.

- The Covenant House HTIAM-14 is validated, and unlike the other interview questionnaires uses language that is nonjudgmental and not invasive. However, it requires self-disclosure, which misses opportunities to identify youth, especially younger youth. Nonetheless, agencies working with older youth who are seeking help may find this tool helpful.