

# Know Your Rights: Trafficking

\*This fact sheet is for educational purposes only. Nothing here should be considered legal advice. Please consult a lawyer for more specific information. Updated as of March 2026\*

## What is Trafficking?

### • Labor Trafficking:

- Forcing or pressuring someone to perform work (which may or may not include physical violence). This includes the use of deportation threats or economic coercion to make someone work.

***In Massachusetts, one of the most frequent forms of labor trafficking is being forced to sell drugs, magazines, candy, and other similar items. Many people do not realize that this is a form of trafficking.***

### • Sex Trafficking

- Individuals exchange sex acts in exchange for something of value (money, food, a place to stay) as a result of force, fraud, or coercion.
- Minors under the age of 18 who are exchanging sex for anything of value are considered survivors of human trafficking, even if there is no force, fraud (lies), or coercion (manipulation).

### • Who, What, Where?

- Working, but not always getting paid.
- Being told that you owe the person you're working for.
- Sometimes, people are being forced to work AND exchange sex.
- Can happen to anyone, no matter where you live.

**If you are experiencing human trafficking, you are not alone!**

## General Legal Consequences

- It is a **crime to force someone to work against their will** (forced services) or **engage in sexual conduct** in exchange for a fee or anything of value.
- If you are being trafficked and forced to do sex work that you do not want to do, you are considered a survivor of sex trafficking and may be able to get the **charges dismissed if you are arrested**.
- If you have been convicted in the past, you may be able to **seal your record** (get it removed).

## General Legal Consequences- Minors

- You may contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and **ask them to file a report of abuse or neglect**.
- If you meet with any health services provider, mental health professional, or school teacher or administrator, and they suspect you have been the survivor of labor or sex trafficking, abuse, or neglect, **they must report their concerns to DCF**.
  - DCF investigations **do not necessarily mean** that anything will happen to your parents or that you will be removed from your home.
  - DCF will **investigate** the situation and depending on what they find, they will offer services and take steps to keep you safe and supported.
- If you report that you are a survivor of a sexual assault or sex trafficking to the police:
  - They are required to contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- If you report a sexual assault or sex trafficking to DCF:
  - They will investigate your case and contact the police.



# Rights against your Trafficker for Survivors of Labor and Sex Trafficking

- State Civil lawsuit
  - Civil lawsuit = seek money to compensate you for the harm caused to you because of the trafficking
- If you are a survivor of sex trafficking you may sue your traffickers (exploiters) in the county where:
  - You live, the trafficker lives, or the trafficking occurred.
- Criminal charges brought by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts against your traffickers.
  - Might receive money in the form of “criminal restitution” from your traffickers for the harm they caused you.
  - SEX TRAFFICKING: this process can be done confidentially and if you ask, your name will be kept private.
- Suing under federal law
  - Have up to 10 years to sue in federal court.
  - There may be other ways to get compensation (money) for certain expenses related to the trafficking.
    - Ex: victim compensation is available to certain victims of trafficking in Massachusetts.

## Resources

***Anti-trafficking organizations help ANYONE impacted by the sex trade, whether you do or don't meet the trafficking definition, and whether you want to leave or not.***

### Legal Assistance & Representation

- **Victim Rights Law Center:** <https://www.victimrights.org>
- **Justice Center of Southeast MA (South Coastal Counties Legal Services):** <https://www.sccls.org>
- **Massachusetts Bar Dial-A-Lawyer: (617) 338-0610**
  - **First Wednesday of Every Month 5:30-7:30 PM**
- **MA Homeless Youth Handbook:** <https://homelessyouth.org/mas>

### Statewide Information & Crisis Resources

- **SafeLink (MA statewide domestic and sexual violence hotline)**
  - 1-877-785-2020
  - <https://www.casamyrna.org/safelink>
- **Polaris Project / National Human Trafficking Hotline**
  - 1-888-373-7888
  - <https://humantraffickinghotline.org>

### Survivor Support & Advocacy

- **My Life My Choice**
  - A survivor-led organization providing mentorship and services to youth impacted by sexual exploitation.
  - <https://www.mylifemychoice.org>
- **Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.**
  - Works with court-involved girls and trafficking survivors across the Boston area.
  - <https://www.roxburyyouthworks.org>
- **Pathways for Change**
  - Serves central Massachusetts with a 24/7 hotline, counseling, and legal advocacy for survivors of sexual violence and trafficking.
  - <https://www.pathwaysforchange.help>

