



Guiding Principles for Working with Survivors of Human Trafficking

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families encourages the use of the following 13 guiding principles for federal, state, and local agencies; community- and faith-based organizations; and other organizations working with survivors of human trafficking. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

- 1. Survivor-Centered Approach.** Prioritize the needs and well-being of survivors while helping them attain economic mobility.
- 2. Empowerment and Strengths-Based Model.** Acknowledge and focus on the strengths and resilience of the survivor.
- 3. Trauma-Informed.** Services take into account the complex traumas of survivors and minimize re-traumatization in all encounters. Staff and organizations are accountable for ensuring the program meets its goals and delivers services in a trauma-informed manner.
- 4. Religious and Spiritual Self-Determination.** It is the survivor's decision whether religious and spiritual issues should be included in interactions. Transparency and choice are critical for participation in long-term recovery efforts. Survivors are free to participate in religious or faith-based programs, and religious beliefs have no bearing on the survivor's ability to receive government or other nonprofit services.
- 5. Confidentiality.** All information gathered during interactions with survivors is held in strictest confidence, and disclosure must be based on the survivor's informed consent and relevant laws.
- 6. Safety.** It is critical to develop a plan in collaboration with the survivor that prioritizes and ensures their physical and emotional safety and that of their family, as they work towards economic mobility.
- 7. Non-Discrimination.** All survivors will be served, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, marital status, family structure, or class. Other protections under Federal, state, and local laws may prohibit additional types of discrimination and/or require you to provide reasonable accommodation for medical, religious, or other reasons.

8. **Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services**. Respect for and awareness of people's unique needs based on cultural background and identity is important in working with survivors.
9. **Program Eligibility and Need**. While all survivors can benefit from some form of community assistance, eligibility for public benefits (including housing assistance) varies; survivors should be screened for the specific services that they may qualify for and say they need.
10. **Professionalism**. To improve the well-being of survivors, professionals need the depth of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to understand and convey their role effectively to survivors and other service providers. Train individuals assisting survivors of trafficking to build skills and competencies for trauma-informed service delivery.
11. **Survivor-Informed**. Inform and improve service delivery by incorporating the experience and expertise of survivors and engaging them in all aspects. Survivors should receive remuneration at the level of a Subject Matter Expert when they are consulted.
12. **Evidence-Based Interventions**. Interventions with a proven track record should be used whenever possible. When the evidence base needs further development, track outcomes to inform research on the effectiveness of programs.
13. **Collaboration**. No one agency is likely to be equipped to meet all the complex needs of a survivor. Collaborative programs encourage comprehensive coverage of services to help survivors obtain economic mobility.

Adapted from "[Guiding Principles for Agencies Serving Survivors of Human Trafficking](#)" by the Southeast Regional Human Trafficking Advisory Group, an initiative of the Administration for Children and Families Region 4 Office.