



Glossary of Terms Related to Sex Trafficking

“3P” paradigm: The paradigm, outlined in the United Nation's (UN) trafficking in persons protocol and the United States' TVPA, stands for protection, prevention, and prosecution.

Automatic: A term denoting the victim's “automatic” routine when her pimp is out of town, in jail, or otherwise not in direct contact with those he is prostituting. Victims are expected to comply with the rules and often do so out of fear of punishment or because they have been psychologically manipulated into a sense of loyalty or love. All money generated on “automatic” is turned over to the pimp. This money may be used to support his concession/ phone account or to pay his bond if he's in jail.

Bottom: A female appointed by the trafficker/pimp to supervise the others and report rule violations. Operating as his “right hand,” the Bottom may help instruct victims, collect money, book hotel rooms, post ads, or inflict punishments on other girls.

Branding: A tattoo or carving on a victim that indicates ownership by a trafficker/pimp/ gang.

Brothel (a/k/a Cathouse or Whorehouse): These establishments may be apartments, houses, trailers, or any facility where sex is sold on the premises. It could be in a rural area or nice neighborhood. Most brothels have security measures to prevent attacks by other criminals or provide a warning if law enforcement are nearby. The security is two sided—to keep the women and children in, as well as robbers out. The places often are guarded (and open) 24 hours a day, but some have closing times in which the victims are locked in from the outside. Victims may be kept in this location for extended periods of time, or rotated to other locations every few days.

Child trafficking: Forms of child trafficking include trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, labor trafficking, removal of organs, illicit international adoption, trafficking for early marriage, recruitment as child soldiers, use in begging, and recruitment of athletes.

Circuit: A series of cities among which prostituted people are moved. One example would be the West Coast circuit of San Diego, Las Vegas, Portland, and the cities between. The term can also refer to a chain of states such as the “Minnesota pipeline” by which victims are moved through a series of locations from Minnesota to markets in New York.

Coercion: Under the TVPA, coercion is defined as (A) threats of serious harm or physical restraint; (B) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or (C) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

Commercial sex act: Under the TVPA, commercial sex act means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC): In 1996, the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children defined CSEC as sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. CSEC includes the prostitution of children, child pornography, child sex tourism, and other forms of transactional sex where a child engages in sexual activities to have key needs fulfilled, such as food, shelter, or access to education. It includes forms of transactional sex where the sexual abuse of children is not stopped or reported by household members, due to benefits derived by the household from the perpetrator.

Daddy: The term a pimp will often require his victim to call him.

Date: The exchange when prostitution takes place, or the activity of prostitution. A victim is said to be “with a date” or “dating.”

Department of Health and Human Services—HHS Certification: Issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), certification allows adult victims of trafficking who are not U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents (LPRs) to be eligible to receive benefits and services under any federal or state program or activity to the same extent as a refugee. To receive certification, a person who is 18 years of age or older must be a victim of a severe form of trafficking; be willing to assist in every reasonable way in the investigation and prosecution of severe forms of trafficking or be unable to cooperate due to physical or psychological trauma; and have made a bona fide application for a T visa that has not been denied; or have received Continued Presence from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in order to contribute to the prosecution of traffickers in person. Foreign child victims of trafficking (under the age of 18) do not need to be certified to receive benefits and services.

Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office): The Office, created by the TVPA of 2000, partners with foreign governments and civil society to develop and implement effective strategies for confronting modern-day slavery. The Office has responsibility for bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, targeted foreign assistance, and public engagement on trafficking in persons.

Domestic trafficking: Refers to the trafficking of U.S. citizens within the United States. Most often seen in the sex trafficking of persons by a pimp.

Escort Service: An organization, operating chiefly via cell phone and the internet, which sends a victim to a buyer’s location (an “outcall”) or arranges for the buyer to come to a house or apartment (an “in-call”); this may be the workplace of a single woman or a small brothel. Some escort services are networked with others and can assemble large numbers of women for parties and conventions.

Exit Fee: The money a pimp will demand from a victim who is thinking about trying to leave. It will be an exorbitant sum, to discourage her from leaving. Most pimps never let their victims leave freely.

Family/Folks: The term used to describe the other individuals under the control of the same pimp. He plays the role of father (or “Daddy”) while the group fulfills the need for a “family.”

Finesse Pimp/Romeo Pimp: One who prides himself on controlling others primarily through psychological manipulation. Although he may shower his victims with affection and gifts (especially during the recruitment phase), the threat of violence is always present.

Gorilla (or Guerilla) Pimp: A pimp who controls his victims almost entirely through physical violence and force.

Human smuggling: The facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation, or illegal entry of a person or persons across an international border, in violation of one or more countries' laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents.

Involuntary servitude: Under the TVPA, involuntary servitude includes a condition of servitude induced by means of (A) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint or (B) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

“John” (a/k/a Buyer or “Trick”): An individual who pays for or trades something of value for sexual acts.

Kiddie Stroll: An area known for prostitution that features younger victims.

Labor trafficking: Under the TVPA, labor trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 U.S.C. § 7102).

Lot Lizard — Derogatory term for a person who is being prostituted at truck stops.

Madam: An older woman who manages a brothel, escort service or other prostitution establishment. She may work alone or in collaboration with other traffickers.

The Mann Act (1910): The Federal Mann Act (enacted in 1910) makes it a felony to knowingly transport any person in interstate or foreign commerce for prostitution, or for any sexual activity for which a person can be charged with a criminal offense. A person also violates the Act if he persuades, induces, entices, or coerces an individual to travel across state lines to engage in prostitution or other immoral purposes, or attempts to do so.

Minor: Under the TVPA, a minor is any person under the age of 18.

National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC): The Center is a national, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls from anywhere in the United States 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. It is operated by Polaris Project, a nongovernmental organization working to combat human trafficking. Callers can report tips and receive information on human trafficking by calling the hotline at 1-888-373-7888. The hotline also provides data on where cases of suspected human trafficking are occurring in the United States.

National Slavery and Human Protection Month: Established by a presidential proclamation declaring January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. January 12th already marks the National Global Human Trafficking Awareness Day in the United States.

Out of Pocket: The phrase describing when a victim is not under control of a pimp but working on a pimp-controlled track, leaving her vulnerable to threats, harassment, and violence in order to make her “choose” a pimp. This may also refer to a victim who is disobeying the pimp's rules.

Pimp: A person who controls and financially benefits from the commercial sexual exploitation of another person. The relationship can be abusive and possessive, with the pimp using techniques such as psychological intimidation, manipulation, starvation, rape and/or gang rape, beating, confinement, threats of violence toward the victim's family, forced drug use, and the shame from these acts to keep the sexually exploited person under control.

Pimp Circle: When several pimps encircle a victim to intimidate through verbal and physical threats in order to discipline the victim or force her to choose up.

The PROTECT Act (2003): The PROTECT Act was enacted in 2003 to combat the sexual exploitation of children. Among other things, the Act requires courts to impose mandatory sentences for sex offenders and makes it a crime to travel abroad to engage in sexual conduct with minors. The Act amends the criminal code to increase supervision of convicted sex offenders for specific felonies. Additionally, the Act creates minimum standards and grants for states to expand their Amber Alert system for missing children.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (also referred to as the “Trafficking Protocol”): The Protocol was adopted by the UN in 2000 and is an international legal agreement attached to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The protocol sets out an agreed definition of trafficking in persons. The purpose of the Protocol is to facilitate convergence in national cooperation in investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons and protect and assist the victims.

Quota: A set amount of money that a trafficking victim must make each night before she can come “home.” Quotas are often set between \$300 and \$2000. If the victim returns without meeting the quota, she is typically beaten and sent back out on the street to earn the rest. Quotas vary according to geographic region, local events, etc.

Renegade: A person involved in prostitution without a pimp.

Seasoning: A combination of psychological manipulation, intimidation, gang rape, sodomy, beatings, deprivation of food or sleep, isolation from friends or family and other sources of support, and threatening or holding hostage of a victim's children. Seasoning is designed to break down a victim's resistance and ensure compliance.

Sex industry: The sex industry consists of businesses that either directly or indirectly provide sex-related products and services or adult entertainment.

Sex tourism: The World Tourism Organization, a specialized agency of the UN, defines sex tourism as “trips organized from within the tourism sector, or from outside this sector but using its structures and networks, with the primary purpose of effecting a commercial sexual relationship by the tourist with residents at the destination.”

Sex trafficking: Under the TVPA, sex trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 U.S.C. § 7102; 8 C.F.R. § 214.11(a)).

Squaring Up: Attempting to escape or exit prostitution.

Stable: A group of victims who are under the control of a single pimp.

The Game/The Life: The subculture of prostitution, complete with rules, a hierarchy of authority, and language. Referring to the act of pimping as ‘the game’ gives the illusion that it can be a fun and easy way to make money, when the reality is much harsher. Women and girls will say they’ve been “in the life” if they’ve been involved in prostitution for a while.

Track (a/k/a Stroll or Blade): An area of town known for prostitution activity. This can be the area around a group of strip clubs and pornography stores, or a particular stretch of street.

Trade Up/Trade Down: To move a victim like merchandise between pimps. A pimp may trade one girl for another or trade with some exchange of money.

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA 2000): The TVPA was the first comprehensive federal law to address human trafficking. The law provided a three-pronged approach to combating human trafficking: prevention through public awareness programs and a monitoring and sanctions program led by the Department of State; protection through a visa and services for foreign national victims; and prosecution through new federal crimes. This legislation was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, and 2008.

Trick: Committing an act of prostitution (verb), or the person buying it (noun). A victim is said to be “turning a trick” or “with a trick.”

Turn Out: To be forced into prostitution (verb) or a person newly involved in prostitution (noun).

Wifeys/Wife-in-Law/Sister Wife: What women and girls under the control of the same pimp call each other. (See Family/Folks and Stable.)

**This glossary was prepared with contributions & permission from SharedHope.org.*