PROTOCOL COMPONENTS

To apply SOAR in your workplace, you'll need a protocol for working with individuals who have experienced trafficking or who are at risk of experiencing trafficking. Protocols are guidelines created for an organization to help guide care providers in the appropriate response to trafficking. The components of a trafficking protocol should include staff training and supports, screening and care coordination procedures, multidisciplinary response, mandatory reporting, followup or follow-through procedures, and continuous quality improvement.

1. Staff Training and Supports

In order to identify and effectively work with individuals who have experienced trafficking, all staff in an organization, including organizational leadership and administrative and supportive staff, should be trained in the basic indicators of trafficking. The National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center is one resource available to you for free training and technical assistance, both in person and online. You can also look for other training opportunities in your community, including how to work with specific at-risk populations such as migrant workers, runaway/homeless youth, or survivors of other crimes.

Staff training should be customized to your organization's needs and consider the best delivery method based on available resources, potential access limitations, and any continuing education (CE) credit requirements. It is also important to be aware of your own unique training needs based on your role in your organization.

A blended learning approach, including both on demand and in person, is most effective. Staff must be educated on what trafficking is—and isn't. Many myths and misconceptions are associated with trafficking, often perpetuated by media. Unless all staff are educated, individuals who are experiencing trafficking can and will be missed.

Additionally, it is important that staff have the support and resources they need to address their own trauma triggers and mitigate the effects of secondary trauma related to the work environment. For more information about the effects of secondary trauma and tips for mitigating it, please see the Secondary Trauma handout.

Considerations

- Training delivery method and resources
- Access limitations
- CE credit requirements
- Needs of learners across roles

Recommendations

- Provide in-person training to reinforce learning and make connections.
- Offer flexible, on-demand learning options.

2. – 4. Screening and Care Coordination Procedures

As you learned in the Ask lesson, screening tools for people who may have experienced trafficking should focus on collecting information about the individual's emergency, medium-, and long-term needs. In addition to the screening tool, organizations need to have a plan in place that considers screening procedures and how to plan for safety. Your community-based advocacy organizations can play a vital role in helping you develop and implement each of these components and likely have access to those with lived experience who are interested in supporting your work.

Screening and care coordination procedures include screening and identification, interview procedures, and safety planning. These three components are described below:

2. Screening and Identification—The response protocol should address the following:

- Who will be the designated interviewer and if an interpreter is needed
- The tool or approach that will be used
- How to ask trauma-informed and culturally competent questions
- Which interpreters will be used and how to contact them

3. Interview Procedures—The response protocol should address the following:

- How to safely and effectively have a private conversation with the individual
- How to ask trauma-informed and culturally competent questions
- When mandatory reporting is required by law and steps to take
- Referral process to community support and resources

4. Safety Planning—Safety for an individual who has experienced trafficking, as well as medical staff, needs to be considered with the proposed interventions. Advanced preparation for certain scenarios such as the following should also be considered:

- What will occur if you are unable to have a private conversation with the individual and suspect they are accompanied by their trafficker?
- How should you respond when you reach a level of certainty that an individual is experiencing trafficking but they refuse any intervention?

For more information on developing response protocols to help you plan for the safety of yourself and the individual, as well as some examples, see HEAL's Protocol Assistance resources and pages 12–14 of NHTTAC's Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool and Guide.

5. Multidisciplinary Response

The third protocol component focuses on multidisciplinary treatment and response. Every individual who has experienced trafficking is unique and will require a different mix of services. Look beyond the resources and staff available in your organization. A vital component of responding to trafficking is collaborating across sectors with experts who can provide services such as legal aid, housing, medical care, and behavioral health services. For more detailed information, please see the Multidisciplinary Treatment and Response handout.

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6. Mandatory Reporting

Various state and federal laws, such as child abuse or domestic violence, may require you to disclose that information to the proper authorities. Ensuring that your protocols outline the steps your staff may take to do this in a trauma-informed way is key.

Mandatory reporting is also important when determining when or how to communicate with external partnerships and law enforcement. Remember that breaches of privacy may harm your relationship with the individual, compromise individual autonomy, and produce distrust among others experiencing trafficking. Ensuring that you have consent will help you build rapport, trust, and a sense of safety as well as ensure that survivors are not re-victimized in the process of seeking help. Establish memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with external partners, including limitations of HIPAA, the need for individual consent for information sharing, and data sharing.

For more specific information about mandatory reporting, see the separate handout on Mandatory Reporting and HIPAA Compliance.

Cover Your Bases

- Know what you can and cannot disclose.

- Remember that breaches of privacy create distrust.

- Obtaining consent builds rapport, trust, and a sense of safety.

- Establish MOUs with external partners and include:
  - Limitations of HIPAA
  - Individual consent for information sharing
  - Data sharing

7. Followup/Follow-Through Procedures

After you have properly identified an individual who is experiencing trafficking, it is important to continue to use trauma-informed care to maintain their trust. For example, include them in decisions that are made about their future, including when creating a safety plan and identifying the services they will receive.

Once your trust has been established, use a warm handoff when it is time for the individual to meet their next provider. As you introduce them, explain what will happen next, and answer any questions they have.

Maintain a high level of confidentiality while continuing to develop their after-care plan. Finally, empower the individual by including them in the development of their after-care plan. Enabling individuals who have experienced trafficking to take back control of their life will help them feel empowered by the process and avoid abandonment or re-exploitive situations or feelings.

8. Continuous Quality Improvement

When applying a public health approach to human trafficking, a process of continuous quality improvement is vital to inform and measure the impact of your programs and interventions on those you serve as well as your staff.

As a team, ask yourselves:

- What data are you currently collecting to monitor performance, and why do you collect that specific data?
- What does program improvement look like for your organization? How do you define progress?
- What data could you collect that you may not have considered before that would indicate improvement and progress toward your goals?

Then, develop tools that will allow you to collect that data and measure progress toward your goals. Additional recommendations for this process include:

- Decide how to define program improvement as an organization.
- Identify short- and long-term measurable indicators of program improvement.
- Develop tools that will allow you to measure those indicators over time.
- Determine documentation procedures and how to monitor them.
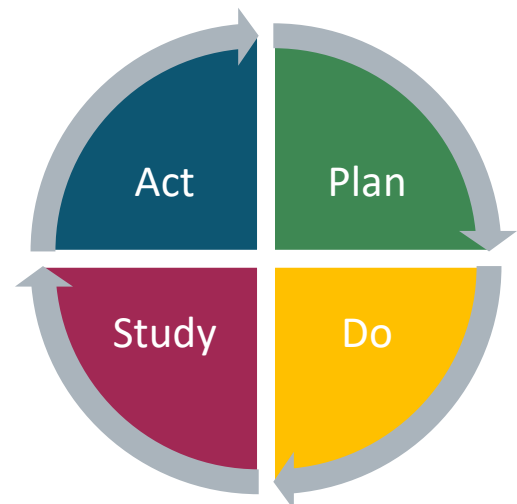
Using ICD-10 Codes

To learn more about using ICD-10 codes to document and track patients affected by trafficking, check out the following resources:

- Office on Trafficking in Persons. (2018). *CDC adds new human trafficking data collection fields for health care providers.* https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/news/icd-10
- American Hospital Association. (n.d.). *ICD-10-CM coding for human trafficking: AHA*. Retrieved April 3, 2020, from https://www.aha.org/icd-10-cm-coding-human-trafficking-resources
- National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (2020). *ICD-10 codes principles*. https://nhttac.acf.hhs.gov/about-nhttac/news/icd-10-codes-principles

One Quality Improvement Model: Plan, Do, Study, Act

The graphic on the right illustrates a model of continuous quality improvement you can use as an example as you implement new policies and procedures.

- First, **plan:** Plan the test or observation, including a plan for collecting data.
- Second, **do:** Try the test on a small scale to see if it's a good fit for your organization.
- Third, **study:** Set aside time to analyze the data, study the results, and make observations as a team.
- Fourth, **act:** Refine the change and make improvements to it based on what was learned from the test.

Langley, G.L., Moen, R., Nolan, K.M., Nolan, T.W., Norman, C.L., & Provost, L.P. (2009). *The improvement guide: A practical approach to enhancing organizational performance,* 2nd ed. Jossey-Bass Publishers.