



## What to Look For

Here are some clues that may indicate possible trafficking in a business:

- Extended hours of operation may or may not suggest a problem, but 24 X 7 operations are a reason for significant concern.
- Employees living onsite may be a cultural practice held over from another country but may also be a sign of trafficking.
- People being transported to and from work may be due to a lack of a driver's license but can also indicate employees who are being held offsite against their will.
- Businesses advertising on sites such as backpage.com or on other websites that allow provocative advertising may be at a higher risk for trafficking.
- Also, a client could tell you about a personal experience at a local business. Although privileged communications may be an issue, you still may be able to get this information to someone who can help. If needed, seek legal advice, but don't ignore the situation.

## Resources:

Human trafficking is a federal crime but most states also have laws on the books and organizations in place that can often assist you.

Though you should consider local law enforcement as an obvious resource, your state's Attorney General's office is also actively engaged in the fight to assist trafficking victims and prosecute the criminals who commit these crimes.

For help in finding a contact point in your state consult the National Association of Attorneys General website. You can also find a list of state attorneys general at: <http://www.naag.org/naag/attorneys-general/whos-my-ag.php>

One of the best resources nationally is the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) run by the Polaris Project. The Polaris Project has a page specifically dedicated to illegitimate massage at: <http://polarisproject.org/initiatives/illicit-massage-businesses>

You can also report human trafficking anonymously by calling the NHTRC at: **(888) 373-7888**

Finally, even if you don't have something specific to report, many non-profits that fight trafficking may benefit from your knowledge of our profession. Finding these organizations can require a little research, but giving your time and energy to fighting modern day slavery may be the most important and gratifying work you ever do.

A MESSAGE THERAPIST'S GUIDE  
TO UNDERSTANDING

# Human Trafficking

PROVIDED BY THE:



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# What You Need to Know

## Why You Need to Know This

Let's be honest, one of the last things legitimate massage practitioners want to acknowledge is that human trafficking and the sale of sexual services have anything to do with legitimate, professional massage. After all, it doesn't.

Unfortunately, because criminal operations that engage in these activities sometimes hide behind signs that say "massage" or "spa" you can end up in uncomfortable conversations with clients and uninformed members of the general public about this issue.

When this happens, what do you say, and more importantly, what do you know about this problem?

## What You Need to Know

One of the first things you need to know is what human trafficking is and is not. Because you may end up being the first and best source of information on this topic for someone, you need to get it right. Generally speaking, human trafficking is defined as the recruiting, harboring, moving, obtaining, or maintaining of a person, by the means of force, fraud or coercion to the end outcome of involuntary servitude, debt bondage, slavery or the sex trade.

The image at the top of the next column may be helpful in understanding this complicated issue.



## Not Jumping to Conclusions

Because a business claiming to provide massage is engaged in illegal activity does not necessarily mean that it is involved in human trafficking. Sadly, illegitimate massage takes many forms, ranging from unlicensed practice in those jurisdictions where licensing is required, to some who choose to willingly engage in sexual commerce.

However, it's well established that many who appear to choose to engage in sexual commerce do so as a result of personal circumstances that may include past life traumas such as physical and/or sexual abuse. Each person's journey in life is different and it's not our place to judge how they got there.

Although it's understandable that you might be upset by the presence of such a business in your community just remember that those who work there may actually be victims. Victimitizing them yet again is the last thing we should try and do.

## Avoiding Profiling

It's also important that you be mindful not to profile people because of their race or ethnicity. Essentially, don't make assumptions about others that you would hope someone would not make about you, simply because you do massage for a living.

Yes, there may be stereotypes regarding so called "massage parlors" but you also have to be mindful that everyone in the massage profession does not have to look like you to do ethical, professional bodywork.

When you point to the long history of massage, remember that much of this history originated elsewhere, done by people who often looked nothing like us.

## Trafficking vs. Smuggling

It's also important to know the differences between human trafficking and human smuggling.

Smuggling occurs when someone is paid to assist another in the illegal crossing of borders. However, this relationship usually ends after the border has been crossed and the individual has paid the smuggler for their assistance. However, if the smuggler sells or brokers the smuggled individual into a condition of servitude, or if the smuggled individual cannot pay the smuggler and is forced to work off the debt, the crime then becomes trafficking.