

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION



*TAT recommends that every school transportation professional complete the TAT school transportation training: [www.tatnonprofit.org/school-transportation](http://www.tatnonprofit.org/school-transportation). This sheet is meant to provide additional context and information for special needs transportation professionals alongside/upon completion of that training.*

Anyone can be at risk for human trafficking, including any child. Traffickers target individuals with vulnerabilities that they can leverage to exploit their victims. Therefore, students with disabilities may face increased risk of being trafficked/exploited for several reasons:

- They may often experience discrimination and/or isolation, creating an enhanced desire for friendship and belonging that traffickers can manipulate.
- Difficulties with communication and/or speech can affect their ability to get help and/or report abuse.
- If they are dependent on a caregiver, they may be vulnerable to exploitation by that caregiver and/or predisposed to comply with a trafficker's requests or commands.
- They might be unaware/uneducated about consent, healthy relationships and their rights.
- Traffickers sometimes target disabled individuals to gain access to their public benefits, and might withhold those benefits as a method of coercion.

## THE FACTS:

- Children with disabilities are **at least three times** more likely to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities.<sup>1</sup>
- Between January 2015 and December 2017, the National Human Trafficking Hotline documented **2,116 potential victims** that had a pre-existing health concern or disability (e.g. physical disability, mental health diagnosis, substance use concern, intellectual/ developmental disability).<sup>2</sup>
- In a review of 54 sex trafficking cases reported in Florida from 2007 to 2014, roughly **one-third of the cases** involved girls with intellectual disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

## INDICATORS OF TRAFFICKING:

In addition to the indicators of trafficking every school transportation professional should be on the lookout for, special needs drivers may also notice these potential red flags:

- Signs of assault, restraint, physical abuse, or malnourishment
- Nonverbal cues or body language indicating fear, anxiety, or trauma
- Medical equipment or mobility aids that are broken or need maintenance
- Service animals that appear neglected or uncared for
- Interference from a caregiver/potential trafficker with attempts to speak to the student alone

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

*Any suspicion of trafficking of a student should be reported through the proper school and state protocols.*

These are some additional resources to learn more about the topic:

- National Human Trafficking and Disabilities Working Group: <http://iofa.org/national-trafficking-disabilities-working-group/>
- National Human Trafficking Hotline: US: 1-888-3737-888 | CAN: 1-833-900-1010
- State or county boards/councils of developmental disabilities

## SOURCES:

1. The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities. Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/risk-and-prevention-maltreatment-children-disabilities>
2. Individuals with Disabilities May Face Increased Risk of Human Trafficking. Polaris, 2018: <https://polarisproject.org/blog/2018/08/individuals-with-disabilities-may-face-increased-risk-of-human-trafficking/>
3. Sex traffickers target girls with intellectual disabilities. Atlas of Science, 2016: <https://atlasofscience.org/sex-traffickers-target-girls-with-intellectual-disabilities/>