

Human trafficking in Idaho [part

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This is part two of two concerning human trafficking in Idaho. This piece discusses the process victims undergo after being rescued.

Human trafficking, a form of modern day slavery, takes place

worldwide. According to the U.S. Department of State, approximately 800,000 to 900,000 victims are trafficked across international borders each year. Between 18,000 and 20,000 of those victims are smuggled or trafficked into the United States.

The Catholic Charities of Idaho is currently working on three

cases of human trafficking. Anna Almerico, domestic violence and immigration caseworker, said these cases are extremely confidential, considering that the victims serve as key witnesses in prosecuting their traffickers.

"We assist victims of labor and sex trafficking here in Idaho, and it's definitely more of an is-

sue. ... [Trafficking] does exist," Almerico said.

Victims of trafficking include men, women, and children who may be forced into taking jobs in the sex trade, domestic servitude, migrant agriculture work, and sweatshops.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 defines

labor trafficking as "the recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery."

The TVPA states that women and underage girls often fall vic-

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protected sex with 10 to 25 men a day, putting themselves at risk of contracting HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. If a woman becomes pregnant, she may be forced to have an abortion or may be beaten by her captor to cause a miscarriage.

Long after being rescued, victims of human trafficking may suffer from a variety of physical and psychological side effects. Victims of labor trafficking may develop reoccurring headaches; hearing loss; and cardiovascular, respiratory, and vision problems. The majority of victims will likely experience feelings of helplessness, humiliation, denial, disorientation, and confusion. Others will suffer from panic attacks, depression, or post traumatic stress disorders.

The U.S. government helps victims with immigration paperwork so they might obtain legal status in the U.S. As a certified representative, Almerico works with pro bono attorneys to help victims submit the proper paperwork for certification for a visa. The Catholic Charities of Idaho are able to fund this kind of work with the help of immigration programs and grants from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Almerico stated.

"They've really stepped up to fight against trafficking and to assist agencies in smaller states to

be able to process the paperwork. It's a way to have it not be as expensive for the victims, because we are certified to be their advocates," Almerico said.

The Department of Health and Human Services certifies victims once they are officially labeled and identified as victims of trafficking. Certification also allows victims who are non-U.S. citizens to be eligible for a special visa as well as benefits and services to aid them in rebuilding their lives while in the U.S.

Almerico said victims of trafficking are eligible to receive the same benefits and assistance that a refugee would.

A "T" visa allows victims of a severe form of trafficking to become temporary residents in the U.S. and protects them from being deported. After three years, "T" visa recipients may apply for permanent residence. Victims, who have suffered serious abuse and are helping investigators prosecute their abuser, may be eligible for a "U" visa.

These visas aren't granted to all victims. Health and Human Services must first obtain statements from state and local law enforcement stating that the victim "has been willing to assist in every reasonable way with respect to the investigation and prosecution of state and local crimes such as kidnapping, rape, slavery, or

other forced labor offences, where severe forms of trafficking appear to have been involved." Both visas require a continued residence of the victim in the U.S.

To report incidents of human trafficking, contact the Catholic Charities of Idaho at 345-6031 x105 or the Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.