



Screening and Universal Education: Choosing Your Approach

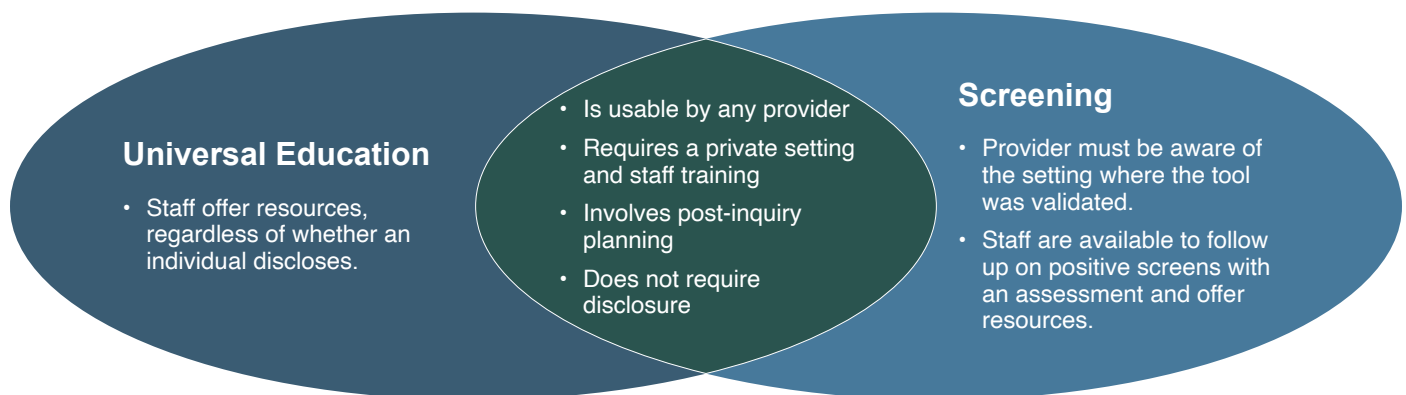
When first speaking with an individual about potential trafficking, it is important to begin with a broad inquiry, using universal education and/or screening tools.

To decide which approach to use, first consider your organizational setting and the population you serve.

Remember, your goal is to understand the individual's experiences and needs in order to connect them with appropriate services and resources. The goal is *not* disclosure.

Considerations for Organizational Setting

Both universal education and screening can be used by any provider (e.g., healthcare, social services), should be done in a private setting, require staff to be trained in the approach, and should include post-inquiry planning. The graphic below includes these similarities, as well as key differences.



Considerations for Population

Before deciding on an approach, also consider the population your organization serves. This is where the approaches differ in key ways, outlined in the graphic below.



With a universal education approach, you can adapt existing tools because the emphasis is on creating a trauma-informed, person-centered space. You are conducting an informal conversation with the individual and sharing information about different forms of exploitation, regardless of whether it relates to their circumstances. Screening tools, on the other hand, are tested and validated with certain populations and are intended to be delivered as written with the population specific to that screening tool.

For both approaches, it is important to consider the individual's age, developmental and/or cognitive abilities, language proficiency, and cultural/ethnic background. Remember that screening and universal education can apply to more areas than trafficking; screening for adverse childhood experiences and social determinants of health may help connect populations with increased risk factors to supportive services. By addressing risk factors early, there is an opportunity for prevention or early intervention to reduce harm and exploitation.

Ethical Response

Before initiating an inquiry using any screening or universal education tool, consider the following to ensure your response is ethical and trauma informed:

- **Best practice:** Designate an internal point person with expertise in human trafficking to coordinate services.
- **Good practice:** Partner with an external agency with expertise in trafficking to fill gaps in services that your organization does not provide.
- **Minimum practice:** Know what community resources are available with staff trained in person-centered services and offer a “warm hand-off.”
- **Don't:** Hand your client a phone number or list of agencies, extract data about their experience, and do nothing to follow up, particularly if the client may not have access to a phone or computer (e.g., in a rural area).

Learn more about these and other important ethical considerations in our SOAR *Online* module, [Ethical Considerations: Working With Individuals Who Have Experienced Trafficking](#).



Choosing Your Approach

Ultimately, several factors influence your approach, including setting, population, time, resources, your role and level of experience, and program policies. Use the decision tree below to help you determine which approach is best for your specific circumstances. **Remember: Flexibility is key.**

Step 1: Determine if you have the capacity and resources needed to apply the approach with (1) all clients or patients, (2) a specific population within those you serve, or (3) only individuals with increased risk factors.

