



Different Approaches to the Conversation: Universal Education and Screening Tools

There are different ways to identify the needs of someone who may be at risk of trafficking or is experiencing trafficking. Because evidence is still forming around these different approaches, we will talk about both universal education and screening and provide tools for each without recommending one over the other.

While these approaches can be used in any professional setting, providers can use universal education to provide information and resources to anyone, whereas screening tools are created and intended for use in a specific setting with a specific population (that may be a subset of the population you serve). Some providers may feel more comfortable with a specific approach or a combination of both approaches depending on available services and resources, current level of comfort talking about trafficking with clients, current organizational approaches and processes, and length of time with a patient or client.

It is also important to recognize that your partners may use different terms to refer to these approaches, so it is important to clarify when delivering multidisciplinary care exactly what is meant by “screening,” “interviewing,” or other related terminology. Additionally, neither of these approaches requires disclosure. Both approaches should only be implemented by staff who have been properly trained according to your organization’s response protocol.



Remember: Disclosure is **not** the goal. It is more important to identify and understand the individual’s unique needs than to secure a disclosure. Ensure your organization has a protocol in place that outlines how to identify and respond to trafficking and train staff on the policies and procedures.

Focus on Rapport and Safety

Regardless of whether your organization uses a formal screening tool or a universal education approach, it is important to build rapport with individuals and create a safe environment. To help avoid common pitfalls to interviewing, be sure to:¹

- Support the individual in feeling physically comfortable; for example, offer them water, show them where the restrooms are located, and periodically ask if they need anything
- Be aware of your verbal and nonverbal cues and maintain a calm tone, eye contact, and a warm, neutral facial expression
- Respect personal space, refrain from touching, and remain at eye level as much as possible
- Monitor the individual’s verbal and nonverbal cues for signs of physical or emotional discomfort
- When needed, use trauma management response techniques; carefully match the individual’s pace and mirror the language they use
- When needed, offer the individual a break from the interview and the opportunity to choose the gender of the person interviewing them.
- Explore safety concerns with the individual. Inform them that you are concerned for their safety and well-being and that you can connect them with appropriate and confidential resources - but be careful not to over-promise before you are sure a certain resource is available. Safety planning requires building trust and helping individuals anticipate potentially escalating risk before, during, or after leaving a dangerous situation.

¹ National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center. (2018). *Adult human trafficking screening toolkit and guide*. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/nhhtacadultscreening>



Universal Education Tools



Find a full index of health and domestic violence-related materials, including safety cards like the one pictured here, through [Futures Without Violence](#).

Let's look at CUES and the PEARR Tool, which are tools you can use to implement a universal health approach.

CUES is an evidence-based intervention developed by Futures Without Violence that encourages providers to initiate conversations about domestic and sexual violence by offering individuals two safety cards. The provider then specifies that one is for the individual to take for a friend or loved one. If there is a disclosure of violence, providers can offer to make a referral to their local domestic violence agency. The CUES intervention is centered on partnerships between domestic violence agencies and health settings so they can adopt a team-based response to supporting survivors.

The **PEARR Tool**, provided by CommonSpirit in partnership with HEAL Trafficking and the Pacific Survivor Center, builds on the CUES intervention. It is another example of a universal approach tool applied in a national, nonprofit healthcare system.

Learn more about the specific implementation of each of these two tools below.

CUES

C: Confidentiality

- Know your state's reporting requirements and share any limits of confidentiality with the individual you are working with.
- Always see individuals alone for part of every visit so that you can mention relationship violence safely.

UE: Universal Education and Empowerment

- Give each individual two safety cards to start the conversation about relationships and how they affect health.
- Open the card and encourage them to take a look. Make sure they know you're a safe person for them to talk to.
- Mention that you've included one for a friend or family member.

S: Support

- Though disclosure of violence is not the goal, it will happen—know how to support someone who discloses.
- Connect individuals via a “warm handoff” to your local domestic/sexual violence partner agency or national hotlines (on the back of all safety cards).
- Offer health promotion strategies and a care plan that takes surviving abuse into consideration.

PEARR Tool

P: Privacy

- Discuss sensitive topics alone and in a safe, private setting.

E: Education

- Educate each individual in a manner that is nonjudgmental and normalizes sharing information.
- Use a brochure or safety card to review information.

A: Ask

- Allow time for discussion with the individual.
- Limit questions to only those needed to determine the individual's safety or connect them to resources.

R: Respect

- Always respect the individual's wishes, even when they deny victimization or decline assistance.

R: Respond

- Respond with a person-centered approach through which the individual's input is actively sought and prioritized.
- The universal education approach means educating an individual about resources, regardless of the red flags that may be present.



Screening Tools

There are general screening tools for cross-discipline professionals, as well as specific screening tools for some professional groups, such as healthcare providers. Determine whether a validated screening tool exists for your setting and the population you serve. Because of the time and resources needed to validate screening tools through longitudinal research, there are few validated tools available.

If there is no validated screening tool for your setting, you may wish to consider using an evidence-based tool: either a screening tool that has been validated for a similar population or a screening tool that has been rigorously tested. If using an evidence-based tool, conducting universal education becomes especially important. The tools and resources listed here help professionals apply trauma-informed principles to identify individuals who have experienced trafficking and provide appropriate referrals to supportive and culturally responsive services. Click on each tool to learn more.

Validated Screening Tools

- [Commercial Sexual Exploitation -Identification Tool \(CSE-IT\)](#): Developed by the WestCoast Children's Clinic to identify sex trafficking among youth across service provision settings; validated in 2017
- [Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure \(HTIAM-14\)](#): Developed by Covenant House to identify trafficking among young adults ages 18-23 experiencing homelessness in service provision settings; validated in 2013
- [Short Screen for Child Sex Trafficking \(SSCST\)](#): Developed by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and physicians on Children's medical staff to identify adolescents experiencing sex trafficking in healthcare settings; validated in 2017
- [Quick Youth Indicators for Trafficking \(QYIT\)](#): Developed by Covenant House New Jersey to identify labor and/or sex trafficking among young adults ages 18-22 experiencing homelessness in service provision settings; validated in 2018
- [Rapid Appraisal for Trafficking \(RAFT\)](#): Developed to identify labor and sex trafficking among adults in emergency department settings; validated in 2021

Evidence-Based Tools

- [Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool \(AHTST\) and Guide](#): Developed by NHTTAC to screen adult patients or clients for human trafficking across various healthcare, behavioral health, social services, and public health settings
- [Human Trafficking Screening Tool \(HTST\)](#): Developed by the Urban Institute, funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and Administration for Children and Families (ACF), to identify minors who have experienced trafficking who are in the child welfare system, have runaway, or are experiencing homelessness



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