

THE ALIGHT LEGAL NEEDS MATCHING PROGRAM

TIPS FOR ATTORNEYS WORKING WITH TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS

BE SENSITIVE TO TRAUMA

Trauma manifests differently for different people. Some survivors may be more withdrawn, while others may be very emotional. Some may want to check in often for reassurance, while others may disengage periodically from the process. You may also encounter potential obstacles: Distrust, Suspicion, Anger, Denial, Resistance.

EARN TRUST

A survivor's trust takes time and must be earned. If you are not sure how to respond to potential obstacles:

- Ask the survivor what constitutes respect for them in the moment
- Ask the survivor what would make them comfortable

OFFER OPTIONS AND RESPECT CHOICES

Traffickers take options and choices away from their victims, and trafficking survivors may have a long history of not being heard by or given autonomy by the systems they have dealt with. You can help change this dynamic by giving clients options and listening carefully to their choices.

EXPLAIN LEGAL PROCESS

Clearly - and often - communicate the steps in the legal process to the survivor. Manage expectations about what the legal system can do, and what engaging with it will involve. Share information on how long a legal process or outcome might take.

HELP CLIENT PREPARE

When setting up a meeting, inform the survivor who else may be in the room and what you plan to discuss.

CREATE COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

Try to ensure that the survivor is in a safe, private place when you are speaking. Identify their level of comfort and pace. Be aware of their emotional state - suggest breaks, and that they ask for a break when needed.

ADDRESS PAST ISSUES

Ask if they have worked with an attorney before, and if so, how the experience was for them. If it was not a good experience, ask what you can do to make this experience better.

MINIMIZE INTRUSION

When discussing the trafficking situation or a potentially sensitive or triggering topic, consider what level of detail is necessary and do not ask for information you do not need.

WORDS MATTER

Use the language and labels the survivor uses (e.g. "boyfriend" rather than "trafficker"), and understand that the survivor may have complicated feelings about the trafficker (for example, if the trafficker was a family member).

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY & SPECIFY NEXT STEPS

It may sometimes be difficult to remain in contact with the survivor - be understanding and ask them up front how they prefer to communicate. Ensure they know how to get in touch with you, and if there is someone else at your office they can speak with if you are unavailable. Before ending a meeting or a call, ensure the survivor knows the next steps and when you will next communicate.

SPOT OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Keep an ear out for other legal issues. If you believe the survivor needs assistance on a separate matter, or if the given matter is more complex than originally known, suggest the survivor request their service provider or the ALIGHT Intake Advocate to post an additional task.