



Human Trafficking, Exploitation and Substance Use Treatment in Rural Maine

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Presenters

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Grace House

- Highly structured recovery residence for women in Portland
- Focus on using coping tools
- Incorporate 12 step programs
- Wholistic approach utilizing nature, service, movement & spirituality
- Accept MaineCare

- www.gracehouseforwomen.com

CourageLIVES

- Flagship program of St. Andre Home serving Maine & beyond
- Office located in Bangor
- Services for anyone impacted by human trafficking, exploitation & abuse
 - Community Center
 - Connection & Leadership
 - Behavioral & Mental Health Services: Case Management & Therapy
 - Training & Education
 - Courage Clothing
 - Empowerment Pantry
 - Restorative Tattoo Care
 - Showers & Laundry

Help & Support

- 24 Hour Resources
 - Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
 - 1-800-871-7741
 - Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
 - 1-866-834-HELP
 - Wabanaki Women's Coalition
 - wabanakiwomenscoalition.org
 - National Human Trafficking Hotline
 - 1-888-873-7888

Learning Objectives

- Define human trafficking and exploitation
- Identify intersections of human trafficking, exploitation, substance use and rural needs
- Identify the strengths and challenges of rural life in regard to treatment and response needs

Human Trafficking

- ANY type of work or labor that is performed through force, fraud or coercion
- Can occur anywhere there is an opportunity to make a profit on someone
- Can occur in any industry or business
- Federally, persons under 18 engaging in sex work are considered victims
- Often difficult to leave
- Can include forms of trafficking that we don't often see in Maine like organ trafficking and surrogacy
- Human trafficking is illegal federally and within Maine.
- Maine laws related to trafficking: Illegal to purchase sexual acts but not to provide; affirmative defense

Exploitation

- A situation where someone who has a need is taken advantage of by another/others for their own gain
- On continuum of abuse and violence, but often not illegal
- Has “option” to leave the situation or choose differently
- Examples:
 - Performing sexual acts to obtain transportation
 - Providing cleaning & child care over and beyond the ‘market rate’ in exchange for a place to sleep
 - Dealer charging higher prices for substances for people in withdrawal

What Is Rural?

- Census perspective:
 - Areas including & surrounding an area of 50,000+ people are urban
- 1 in 5 (20%) in the US live in rural areas
- Sparsely populated & low housing density
- Far from an urban center
- Land mass: Urban areas = roughly 3% of the US land mass but 80% + of population lives there
- 97% of US land mass is rural

Rural

- Maine is known as the most rural state in the US due to 50% of land being uninhabited
 - 22.646 million acres total = 11.3 million acres uninhabited
- There are 5 urban centers & 24 urban clusters & 3 urban cities: Portland; Lewiston; Bangor
- Everything else is rural
- Maine is oldest state in the country
 - 62% of those living in rural Maine are older adults
 - Higher rates of substance use needs among older rural Maine adults who have prescriptions for controlled substances

Appeal of Rural

- Pre-Covid: Negative view of rural living
 - Drain on resources; Lack of resources; “Behind the times”
- Covid brought change to Maine’s population: Population influx including rural regions (except Aroostook County)
- It’s home
- Beauty
- Community & connection
- Independence
- Sense of peace and calm/less crime
- “Quintessential”
- Why not rural?

Challenges of Rural Life

- Transportation
- Access to resources
- Housing: Homelessness in rural Maine is often unseen/invisible
- Higher high school graduate rates than urban students but lower post-secondary attendance
- Limited employment options & lower pay scale
- Acceptance of substance use: alcohol; marijuana; higher rates of methamphetamines
- Greater health needs & reduced access to healthcare
- Reduced population = reduced revenues = reduced infrastructure
- Forced migration
 - Examples: Mill closure; bankruptcy; resettlement

How does trafficking happen?

- Traffickers prey upon both real and perceived vulnerabilities and breakdown of systems
- When people's basic needs are not met (food, housing, safety, etc.), this increases their risk factors
- For someone who has substance dependency, the substance becomes the primary need which increases risk factors
- Majority of victims know their traffickers
 - Family & Friends/Neighbors
 - Romantic partner
 - Met on-line
 - Organized operations

How does trafficking happen?

- Most often:
 - Grooming process
 - Lure of something better
 - Traffickers offer or promise to meet needs
 - The public often focuses on the danger and risk of strangers, overlooking the immediate risks

Rural Children & ACES Scores

- Rural youth are more likely to have higher ACES scores in these areas than urban youth:
 - Economic hardship
 - Substance use
 - Mental health
 - Neighborhood violence
 - Incarceration
 - Parental death
 - Parental separation/divorce

Rural Health Information Hub

Impact on Rural Families

- Generational trauma
 - Compound and complex
- Kinship care: Grandparents & Great-grandparents raising children
- Rural counties in Maine have high rates of children in foster care compared to more populated counties
- Youth who are aging out of foster care face greater risks around trafficking

Role of Education

- Education has consistently been shown to be the top factor in helping people address their needs related to poverty
- Rural schools are lacking teachers, bus drivers, school counselors
- “If students can’t access exposure to opportunities both within and outside of their communities due to the shortage of school staff and bus drivers, it dampens their ability to imagine their full potential.”
Katie Flood, Director of Enrollment, Let’s Get Ready; Doctoral Student, University of Maine Higher Education Program

Potential Indicators

- No money or lots of money
- Drug debts
- Connections with new people
- Needs are clearly not met
- Delay in medical care/lack of treatment
- Stated history & presentation don't match
- Scripted responses
- Change in behaviors
- Recent and/or frequent relocation
- No documents or identification

Potential Indicators

- "Companion" who seems to "run the show"-answers questions, speaks for the person, always there
- Provides own translator
- Doesn't know answers to basic questions
- Tattoos, brands, marks
- Injuries
- Recurrent STIs
- Multiple or frequent pregnancies
- Frequent or forced abortions
- Disappears

Examples of Trafficking in Rural Maine

- Landlord payment
- Drug dealing and muling
- Running weapons
- Web camming
- Bachelor parties/Deer camp
- Farm labor
- Generational sexual exploitation/sex trafficking
- “That house”

Benefits of Rural Services

- Relationships
- Community support
- Creative responses
- Easy to hide

Challenges of Rural Services

- Community judgement & stigma around help seeking
- Everyone knows
- Easy to hide
- Limited resources
 - Childcare
- Closed systems leads to distrust of outside providers
- Animal care for when someone accesses treatment
- Virtual services are not always a good option
 - Can be unsafe and dangerous when there is abuse or violence
 - Lack of privacy
 - Lack of access: no connection; no device; no electricity

Rural Response & Treatment

- Assessment questions
 - Work: Do you work? What do you do? What do you like about your work? What do you not like about it?
 - If you wanted to, are you able to leave your job? What would happen if you left?
 - Income: If not working, how do you get money for the things you need and would like?
 - Explore child support needs
 - Housing: Where do you live or stay? How is that going?
 - Substance use: How do you get the substances you use? What does that process look like?
 - Supports: Who helps you or can help you when you need support?

Rural Response & Treatment

- Focus on the relationship & keep showing up
- Respect privacy & assess & promote safety
- Have the conversation: “I’ve noticed...” and REFER
- Consider range of social determinants of health
- Address basic needs: refer & be creative about resources
 - Childcare: Can children come with their parent or care giver?
 - Community meals & pantries
 - Do you offer rides? Free meal? Free clothing?
 - Consider how much information you need
 - Examples:
 - Skowhegan previously had “the fridge”
 - School meal deliveries in the summer

Rural Response & Treatment

- Consider where the information hubs are & messaging
 - Gas stations; diner/grocery store; church
- Telehealth treatment
 - Utilizing telehealth increased participation amount LBGTQ+ rural youth
 - Access to MAT; hybrid services for in-person treatment & telehealth
- Recovery centers
- Peer Recovery
- OPTIONS liaisons
- Ensure transportation to services
- Home visits?
- Local groups
- Family events

Reaching Rural Initiative

- COSSUP funded project
- Legal system involved, opiate use disorder/overdose needs
- Partnership among Piscataquis County Sheriff, Recovery Wellness Center in Sangerville, Helping Hands with Heart in Dover and CourageLIVES
- Goals:
 - Promote information and education about available resources
 - Provided reentry support for affected person and family members
 - Provide training on intersections of OUD, mental health needs and human trafficking, exploitation & abuse

Resources

- Maine Children's Alliance *mainechildrensalliance.org*
- Maine Rural Health Research Center
- Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment
- NAADAC: Association for Addiction Professionals

Resources

- Wabanaki Women's Coalition *wabanakiwomenscoalition.org*
- Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault *mecasa.org*
- Maine Sex Trafficking Education Network *mesten.org*
- Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence *mcedv.org*
- SurvivorSpeak USA *survivorspeakusa.org*
- Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Services *preblestreet.org*
- Child Advocacy Centers
- Anti-Trafficking Coalitions
- Child/Adult Protective Services

Resources

- Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) *ilapmaine.org*
- Pine Tree Legal *ptla.org*
- Mass General Freedom Clinic, Boston
- St. Joseph Healthcare SAFE Program, Bangor
- Faith Linking in Action: food; housing; transportation in Greater Bangor
- Truckers Against Trafficking
- Polaris Project and National Human Trafficking Hotline
Polarisproject.com 1-888-373-7888
Text "Be Free" to 233733



THANK YOU



Learn more online:
couragelivesme.org

