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## Ohio salon employees taking required course in human trafficking

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By Ben Nandy, Reporter



"I was very surprised to learn that would be something of a necessity," says hair stylist, Shawna Nixon of Ironton. "It made me think it was something that could occur, something maybe to look out for."

Beginning this year, anyone wishing to work in, or continue to work in, a nail or hair salon must complete a course on human trafficking.

Part of the course involves watching a 45-minute video on what human trafficking is, and how to spot potential victims of human trafficking.

Officials with the State of Ohio Board of Cosmetology are now requiring the hour-long course to help employees identify coworkers, customers or friends who may be victims existing in plain sight. Unlike prostitution, which is considered voluntary, human trafficking is defined as recruitment or transfer of humans through force or deception for the purposes of sex or labor.

According to the video that all Ohio cosmetology licensees must watch, there are an estimated 1,078 minors who are victims of sex or labor trafficking. According to a comprehensive report prepared exclusively for this story by Christopher Logsdon, executive director of the Board of Cosmetology, there are 106,000 licensees working with, or at, salons in Ohio

In 2014, the Ohio law enforcement identified 113 suspected traffickers total, including 111 potential sex traffickers and two potential labor traffickers. -- This data is required to be reported annually from law enforcement entities to the Ohio Attorney General.

As for Ohio's salons, specifically, being potential hiding places or hubs for human trafficking, Logsdon points to two instances "from 2010 that were related to nail salons."

That may not make the average observer see the need for human trafficking education for cosmetology licensees, but since 2010, resources to educate about, and identify, human trafficking cases have increased significantly.

In each of the attorney general's yearly reports on human trafficking, numbers change, but the high-risk experiences associated with victims remains the same.

Runaway behavior, difficulties in education, sexual assault, court appearances, use of drugs or alcohol, emotional abuse, child abuse, homelessness, influence from friends or relatives in the trade, relationships with older men, and difficulty making friends are the high-risk experiences or traits the attorney general says are often had by victims.

Salons are not necessarily a hotbed for human trafficking, but are among the industries where labor trafficking specifically can be found, according to the Polaris Project, a non-profit that researches and informs about human trafficking in the United States.

Aside from salons, those industries include landscaping, construction, agriculture and food service, among others. Anyone who suspects a case of human trafficking is asked to call the

National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888 FREE.