Human Trafficking

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Charleston Human Trafficking Attorneys

Charleston was once a major hub of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Today, a modern-day form of slavery now exists here in the form of human trafficking. Like many seaports, Charleston is targeted by human traffickers who exploit not only the large population of this area but also its access to major cities like Charlotte and Atlanta. And the problem doesn't appear to be going away any time soon.

If you or a loved one were targeted in a human trafficking operation, you may have legal remedies against the parties who participated in it. Reach out to the dedicated human trafficking attorneys of Rosen Hagood today.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is defined as the use of force, threats, coercion, or fraud in the trade of people for sexual slavery, forced labor, and commercial exploitation. Many incidents, especially those involving minors, are accompanied by kidnappings and violence. But in some cases, trafficking happens because someone personally knows the victim and exploits that relationship for their own gain. These cases are often more insidious and concealed from the general public, making them difficult to detect and stop.

Human trafficking is often considered to be interchangeable with sex trafficking. And while the two are certainly linked, sex trafficking is but one aspect of the larger problem of human trafficking. Another, sometimes overlooked type of trafficking involves labor. People who are forced to work with little or no control over their lives may be considered victims of human trafficking.

The Reality Of Human Trafficking In South Carolina

A 2017 report by South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson's Human Trafficking Task Force indicates that major population areas in the state are the top human trafficking locations. Those areas include the counties of Charleston, Greenville, Horry, Richland, and Beaufort. Law enforcement agencies in the state charged 59 counts of human trafficking in 2017, 22 of which involved minors. At the end of that year, there were 72 cases of human trafficking pending in state courts.

Common Human Trafficking Victims

Human trafficking can affect anyone and can be found in any community. But there are some

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people who are more susceptible than others to being trafficked. They include:

- Foreign nationals
- Low-income individuals
- People with disabilities and mental illnesses
- Individuals with a history of abuse, trauma, or substance abuse
- Foster care youth
- Runaway and homeless youth
- LGBTQIA+ individuals

Types of Human Trafficking:

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is the use of force, threats, coercion, or fraud to compel someone to perform commercial sexual activity (e.g. sex work or prostitution). It can involve adults or minors under the age of 18.

Force may come by way of kidnapping, rape, restraints, and other types of violence. But fraud may also be used, for example with false promises of future employment, a career, a better life, or even marriage. Coercion can include threats to the victim and/or his or her family, along with psychological abuse and the use of drugs or alcohol.

Sex trafficking can encompass a number of different activities, including:

- Personal sexual services
- Escort services
- Brothels
- Virtual interactive sex acts
- Solicitation
- Erotic massage parlors
- Strip clubs
- Pornography

Labor Trafficking

Labor trafficking is another type of human trafficking that often doesn't get the attention it needs. It is defined as using force, threats, coercion, or fraud to make an individual perform work on behalf of another person or a business. Many of the same behaviors used to compel someone into sex trafficking are used to force people into labor trafficking.

Businesses and individuals in various industries participate in labor trafficking. These are some examples:

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- Agriculture
- Factories
- Construction
- Landscaping
- Manufacturing
- Cleaning services
- Hotels and hospitality
- Domestic work
- Health and beauty services
- Restaurants and food service

Signs of Human Trafficking:

There are numerous signs that an individual is being sex trafficked. Be on the lookout for someone who:

- Is a minor engaged in commercial sexual activity
- Displays signs of malnourishment, poor hygiene, or fatigue
- Appears fearful, timid, or submissive
- Shows signs of physical abuse or trauma
- Is heavily controlled or monitored by someone else
- Shows a lack of freedom and individual choice
- Has large amounts of debt
- Has been recruited through false promises of work
- Is unpaid or paid very little for his or her services
- Works in particularly dangerous, crowded, or unsanitary conditions
- Works without proper safety gear and without regard to labor rules
- Has been threatened with deportation

How Can A Charleston Human Trafficking Attorney Help?

It takes engagement on a number of different fronts to stop human trafficking. Education is essential to keep people from becoming victims and learning the signs that someone they love may be in trouble. The criminal courts are also there to punish and deter this activity. A first offense for trafficking can result in a steep prison sentence of up to 30 years, for example.

The civil courts also play an increasingly important role in efforts to stop human trafficking. A victim of trafficking, whether sexual or labor, could have legal recourse against the individuals or businesses who exploited them. This could include a demand for different types of civil damages. For example, victims of sex trafficking often need medical attention for their injuries.

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A victim of labor trafficking may be entitled to unpaid wages that he or she was cheated out of.

Our firm can also connect victims with other services throughout the community. A foreign national who has been trafficked may have the right to petition the courts for a change in their immigration status. Still others need assistance securing housing, stable employment, and education.

Rosen Hagood is working hard to stop human trafficking here in Charleston and throughout our state. If you or someone you love has been a victim of any form of trafficking, reach out to us today to learn how we can help.

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