

# Instructions | Request for Assistance

for Child Victims of Human Trafficking



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office on Trafficking in Persons

OMB Control Number: 0970-0362

Expiration Date: 07/31/2021

**Use these instructions to submit a Request for Assistance through the online Shepherd system.**

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The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), as amended, requires federal, state, and local officials to notify the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) not later than 24 hours after discovering that a foreign national minor may be a victim of trafficking (22U.S.C. § 7105 (b)). This Request for Assistance form (RFA) should be used to notify the HHS Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) of trafficking concerns for a foreign national minor (non-U.S. citizen or non-lawful permanent resident under the age of 18) who is currently in the United States and request assistance on behalf of the child (foreign national minor). Use of this form, or the completion of any section of this form, is optional.

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## PROCESS FOR REQUESTING ASSISTANCE

**A** If there is credible information that a child (foreign national minor) may have experienced forced labor and/or commercial sex, complete and submit a Request for Assistance (RFA) through the online Shepherd system with any available information within 24 hours of discovering the potential trafficking concerns. Once the RFA is started, a system-generated request number will be assigned to the case and can be tracked on the **Requests** page moving forward. Throughout the process the Shepherd system will generate emails any time there is an update on the case.

**B** If all of the information related to the potential trafficking concerns is available within the initial 24 hours, submit the entire RFA. However, if more time is needed to complete the narrative section of the RFA (Section 4) OR if new information arises after initially submitting the RFA, the information can be submitted at a later date by selecting **New Information** on the **Requests** page. During the process, OTIP may send clarifying questions to determine whether the child is eligible to apply for benefits and services as a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons. These clarifying questions will appear in the **Tasks** section of the Shepherd system.

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## INSTRUCTIONS

### SECTION 1: REQUESTER'S INFORMATION

Provide the requester's information (individual submitting the RFA on behalf of the child) and their organization's information, if applicable. OTIP will use this information to correspond with the requester during the RFA process and will send any letter issued to the child to the address provided.

### SECTION 2: CHILD'S INFORMATION

Provide available and applicable information on the child's behalf. For Documentation of Citizenship and Age, identify the type of document submitted with the RFA, if available. If the child has Continued Presence or a T visa, select Immigration Document and upload a copy.

### SECTION 3: POTENTIAL TRAFFICKING CONCERNS

Indicate whether the potential trafficking concerns for the child are labor, sex, both labor and sex, or if there are some other type of potential trafficking concerns (child in the midst of a possible trafficking scheme, child brought to a location for the purpose of forced labor or commercial sex, etc.). For concerns of labor trafficking, also check any indicators of force, fraud, or coercion experienced by the child in relation to the labor or service performed. Note that the service performed by the child can also be sexual in nature (i.e. sexual servitude). For concerns of sex trafficking, check whether there was an offer or exchange of something of value in relation to the sex act that the child was asked or made to perform. Finally, describe the basis of the concern that the child may be a victim of a severe form of trafficking and provide any relevant information supporting this concern.



## SECTION 4: NARRATIVE OF TRAFFICKING CONCERNS

Provide the narrative of potential trafficking concerns on behalf of the child, as well as any other applicable details. If needed, refer to the federal definitions of severe forms of trafficking persons.

## SECTION 5: TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCE

Provide information related to the child's history and trafficking concerns. OTIP may use the information to evaluate and determine the child's eligibility for benefits, for consultation purposes with law enforcement and NGOs, for reporting requirements, and for research and analysis in anonymous datasets.

## SECTION 6: INFORMATION SHARING AND CONSENT

As the requester submitting the information on behalf of the child, review the Information Sharing and Consent page, and submit the Request for Assistance.

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## ISSUANCE OF ELIGIBILITY LETTERS

Any letter issued to the child will be available for download in the Shepherd system for up to 30 days. The original hard-copy of the letter will be mailed to the address that the case requester provided to OTIP when they originally submitted the RFA. The original hard-copy of the letter must stay with the child even if they move placements as the original letter will be needed to apply for benefits and services. The downloadable version is for record-keeping purposes only. Note that if at any point in the process the point of contact or mailing address for the letter changes, provide this update to OTIP by selecting **New Information** on the **Requests** page.

### ELIGIBILITY LETTER

If there is sufficient information during the RFA process to indicate that the child was subjected to forced labor and/or commercial sex, OTIP will issue an Eligibility Letter, making the child eligible to apply for benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee.

### INTERIM ASSISTANCE LETTER

If there is information during the RFA process to indicate that the child may have been subjected to forced labor and/or commercial sex, OTIP will issue an Interim Assistance Letter, making the child eligible to apply for benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee for up to 90 days (or 120 days, if extended). During this interim assistance period, OTIP will seek consultation from the U.S. Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Homeland Security (DHS) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) before issuing an Eligibility Letter or a Denial Letter.

### DENIAL LETTER

If the information OTIP receives during the RFA process does not indicate that the child was subjected to a severe form of trafficking in persons, OTIP will issue a Denial Letter to the child. OTIP will include instructions with the letter on how to request reconsideration or how to resubmit the child's case.

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RFA PROCESS OR WANT TO DISCUSS A POTENTIAL CASE?

Contact the OTIP Child Protection Specialists by email at [ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ChildTrafficking@acf.hhs.gov) or by phone at **202-205-4582** to ask questions regarding the RFA process or to discuss a potential case of trafficking before submitting an RFA.