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**Human Trafficking Protection: Improving Interventions to Protect Survivors of Forced Labor and Human Trafficking**  
**LESSONS FROM RIGOROUS EVIDENCE**

**Introduction**

Protection encompasses a vast array of comprehensive efforts to identify, assist, and support those who have been exploited or trafficked as they rebuild their lives. Services focus on improving identification of victims and providing support through shelter, food, counseling, health care, legal assistance and access to educational, vocational, and economic opportunities (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Existing research is primarily focused on improving identification and supporting survivors' mental health.

In this evidence brief, the Human Trafficking Research Initiative (HTRI) has compiled evidence from 14 studies on protection interventions for survivors of human trafficking. We identified nine randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and four systematic reviews that—in response to the lack of rigorous evidence—included a wide range of quasi and non-experimental study designs. We have included these systematic reviews and a single quasi-experimental study to understand the evidence landscape and research gaps. Further research is needed to build the evidence base around protection efforts for survivors of trafficking. HTRI is providing research funding for academics, researchers, donors, and policymakers to pursue and support further research around these topics.

**Key lessons from existing research**

1. Trauma-informed mental health interventions are successful in reducing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms and other trauma-related symptoms amongst child victims and children who have experienced trafficking.
2. Evidence around mental health support in adult survivors of human trafficking is much more limited, with only one RCT demonstrating the effectiveness of narrative exposure therapy for survivors of trafficking with PTSD.
3. A small number of studies show that educational interventions can improve healthcare and specialized social workers' ability to identify and support human trafficking victims, but additional research is needed.

\*Please find a description of the methodology at the end of the document.



HTRI

Evidence Review

May 2024

Evidence Review

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