

Shelter and Housing Services

Finding somewhere safe for a trafficked person to bathe, eat, and sleep is often the first and perhaps most important service you can provide.

Shelters often provide basic material needs, such as clothing and meals, as well as referrals to other resources. Some may also provide in-house services, such as medical care, counselling, legal aid, and victim services.

Special Considerations

- If the trafficked person's safety is at risk, you may need to look for a shelter that has higher security, or consider housing the person elsewhere, possibly outside the immediate community.
- The trafficked person may still be under the trafficker's control.

The shelter will want to know that the trafficked person is willing to respect any requirements that the shelter provider may have, including:

- Keeping the address and telephone number of the house and information about its occupants and staff confidential.
- Respecting all house rules, such as no drugs, alcohol, or indoor smoking.

Where to Look

Shelter options in your community include:

- Women's shelters or transition houses. (To find housing resources for women in your area, try [ShelterNet Canada](#), a site dedicated to connecting abused women to shelters across the country.)
- Homeless shelters.
- Shelters specifically for refugees and immigrants.
- Housing operated by faith-based organizations.
- Youth shelters.

Sister Nancy Brown, Pastoral Counsellor/Ombudsperson at Covenant House in Vancouver, explains the concept of sanctuary, an important step in breaking the trauma bonds between trafficker and trafficked person:

"Sanctuary for those living in danger of going back to the trafficker is a top priority. Providing sanctuary is imperative but difficult to ensure as the manipulative techniques of the perpetrators makes relapse a strong possibility. Often, 'going on sanctuary' — staying in house until one feels safe to venture out alone — is necessary. We discuss lot of 'what ifs...' and practice scenarios: 'If this happened, what would you do?' Safety is a primary concern to prevent further exploitation as well as to enable healing."

MY STORY:

"With the last women's shelter I was at, they gave me the confidence that I was a worthwhile being, that I had value, that my opinions were of value, and that I was capable. They helped me gain confidence in myself. Now, I volunteer and educate others and my opinions count for something."

Stacey

