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# BACKPACK MINISTRY

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**PROVIDING BACKPACKS FOR  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS**



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Addie met a guy at school who just seemed to “get her.” He understood her weaknesses and her vulnerabilities. She thought he really cared about her. She trusted him. When he offered to take her to New Orleans, a place she had always wanted to visit, she gladly went along. There, the unimaginable happened. Addie was sold to a human trafficker who took her to a hotel and advertised her services through social media.

Addie’s story has a happy ending. While in the hotel room, she saw a bar of soap in the bathroom that had the Human Trafficking Hotline phone number on it. Addie was able to call the hotline and was rescued.

Because of the work of the Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans, those bars of soap have been placed in all New Orleans hotels. The Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans ministers to homeless women and children in the city. Many of them are survivors of human trafficking. One way the center provides help to these survivors is through backpacks that provide clothing and toiletries. Kay Bennett, the founder of Baptist

Friendship House, explains that one common misconception is that human trafficking happens only overseas. Her perception was changed when someone talked to a resident in the Friendship House and tried to buy the resident's one-year-old daughter to sell into sex slavery. Kay says, "That was eye opening for our ministry. How much closer can it get than right across the street?"

## Discover the Needs in your Community

Before you begin any new ministry, it is important to first take time to discover and understand the unique needs within your community. Explore the physical community, listen to and learn from people living and working in the area and seek God's guidance by prayer-driving and prayer-walking the neighborhood.

*If you find that providing backpacks for the victims of human trafficking is a need in the community, keep reading! We have practical steps to help you get started.*

To learn more about how to identify needs in your community, download [\*How Can We Serve? An In-Depth Guide to Discovering Community Needs\*](#).

If not, [check out some of our other ministry guides](#) for opportunities that fit for your church's gifting and community's needs.



# Human Trafficking In America

- The International Labor Organization estimates that there are over 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally.<sup>1</sup>
- Estimates suggest somewhere between 20 to 30 million people are held in some form of slavery.<sup>2</sup>
- Every year, 600,000 to 800,00 people are forcibly trafficked across international borders. Of these, 80% are female; half are children.<sup>3</sup>
- Eighty percent of those trafficked are for sexual reasons; nineteen percent involves labor exploitation.<sup>4</sup>
- The average age of minors being placed in the sex industry in America is 12-14 years old.<sup>5</sup>
- Many of the victims in America are runaway teens who have been sexually abused as children.<sup>6</sup>

**The bottom line is this: People who have been trafficked are all around you, usually hidden in plain sight. You, and your church, can make a difference to these victims!**

1 "Human Trafficking: The Facts," Polaris Project, available at [www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/facts](http://www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/facts).

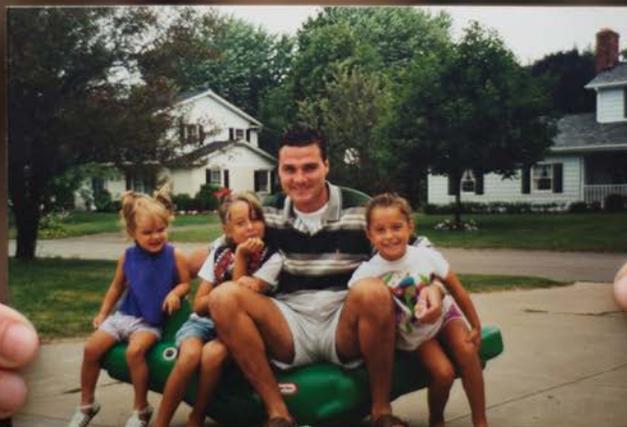
2 Alliance for Freedom, Restoration, and Justice.

3 "11 Facts about Human Trafficking," DoSomething.org.

4 Ibid.

5 The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children, Shared Hope International, May 2009.

6 The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Efforts to Combat Crimes Against Children, Audit Report 09-08, January 2009.



# Strategically Considering Ministry Opportunities

Take the next step by enlisting a small group of people within the congregation to assess ministry opportunities by working through the following questions with you:

- **What partnerships in your community have you considered connecting to meet this need and use this resource?** These could include government officials, school officials and teachers, other community churches and leaders, local shelters, or other preestablished programs addressing human trafficking victims.
- **Who in your church is passionate and equipped to lead or participate in this ministry?** Consider children's workers, parents and/or families, teenagers or youth groups, Sunday School classes, senior adults — anyone with a desire to help provide resources to help those who have been human trafficking victims.
- **What resources and relationships has God given your church to support this ministry?** Consider missions offerings, other financial resources, church members who are connected to local schools, those with the gift of couponing, and Sunday School classes as places to start.
- **What space can be used for collecting and stockpiling donations, and for filling backpacks?** Consider unused classrooms, closets, or members' home that can provide secure, dry storage.

**These questions can lead this small group of local missionaries to determine whether or not:**

1. There is a desire within the congregation to meet this need.
2. There are resources of people, space and money to meet this need.
3. This ministry is sustainable over time.
4. You feel God leading you as a congregation in this direction.

# STARTING A BACKPACK MINISTRY

God may be moving you to be the catalyst of starting a ministry to survivors of human trafficking in your community. If so, where do you start? We've provided eight steps that can lead you to successfully meeting this much-needed ministry:



1. **Learn about Human Trafficking in America.** Research the needs and issues of human trafficking in America and the world online. Two sites to begin are [AFRJ \(Alliance for Freedom, Restoration, and Justice\)](#) and the [Polaris Project](#).
2. **Schedule meetings with local organizations who are involved with survivors of human trafficking locally.** Find out what is being done and what help is needed. Discuss the details of backpacks, and find out what the needs of the organization are. Carefully determine which organization meets the ministry needs your congregation has identified. If there are no local groups already involved in addressing human trafficking, move outward geographically by looking for possible ministry partners in your state or your region.
3. **Make a budget, including all the resources and materials you will need, and a schedule for operating.** Determine the answers to each of these questions:
  - Based on the information you've received from local organizations, how much aid and support will the church commit to do? Determine how often supplies and backpacks will be collected from the congregation and passed on to local ministries for trafficking victims.
  - How will you pay for backpacks and supplies? (Possibilities: church budget, donations, grants, church-wide love offerings, fundraising, corporate donations, grocery store donations.)
  - How will supplies be purchased or collected? (By volunteers, donations of supplies and/or filled backpacks)
  - How and where will you store and pack backpacks before delivery?
  - When should collection of supplies and/or cash begin? When is the target deadline for the delivery of backpacks?
4. **Find volunteers.** You'll need a strong, dependable group of volunteers to keep your program organized and successful.

The **volunteer leader's** responsibilities include: enlisting additional volunteers, coordinating the transportation and delivery to local ministries and fundraising. The leader communicates with the local ministries about the program, keeps track of how well the program is working and coordinates events to raise money. Finally, the leader organizes the collection of supplies for Backpacks for Restoration.

**Other volunteers** pack the backpacks and deliver them local ministry partners.

- Collect Backpack Items.** Begin collecting two months before established delivery date by providing a list of needed items (see below). Two weeks before delivery date, inventory items received, and purchase needed items using monetary donations.

Many churches have good success by asking church members to donate needed items. Some members will prefer to supply the entire contents for a backpack. Each backpack should be labeled with sizes—either small, medium, large or extra-large. The clothing items in each bag should be the same size and new. Hygiene items should be travel size and should not have any hotel logo or name on them. Make sure the toothbrush is in an unopened pack to avoid contact with the bar of soap. Feminine hygiene items can be packed in a single storage bag

**Suggested Items per backpack:**

<b>Clothing:</b>	<b>Hygiene Items:</b>	<b>Other useful items:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweatpants</li> <li>• Sweatshirt</li> <li>• T-shirt</li> <li>• Underwear and Sports Bra</li> <li>• Socks</li> <li>• Sunglasses (to help the victim feel safe)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shampoo &amp; Conditioner</li> <li>• Lotion</li> <li>• Deodorant</li> <li>• Soap</li> <li>• Washcloth &amp; Towel</li> <li>• Toothbrush &amp; Toothpaste</li> <li>• Hair Brush</li> <li>• Hair Bands</li> <li>• Feminine hygiene products</li> <li>• Make-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note of Encouragement</li> <li>• Fleece Blanket or Weighted Blanket</li> <li>• Bible</li> <li>• Journal and Pen</li> <li>• Prepackaged, Non-perishable Snacks</li> <li>• Grocery Store Gift Card</li> <li>• Gift Card to Local Restaurant</li> </ul>

- Deliver Backpacks of Restoration to ministry partner(s).** Set up a time and deliver backpacks to ministry partner(s). Pray over backpacks before they leave your location, and pray for them as they are delivered. Pray for the victims who will receive them. As you are able, pray for the workers within the ministry partners.

7. **Evaluate the program's success.** After the first collection and delivery of backpacks, closely review how successful the project has been with the following questions:

- Did the project run smoothly? If no, why not?
- What problems or issues have come up that you were you unprepared for? How can these be handled?
- How good is the relationship with the church and the local ministry partner? What can you do to strengthen those relationships?
- Could you expand the project to include more backpacks and/or additional ministry partners? What would that take?

8. **Consider other ways to help human trafficking survivors.**

- **Baptist Friendship House** in New Orleans has a ministry to women and children who are homeless and/or survivors of human trafficking. They accept donations of cash and supplies at [BaptistFriendshipHouse.org](http://BaptistFriendshipHouse.org).
- Pray for victims of human trafficking using the [Send Relief prayer guide](#).
- Check with your local and state law enforcement agencies to see what needs they have in their work with human trafficking victims.

## What Next?

This is your opportunity to meet a huge need in your community...  
one survivor and one backpack at a time.

Take your next step on mission with Send Relief by not only helping your immediate neighborhood with backpacks, but also traveling to communities around the world who need your help! Learn more about Send Relief mission trips and get started today at [SendRelief.org/Trips](http://SendRelief.org/Trips).



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