



MEDIA RELEASE

Investigative Unit

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Agents on the Lookout for Human Trafficking in Liquor Permit Establishments

(Columbus) - As agents with the Ohio Investigative Unit conduct investigations at liquor permit premises throughout the state, they are not only looking for alcohol violations, but drugs, weapons and now, human trafficking.

Every agent has received training on how to spot signs of human trafficking in Ohio's liquor permit establishments. Last October, agents attended a human trafficking awareness training put on by the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The training explained what human trafficking looks like and what agents do when they observe this illegal activity.

"Our agents are often in a prime setting to spot victims of human trafficking," said Agent-in-Charge Eric Wolf. "In these cases, time is of the essence. Our agents can start the process to get these people to safety and do so quickly."

Many victims of human trafficking are often moved through adult entertainment clubs, or even truck stops, which often have liquor permits.

Staff and patrons should also know the signs of human trafficking such as victims are unable to come and go as they please; are under 18-years old and providing commercial sex acts; has very few or no personal possessions and are not in control of their own money and identification; claims to be visiting and is unable to clarify where they are staying; and has inconsistencies in their story.

Anyone who thinks they have come into contact with a victim of human trafficking needs to act quickly and contact OIU at #677 on the cell phone or for emergencies, call 911.

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The Ohio Investigative Unit agents are plain-clothed fully sworn peace officers. OIU is charged with enforcing the state's liquor laws and is the only state law enforcement agency specifically tasked with investigating food stamp fraud crimes. Agents also investigate tobacco violations.

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