

Guiding Questions

The SoE is both a framework and a reflection tool that is used to explore the different ways that people can experience unfairness, discrimination, harassment, and violence in relation to how they are supporting themselves. This guide has been written to support the integration of the SoE as a framework. It is not intended to serve as a checklist for an intake or counselling session. Instead, the questions can help professionals reflect on conversations to deepen understanding in considering the different aspects of 'work' that contribute to exploitation.

It is not uncommon that people seeking service do not think about their situation as work related, especially when the exploitation is perpetrated by a boyfriend or relative. In initial testing of the SoE with survivors, the feedback suggested the context of work is helpful in reframing what was happening and in contrasting their experience to workplace rights. Everyone has the right to decent work.

The SoE explores three areas of work:

1. Interactions
2. Choice
3. The work situation

The questions in this guide have been created using the frame of 'decent work' that was established by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The Decent Work Movement presents an opportunity to be a champion of working conditions and social policies that ensure work environments are dignified and supportive. Everyone has the right to be safe and respected at work or anywhere they earn a living, including those who work in the sex trade. Sex work should not be conflated with trafficking.

Exploitation is the act of treating someone unfairly to benefit from their activity or work.

Work describes how individuals make a living. In the context of exploitation, our definition of work includes what a person does to meet their basic needs and/or when others use a person to make their living or to profit from their actions.

1: WORK INTERACTIONS

1. Does the person:
 - have opportunities to grow and learn in how they are making a living?
 - have opportunities to advance?
 - feel valued by others in their work?
 - feel respected?

If the answer is 'no' to any the questions above, is it because...

- It's a dead-end situation
 - It's a toxic environment
 - They don't have the same opportunities as others to advance because of who they are or how they identify
 - They were tricked into this work with lies
 - Are there any other reasons?
2. Does the person...
 - experience discrimination? If yes, how often?
 - feel safe at work?
 - have to hide parts of their life?
 3. While working, has the person been...
 - bullied
 - harassed
 - sexually harassed
 - Assaulted
 - Raped
 - Closely watched or monitored to control them
 4. Who makes work unsafe?
 - Someone who has more power, like a boss or a boyfriend
 - Co-worker(s)
 - Customer(s)
 - Others, who?
 5. How often does the person feel unsafe at work?
 6. Would they report violence or harassment to a boss and expect to be protected?

7. Would they report to outside authorities if they need to: (eg. Ministry of Labour, Human Rights, Immigration Canada, Police)

With respect to reporting, if they said 'no' or 'I'm not sure' is it because...

- It would never occur to them to report
- They don't know how to report
- They would never report because of distrust of authorities
- They would never report because of past experience with authorities
- They are afraid of losing their job
- They have reported in the past but nothing happened
- They are afraid they will be hurt
- They are afraid of being arrested
- They are afraid of being deported
- They are afraid for their life, or their family
- Are there other reasons?

2: CHOICE

1. Does the person...
 - like the work they do?
 - choose the work they do?
2. Can they quit anytime to find a new job?

If 'no' is the answer to either of the last two questions, is it because...

- There are not many options for work in their community
- They can't afford to look for another job
- They don't have the education to find a new job
- Their work permit ties them to this job
- They hide that they are looking for other ways to earn money
- Their financial responsibilities keep them stuck in this situation
- They worry about the safety of their family
- They are pressured to keep this job by their family or partner
- They have been forced to do things against their principles
- They have been forced to do things that could get them arrested
- They have been threatened with deportation
- Are there other reasons?

3. Does the person...

- decide when they work?
- have a say in where they work?
- in how many hours they work in a day?

If they chose 'no' to any of the last three questions, is it because...

- They don't have control over when, where or how much they work
- The boss / boyfriend doesn't provide choices or options
- They can't make plans because they are at the mercy of when the boss / boyfriend wants them to work
- They have financial responsibilities that force them to work nights, weekends, to make ends meet
- They are responsible for medical costs that can't covered with their wages
- The care responsibilities force them to work more than they want
- Status limits their choices
- Are there other reasons?

4. Is the person limited in any way as to where they feel safe and welcome at work?

5. Is it safe to talk about their work with others? If not, is it because...

- It's better not to talk about what they do because people look down on them / judge them
- Talking about work could get them arrested
- Talking about work puts them at risk of being hurt
- Their communication is monitored and controlled
- Are there other reasons?

6. Can the person freely socialize with the people they work with?

3: WORKING CONDITIONS

1. Can the person live on what they earn? (without having to work extra / overtime)

2. Does the person:

- have a full-time position
- have savings
- have a pension
- have benefits

- take paid vacations
 - get paid for overtime
 - get paid sick leave
3. Are they a member of a union?
 4. Has their employer provided training on workplace violence and harassment?
 5. Does their workplace have a policy on workplace violence and harassment? Do they know where to find it?
 6. Does the person:
 - make enough to cover rent and basic necessities
 - have to work more than one job
 - have to work lots of overtime to get by
 - have medical expenses not covered
 - receive full payment for their hours worked
 - have to pay to live in a place provided by the employer – how much?
 - have to pay a cash penalties for speaking out, or being late etc.
 - have someone else who keeps or withholds, some or all of their earnings