

PRACTICAL • SURVIVOR-CENTERED • CIVIL ACCOUNTABILITY

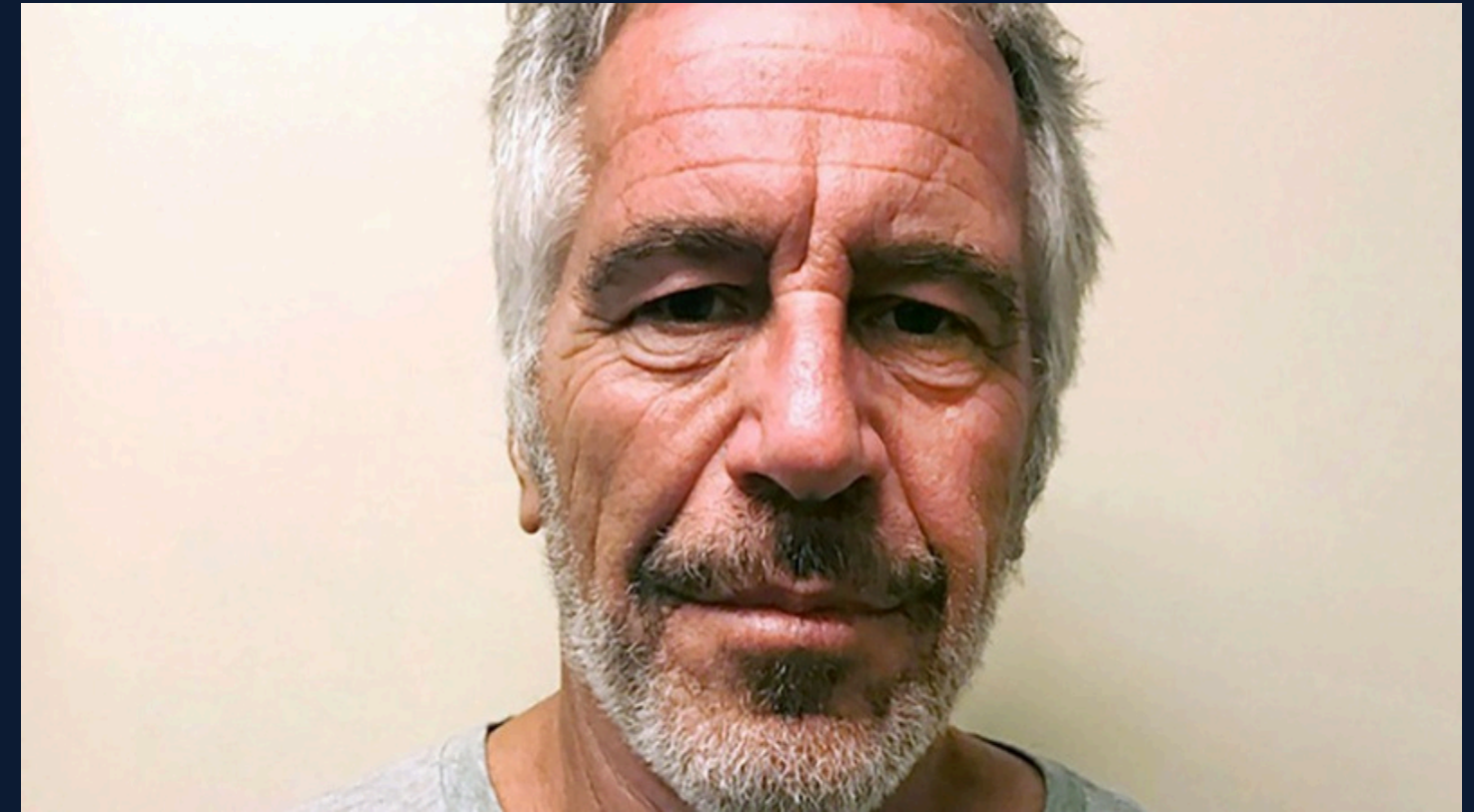
Beyond the Arrest

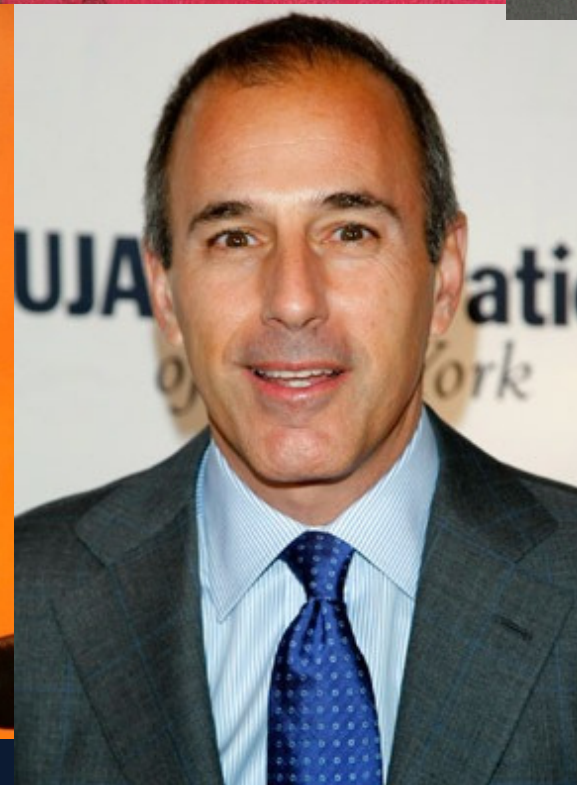
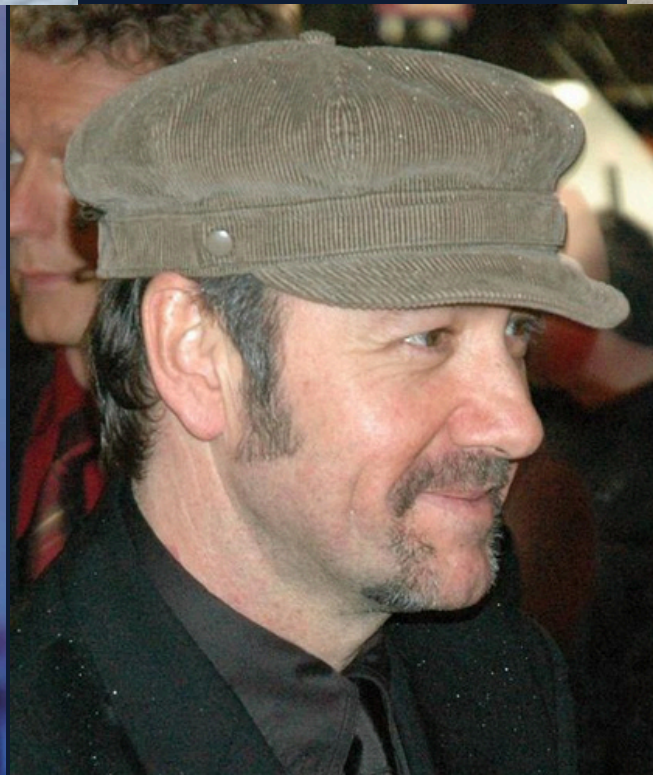
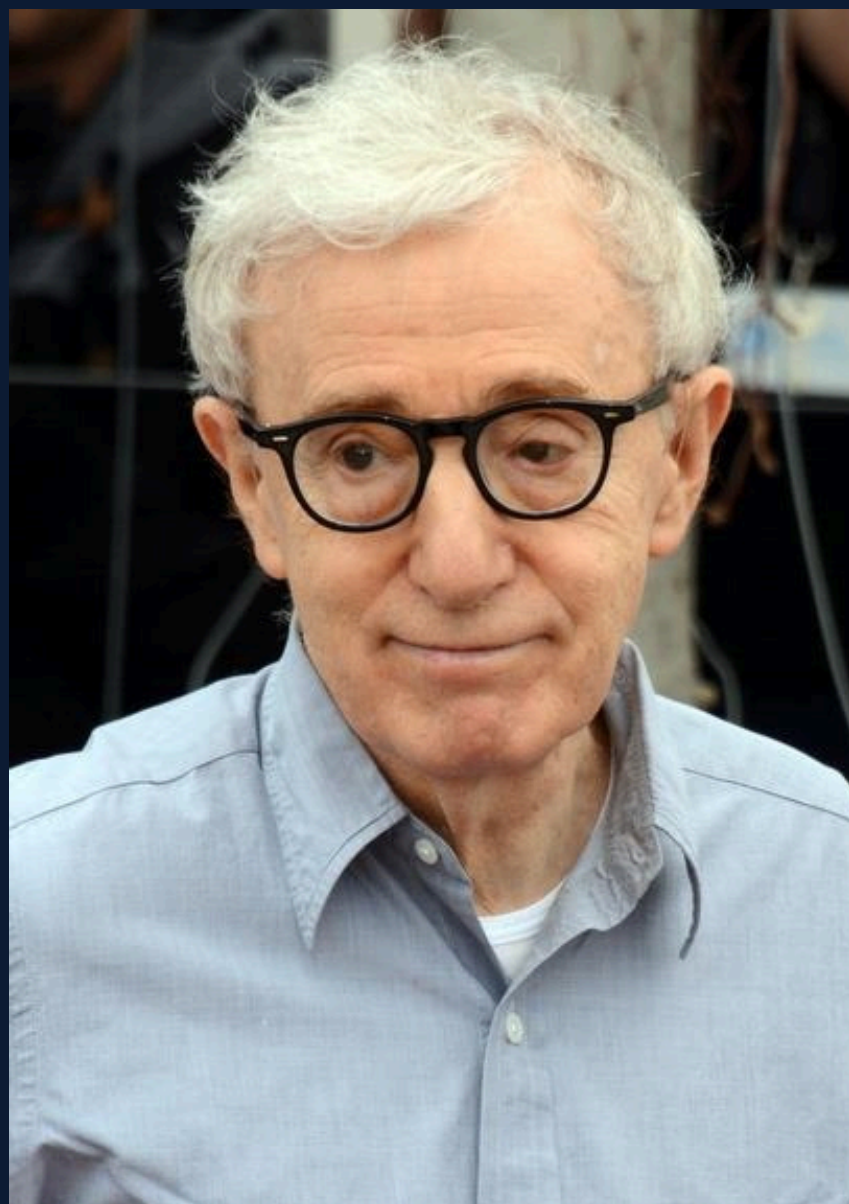
Civil Liability Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act

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Perspective shaped by survivor-side litigation involving Jeffrey Epstein, Bill Cosby, and other high-profile defendants.





Child sexual abuse: awareness & prevention

Abuse crosses socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural lines, religions and levels of education.



1 in 3 girls & 1 in 5 boys

in the United States are sexually abused before age 18.

More than 90%

of individuals with a developmental delay or disability will experience sexual abuse at least once in their lifetimes.

1 in 5 children

are solicited sexually through the Internet before their 18th birthday.

95%

of child sexual abuse is preventable through education and awareness, according to the flyer.

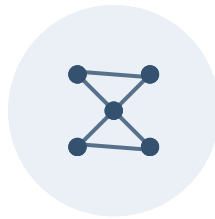
What survivor litigation teaches us

The law is important — but the pattern is what people in the room actually see.



Abuse rarely announces itself

Most people see only fragments: a ride, a hotel room, a “boyfriend,” cash, a sudden absence, a controlling adult, a repeated referral.



Trafficking is often an ecosystem

A perpetrator may be surrounded by recruiters, drivers, assistants, businesses, online tools, or others who make the exploitation easier.



Small facts become big evidence

A note, text, room number, license plate, attendance change, camera clip, or exact quote can later establish knowledge and participation.

A survivor may not tell the story in chronological order — and may return to the person exploiting them. Neither fact means the exploitation was voluntary.

Child sex trafficking — in plain English

For minors, the federal definition is intentionally simple.

**UNDER
18** + **COMMERCIAL
SEX**

= SEX TRAFFICKING

No proof of force, fraud, or coercion is required when the person caused to engage in the commercial sex act is a minor.

What does “commercial” mean?

A sex act where anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Cash

Hotel room

Drugs

Food / shelter

Gifts / rides

Protection / status

The value does not have to be paid to the child.

The civil remedy: § 1595

The TVPRA lets survivors pursue civil accountability — not only criminal prosecution.

PATH 1

THE PERPETRATOR

The person who committed a violation of the federal trafficking chapter.

PATH 2

THE BENEFICIARY

Someone who knowingly benefits from participation in a venture that the person knew — or should have known — engaged in a TVPRA violation.

DAMAGES

Money damages for harm caused by the trafficking.

ATTORNEYS' FEES

The statute authorizes reasonable attorneys' fees.

TIME LIMIT

Generally the later of 10 years after the claim arose or, for a minor, 10 years after turning 18.

FEDERAL COURT

The statute expressly creates a federal civil action.

Source: 18 U.S.C. § 1595(a), (c). State-law remedies and deadlines may differ.

“Knew or should have known” is built from facts

Frontline observations can become the evidence lawyers later call “knowledge.”

At a school

- Sudden unexplained absences
- New older “boyfriend” / controller
- Cash, hotel keys, gifts, multiple phones
- Abrupt behavior or peer-group change

In law enforcement

- Prior calls at the same location
- Online ads tied to a room / phone
- License plates, camera footage, names
- Statements by staff, drivers, companions

At a hotel / business

- Repeated adult visitors to one room
- Local guest paying cash / frequent room changes
- Minor with no ID or not on reservation
- Staff assistance that bypasses normal rules

PATTERN

not one clue

In counseling / advocacy

- Exact words used by the survivor
- Who controls money / transport / phone
- Recruitment by friend or family member
- Threats, debt, dependency, housing needs

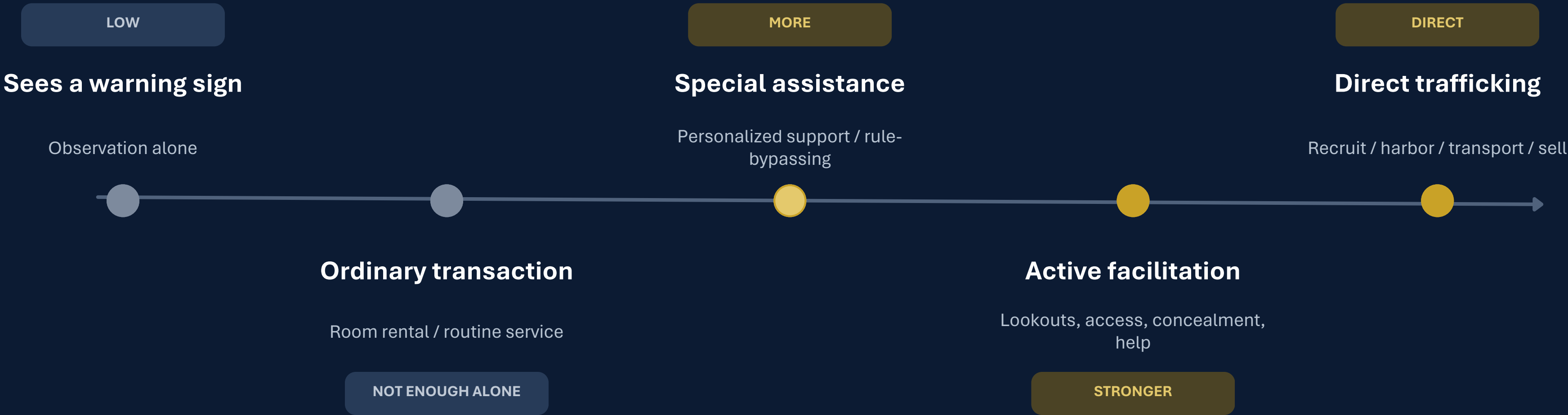
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In the Eleventh Circuit, “participation” requires more

8

Florida, Georgia, and Alabama: ordinary business with a trafficker is not enough by itself.

A practical continuum

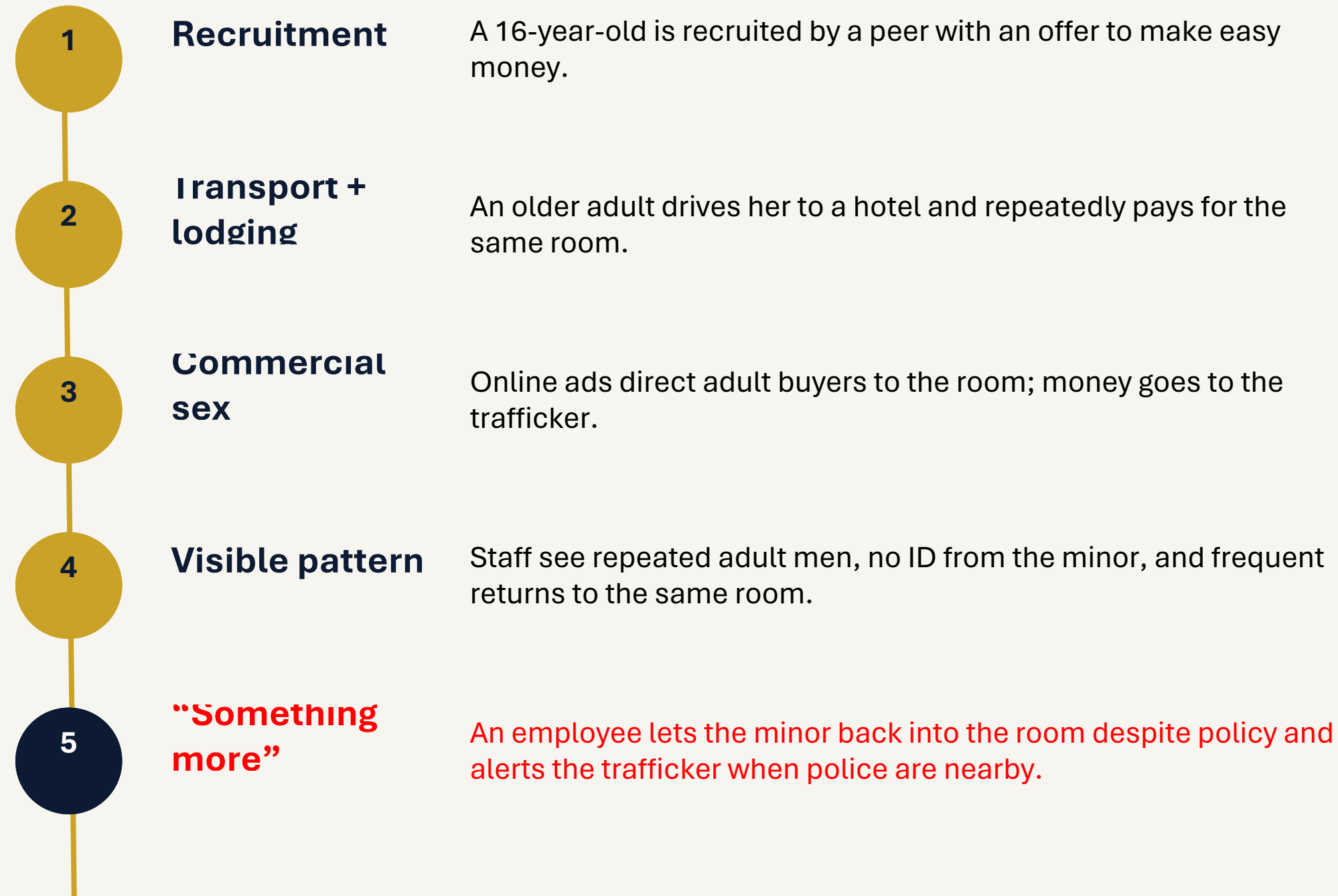


2026 Eleventh Circuit: renting a room — even with knowledge — is not automatically “participation.” But evidence of personalized support or other “something more” can allow a jury to find participation.

Doe #1 v. Red Roof Inns, 21 F.4th 714 (11th Cir. 2021); A.G. v. Northbrook Indus., Inc. (11th Cir. Mar. 30, 2026).

Composite scenario: “Room 214”

A fictional teaching example drawn from recurring fact patterns in survivor cases — not confidential case facts.



Ask 3 questions

1 Who benefited?
Money, fees, occupancy, favors, access.

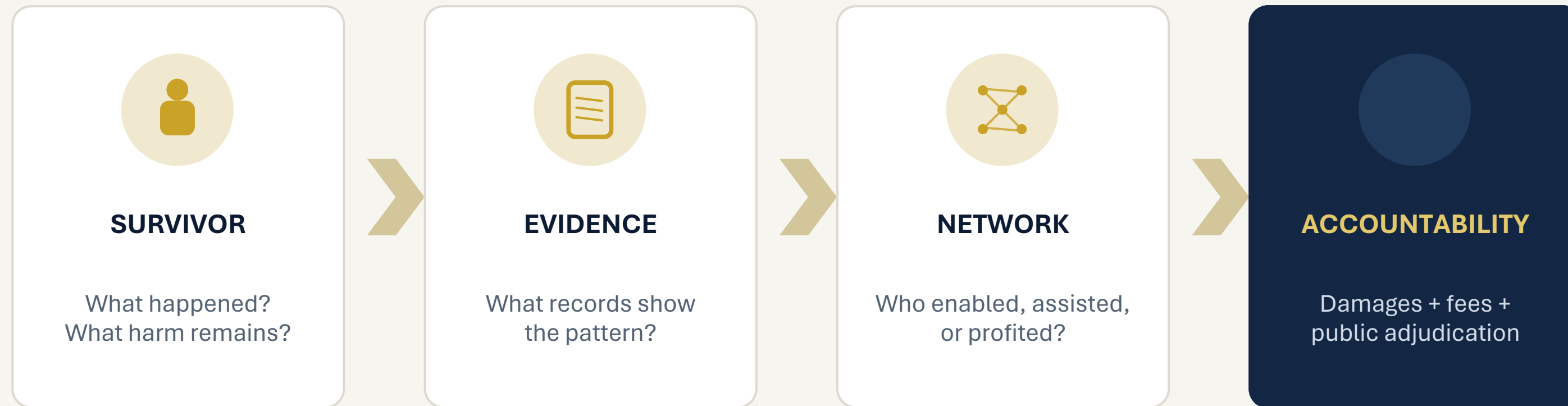
2 Who participated?
Who did more than passively observe or provide an ordinary service?

3 What did they know?
What facts made the trafficking apparent — or should have?

Why civil cases matter — even after the criminal case

Civil litigation asks different questions and can reach different actors.

LESSON FROM EPSTEIN + OTHER SURVIVOR MATTERS



In high-profile survivor cases, criminal proceedings may focus on guilt of a particular defendant. Civil discovery can focus on the wider system: records, policies, communications, finances, supervision, and who knew what — when.

**Different
question.
Different
proof**

18 U.S.C. § 1595 authorizes damages and reasonable attorneys' fees.

What you can do that helps a survivor — and a future case

Your job is not to prove the lawsuit. Your job is to respond safely and preserve reliable information.

DO

- ✓ Prioritize immediate safety and medical needs.
- ✓ Follow mandatory-reporting law and agency protocol.
- ✓ Write down the survivor's exact words — not your conclusions.
- ✓ Preserve texts, screenshots, room numbers, video, names, dates, and vehicles.
- ✓ Limit unnecessary retelling; connect the survivor with a trained advocate.

DON'T

- ✗ Demand a perfectly consistent chronology.
- ✗ Confront a suspected trafficker in a way that increases danger.
- ✗ Delete, crop, edit, or “clean up” digital evidence.
- ✗ Conduct repeated informal interviews that can contaminate memory.
- ✗ Promise arrest, prosecution, money, or a particular case outcome.

DHS Blue Campaign encourages recognition + appropriate response; follow your jurisdiction's reporting requirements.

Five things to remember

See the pattern. Protect the survivor. Preserve the evidence.

1

A minor + commercial sex = trafficking

Do not wait for proof of force, fraud, or coercion.

2

Civil liability can reach beyond the trafficker

§ 1595 includes qualifying beneficiaries who knowingly benefit from participation.

3

“Should have known” makes patterns important

Repeated warning signs, records, and policy exceptions can matter.

4

in the Eleventh Circuit, participation needs “something more”

An ordinary arm’s-length transaction is not enough by itself.

5

Your documentation may become decisive evidence

EXACT WORDS, DATES, NAMES, VIDEO, TEXTS, AND OBSERVATIONS CAN CHANGE A CASE

National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888 • Text HELP or INFO to 233733 • Emergency: 911 • HSI Tip Line: 1-866-347-2423