

What is wage theft?

The Colorado Fiscal Institute estimates that 68% of low-wage Colorado workers experience non-payment of wages in industries such as agricultural, professional caregivers, delivery workers, construction workers, restaurants, and janitorial and cleaning. Wage theft can include non-payment of wages, misclassification of an employee, underpayment of wages, non-payment of vacation pay, or illegal paycheck deductions. In 2019 Governor Jared Polis signed in to law that “. . . any employer or agent of an employer who willfully refuses to pay wages or compensation . . . , or falsely denies the amount of a wage claim, or the validity thereof, or that the same is due, with intent to secure for himself, herself, or another person any discount upon such indebtedness or any underpayment of such indebtedness or with intent to annoy, harass, oppress, hinder, coerce, delay, or defraud the person to whom such indebtedness is due, commits theft[.]”

The loss of wages for Colorado residents disproportionately impacts low-wage, immigrant, and female workers. Wage theft also prevents the ability for residents to pay for basic needs like food, housing, and transportation, therefore putting an increased load on limited local public benefits. On a state level within Colorado, it is estimated that around 440,000 workers lose over \$728 million to wage theft every year, which not only negatively impacts the individuals in our workforce, amounts up to \$45 million in lost revenue taxes for public projects in Colorado.

What to do if you have a wage issue?

First, would be to attempt to resolve the issue with your employer directly. If the issue is not resolved, take the following steps:

1. File a Demand for Payment of Wages
2. Gather information regarding your wage dispute including any supporting documentation that may help you report the wage theft and any details of extortion if it occurred.
3. If the demand has no response, you can file a complaint with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE).
4. Report to your labor union or association, if available.
5. Make a report to your local police department or Sheriff's office.

Law Enforcement Contacts



Boulder County Sheriff's Office
(unincorporated Boulder County and Nederland): 303-441-4444



CU Police Department
303-492-6666



Boulder Police Department
303-441-3333



Longmont Police Department
303-651-8501



Lafayette Police Department
303-665-5571



Louisville Police Department
303-441-4444



Erie Police Department
303-441-4444

Links related to labor trafficking

[This Is Human Trafficking website](https://thisishumantrafficking.com/)
(<https://thisishumantrafficking.com/>)

[Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking website](https://combathumantrafficking.org)
(<https://combathumantrafficking.org>)

[USDOJ Community Oriented Policing Services](https://cops.usdoj.gov/labor_trafficking)
(https://cops.usdoj.gov/labor_trafficking)

[Boulder County District Attorney's Office Wage Theft and Extortion webpage](https://bouldercounty.gov/district-attorney/wage-theft/)
(<https://bouldercounty.gov/district-attorney/wage-theft/>)

Boulder County Human Trafficking Unit
Updated 12/2025 EM

Labor Trafficking



DAHumanTraffickingUnit@bouldercounty.gov

Edna Muñoz

Senior Investigator
emunoz@bouldercounty.gov
303-441-1355

Adam String

Senior Investigator
astring@bouldercounty.gov
303-441-3687

What is labor trafficking?

Labor trafficking has been defined by the National Human Trafficking Hotline as a form of modern-day slavery where individuals are forced to provide labor or services by force, fraud or coercion. Labor trafficking thrives in secrecy and is often a hidden crime affecting people across various industries including agriculture, hospitality, construction, domestic work, and restaurants.

Victims are often forced to work under unsafe conditions, have wages withheld, or are threatened if they attempt to leave their employment. Victims of labor trafficking often live in fear of being reported for immigration issues, may lack access to their identification documents, and may have limited freedoms. Similar to sex trafficking, there is a very high percentage of survivors who state that they knew their perpetrator, whether it was a family member/loved one, professional connection or a “friend of a friend”.

Labor trafficking also disproportionately affects immigrants, particularly those who work in agricultural, domestic services, hospitality, food and beverage, manufacturing, sales crews, and construction. Particularly, the farming industry makes up nearly 60% of the labor trafficking cases in Colorado.

To learn more about labor trafficking from individuals who have lived experience, visit [This Is Human Trafficking](#) page.

Where can I report labor trafficking?

If you or believe someone you know is being labor trafficked and in immediate danger, please call 911. For more help, contact the Colorado Human Trafficking Hotline which is available by phone at 866-455-5075 or by text message at 720-999-9724. You can also contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-888-373-7888.

How the DA’s Office can help

Our office can help coordinate with other local agencies to help community members file reports, assist with the investigation, and help provide resources. Contact the Boulder County DA’s Office at 303-441-3700.

Why it’s important to file a report?

It’s important to file reports of labor trafficking to show support, get help for victims, and for agencies to understand the scope of the problem in Boulder County.

Common indicators

- Appearance of malnutrition
- Poor physical or dental health
- Signs of physical injuries and abuse
- Avoiding eye contact, social interaction, and authority figures/police
- Appearing to follow pre-set or rehearsed responses in social interactions
- Appearance of homelessness/lack of personal belongings
- Excessively long working hours
- Living at the workplace
- Lack of official documentation
- Security measures that seem to prevent access to an establishment
- Excessive debts to those in charge that prevent an individual from leaving the situation

Colorado State Laws regarding Human Trafficking

Human trafficking for involuntary servitude--human trafficking of a minor for involuntary servitude (C.R.S. 18-3-503)

(1) A person who knowingly sells, recruits, harbors, transports, transfers, isolates, entices, provides, receives, or obtains by any means another person for the purpose of coercing the other person to perform labor or services commits human trafficking for involuntary servitude.

(2) Human trafficking for involuntary servitude is a class 3 felony; except that human trafficking of a minor for involuntary servitude is a class 2 felony.

Who is Most At Risk?

Anyone can experience trafficking in any community, just as anyone can be the victim of any kind of crime. Many societal factors can put people at risk. Traffickers recognize and take advantage of people who are at-risk.

People may be at-risk to trafficking if they:

- Have an unstable living situation
- Have previously experienced other forms of violence such as sexual abuse or domestic violence
- Have run away or are involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare system
- Are facing poverty or economic need
- Have a caregiver or family member who has a substance use issue
- Are addicted to drugs or alcohol

Who Are the Traffickers?

There is no evidence that traffickers are more likely to be of a particular background. They may be family members, romantic partners, acquaintances, or strangers.

How Traffickers Lure People In

Stories become weapons in the hands of human traffickers — tales of romantic love everlasting or about good jobs and fair wages just over the horizon. Sometimes, the stories themselves raise red flags. Other times, traffickers or potential traffickers may raise red flags during recruitment.