

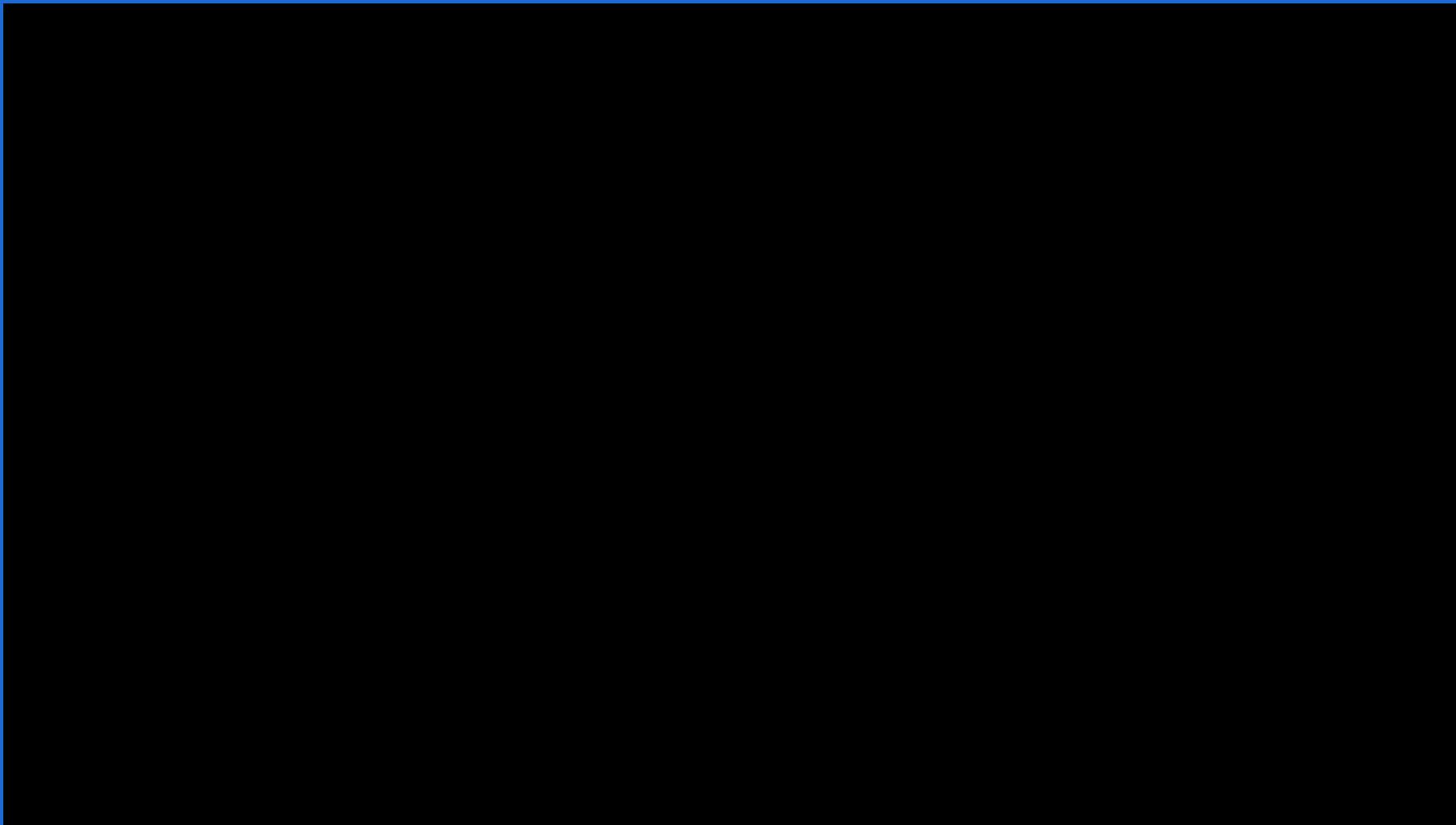
# Human Trafficking



**Ascension**

*Listening to you, caring for you.®*

**Take Care of Yourself!**





It's ALL About  
Kidnapping!

People  
Know They  
Are  
Victims

Victims Could  
Leave if They  
Want To!

Traffickers  
Randomly  
Target  
Victims

Highways  
are the  
Problem

# Human trafficking is the fastest-growing criminal industry

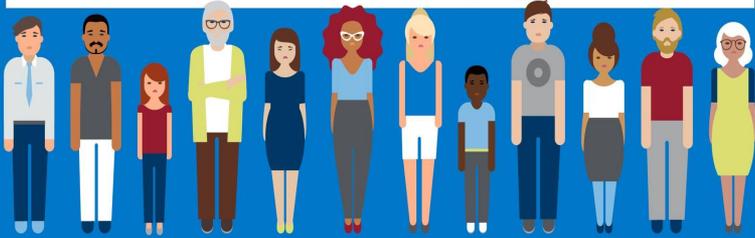
- The person is the product
- Low risk / high gain





# HUMAN TRAFFICKING CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE.

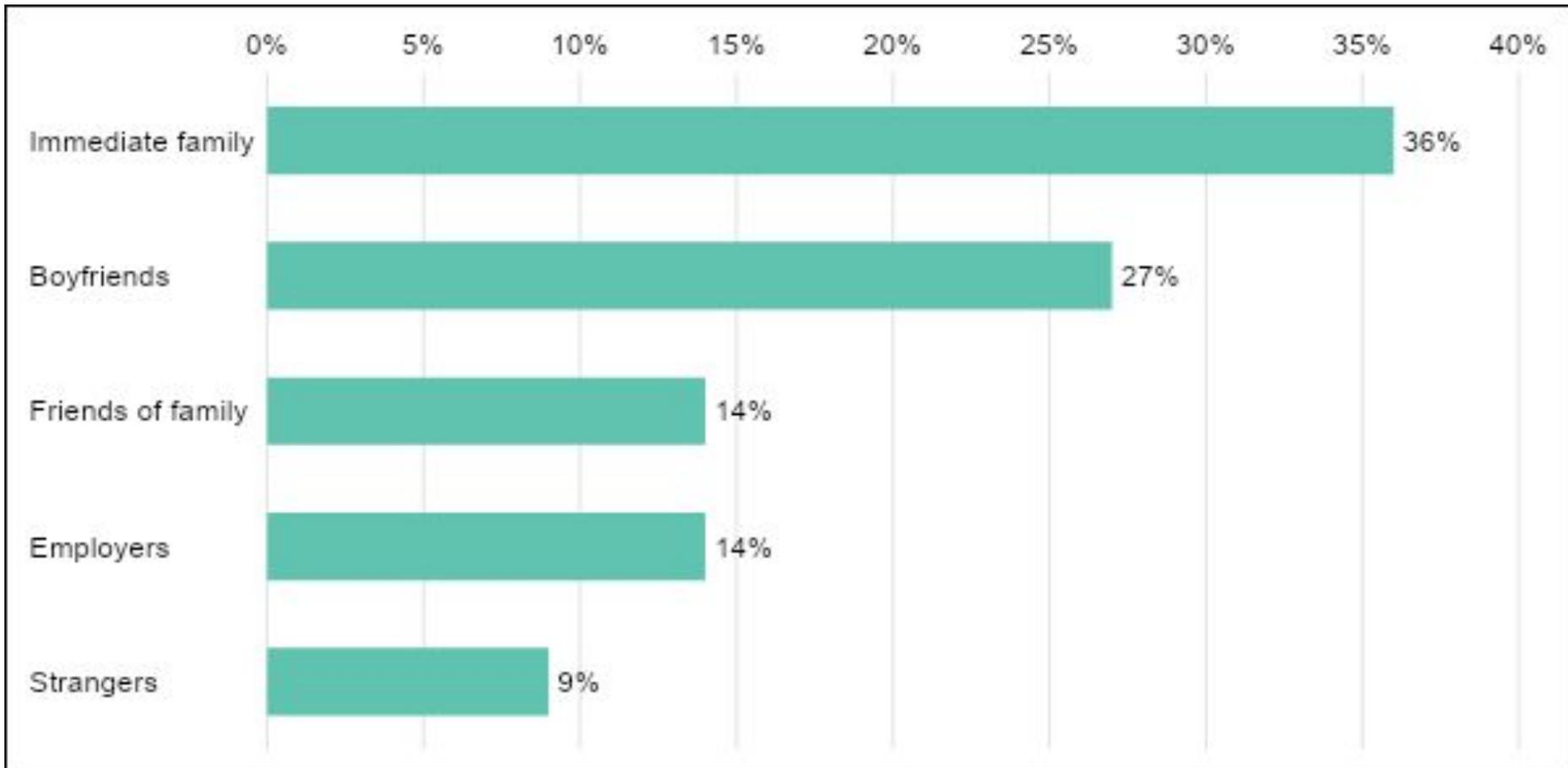
NO MATTER RACE, AGE, OR GENDER.



## Force, Fraud, Coercion

Human Trafficking is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts for profit or gain (this does not have to be monetary, it can be ANYTHING of value). The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological.

Causing someone under the age of 18 to engage in a commercial sex act is human trafficking, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud or coercion was used.



# Who are the traffickers?

- A parent or guardian who sells their child for sex to make their car payment or rent.
- A partner who forces their partner to sell themselves for sex to provide for the family.
- An individual convincing a young person to sell themselves to feed a drug addiction.
- An individual that provides food or shelter to a homeless youth but then forces them to sell sexual favors as a way to “pay” them back - often thought of as survival sex.
- A parent or guardian that makes their child work long hours at the family restaurant “under duress” instead of going to school.
- An employer who takes ID’s, passports of migrants and forces work on fields.

# H.B. 4210, H.B. 1886 & the HTRU

# — What is H.B. 4210 & H.B. 1886?

**Created a unit inside the OK Attorney General's Office mandated to:**

- Statewide Data - Jared Mason
- Law Enforcement Education and Assistance - Bo Williams
- Statewide HT Awareness and Education - Sarah Samples
- Community Engagement - Erik Zoellner
- Service Provider Support - Increase access to care for those who have experienced HT

# — The Mission: Why These Bills Matter

- AG's office (through an outside company) conducted a survey of Oklahomans.
  - While over **87%** of Oklahomans believe that human trafficking is a serious or very serious issue in OK, about **38% of those same people** believe it is not a serious issue in the OK community they personally live in. They feel like it happens “somewhere” but not “right next door.”
- When we don't know what to look for, it stays hidden and victims continue to be harmed.
- People do not know they are victims because they believe the same myths about HT being about Kidnapping or “only” Foreign National victims. We need awareness!

# Why HealthCare?

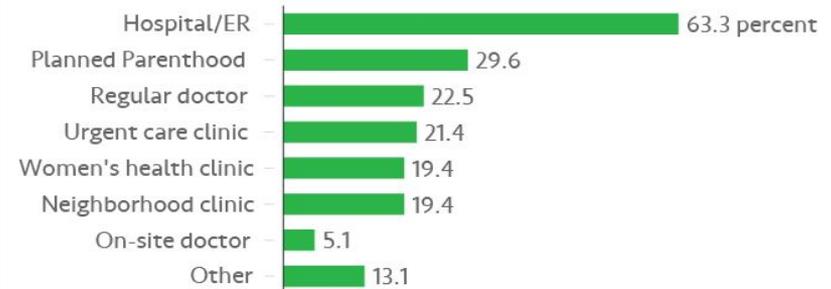
# Human Trafficking Response Program

## Why Healthcare?

- Most victims come into contact with a healthcare professional at some point while they are being trafficked
- To date, MOST are not recognized
- Long-term health consequences for those that experience HT are extreme and could be treated if caught in time
- Health care professionals can provide a safe place where victims can be offered resources and freedom from their trafficker!

# 87.8%

*of sex trafficking victims say they had some contact with health care while being trafficked*



Source: Laura J. Lederer and Christopher A. Wetzel, "The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking."

## Ascension's Approach

---

- We **recognize** individuals as victims and survivors of human trafficking (validation).
- We are a **safe place**.
- We are here to help individuals **when** they want out.
- We are **not** here to investigate.
- We **do not** need full disclosure; the story of trauma is the survivor's story and they **choose** to tell it or not.

## Human Trafficking Response Program

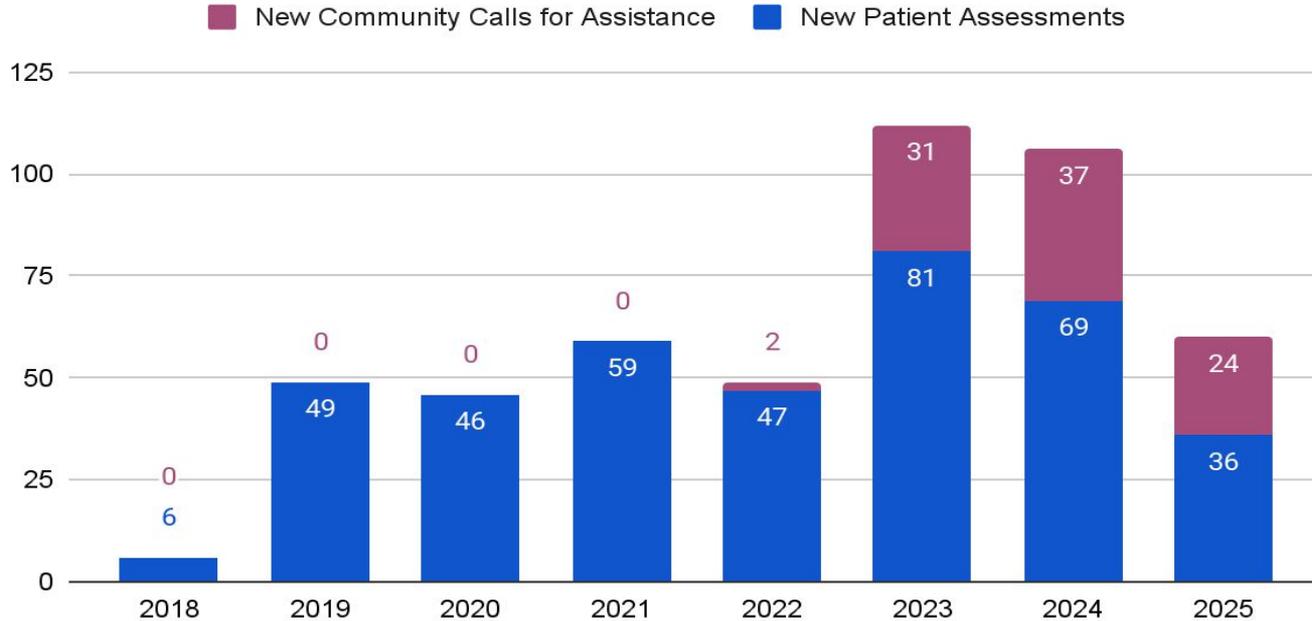
From program inception in August 2018 through March 2025, our team has assessed **400+** suspected victims of human trafficking and offered assistance and case management services to countless more in our state.



*2024 ASJ donation drive for pregnant HT victims*

# Human Trafficking Response Program

## HT Assessments (Patients and Community Calls)



# How Do I Identify Trafficking?

# Anna

Inadequate living conditions

---

Substance use as means of control or to mentally escape

---

Sexual assault and violence

---

Dress or belongings not appropriate for weather or situation or outside of their means, or not in control of personal belongings

---

Claims of just visiting or inability to clarify where living

---

Lack of choice or control regarding safe sex practices

---

# Matthew

Deprivation of basic needs

---

Involvement with new friend group, older people

---

Not allowed or able to speak for himself

---

Restricted movement

---

Isolation

---

Physical violence & abuse from traffickers or buyers

---

# Olivia

History of missing from care

---

History of recurring STDs

---

Disconnect from friends, family, activities

---

Unexplained absences from school, work, activities

---

Controlled communication

---

Unexplained cash, phone upgrades, clothing

---

Psychological and emotional abuse

---

# Maya

Not in control of personal belongings or identification

---

Withholding of medical care

---

Physical restraining, bondage or confinement

---

Not allowed or able to speak for herself - a third party may insist on being present and/or translating for them

---

Unpaid, paid little, or works excessively long/unusual hours

---

Dangerous working conditions

---

# How Do I Provide Trauma Informed Care?

**TRAUMA IS NOT AN EVENT.  
IT'S THE OVERWHELMING RESPONSE  
TO THE EVENT.**

## **TRAUMA INFORMED CARE**

A practice that promotes a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing.

Prioritize patient safety

Meet their basic needs

Provide options for resources

Keep your word

Honor their experience

Take care of yourself

**Create  
A  
Safe  
Space**

- **Every behavior makes sense** -

Understanding trauma can help us to identify when there has been a “trigger” to the victim.



# Questions

---

Does the person know they have other alternatives to their situation?

---

Has the person witnessed other crimes?

---

Has the person been forced to participate in other crimes?

---

What could the person have been threatened with?

---

Could there be other victims in the home?

---

Does the person feel this is the best that they can have?

---

Has the person asked for help in the past and been hurt worse and/or seen the person they asked for help be harmed?

---

# Questions

---

Has anyone asked you to share compromising photos of yourself with them and now they are threatening to share them if you do not work or engage in sex with others for the profit of another person?

---

Did you run away or leave your home and now someone doesn't want you to go back or contact your family members?

---

Is someone withholding food, shelter, money, drugs, medication, or anything important to you if you refuse to work or engage in sex for the profit of someone else?

---

Is someone threatening, blackmailing or hurting you or someone you care about to force you to work or perform a commercial sex act?

---

# Questions

---

Are you able to get the healthcare you need without fear of being hurt?

---

Are you paid less than minimum wage, or does someone other than you control how your paycheck is spent?

---

Is someone else keeping your birth certificate, identification, legal documents, or passport and withholding it when you ask for it?

---

Do you owe a debt to your employer, sponsor, or person who recruited you for this work that, even if you are making payments, never gets smaller or paid off?

---

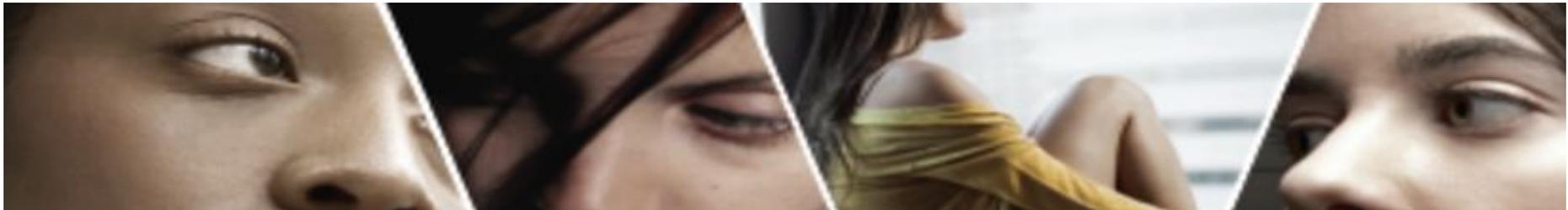
Does your employer tell you where to live?

---

## - Self Determination -

We may be subject matter experts but we are not the experts of the victim's life or story - they are.

Our job is to simply help them identify possible



We MUST  
understand the  
meaning of being  
responsible “To”  
someone, not “For”  
someone.

# Resources

---

# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

THE 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE' INITIATIVE IS DESIGNED TO RAISE AWARENESS AND EMPOWER OKLAHOMANS WITH AVAILABLE RESOURCES OF SUPPORT AND RECOVERY.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE



EDUCATION/RESOURCES

**Human Trafficking  
Hot Line:  
(855) 617-2288**



Bureau of Narcotics  
& Dangerous Drugs Control  
**OKLAHOMA**



OKLAHOMA COALITION AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING



**OCATOKLAHOMA.ORG**  
A PROGRAM OF THE FAMILY SAFETY CENTER



# LOOK BEYOND WHAT YOU CAN SEE & INVISION WHAT THEIR FUTURE CAN LOOK LIKE!

**Sara Gadd**

Human Trafficking Program Manager  
Ascension St. John  
918-417-2063 work cell  
[sara.gadd@ascension.org](mailto:sara.gadd@ascension.org)

**Sarah Samples**

Training and Outreach Manager - HTRU  
Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General  
405-522-0749  
[Sarah.Samples@oag.ok.gov](mailto:Sarah.Samples@oag.ok.gov)



OKLAHOMA PERINATAL **QUALITY**  
IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

Save the date for next  
year's OPQIC Summit!

**September 29, 2026**



**Scan QR Code to  
Complete Summit  
Evaluation**