

# Safe Outside the System: Informal Labor and Trafficking

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Informal Labor, Exploitation and  
Trafficking



# Objectives

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- Understand the scope of the informal economy and why it is important in trafficking discussions
- Learn strategies around outreach and identification
- Understand the role of the informal economies in peoples' lives
- Identify advocacy agendas for prevention and collaboration



# Informal Economy vs Formal Economy

- Any economic exchange which is not part of a country's GDP
- Under the table
- Trading for resources, bartering
- Grey economy

- Who participates in these economies?
- How has this come up in your work?



# Labor: Formal and Informal

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## Informal Labor

- Baby-Sitting
- Day Laborers doing yard work
- Prostitution
- Stripping & Exotic Dancing
- Selling DVDs on the subway
- Trading labor for resources
- Street Pharmacists

## Formal Labor

- Nannyng through an agency
- Hiring a gardening company
- Pornography
- Stripping & Exotic Dancing
- Running a CD store
- Housing a resident advisor on campus
- Pharmacists



- Minimum wage
- Hours per day
- Health/Safety

Lack of clear standards

- This is just how we are treated
- Reflections on personal value

Stigma towards the job

- Possibility of re-curring work
- Not worth pushing for improvements

Short Term & Transitory

- No documentation on amount paid, hours worked
- Competing info

Lack of Data





# Barriers to Formal Labor

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- Lack of viable economic opportunities
- Age
- Physical Ability
- Mental Health challenges
- Drug addiction
- Arrest record
- Documentation/Migration Status
- Discrimination and stigma (***Race, gender identity, sexuality***)
- Hours/Time constrains (school)
- Loss of social services

- Available to those without training, who may not pass a drug test

Fewer barriers to entry

- Available anywhere, in any time frame
- Can responsively support other forms of income

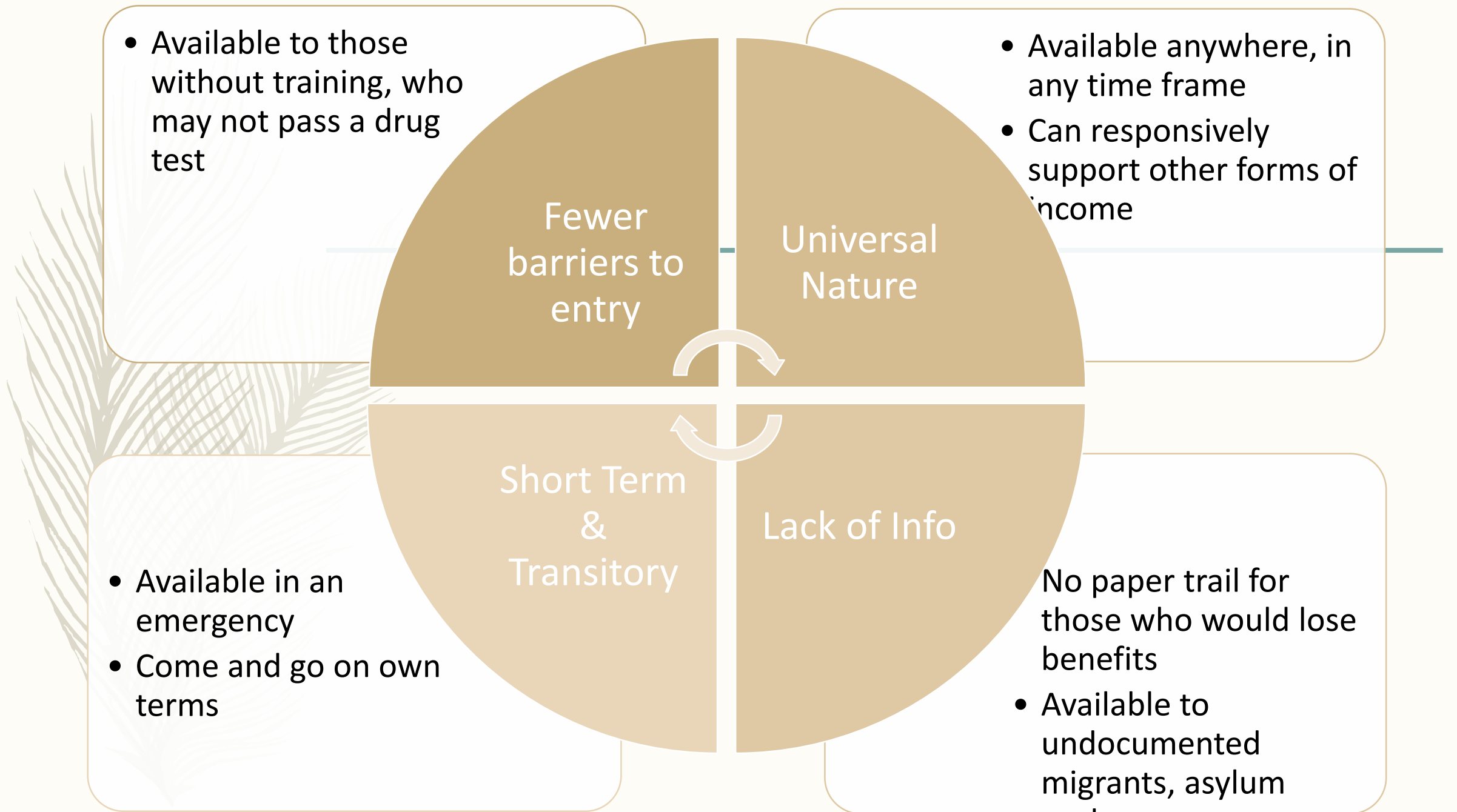
Universal Nature


- Available in an emergency
- Come and go on own terms

Short Term & Transitory

- No paper trail for those who would lose benefits
- Available to undocumented migrants, asylum seekers

Lack of Info





Case Example:  
Texas and the  
Rio Grande  
Valley

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# Criminalization of Informality



## Outright Criminalization

Drugs

Smuggling

## Administrative Criminalization

Educational  
Minimums

Licensing, inc  
fees

## The Penumbra

Incomplete  
reporting

Intentional lack  
of knowledge



# Prevention

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- Know Your Rights Trainings for vulnerable communities
  - Around Documentation and Law Enforcement Interaction
  - Around Informal Labor
  - Around how to access services
- Offer materials which respond to the ways in which people live *and will not cause further criminalization*
- Expand other labor opportunities and trainings
- Lower barriers to formal employment



# Outreach

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- Relationship Building with non-traditional labor
  - National Day Laborer Organizing Network
  - National Guest Workers Alliance
  - Jobs with Justice
- Who is already serving the needs of this community?
  - Cultural Spaces
  - Health
  - Housing, SNAP and other service organizations



# Relationship Building: *Advocacy as Trust*

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- **Support of expanded labor rights**
  - Domestic Workers Bill of Rights
  - Excluded Workers Congress
- **Supporting expanded access to services**
  - Universal Health Care
- **Help to End Practices which harm communities**
  - Immigration Enforcement
  - Use of harm reduction supplies as evidence of a crime (syringe laws, condoms)



Prosecution:  
New York  
State and  
Child Labor

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# Protection

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- Resources and Services
- T-Visas
- Pandering/Begging
- Restitution
- Case Example



# Questions

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