

SNAPSHOT – CHINESE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND THE IMI

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U.S.-based Chinese employment agencies identify domestic jobs for newly arrived Chinese nationals and Chinese citizens seeking to emigrate to the United States. A number of Chinese victim workers first reported learning about the illicit massage industry (IMI) from these agencies and some victims share overlapping public records histories with these entities, according to a limited body of reporting. Although these agencies fulfill staffing needs in a variety of industries, job advertisements for the massage industry are ubiquitous. Uncovering definitive, wide-scale links between these agencies and the broader IMI, however, remains an intelligence gap. Nevertheless, we assess that sustained engagement and improved monitoring of these agencies could raise awareness about trafficking realities and potentially impede IMI sourcing tactics.

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND VICTIM WORKERS

These agencies are primarily concentrated in New York City (115) and the greater Los Angeles area (80); however, they can also be found in many metropolitan areas. These agencies advertise jobs in numerous sectors, to include: child/elder care, hospitality, construction, and housekeeping.

- While some job placement agencies claim to only offer services to individuals who are in the U.S. legally, this sentiment does not appear to be universal.
- Agency advertisements can be found in Chinese-language newspapers, such as Sing Tao Daily and World Journal, as well as on websites www.chineseinla.com and www.nychinaren.com.
- Prospective job applicants are typically required to pay an up-front fee in exchange for job placement services, although this fee structure often varies based on locality and job-type.

A SAMPLE TEST CASE: ATTEMPTING TO LINK LOS ANGELES-BASED AGENCIES TO THE BROADER IMI

Public records and open source searches of Los Angeles-based employment agencies yielded **more than 6,000 individuals with verified public records links to at least one employment agency address**. In many cases, these individuals listed the employment agency address as their official address on employment-related paperwork. Of those 6,000 individuals, **only 50 had overlapping address histories with locations linked to suspect illicit massage businesses (IMBs) on Rubmaps**. Although a very small number of identified IMB addresses were associated with two or more of these individuals, these instances were extremely rare when compared to the aggregate population. Although a review of the data did not reveal other verifiable links between these agencies and suspected IMBs, additional research on New York-based agencies could yield a different result.

ENGAGEMENT WITH EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES COULD YIELD POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND RAISE AWARENESS

According to a limited body of reporting, victim workers often initially seek employment in the licit economy and view employment agencies as one way to improve their job prospects. In some cases, IMI recruitment occurs months or sometimes years after a victim's initial attempts to identify a job.

- **Sustained engagement** with local Chinese employment agencies and proprietors, to include information sharing about the IMI, **could potentially increase their awareness** about trafficking realities, as well as reinforce the potential negative ramifications for their businesses should it be discovered they facilitated recruitment into the IMI.
- Highlighting a massage establishment's presence on Rubmaps as a **negative employment indicator** could empower employment agencies to reject such clients and alert authorities.
- Mandating that employment agencies display **human trafficking hotline information** and other informational materials could also provide potential victims with a means to seek help.