

What You Should Know

ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING



As a parent, you do everything you can to protect your children. From making them eat their veggies to monitoring their online activity, you want to help them to grow up healthy and safe. You may have heard about human trafficking on social media or the news, but you might not know that it affects children in every community across the United States. Children of all ages, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds can become victims of human sex traffickers in the United States.

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Human trafficking is the exploitation of another person for labor, domestic servitude or commercial sexual activity by force, fraud or coercion. If a child (under 18) is induced to perform a commercial sex act then it is automatically considered human trafficking—no showing of force, fraud or coercion by another person is necessary. The official U.S. criminal law definitions can be found by googling: Title 22, Chapter 78 of the U.S. Code, Section 7102. Human trafficking & commercial exploitation affects children across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines. It affects every demographic. One of the best ways to protect your children and the children in your community is to know the risk factors and the signs associated with human trafficking.

WHO DO TRAFFICKERS TARGET



Traffickers have been known to actively seek out children with one or more of the following risk factors:

- Behavioral problems or mental illness
- Low self-esteem
- Sexual minority status (LGBTQ)
- History of abuse or neglect
- Exposure to intimate partner violence
- Caregiver substance abuse or criminality
- Poverty
- Gang affiliation
- Substance abuse

RED FLAGS



Some red flags that a person is a victim of human sex trafficking include:

- Tattoos as a form of branding
- Fake nails or hair, or “extras” that are out of proportion to what you’d expect the child to have
- Hotel room keys
- Fake ID
- Numerous school absences
- Dating much older, abusive or controlling men
- Large amounts of cash, jewelry or new clothes that you did not buy them
- Signs of physical assault or unexplained injuries (branding or tattooing, fractures, bruising, black eyes)
- Runaway or homeless
- Always on their phone and refuses to take breaks
- Sleeps with their phone
- Not coming home at night
- Coming home in different clothes than when they left
- Using words that are indicative of the “life” (commercial sex*) such as: finessing, getting a telly (a hotel), baddy, wifey, out of pocket, quota, RHGO (Real Ho-ing Going On), etc.
- Sudden change in fashion (more provocative)
- Sudden negative change in grades
- Always exhausted
- Excessive crying or depression
- Expressing feelings of self-hate or worthlessness
- Acting secretive; defensive to questions
- Unable to say where they are or have been
- Will not disclose information about who their friends are
- Will not look you or others in the eye
- Having a significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend
- A lot of adults you do not know on their social media
- Multiple STIs / STDs
- Sudden poor hygiene and odors that are indicative of an STI / Urinary Tract Infection
- Is someone (a boyfriend/girlfriend) trying to control their movements/communication with other friends?
- No longer going out with other friends

*A commercial sex act is a sexual act conducted in exchange for money or things of value. For a teenager, this could be a place to sleep, food, a cell phone, and more, and might be called “Survival Sex”



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TRAFFICKING METHODS MAY INCLUDE

- Threats of violence
- Isolation from friends & family
- Deceiving the individual
- Instilling distrust or fear of law enforcement
- Promising love and gifts
- Creating a dependence of the victim upon the trafficker through financial needs, debt, drugs, the need of a safe place to stay
- Blackmailing with threats of turning in the victim or those in their family who are undocumented, or threatening to expose the youth's past actions or pictures to parents and/or peers

GROOMING PROCESS



Traffickers identify targets and establish a relationship through a "grooming" process.

What does GROOMING Look Like?

- False promises—like a "Honeymoon" phase
- Traffickers identify a potential victim's needs and begins to fulfill them
- Trust with the target is built on a false sense of care and love. (For many at-risk youth, a trafficker may be the first adult figure that follows through on their promises or says "I love you")

Signs that a child is being groomed for future trafficking:

- Has new, older friends
- Talks about friends who seem too good to be true
- Spends an increasing amount of time online or on their phone
- Has suddenly changed their appearance, how she dresses, or grooming habits
- Suddenly has items they wouldn't be able to afford, like a cell phone, new clothes, etc.
- Has become withdrawn from the family and more secretive

TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY



- Allowing you to be friends with them on their social media sites,
- Accepting friend requests only from people they have met in person,
- Having them tell you if someone suggests that they send sexy or provocative photos or if someone offers them a job or travel opportunity,
- Talking to you if they receive sexual images or other inappropriate links from another person,
- Asking your child to set their photos on the highest level of internet security so that strangers cannot download their images.
- "Human Trafficking" talk a mandatory talk to have with your kids--like the "sex talk" or the "drug talk".

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN



By helping your child develop and maintain a good self-esteem and healthy relationships, you reduce the risk that he or she will be targeted by traffickers.

- Know what your kids are doing online. Establish guidelines and monitor use of Internet and devices.
- Know who your kids are with and where they are hanging out. There are obvious situations, like being on the street late at night, but even places like the mall can be dangerous.
- Teach your children resiliency. Talk to them about healthy relationships and personal boundaries.
- Help your child build a strong self-esteem from an early age.
- Maintain open communication with your child. Be someone the teens in your life can talk with. Foster a relationship that encourages your child to come to you in case of an emergency.