

How to Prevent Youth Trafficking

The trafficking of youth is a crime involving the exploitation of individuals for the purposes of a commercial sex act or involuntary labor through the use of coercion, fraud or force. In all cases, the persuasion of a person under the age of 18 to perform a commercial sexual act is *a crime*, regardless of whether coercion, fraud or force are used. In some situations, a trafficker will trick, defraud, or physically force a person to perform commercial sex. In others, a person is lied to, threatened, manipulated or assaulted into working under illegal, inhumane, or unacceptable conditions.

Although human trafficking can happen to *anyone*, there are a number of known risk factors for victimization. The most common include recent migration or relocation, being a runaway or an unhoused youth, involvement with the child welfare system, substance use, and mental health concerns. Perpetrators span all gender, racial, ethnic and economic demographics, and can include individuals, family members, business owners, intimate partners, members of a gang or network, corporate executives and government officials.

Warning signs for human trafficking

It is important to *educate youths* about the warning signs of human trafficking situations. One or more of the following circumstances may indicate that a person is at-risk for sex or labor trafficking.

These include when an intimate partner or employer:

- Is pushy, forceful, very persuasive, and makes promises of things that are too good to be true (e.g. high wages, gifts).
- Is unclear about the location of employment, terms, and/or employer name or credentials.
- Exerts pressure for a person to commit to employment on the spot, and threatens that the opportunity will be lost if an immediate decision isn't made.
- Asks a person to do something outside of their comfort zone, including performing sexual acts for others.
- Uses or threatens violence to create a culture of fear.
- Attempts to restrict access to family, friends and social networks.
- Is overbearing, and constantly checks in on a person's behavior and location.
- Prohibits access to money or communication devices such as phones or computers.

How to educate youth about staying safe

It is important that adults *empower youth* with tools they can immediately access to accurately assess their safety. This includes sharing the following guidance:

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- If a person or circumstance makes you feel uncomfortable, take it seriously and remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible.
- Keep all of your important identification documents, as well as phone numbers of trusted adults, with you at all times. Another person or employer does not have the right to possess or hold onto your ID.
- Make sure that you have access to a means of communication (cell phone or phone card) as well as access to your bank account at all times.
- Let a trusted person know if you are concerned for your safety. If possible, set up a safe word with this person – one that indicates that you are fine and able to speak, and another that you are in danger, and that the person is to immediately call 911.
- If you suspect that you are in immediate danger call 911 right away before contacting anyone else.
- Use a public computer if possible, and always delete your search and browser history.
- Create a new email account with a free service like [Gmail](#), [Yahoo](#), or [Hushmail](#). Use a username that is not related to your name. Do not use birth dates or other identifying information that might tip a trafficker off about your location.
- Save copies of threatening emails, texts and chats.
- Consider blocking or filtering incoming emails of traffickers or people who are not trustworthy.
- Double check social media privacy settings and remove all geographical check-in points from posts. Do not provide unnecessary information about your daily activities or location. Learn more about [Instagram](#), [X](#) and [Facebook](#) privacy and safety.
- Consider disabling social media chats and blocking or unfriending your trafficker's friends, acquaintances, and mutual friends who may not be trustworthy.

What school counselors, administrators and other mental health professionals can do.

In addition to educating youths about the warning signs of human trafficking, and empowering them with tools to keep them safe, trained professionals within schools can assist youths at risk for trafficking by creating a safety plan.

These plans should include:

- Assessing the current risk, and identifying potential or current safety concerns.
- Creating strategies for avoiding or reducing the threat of harm.
- Clearly outlining specific plans for responding when safety is threatened or compromised.

As always, it is important to follow the policies, procedures and guidelines set forth by your school district.

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Where to get help

If you are being exploited or feel that you are experiencing human trafficking

- **Call 911**
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) 1-888-373-7888, TTY: 711, *Text 233733, “HELP” or “INFO” or contact the [live chat](#). Services offered in English, Spanish, and 200 more languages.
- [Línea Nacional Contra la Trata de Personas](#), las 24 horas del día, 7 días a la semana al 1-888-373-7888 para hablar con uno de nuestros asesores especialmente capacitados en este tema. Se presta apoyo en más de 200 idiomas. Estamos aquí para escuchar y conectarlo con la ayuda que necesite para mantenerse a salvo.

How to report a suspected incidence of human trafficking

- **Call 911** or contact your local police department or emergency access number.
- [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#): Call the toll-free (24/7) at 1-888-373-888 (1-888-373-7888). Offers 24/7 service in over 200 languages.
- [Línea Nacional Contra la Trata de Personas](#), Para reportar un posible caso de trata de personas, llame a la Línea Nacional al 1-888-373-7888. Toda comunicación con la línea directa es estrictamente confidencial. Lea nuestra Política de Confidencialidad haciendo clic aquí.
- **Text HELP or INFO to BeFree** (233733).
- [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).
- Submit a tip online at [Trafficking Resource Center](#) or call the hotline 1-888-373-7888, TTY: 711, *Text 233733, [live chat](#)

Resources for parents, caregivers, school staff and community members

- [Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force \(SATF\)](#) provides educational opportunities, resources, and help for survivors.
- [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#) provides [resources for keeping youth safe while online](#), [guidelines for safe cell phone use](#), and [other information](#) for parents and families.
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) provides detailed information on safety planning, and how to prevent or respond to a human trafficking situation.
- [Youth.gov](#) offers links to videos, podcasts, training resources, and programs aimed at preventing youth trafficking.
- [Truckers Against Trafficking \(TAT\)](#) – energizes and equips and mobilizes members of trucking, bus and energy industries to combat human trafficking.