

Members of the Board

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

A FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOLS

Human trafficking is a serious federal crime with penalties of up to imprisonment for life. Federal law defines “severe forms of trafficking in persons” as: “ (A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; (b) the recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.” [U.S.C. 7102(8)]

In short, human trafficking is a form of modern slavery. Those who recruit minors into commercial sexual exploitation (or prostitution) violate federal anti-trafficking laws, even if there is no force, fraud, or coercion.

How does Human Trafficking Affect Our Schools?

Trafficking can involve school-age youths, particularly those made vulnerable by challenging family situations, and can take a variety of forms including forced labor, domestic servitude, and commercial sexual exploitation.

The children at risk are not just high school students – pimps or traffickers are known to prey on victims as young as 9. Traffickers may target minor victims through social media websites, telephone chat-lines, after-school programs, at shopping malls and bus depots, in clubs, or through friends or acquaintances who recruit students on school campuses.

What Is the Extent of Human Trafficking in the United States?

An unknown number of U.S. citizens and legal residents are trafficked within the country for sexual servitude and forced labor. Contrary to a common assumption, human trafficking is not just a problem in other countries. Cases of human trafficking have been reported in all 50 states, Washington D.C., and the U.S. territories. Victims of human trafficking can be children or adults, U.S. citizens or foreign nationals, male or female.

Common examples of identified child trafficking cases include:

- Commercial sex, stripping, pornography, forced begging, magazine crews
- Au pairs or nannies
- Restaurant work, Hair and nail salons
- Agricultural work
- Drug sales and cultivation

How Do I Identify a Victim of Human Trafficking?

Indicators that school staff and administrators should be made aware of concerning a potential victim:

- Demonstrates an inability to attend school on a regular basis and/or has unexplained absences
- Frequently runs away from home
- Makes references to frequent travel to other cities
- Exhibits bruises or other signs of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, anxiety, or fear

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- Lacks control over his or her schedule and/or identification or travel documents
- Is hungry, malnourished, deprived of sleep, or inappropriately dressed (based on weather conditions or surroundings)
- Shows signs of drug addiction
- Has coached/rehearsed responses to questions

Additional signs that may indicate sex trafficking include:

- Demonstrates a sudden change in attire, personal hygiene, relationships, or material possessions
- Acts uncharacteristically promiscuous and/or makes references to sexual situations or terminology that are beyond age-specific norms
- Has a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older
- Attempts to conceal recent scars

Additional signs that may indicate labor trafficking include:

- Expresses need to pay off a debt
- Expresses concern for family members’ safety if he or she shares too much information
- Works long hours and receives little or no payment
- Cares for children not from his or her own family

How Do I Report a Suspected Incidence of Human Trafficking?

- In the case of an immediate emergency, call your local police department or emergency access number.
- To report suspected human trafficking crimes or to get help from law enforcement, call toll-free (24/7) 866-347-2423 or submit a tip online at www.ice.gov/tips
- To report suspected trafficking crimes, get help, or learn more about human trafficking from a nongovernmental organization, call the toll-free (24/7) NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCE CENTER at 888-373-7888
- To report sexually exploited or abused minors, call the NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDRENS’S (NCMRC) hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST, or report incidents at <http://www.cybertipline.org>

Resources and Publications

One of the very best ways to help combat human trafficking is to raise awareness and learn more about how to identify victims. Information on human trafficking can also be found on the following Web sites:

- Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign – dhs.gov/blue-campaign/share-resources
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children – missingkids.org
- National Human Trafficking Resource Center – polarisproject.org/get-assistance/national-human-trafficking-hotline
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Victims of Human Trafficking and Other Crimes – uscis.gov/humanitarian/victims-human-trafficking-other-crimes