

Human Trafficking **STOPS WITH US.**

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What is Sex Trafficking?

Sex trafficking is the crime of exploiting persons using force, fraud, or coercion to make a person engage in sexual acts. A commercial sex act includes prostitution, pornography, or sexual performance done in exchange for any item of value, such as money, drugs, shelter, food, clothing, or protection.

Who is most vulnerable to trafficking?

- Any person with vulnerabilities in EVERY neighborhood in all 50 states.
- Individuals who are young, poor, vulnerable, living in an unsafe or unstable situation, and/or in search of a better life.
- The average age of victims in the US is 12-14 years old.
- There is an estimated 42 million victims of childhood sexual abuse in America.
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience sexual abuse before the age of 18.
- 94% of sex trafficking victims were victims of childhood sexual abuse.
- 60% of child trafficking victims nationwide have a history in the child welfare system.
- The average age of entry for viewing pornography is boys age 8.
- Porn use renders a child severely vulnerable to trafficking.
- Children are desensitized, indoctrinated, or groomed online and via visual or reading material including formalized education.

Who are the sex traffickers?

The crime of sex trafficking does not profile by gender, race, age, or socio-economic status. Traffickers can act alone or as part of an organized criminal enterprise. People often incorrectly assume that all traffickers are males; however, the United States has prosecuted cases against women traffickers. #1 recruitment is from an intimate relationship and #2 is at the hand of a family member. A recent report on familial trafficking estimates 25-50% of child trafficking cases nationally are by a family member.

- Family members
- Partners
- Strangers
- Acquaintances
- Online predators
- Peer to peer groomers

How many sex trafficking victims are there?

Sex trafficking happens in all 95 counties in TN. Estimated numbers of sex trafficking in the U.S.A is around 500,000 nationally, and as an example approximately 79,000 minor victims of sex trafficking in the state of Texas alone. (University of Texas School of Social Work, 2017). Most cases go unreported.

Signs of Grooming:

It is widely perceived that child sex trafficking is primarily initiated through kidnapping and transporting to different states or countries. This is a false narrative that allows the crime to remain undetected and hidden in plain sight. In most cases, minors become victimized through processes of targeting, grooming, and recruitment within their own community and sometimes

within their own family. Victims do not self-identify as ‘victims’ and most likely don’t realize that they are being exploited & controlled.

ANYONE, FROM ANY BACKGROUND, CAN BE GROOMED AND TRAFFICKED – see the six tactics below a perpetrator uses to gain control of a person.

- **Targeting the Child** - Perpetrators target and exploit a child’s vulnerabilities, including emotional neediness, lack of a father, isolation, neglect, a chaotic home life, lack of parental oversight, etc. Ex: the offender will pay special attention to or give preference to a child.
- **Gaining the Child’s & Caregiver’s Trust** - Perpetrators work for the parent’s/caregivers’ trust to gain access to the child by showing warm yet calculated attention. They gather information about the child and find ways to fill their needs. **Ex:** “I saw you reading the new Superman comic. I’m planning to go see the new movie. I can take you if you want to go.”
- **Filling a Need** - Once the perpetrator begins to fill the child’s needs, they may assume noticeably more importance in the child’s life by: gift giving, flattery, gifting money, and meeting other basic needs. Ex: “I know you love jewelry, so I got you this watch.”
- **Isolating the Child** - The perpetrator creates situations where they are alone together to reinforce relationships with the child (babysitting, one-on-one coaching, “special” trips). They cultivate a sense that they love and understand the child in a way that others, even their parents, cannot. Ex: “You can trust me because no one understands you the way I do.”
- **Sexualizing the Relationship** - Once emotional dependence is built, the perpetrator progressively sexualizes the relationship by talking, asking for or taking pictures, and creating situations in which both are naked (swimming). The adult exploits the child’s natural curiosity and trust by using stimulation to advance the sexual nature of the relationship. Coercing the child to self-compromise. For example: “Can you send me a picture” or “Have you ever masturbated? I can show you how. It feels good.”
- **Maintaining Control** - Once sexual abuse is occurring, perpetrators commonly use secrecy, blame, and threats to maintain the child’s participation and continued silence. Emotional manipulation makes the child believe they are the only person who can meet their emotional and material needs. The child may feel that the loss of the relationship, or the consequences of exposing it, will be more damaging and humiliating than continuing the unhealthy relationship. Ex: “If you tell anyone, we both could go to jail. We won’t be able to be together.” Or “If you tell anyone, something bad could happen to your family.”

Red Flag indicators:

Most sex trafficking victims do not self-identify as victims or disclose their abuse due to fear, shame, or loyalty to their abuser. It is not a child’s responsibility to ask for help. It is up to the adults in these children’s lives to recognize signs of abnormality, so they can intervene and help them get the support they deserve. These red flags or indicators should not be considered a checklist or an assessment tool. Rather, if any of these signs of abnormality are observed, the adult must ask more questions, make a report to the closest safe authority, police, anti-trafficking Org. NCMEC’s CyberTipline, or connect the child to resources for prevention or intervention.

- Rapid change in behavior
- Change in peer group, language, attire, or social interaction
- Signs of sexual or physical abuse
- Symptoms of neglect such as malnourishment
- Dental issues or STIs
- Untreated injuries
- Close association with an overly controlling adult
- Recovered at hotels, street tracks, truck stops, strip clubs; or other locations where trafficking or commercial sex is known to occur
- Has secret cell phones or apps providing multiple cell phone numbers
- In possession of material goods, inconsistent with the child's access to money or socioeconomic status
- In possession of bulk sexual paraphernalia (such as bulk condoms or lubricant)
- Unexplained access to large amounts of cash, prepaid credit cards, or hotel keys
- Tattoos or branding, such as those indicating money, matching those of other known trafficking victims or that the child is reluctant to explain
- References traveling to other cities or states while missing or lack of knowledge of their current whereabouts
- Drug dependency or frequent abuse of "party drugs" such as GHB, Rohpno^l®, Ketamine, MDMA (Ecstasy), Methamphetamine
- Runs away from home (especially 3+ missing incidents)
- Unexplained absences from school
- Repetitive lying
- Secrecy regarding friend groups and online activity
- Constantly sleeping during class
- Stops engaging in activities they previously enjoyed (such as athletics or clubs)
- Abruptly disconnects from family and friends
- Significant changes in behavior, including their online activity
- Appears frightened, annoyed, resistant, or belligerent to authority figures
- References online escort ads or dating websites/apps
- Houses or flats with too many people, all picked up or dropped off at the same time
- Living out of suitcases, at motels, or in a car, or other evidence of housing insecurity
- Few or no documents, or someone else in control of their documents/ passport
- No control over their own post/mail, no phone or phone held by someone else.
- Reluctant to disclose identity or personal information and/or has a secret online profile.
- Low or no pay - Feel they are in debt to someone.
- One person speaking on behalf of many others, who may avoid eye contact or conversation.
- Lights on at workplaces at strange times – are people living there?
- Limited freedom of movement and dependency on others
- Fear of police/authorities - Anxious and unwilling to tell others about their situation.
- Fear of a trafficker, believing their life or families' lives are at risk if they escape or complain.
- Bruising; signs of other physical or psychological trauma including anxiety, confusion, and memory loss.
- Sexual grooming on video game chat rooms and social media messaging.

Newer Forms of Exploitation:

CSAM: Child Sexual Abuse Material

Child sexual abuse material (legally known as child pornography in the U.S.) refers to any content that depicts sexually explicit activities involving a child.

More Than 29M reports of suspected child sexual exploitation are received by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Massive consequences of the rise of the internet and the dark web have been an explosion in the illicit trade of child sexual abuse images and videos.

https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/missingkids/pdfs/NCMEC_0022-20_CSAM%20Brochure_Digital.pdf

Sextortion:

Sextortion takes on different forms, but at its core, it is the threat to expose sexual images in order to make a person do something. These threats come from both strangers met online and once intimate romantic partners attempting to harass, embarrass, and control victims.

Online victims are often targeted on platforms they frequent. Victims reported that the first contact with their perpetrator typically came in the form of a social media friend request.

Most victims are embarrassed or ashamed and would prefer to handle the situation on their own. If they do report, they are much more likely to talk to someone they know than to a website or law enforcement.

Sextortion can have a devastating impact on victims, and it can happen to anyone. You can stop it before it starts by helping to increase awareness about sextortion, destigmatize the issue, and encourage individuals to reach out for help and support their friends.

<https://www.stopsextortion.com/>

What to do if you see something concerning:

Report suspected child sex trafficking to the local County Sheriff, local PD and make a tip at **1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)** or [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org). If you suspect someone is in danger, please contact local law enforcement immediately.