

CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IDENTIFICATION RESOURCE

It is the responsibility of professionals to identify possible indicators of child sex trafficking and NOT rely on the potential victim for disclosure. Due to the sophisticated recruitment tactics, manipulation, trauma bonds, and threats used by traffickers and buyers, exploited youth are often unable to immediately disclose or recognize their own victimization.

Child Sex Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting a child under 18 years of age for the purpose of a commercial sex act, per the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act[1].

ANY child, 17 years of age and younger exploited through commercial sex including prostitution is a victim of sex trafficking. The commercial exchange can include but is not limited to money, food, shelter, drugs, etc. Regardless of the existence, reluctance or ability of the youth to identify a trafficker that youth is still a victim. A minor is not able to consent to being bought or sold. State laws may differ in definition of child sex trafficking please review your state laws to see what may be applicable.

Recruitment

Technology has changed the way traffickers target, groom and recruit victims. Traffickers will often seize any available opportunity including both in-person and online. However, the majority of recruitment is moving to social networking apps and sites. Through the use of technology, traffickers are able to research their victims and use that information to relate and build trust more quickly.

Indicators of Child Sex Trafficking Victims [3]

Listed below are some indicators to help professionals in determining if a youth may be at-risk or is currently being groomed or exploited through possible child sex trafficking. No single indicator confirms the existence of child sex trafficking but several indicators combined can increase the likelihood that this crime is occurring. Victims can include male, female and LGBTQ youth.

Risk Factors [2] :

While any child can be targeted by a trafficker research has shown that traffickers often target youth with increased vulnerabilities.

- Youth who are chronically missing/run away especially 3+ missing incidents
- Youth who have experienced childhood sexual abuse, especially if it resulted in being removed from the home or the abuse was unreported or unaddressed
- Youth who have experienced prior sexual assault or rape
- Youth with significant substance abuse or living with families with significant substance abuse
- Youth who identify as LGBTQ and have been kicked out stigmatized by their family



Behavioral Indicators:

Significant change in behavior to include virtual behavior such as online activity/profiles or new groups online friends/older friends.

Lies about their age and identity

Avoids answering questions and/or lets others speak for them

Looks to others before answering questions

Seems coached in talking to law enforcement

Resists offers to get help to get out of the situation, does not ask for help (does not consider self a victim)

Frightened, annoyed, resistant, or belligerent to police

Uses prostitution-related terms, such as “Daddy,” “The Life,” “The Game,”

Preoccupied with “getting money” such as displaying photos of cash

Daddy

Wifey

Track





Physical Indicators:

No identification (or ID is being held by another person)

Multiple minors with unrelated adult male(s) or female(s)

Sexual paraphernalia such as bulk condoms or lubrication

Evidence of travel (living out of suitcases, at motels, in the car)

Youth with a name or symbol tattooed, burned or branded onto their bodies- particularly when coupled with reluctance to explain the tattoo or when others in the group have matching tattoos

References traveling to other cities/states or is from a state other than current location. Youth may also lack knowledge of travel plans, destination, and the current location

Large amounts of cash or pre-paid credit cards



Hotel keys, hotel receipts or other items from hotel/motel

Presence of an overly controlling or abusive “boyfriend” or older female

Minors at hotels, street tracks, truck stops, or strip clubs

Multiple cell phones and/or electronic devices



Notebooks/slips of paper containing: phone numbers, dollar amounts, names, or addresses

Youth has items or an appearance that does not fit the current situation (Examples include having money, electronics, new clothes/shoes, hair/nails done but youth is homeless/runaway)

Youth who reference online classified ads or escort websites (professionals are encouraged to research classified ads or escort websites as these sites change and are sometimes geographically specific)

Youth who reference traveling job opportunities such as modeling, singing/dancing in a music group or magazine sales crews

¹22 U.S.C. § 7102(10) (originally enacted as Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. 106-386, § 103, 114 Stat. 1464, 1470 (2000) and amended by Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, Pub. L. 114-22, § 108, 129 Stat. 227, 238 (2015)).

²Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2013). Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States. 10.; See also Smith, L., Vardaman, S.H., Snow, M. (2009). The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children.