



HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

A FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOLS

What Is Human Trafficking?

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 in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, 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 prostitution violate federal anti-trafficking laws, even if there is no coercion or movement across state lines.

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 some U.S. territories. Victims of human trafficking can be children or adults, U.S. citizens or foreign nationals, male or female.

How Does Human Trafficking Affect Our Schools?

Trafficking can involve school-age youth, particularly those made vulnerable by challenging family situations, and can take a variety of forms including forced labor, domestic servitude, and commercial sexual exploitation (i.e., prostitution). Those who recruit minors into prostitution violate federal anti-trafficking laws, even if there is no coercion or movement across state lines.

The children at risk are not just high school students—studies demonstrate that pimps prey on victims as young as 12. Traffickers may target minor victims through social media websites, telephone chat-lines, after-school programs, on the street, at shopping malls, in clubs, or through friends recruiting other friends.

How Do I Identify a Victim of Human Trafficking?*

A victim:

- Has unexplained absences from school
- Demonstrates an inability to attend school on a regular basis
- Chronically runs away from home
- Makes references to frequent travel to other cities
- Exhibits bruises or other signs of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, or fear
- Lacks control over her or his schedule or identification documents
- Is hungry-malnourished or inappropriately dressed (based on weather conditions or surroundings)
- Shows signs of drug addiction

Additional signs that may indicate sex-related trafficking include:

- Demonstrates a sudden change in attire, behavior, relationships, or material possessions (e.g., has expensive items)
- Makes references to sexual situations or terminology that are beyond age-specific norms
- Has a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older (10+ years)
- Engages in uncharacteristically promiscuous behavior and/or being labeled “fast” by peers

* This is not a comprehensive list of all of the signs of human trafficking and students who exhibit these signs are not always trafficking victims.

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.
- Report suspected trafficking crimes or get help by calling the toll-free (24/7) National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888. The Resource Center will help you determine if you have encountered a victim of human trafficking; identify local resources available in your community to help victims; and coordinate with local social service providers to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of rehabilitation and restoring their lives. When appropriate, the Resource Center makes referrals to local organizations that assist victims with counseling, case management, legal advice, and other appropriate services, as well as to law enforcement agencies that help trapped victims find safe haven.
- To report sexually exploited or abused minors, call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST, or report incidents at <http://www.cybertipline.org>.
- To report suspected instances of trafficking or worker exploitation, contact the FBI Field Office nearest you at <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm>, or contact the Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Office at 1-888-428-7581.

How Does the United States Help Victims of Human Trafficking?

The U.S. government supports a victim-centered approach and funds a national public awareness campaign and a number of nongovernmental organizations that assist victims. The U.S. government seriously pursues human trafficking cases and prosecutes the traffickers. For a complete assessment of U.S. government efforts to combat trafficking in persons, please visit the U.S. Department of Justice Web site: http://www.usdoj.gov/whatwedo/whatwedo_ctip.html.

Resources and Publications

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

- U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
<http://www.state.gov/g/tip>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Justice
<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/ceos/trafficking.html>
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, Investigative Programs, Crimes Against Children
<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/crimesmain.htm>
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
<http://www.ncmec.org>
- Polaris Project
<http://www.polarisproject.org>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>
- United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-sale.htm>

If you have questions or see signs of human trafficking and would like additional information, one of several helpful resources is the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center: 888-3737-888**.

NOTE: This fact sheet contains resources, including Web sites, created by a variety of outside organizations. The resources are provided for the user's convenience and inclusion does not constitute an endorsement, by the U.S. Department of Education of any views, products, or services offered or expressed therein. All Web sites were accessed on March 15, 2012.

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