

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 commercial sexual exploitation (or prostitution) violate federal anti-trafficking laws, even if there is no force, fraud, or coercion.

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.

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.

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.

How Do I Identify a Victim of Human Trafficking?*

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

- Has unexplained absences from school or 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- Exhibits bruises or other signs of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, or fear.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 or malnourished, in need of medical care, or inappropriately dressed.

Additional signs that may indicate sex-related trafficking include:

- Demonstrates a sudden change in attire, behavior, relationships, or material possessions.
- Has a "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" who is noticeably older.
- Engages in uncharacteristically promiscuous behavior and/or make references to sexual situations or terminology that are beyond age-specific norms.

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 (911).
- Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) at 1-888-3737-888 to:
 - GET HELP and connect with a service provider in your area;
 - REPORT A TIP with information on potential human trafficking activity; or
 - LEARN MORE by requesting training, technical assistance, or resources.
 The NHTRC is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The NHTRC is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a nongovernmental organization funded by the Federal government.
- To report sexually exploited or abused minors, you can 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, you can call the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations Tip-line at 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423). You can also report online at <http://www.ice.gov/exec/forms/hsi-tips/tips.asp>.
- Suspected incidences can also be reported to the FBI Field Office nearest you at <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm>, or you can contact the Department of Justice's Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line 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 an assessment of U.S. government efforts to combat trafficking in persons and agencies' progress under the Obama Administration, please visit the U.S. Department of State Web site: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/response/usg/index.htm>.

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:

- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
<http://www.ncmec.org>
- Polaris Project
<http://www.polarisproject.org>
- Shared Hope International
<http://sharedhope.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>

** 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.*

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 January 7, 2013.

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