



LEARN

ENGAGE

SUPPORT

FOR PARENTS

“Not my family, it would never happen to my little girl, right? That’s what I thought until the cops knocked on my door ...”
- Sandy (a parent of a teen victim)

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WHAT?

Human trafficking is compelling a person to engage in commercial sex or forced, unfair labor. A sex trafficker is someone who profits from someone participating in sexual acts in exchange for anything of value (money, food, drugs, clothes, a place to sleep, etc) or someone who gives something of value to receive a sex act.

WHERE?

In 2016 there were over 7500 cases of human trafficking reported in the United States according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. This is only a percentage of the actual cases as many go unreported. The map below shows where those phone calls originated. Notice the concentration of calls in your area. **To find specific statistics for your area go to: <http://traffickingresourcecenter.org/states>**



WHO?

Victims can be from any ethnicity, social or economic group, gender, or level of academic achievement. Some traffickers prefer to focus their efforts on recruiting young people into their enterprises, as most traffickers are young as well. Traffickers are looking for young people who may:

- Lack a sense of belonging to others
- Not feel respected or valued by family or friends
- Base their self-worth on popularity or relationships
- Be willing to keep secrets, including the relationship
- Not have a good relationship with their parents
- Be looking for a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Be often bored with not much to do
- Spend a lot of time away from family or friends
- Be willing to take directions and believe the lies and false promises

HOW

Scouting



Traffickers are searching for young people to target. Traffickers find teens:

- Social media
- Shopping malls
- Bus stops
- School
- Through friends

Manipulating



Traffickers relate to young people and often times seem "too good to be true."

- Pretend to be boyfriends or girlfriends
- Buy presents; treat their intended victims very well
- Listen and act interested in their lives
- Traffickers lie

Trapping



Traffickers trick or control young people into staying in the lifestyle.

- These methods could be:
- False love or lies
 - Drugs
 - or even violence or threats of violence

EDUCATION

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The key to success is being involved in your teen's life.

One frequently asked question is, "What can I do to protect my teen?" It's a difficult question to answer, but here are some suggested ways to be an informed, involved, and proactive parent or guardian.

Know what your teen is doing

Knowing where your teen is and what they are doing sounds simple, but it's a vital component in keeping teenagers safe, especially when they have unsupervised time after school or on weekends. Always know how to reach your teen and check in on them regularly.

Be involved

Build a trusting relationship with your teen. Simple things such as conversations, family meals, and family time create an open relationship between parents and teens.

Talk with your teen about sensitive topics

Discuss difficult topics such as healthy relationships, alcohol, drugs, and sex trafficking with teens. Discuss methods used to lure teens such as promises of a better life, new clothes, money, love, and attention. These tactics are ways that traffickers exploit the dreams of teens they target.

Help build your teen's self-esteem and confidence

Traffickers look for vulnerable victims and specifically target teens who may feel excluded, are looking to belong and be accepted, or are otherwise emotionally susceptible. If you don't tell your teen you love them, someone else will.



"I thought that my teen needed their privacy so when they defriended from social media I didn't push the issue. I trusted them! But to answer your question, no I never talked to them about the threats of sex trafficking or other online predators."

- Sam
(parent of a victim)

Talk to your teen about the dangers of social media and monitor their social media accounts

Provide practical safety tips and set ground rules for your family. Teens should never share personal information online or accept friend requests or follow people they do not know. No one should ever share sexually explicit or suggestive photos with anyone; photos can be shared multiple times and are never truly deleted. Tell your teen to talk to you or another trusted adult if they feel threatened or uncomfortable online. **See our Social Media Awareness Guide for more information.**

Talk with your teen about friendship

Talk with your teen about what friendship really means. Explain to them that friendship is built on trust and honesty. People are not always who they seem on social media. Discuss healthy relationships and identify unhealthy relationships. Arrange opportunities to meet your teen's friends and their families. Be alert to situations that are questionable such as a much older boyfriend or girlfriend, isolation from other friends and family, and unexplained gifts.

PREVENTION

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Keep an open dialogue

Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- Tell me about your friends.
- Who do you hang out with during your free time?
- Have you received any strange friend requests or followers on social media?
- Have you received texts or private messages asking you to meet?
- Did your friend ask you to keep your friendship a secret?
- Do you feel like you have to spend all of your free time with this friend?
- How old is your friend?
- Has your friend bought you expensive gifts for no reason?
- Has your friend tried to give you drugs or alcohol?
- Has your friend tried to get you to participate in illegal or questionable activities?
- Has your friend asked you to be sexually active with them or another person in exchange for money, clothes, or something else you want?
- Do you feel like you have to check-in with your friend?
- Has your friend ever hit, kicked, shoved, or hurt you?
- Has your friend threatened to hurt you if you try to leave?
- Are you afraid to end the relationship with this friend?
- Does your friend make you feel uncomfortable?

Provide ongoing support for your teen

- Focus on building your teen's self-image.
- Provide emotional support.
- Celebrate your teen's strengths and skills.
- Surround your teen with people who love them and they can trust.

If your teen has been targeted or exploited by traffickers...

- Reassure teens that they are not alone!
- Help your teen picture a better, happier life.
- Emphasize that your teen deserves a life that is free from exploitation and violence.

Help is available for you and them! You can contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-3737-888 or Text "HELP" to BEFREE.

See Fact Sheet insert for local resources or visit our website

Make time to listen ...

- Let your teen share what's bothering them. Don't force the issue. Listen, but be persistent.
- Tell your teen that you love them.
- Show your teen you are willing to listen.
- Never blame your teen for what is happening.



"I thought he was just my daughter's boyfriend, I had no idea who he really was until the police showed up at my door. I didn't want to believe them at first, but I knew something was different about her, she wasn't acting normal and was isolating herself more and more from her family. If I had JUST ASKED what was going on, maybe her innocence wouldn't have been taken from her."

- Jean (parent of a victim)

INTERVENTION

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