

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

WHAT IS SEX TRAFFICKING?

The Federal Trafficking Victims Protections Act TVPA defines the crime of human trafficking as:

- A. The recruitment, harboring, transportation, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an 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.

Often times, when people first learn about sex trafficking, the first thing that comes to mind is “it only happens in movies”. They do not think about their child or grandchildren becoming a victim. The purpose of this handout is to give parents and guardians some insight and tools to talk to their children about the various age groups and maturity levels on commercial sexual exploitation.

It is important to recognize the signs and identifiers of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and talk to your children about these situations.

Parents or guardians have a right to know where their minor children are at all times, despite what your teen may argue.

A FEW BASIC TOOLS TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN:

- 1) Know where your kids are at all times.
- 2) Know what your kids are doing online and teach them about internet safety.
- 3) Talk to your kids about sexual exploitation.
- 4) Know the warning signs of sexual abuse in younger children and teens and recognize the warning signs of sexual exploitation.
- 5) Educate yourself on the apps and places they frequent.

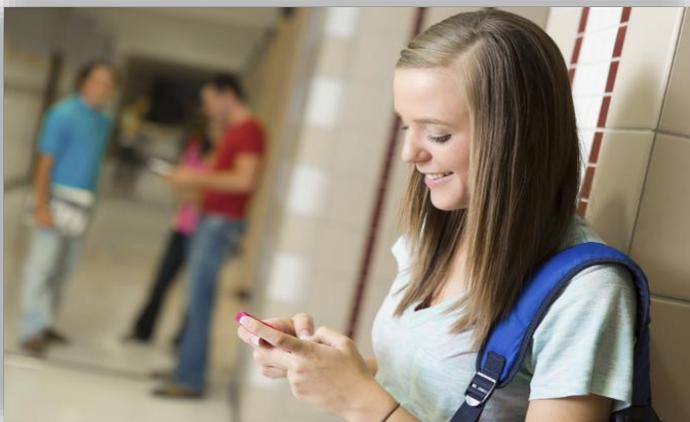


This handout represents the views and opinions formed after many hours of discussion with experts in the field, survivors, law enforcement, and people who have dedicated their lives to rescue, protect, and serve vulnerable children.

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WHERE IS YOUR CHILD RIGHT NOW?

As a parent or guardian, you may have varying degrees of apprehension about giving your child enough freedom necessary to grow up and become an adult. In today's world, it is perfectly acceptable to have fears about your child's safety, especially when it is nearly impossible to keep up with teens' latest social media trends.



One thing is certain—Nearly all teens have a cell phone, and most teens cannot function without their cellphone on hand. According to report released in March 2013 by Harvard University entitled “*Teens and Technology 2013*” 78% of teens now have a cell phone. In present day, I would bet you that the percentage has increased to 90-90%.

Cell phone tracking can help you locate your child's lost cell phone, and can help keep you notified of your child's whereabouts at all times; especially in the event of an emergency. Most cell phone carriers have programs to assist parents with this task.

Major wireless service providers such as “AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint offer “*Family Locator*” packages that allow you to locate and track the cell phones on your plan. In addition to that, if your child's phone has GPS capabilities, you can download a tracking app directly from the phone.

Predators and traffickers prey upon children who have the freedom to move around freely without suspicion. Children who are most vulnerable are those who do not have a parent or guardian looking for them—often times these children are runaways.

Some research points to direct parallels between socio-economic factors and risk for trafficking. Children who are raised in poverty or come from the foster care system are far more likely to fall victim to predators.

Your child must be taught never to give any personal information, answer questions such as birthdate or social security numbers, or fill out forms online.

Today's parents are navigating uncharted parenting territory. The good news is that most dangers can be avoided if children and their parents learn about smart internet use.

ONLINE BEHAVIORS IN KIDS AND TEENS

The latest Harvard research suggests that 9 in 10 (93 %) of teens have a computer or have access to one at home. Although it may be hard to believe, tech savvy kids as young as 5 are now actively using and engaging in social media.

Kids online are exploring various websites, emailing friends, chatting with friends through instant messenger and in chat rooms, sending each other pictures and videos, playing games together online, creating websites and web blogs, and searching YouTube for popular “viral” videos and trends.

Be sure to place any computer your younger child uses in a common area, so you can monitor what is happening. Pre-teens should never be allowed on chat sites without supervision. For older teens, parents should have the right to ask about browsing history and access to all passwords.

When discussing social networking safety with your teen, encourage them to always use discretion when posting any type of photo, location, status, and message.

Teens tend to over share information. They post questionable photos, give their locations and share personal information such as their cell phone numbers and home address. What seems like harmless chatter between friends can end up pinpointing your child's location and regular behavior to a predator.

Traffickers and predators are masterful at deception and gaining a teen's trust online first, before meeting online.

KNOW WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE DOING ONLINE

Another way to keep tabs on your kids is to follow them on their social media sites. You may learn a lot about your child from how he or she communicates with peers.

Teens should interact with only people they know. Allowing only people you know and trust as “friends” or “followers” is the best way to ensure safety when using social networking sites. Unfortunately, some teens are motivated by sheer volume in the numbers of online “followers”, and fail to think about the dangers associated with a stranger having access to personal information such as photos and locations.

Learning how to use social media apps like Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter are becoming part of “good” parenting today. Everyone can learn how to use social media—just ask your child to teach you or visit

www.commonsemmedia.com to get more information on what kids are using today and how to monitor their apps.

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TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT EXPLOITATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO TRUST THEIR INSTINCTS

With so much constant change in the internet space, the best way to equip a child is to teach them to trust their instincts. If something feels wrong, it probably is. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN

Slavery is a common topic taught in schools and most kids believe that slavery ended with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, or three years later with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Kids can relate to the concept of slaves having to work without pay and not having the freedom to escape the situation. This is a logical way to address the topic of commercial sexual exploitation. You can share the fact that there are more slaves today worldwide than at any other time during history. For more resources, The New York public school system has an excellent curriculum about modern day slavery

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/endht/downloads/pdf/sanctuary-nyc-2013.pdf>



STRANGER DANGER

Despite sensational media coverage, stranger abductions are extremely rare. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, only 115 children per year in this country are victims of “stereotypical” kidnappings, where a stranger takes a child to keep or harm them. Young children are less likely to be targeted by strangers than teens.

Nevertheless, it is important to talk to your children about strangers and above all, teach them to once again trust their own instincts. Children should never be left alone with unknown adults and should always travel in groups, where there is safety in numbers.

WHEN DO I START THE CONVERSATION?

Human sexuality is not openly discussed in many American households, yet the topic is glaringly present in all aspects of media seen by kids and teens on a daily basis. These are difficult waters for a child to navigate alone.

Most kids under the age of 10 are usually naïve about sexuality and have limited knowledge about sex, and even more limited understanding of rape or sexual exploitation.

Human growth and development at school likely occurs during the 5th grade, when students range from ages 9-11. In girls, puberty usually starts around 11 years of age and in boys puberty usually starts around 12 years of age. The normal onset of puberty ranges in girls from 9-16 while in boys it is 12-15.

It is best to have these conversations with your children after puberty has begun.

Pre-pubescent children lack the physical and mental maturity to understand changes in the human body that prepare them for sexual reproduction.

It is important to understand that girls who mature early may begin sexual activity earlier than those who physically mature at a slower pace.

Where student may learn about reproductive health at school, it is up to the family to teach their kids to feel good about how their bodies look and feel. Parents can teach children at a young age about physical touch and what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. Children should be taught what kind of touch is acceptable, what to do if someone tries to hurt them, and that is okay to talk about anything that makes them “feel” uncomfortable with a parent, guardian, or responsible adult.



SEXTING AND SEXTORTION

As a parent or guardian, it is extremely important to know if your child is engaging in these activities. Even if your child denies being involved in these activities, ensure that your talking to them about how these practices can affect their life and their reputation.



“What would you do if a good looking older guy came up to you at the mall and said he thought you were pretty enough to be a model?”

“Would you give him your phone number?”

“Is it okay for a stranger to take pictures of you?”

“Is it okay to send pictures of yourself to a stranger?”

“Have you ever known someone at school that had an older boyfriend?”

“Have any of your friends ever talked about getting paid to go on a date?”

“Do you know what sexting is?”

“Has anyone ever sent you a picture that made you feel uncomfortable?”

Questions to ask your teen or another way to begin a conversation with your teen. When you ask questions, you show that you care about your kid’s health and safety.

WHAT IF....

“What if?” questions are an opportunity to practice scenarios with your kids. Role-playing is a powerful way to teach kids how to handle difficult situations.

Act out with your child various situations at different familiar locations—sports practice, walking to a friend’s house, outdoor festivals, Halloween, at the mall, Movie Theater, etc.

These “what would you do” conversations can take place at the dinner table or on the drive to school and may help ease apprehension about the topic.

You will probably hear, “Oh Mom, Seriously?” In the end, it is better to upset your child so that he or she thinks twice when potentially faced with a difficult situation.

WHAT IS SEXTING?

Sexting is the sending of sexually explicit photos or text through ones mobile phone to another person. Sexting is more common than you think. Did you know that 20% of middle schoolers have reported having received sexually explicit messages?

- 11 % of teens admit they’ve sent images to strangers
- 80% of teens who have sexted are under the age of 18
- 12% of teen girls feel pressured to sext

Teens sext due to the following reasons:

- Teen may see sexting as the first step to becoming sexually active
- It is commonly done in a romantic relationship
- Many teen see this is as a good way to tell someone that they are interested in them

Other reasons for sexting:

- Everyone else is doing it
- To boost self-esteem
- The need for instant gratification
- Exploring their sexuality and feelings
- Finding attention from someone else or gain popularity on social media
- It is becoming the normal way of flirting among teens

WHAT IS SEXTORTION?

Sextortion is a criminal and deviant activity by which adolescents and adults exploit other children and adults for sex and/or sexually themed activities in exchange for not disclosing embarrassing and humiliating information. If the victim does not submit to their sexual directives, they threaten to disclose sensitive information to loved ones, employers, educators, peers or organizations if the victim does not engage in sexually illicit acts.

A study conducted in New Hampshire with 1,600 participant’s concluded that:

- 46 % were minors
- Three out of five (60%) knew their perpetrator in real life ; 40 % met them online
- 54 % met on social media apps; 41 % met on messaging apps
- 45 % of perpetrators carried out their threat

SEXTING AND SEXTORTION CAN LEAD TO COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS AND AFFECTS OF EXPLOITATION

According to national statistics, most children who are trafficked have a history of sexual abuse from earlier in their childhood. According to research out of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, nationally, 95% of “teen prostitutes” were victims of earlier childhood sexual abuse. Noticing the warning signs of abuse can help these children receive the services they need to so they are not further victimized or exploited.

Homeless, runaway/throwaway and foster children are the most vulnerable population of kids that are at risk for sex trafficking. According to researchers out of Arizona State University’s Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention and Research, vulnerable girls may be recruited “into the life” by friends or over the internet. Pimps often act as a boyfriend. They might befriend a victim or require one of their current victims to befriend a new girl.



YOUNGER CHILDREN

- Gradual or sudden changes in behavior
- Cruelty to others
- Cruelty to pets
- Recurring nightmares
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Fear of the dark
- Regression behavior like bed wetting
- Unusual interest in/ knowledge of sex
- Expressing affection in ways that are inappropriate for a child of that age
- Sexual Acting Out/ Inappropriate sexual play (with self, other children)
- Fear of a certain person/ intense dislike of being left somewhere
- Change in behavior around a specific person
- Afraid to be left alone
- Loss of or lack of interest in friends, school sports, or other activities
- Fear of participating in physical activities at school

TEENS

- Extreme and/ or unexplained anger
- Running away
- Low self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors/ self harm
- Seductive behavior
- Promiscuous behavior
- Eating disorders
- Anxiety and/ or Depression
- Alcohol or substance abuse at young age
- Difficulty establishing relationships with family members and peers at school
- Signs of PTSD from prior trauma
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Inadequately dressed for school
- Teens carrying large amounts of cash with no probable way of obtaining it
- Multiple sexual partners at a young age
- Constantly running away from home
- Often using their friends as “cover-ups” for their whereabouts

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NEW MEXICO HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE

As a parent or guardian, you have the right to know about agencies that can offer resources and services to teens who have been sexually exploited or if your child's image is online.



CONTACT US

New Mexico Office of the Attorney General
Human Trafficking Unit/ ICAC Unit
201 Third St. NW, Suite 300
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 717-3500

New Mexico Human Trafficking Task Force
www.stopnmtrafficking.org

Human Trafficking Hotlines:

Polaris BeFree Textline

233733

National Human Trafficking Hotline

1-(888)-373-7888

NM Hotline

505-GET-FREE

We can answer questions on human trafficking, child sex trafficking, sexting, sextortion, cyber safety and Internet Crimes against Children. We can refer you to services and assist with law enforcement investigations.

New Mexico's human trafficking statute was enacted in 2008, which was spearheaded by the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General (NMOAG). Since then, the task force has been involved in intensive public awareness campaigns and statewide training efforts. There has been a dramatic increase in identified human trafficking cases. These human trafficking cases are multi-faceted, often involving labor exploitation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, pornography, door-to-door sales crews, escort services, truck stops (sex trafficking), human smuggling, gang activity, drug trafficking, and money laundering. Effective enforcement requires a coordinated, collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to investigate these diverse aspects of criminal conduct. We are a statewide task force. We address trafficking issues not only in our metropolitan area, but in other cities and all other areas of the state.

The NMOAG, USAO, and The Life Link have established a collaborative partnership working together and with other key stakeholders to investigate human trafficking cases, provide services to victims and increase awareness of human trafficking. Key stakeholders include all levels of law enforcement, the justice system, state/ local government, service providers, medical/health field, schools, media, and community resources.

This multidisciplinary task force brings a collaborative and concentrated approach to proactive investigations and prosecutions of all types of human trafficking.

Our primary objectives consist of:

- 1) Conducting proactive investigations of sex trafficking and labor trafficking crimes in coordination and collaboration with local, state, tribal, regional, and federal law enforcement and regulatory agencies.
- 2) Identify victims of all forms of human trafficking and offer a comprehensive array of restorative services to meet each victim's individualized needs.
- 3) Enhance community capacity to identify and report trafficking crimes by conducting training, public awareness, and outreach.

Through the tremendous efforts of our task force partners, we have been successful in prosecuting these cases and bringing restorative justice to those who have been victims of this heinous crime. With your help, we can combat human trafficking in New Mexico and save the lives of many men, women, and children who have yet to be victimized.

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