



## WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF MINORS

24-HR NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE  
**1-888-3737-888**

### WARNING SIGNS\*

- Frequent or unexplained truancy, irregular school attendance
- Chronically runs away from home
- References to frequent travel to other cities
- Signs of physical abuse, trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, fear distrust
- Lacks control over personal schedule or ID documents
- Sudden change to inappropriate attire, overall appearance to look older
- Uncharacteristic promiscuous behavior or sexual references beyond age-specific norms
- In a relationship or socializing with noticeably older people (*access to alcohol, drugs, nightclub culture*)
- In possession of expensive materials (*clothes, jewelry, cars, technology, etc*)
- Hungry, malnourished, sleep-deprived, signs of exhaustion
- Neglectful home environment, lack of parental supervision
- Affiliation with gang members or gang tattoo branding

\*NOTE: 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.

### WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is a federal and state crime that involves the recruiting, harboring, providing, obtaining or transporting of a person for the purpose of labor or commercial sex through the use of coercion. It is human exploitation for the purpose of fraudulent financial gain or exchange of anything of value.

**Any minor engaged in commercial sex acts is a victim of human trafficking.** Proof of the use of force, fraud or coercion is not required by law. This means that minors who are prostituted are victims of human trafficking even if they do not self-identify.

**SEX TRAFFICKING:** Engaging a minor for sex in exchange for money, drugs or other items of value is considered human trafficking and the consent of the minor or mistake of age by the perpetrator has been excluded as a defense.

**LABOR TRAFFICKING:** Labor trafficking of a minor, however, does need to include elements of force, fraud or coercion to be classified as human trafficking. Labor trafficking may be in the form of involuntary servitude and affects both foreign nationals and US citizens.

Human trafficking can be punishable by up to life in prison.

### HOW DOES HUMAN TRAFFICKING AFFECT SCHOOLS?

Traffickers, or pimps, are known to recruit middle school and high school aged youth. Multiple factors contribute to a minor's vulnerability to being trafficked. While a history of abuse, neglect and running away from home are very common among trafficked youth, there are additional factors that make minors vulnerable regardless of their background. Such factors include low self-esteem, peer pressure, access to social networking sites and rapidly changing technological communication, media influence, and an inability to confide in adults or authority figures due to feelings of shame or fear of consequences.

### HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- IF IT'S AN EMERGENCY: 911
- National Trafficking Hotline (24/7, anonymous): 1-888-3737-888
- Local Police / School administration
- Sexually abused/exploited minors: Call Nat'l Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1.800. THE LOST
- Suspected instances of trafficking/worker exploitation: Dept of Justice Human Trafficking Office at 1.888.428.7581 or nearest FBI field office at [www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm)

**[swmihumantrafficking.org](http://swmihumantrafficking.org)**

## 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 US citizens and legal/illegal 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 DC, and some US territories. Victims of human trafficking can be children or adults, US 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 chatlines, after-school programs, on the street, at shopping malls, in clubs or through friends recruiting other friends.

## How Does the United States Help Victims of Human Trafficking?

The US government supports a victim-centered approach and funds a national public awareness campaign and a number of nongovernmental organizations that assist victims. The US government seriously pursues human trafficking cases and prosecutes the traffickers. For a complete assessment of US government efforts to combat trafficking her persons, please visit the US Department of Justice website: [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov)

## 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 websites:

- US Dept of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons: [www.state.gov/g/tip](http://www.state.gov/g/tip)
- US Dept of Health & Human Services, Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking: [acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/index.html](http://acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/index.html)
- US Dept of Justice: [usdoj.gov/criminal-ceos](http://usdoj.gov/criminal-ceos)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, Investigative Programs, Crimes Against Children: [fbi.gov/wanted/cac](http://fbi.gov/wanted/cac)
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children: [missingkids.org](http://missingkids.org)
- Polaris Project: [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: [unodc.org](http://unodc.org)
- United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography: [ohchr.org](http://ohchr.org)

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 information is from the US Department of Education and was current as of 2015. Websites listed could change without notice.