

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

FOR CAREGIVERS



Special Considerations

Traffickers do not fit one single stereotype

- Traffickers are often people that the child knows.
- Traffickers often target vulnerable children and youth by promising things such as food, money, clothing, or shelter.
- Traffickers may recruit or befriend individuals in public places such as libraries, malls, parks, or schools.
- Traffickers often approach individuals online through social media or phone applications.
- Traffickers seem to have everything together, acting as if they have all the answers. They are an easy person to get to know quickly.

Talking to a child about possible trafficking or exploitation

- The child will probably not identify their situation as exploitation or trafficking. Even if they say something about what is happening, they might not see themselves as a victim.
- Be non-judgmental and avoid shaming the child if they open up about their exploitation or trafficking situation (or any other traumatic event).
- Body language is important. Pay attention to your own body language, and that of the child, to be sure that you are not shutting them down.
- If the child begins to withdraw or shut down during the conversation, do not push the issue and let them know they can talk with you when they are ready.
- Ask the child if they would like to talk with a sexual assault advocate, therapist, or anyone else that they identify as a supportive individual.
- If the child is in a dangerous situation, you may need to reach out without permission, but use this as an opportunity to build trust by involving them in the process.

Caring for exploited or trafficked children

- Every child has individual needs and strengths.
- Talk with the child about what services they feel would be helpful and supportive.
- Remember that exiting trafficking or exploitation situations can be a difficult process for children and may take multiple attempts.
- Protect a child's privacy. Their story belongs to them. For the safety of all involved, it is critical to protect the confidentiality of the child's information whenever possible.

Next Steps

- **If in immediate danger:** call 911
- **Make a report to child protection or law enforcement.** Minnesota law requires mandated reporters (e.g. foster parents) to make a report if they know or have reason to believe a child or youth is being abused or neglected, or has been within the past three years. Sex trafficking of a child, regardless of who the alleged offender is, is a mandated child protection report. Parents or caregivers who are not mandated reporters may still report to the local child welfare agency to ask for help for your child.
- **Talk to your Safe Harbor Regional Navigator.** If you suspect that your child is at risk of trafficking or exploitation, you can contact your Safe Harbor Regional Navigator for support and connection with resources. The Safe Harbor services map indicates the contact information and service area for the Safe Harbor Regional Navigators statewide.
- **Make a plan to protect the child's safety.** Talk with the child to create a safety plan. This can be done with assistance from the Regional Navigator, a Safe Harbor provider or other professionals that may be working with the child. Talk the child through different scenarios to help prompt safety plan ideas and realistic action steps. In addition, talk with the child about who are trusted adults and peers they could talk with. Know that safety planning can be a triggering event.

Resources

- [Minnesota Department of Human Services Safe Harbor \(https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/program-overviews/child-protection-foster-care-adoption/safe-harbor/\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/program-overviews/child-protection-foster-care-adoption/safe-harbor/)
- [Center for Parent and Teen Communication \(https://parentandteen.com/\)](https://parentandteen.com/)
- [A Parent's Guide to Human Trafficking \(Polly Klaas Foundation\) \(http://www.pollyklaas.org/safe/a-parents-guide-to-human-trafficking.pdf\)](http://www.pollyklaas.org/safe/a-parents-guide-to-human-trafficking.pdf)
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children NetSmartz \(https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/\)](https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/)
- [Shared Hope: Your Kids and Technology, Parent's Safety Guide \(https://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Designed-Internet-Safety-e-book.pdf\)](https://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Designed-Internet-Safety-e-book.pdf)
- [Love 146: Internet Safety Guide \(https://love146.org/action/online-safety/internet-safety-guide/\)](https://love146.org/action/online-safety/internet-safety-guide/)
- Free webinar presented by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and MNAdopt: [Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation: Basics for Foster and Adoptive Families \(https://www.mnadopt.org/product/1187-webinar-human-trafficking-and-sexual-exploitation-basics-for-foster-and-adoptive-families/\)](https://www.mnadopt.org/product/1187-webinar-human-trafficking-and-sexual-exploitation-basics-for-foster-and-adoptive-families/).
- Free online legal resources and search engine for free legal assistance in victim's area: [LawHelpMN.org Providers and Clinics \(https://www.lawhelpmn.org/providers-and-clinics\)](https://www.lawhelpmn.org/providers-and-clinics)
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline Safety Planning \(www.humantraffickinghotline.org/faqs/safety-planning-information\)](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org/faqs/safety-planning-information)

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