

Child Victims of Human Trafficking

What is human trafficking?

Right now in Ohio, more than 2,000 school-age children are potentially at risk of being forced into human trafficking through exploited labor, domestic servitude or prostitution. Children, especially those not living with their parents, are especially vulnerable. The average entry age into the commercial sex market is 12-14, although it is not unusual for the age to be younger.

Because the demand for young victims is large, traffickers find students through telephone chat lines, clubs, on the street through friends, and at malls. Traffickers may use girls to recruit other girls at schools and after-school programs, or involve school age boys in gaining and betraying the trust of potential victims. This means it is essential that youth see adults model healthy relationships and that schools create environments to support those students who are victims of violence and exploitation. Educators have an opportunity to help identify and guide youth who display risky behaviors to receive the appropriate community supports and services.

How can I identify a victim of human trafficking?

While not all of the behaviors listed below indicate that a child is a victim of human trafficking, educators should recognize that these red flags are cause for concern. Other causes may be teen dating violence, homelessness, domestic abuse and drug and alcohol abuse. This list is meant to be a guide to determine if further action is appropriate. It is not a comprehensive list of all signs of student trafficking.

- ✓ Does not attend school regularly;
- ✓ Runs away from home regularly;
- ✓ Has unexplained absences from school and is considered a truant;
- ✓ Talks about frequent travel to other cities;
- ✓ Has bruises or other physical trauma, is withdrawn and seems depressed or afraid;
- ✓ Doesn't seem to have control over her/his own schedule or identification documents;
- ✓ Is hungry, malnourished or dressed inappropriately for weather conditions or surroundings;
- ✓ Shows signs of drug addiction;
- ✓ Demonstrates a sudden change in clothing, behavior or has expensive items that a child usually cannot afford;
- ✓ Makes references to sexual situations that are unusual for a child of that age;
- ✓ Has a "boyfriend" who is noticeably older (10+ years);
- ✓ Uses language that is beyond his/her normal age or terms that are used in the commercial sex industry; engages in promiscuous behavior; and may be labeled "fast" by peers.

What should I do as an educator if I suspect a child is a victim?

- ✓ Recognize the red flags students may exhibit;
- ✓ Make the appropriate referral to school personnel and community contacts.

How do I report suspected human trafficking?

- ✓ In cases of immediate emergencies, it is best to call your local police department or emergency access number.
- ✓ If you suspect someone is a victim of human trafficking, please call the National Resource Center hot line toll-free at (888) 373-7888, or easy-to-remember – 888.3737.888.
- ✓ <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/the-nhtrc/overview>.