

Human Trafficking

Hidden in Plain Sight

Part 1



Human trafficking affects all sectors of our community and victims can be found in plain sight if we learn to identify the signs and take the time to look.

-Florida Department for Children and Families

What Is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking, or modern-day slavery, is defined by U.S. law as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts, labor, or services against their will. It is a fundamental violation of human rights. There are approximately 30 million people enslaved throughout the world with 2.5 million located right here in the United States. It can happen in any community, including our own. In fact, Florida is third in the nation for reported human trafficking cases. Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, gender, nationality, socioeconomic status, education level or citizenship status.

To be considered human trafficking, either force, fraud, or coercion must exist. That indicates that the victim has not consented of his or her own free will. Examples of force include physical or sexual abuse or assault, or confinement. Fraud could include false promises of work or living conditions, withholding promised wages, or contract fraud. Coercion may include threats of harm to self or others, debt bondage, psychological manipulation, or document confiscation.

January has been designated as "National Human Trafficking Prevention Month," reaffirming the United States' commitment to protect and empower survivors of all forms of human trafficking, to prosecute traffickers, and to bring an end to human trafficking in the United States and around the world.

January

National Human Trafficking Prevention Month



PREVENTION SERVICES

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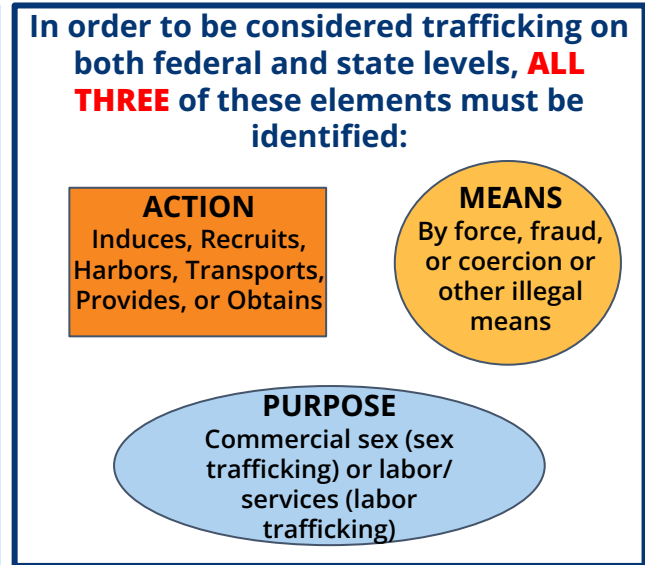
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Types of Human Trafficking

There are two primary forms of trafficking which involve people: labor trafficking and sex trafficking.

In labor trafficking, the trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains a person for labor or services. This includes situations of debt bondage, forced labor, and involuntary child labor. Labor traffickers use violence, threats, lies, and other forms of coercion to force people to work against their will in many industries. Common types of labor trafficking include people forced to work in homes as domestic servants, farmworkers coerced through violence as they harvest crops, or factory workers held in inhumane conditions with little to no pay.

Sex trafficking is when a person recruits, harbors, transports, provides, obtains, patronizes, solicits, or advertises a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act. It also includes when someone causes a child to engage in a commercial sex act. Common types of sex trafficking include various venues within the sex industry, including residential brothels, strip clubs, escort services, fake massage businesses, and street prostitution.



Click to watch the Blue Campaign's video, "What is Human Trafficking".



FACT: Many survivors have been trafficked by people closest to them, including spouses, romantic partners, and family members, including parents.

FACT: Any minor who is enticed to perform a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking according to U.S. law, regardless of whether there is force, fraud, or coercion.

Targeting Youth

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, every two minutes a child is trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the United States, Sex traffickers target children for financial benefit because of their innocence and vulnerability, as well as the market demand for young victims. Those at risk are not just high school students; studies show that 12-14 is the average age of entry into sex trafficking.

Traffickers find their minor victims online, at bus or train stations, in neighborhoods, at shopping malls and other popular teen hangouts, and even schools or after-school programs through friends or other youth.

Though there is no standard profile of a child-trafficking victim, several risk factors make particular children more susceptible. Those include children who:

- Are chronically missing or frequently run away
- Have history of sexual abuse
- Are in or have been in the foster care system
- Have low self-esteem
- Have substance abuse issues or live with someone who does
- Identify as LGBTQIA AND lack family support

These factors can make a child more vulnerable. The best defenses against human trafficking are healthy families and strong communities.

Up to 70% of sex trafficking and exploitation begins with predators connecting with the youth online.

Florida Department of Education

When it comes to profitable criminal activity in the United States, human trafficking is second only to drugs. People can sell drugs one time, but an adult or child can be sold over and over again.

The Traffickers

So who are the traffickers? Perpetrators of human trafficking span all racial, ethnic, and gender demographics and are as diverse as the survivors. Traffickers prey on those who are financially-needy, vulnerable, living in an unsafe situation, or in search of a better life. Some use their privilege, wealth, and power as a means of control while others experience the same socio-economic oppression as their victims.

Traffickers can include strangers, acquaintances, and sadly, non-governmental organizations report an increase in cases of human trafficking by a family member, guardian, or intimate partner. Traffickers include business owners, members of gangs, labor brokers, owners of farms or restaurants, powerful corporate executives, diplomats, and pimps. People often incorrectly assume that all traffickers are men. Although the majority of traffickers are male, there have been multiple cases in the United States where the trafficker is a female.

Grooming

Grooming is the most common way that both children and adults end up in sex trafficking situations. Traffickers are experts at finding and using a person's vulnerabilities in order to develop a relationship with them, making the victim believe that the trafficker genuinely cares about them and is looking out for their best interests. Grooming is methodical, intentional, and it works.

Gaining full control over their victim and to manipulate them into cooperating in their own exploitation is the main goal of grooming. The six stages of grooming are: target, gain trust and get information, fill a need or help the victim, isolation, sexualization and abuse, and maintain control. To learn more about these stages, go to the Polaris Project's ["How Traffickers Groom & Control Their Victims"](#) web page.



Red Flags

Recognizing potential red flags is key to identifying victims. Pay special attention to a child who:

- Has frequent and unexplained absences from school or chronically runs away from home
- Sleeps in class or seems to be sleep deprived or 'checked out'
- Dresses in a provocative manner or wears the same clothes, regardless of weather or circumstance
- Has material goods inconsistent to their access to money or their socio-economic status
- Acts fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous
- Avoids answering questions or lets others speak for them
- Talks about an older boyfriend/girlfriend or has a close association with an overly controlling adult
- Show signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, or malnourishment
- Has new tattoos or branding
- Does not have possession of his or her own identification documents (Student ID, Driver's License, etc)
- Has secret or multiple cell phones
- Abruptly disconnects from family and friends
- Stops engaging in activities they previous enjoyed (such as athletics or clubs)
- Is in a suspicious circumstance, such as being alone at a hotel

While no single indicator is necessarily proof of human trafficking, recognizing the signs is the first step in identifying a problem. Visit [YouCanStopHT.com](https://www.youcanstopht.com) to learn more about what to look for.

Big Events and Trafficking

High profile sporting events, large festivals, and corporate conventions are prime targets for human traffickers. Reasons for this are that these events require many temporary workers, alcohol is often abundant, and many men who attend are either single or traveling without a partner. In fact, the biggest driver of demand for commercial sex and exploitation is transient male populations. The "It's A Penalty" campaign was designed to bring awareness to this fact. Watch their video [here](#).

Why Victims Stay

Victims of human trafficking often do not seek help right away even if they are not physically restrained. They may stay because they lack the basic necessities to physically get out – such as transportation or a safe place to live. Some are afraid for their safety. Some have been so effectively manipulated that they do not identify with being under the control of another person, or being actively trafficked. Every trafficking situation is unique. Fear, isolation, guilt, shame, misplaced loyalty, and expert manipulation are among the many factors that may keep a person from leaving.



1 in 6 of the more than 25,000 cases of children reported missing to NCMEC in 2022 who had run away were likely victims of child sex trafficking. Click on this [link](#) for more information about child sex trafficking and how to prevent it.

Using Emojis

Emojis have become the primary means of communicating online that a sex service is for sale. According to research done by Jennex and Whitney at SDSU, the most prominent emoji indicators of trafficking are the rose, rosette, cherry, cherry blossom, growing heart, airplane, and crown. The growing heart and cherry, for instance, highlight that the victim being trafficked is a minor, whereas an airplane relates that a person will be in town for a temporary amount of time. Traffickers evolved to using emojis to advertise so as to avoid detection from law enforcement.




Protect Your Child From Groomers

Parents need to be concerned about online predators. Here are some tips to teach your child how to stay safe online.

- Talk to your child about online predators
- Discuss risky online behavior and the danger of chat rooms with your child
- Warn your child about online flirting and sending provocative selfies
- Check your child’s browser history frequently and their location and privacy settings
- Know your child’s usernames and passwords and follow or friend them on social media sites
- Make it clear to your child that they can always come to you no matter what has happened



When families navigate the world of social media together, a child’s online world becomes much safer and more manageable.

THORN  A key piece in developing approaches to combat child trafficking is to gather quantitative and qualitative data from trafficking survivors. Stories shared by survivors about their experiences illuminate the aspects of trafficking that are hidden to people who have not experienced it directly. Including the voices of survivors leads to creating effective and targeted anti-trafficking programs.

[Thorn for Parents](#) [Online Grooming](#)

A21 A21 is a global anti-trafficking organization dedicated to rescuing and restoring the lives of human trafficking victims. With offices in several countries around the world, A21 is determined to abolish slavery everywhere, forever. Their operational strategy: They aim to reach, rescue, and restore victims of slavery around the world. For more information, visit a21.org.

Visit our [Prevention Services](#) web page for additional resources on human trafficking, substance use and abuse, and social media awareness.

