

# + An Introduction to Youth Sex Trafficking

Presented by the International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA) in collaboration with Courtney's House



international organization for adolescents



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# Learning Objectives

1. Define Youth Sex Trafficking
2. Understand vulnerabilities that make youth targets of trafficking
3. Understand how youth are recruited and controlled
4. Identify indicators or “red flags”
5. Understand how to respond and refer survivors of youth sex trafficking

# Human Rights-Based Approach





# Human Rights-Based Approach

- Survivor vs. Victim
- Empower vs. Rescue
- No such thing as a “child prostitute”

What is minor sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)?



# Elements of Human Trafficking as Defined by the Trafficking Victim's Protection Act (TVPA)

1. Process	2. Means*	3. End
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruiting</li><li>• Abducting</li><li>• Facilitating</li><li>• Transferring</li><li>• Harboring</li><li>• Transporting a person</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Force</li><li>• Fraud</li><li>• Coercion</li></ul> <p>* Exception: minors under 18 years old who are involved in commercial sexual exploitation don't need to prove force, fraud, or coercion under the TVPA.</p>	<p>For the purposes of:</p> <div><p><b>Labor or Services</b></p></div> <div><p><b>Commercial Sex Acts</b></p></div>

# TRUE OR FALSE?

“Youth Sex Trafficking” requires a city, state, or international border crossing.

# Four Types of Control

Pimp

Gang

Family

Boys and  
Transgender



# TRUE OR FALSE?

Only foreign-born children and youth are victims of Youth Sex Trafficking.

# FALSE!

Youth that were born and raised in the U.S are victims of minor sex trafficking, as well as children and youth with green cards, permanent residence or other forms of lawful immigration status.

Why are children and youth  
vulnerable to trafficking?



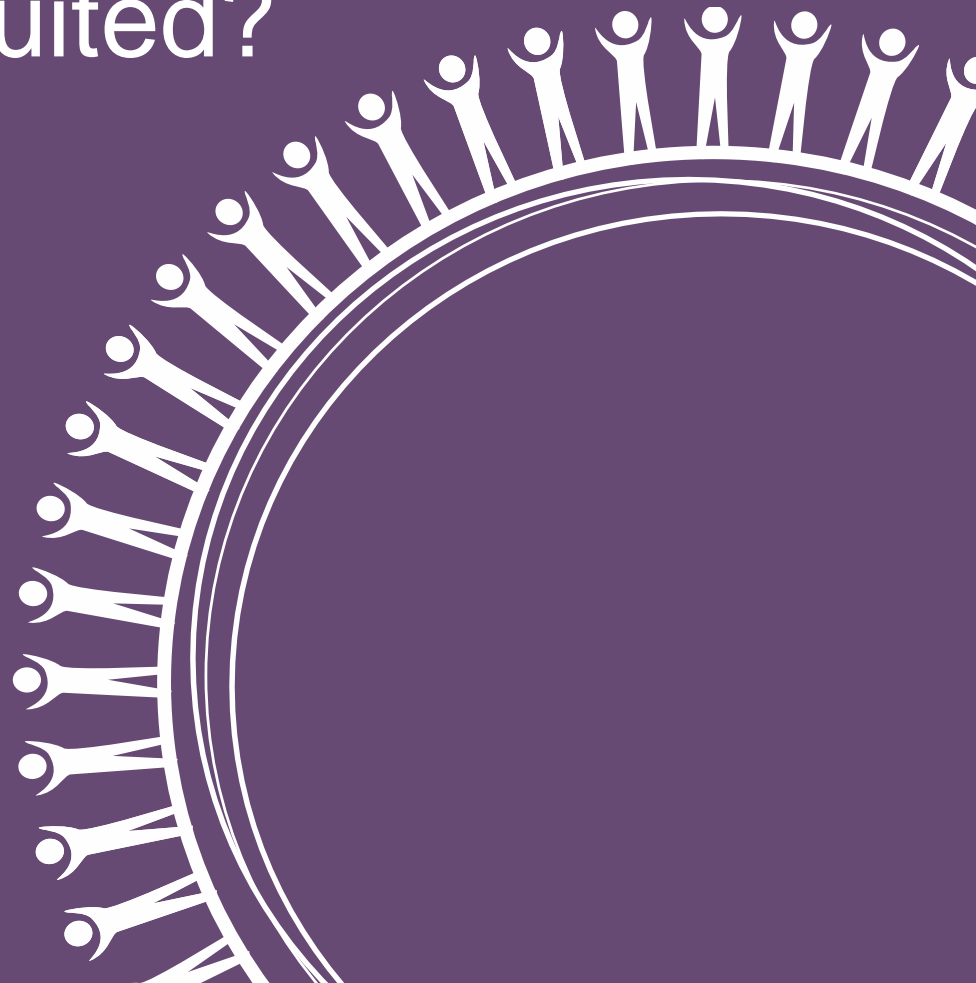
# Why are Youth at Risk?

- Experience feelings of being misunderstood
- Want to develop romantic relationships
- Experience feelings of insecurity
- Experience conflict with their parents/caregivers
- Do not feel valued or loved by adults in their lives
- Want more independence
- Want attention and affection
- Test boundaries and take risks
- Are attracted to consumer goods
- Own or have access to computers, smart phones

# Children Especially at Risk

- Children with a history of sexual abuse, physical abuse, maltreatment and neglect
- Children with a history of living in foster care or interactions with the justice system, especially youth with multiple placements
- Homeless youth and youth who left home
- Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC)
- Youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities

# How are Children and Youth Recruited?



# How are Children and Youth Recruited?

- Runaways, kicked out
- Sold by family
- Recruited by other youth
- Internet
- Befriending and/or boyfriending
- False employment offers
- Kidnapping
- Promise of a better life



# The Grooming Process

**Traffickers identify any physical and/or emotional voids in a youth's life and fills them.**

- Provide basic needs such as housing and food
- Provide gifts, drugs, technology, beauty makeovers
- False promises of a career in modeling, acting, or dancing
- False offers of love, marriage, family
- Provides false sense of safety and/or understanding
- Normalize ongoing abuse



# How do Youth Become Trapped?

## **Youth may:**

- Blame themselves
- Do not consider themselves victims
- See their trafficker in a positive light
- Distrust authority figures
- Do not know where they are
- Fear for safety of family
- Experience mental, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Be blackmailed

# Trauma Bonds

## How are trauma bonds formed?

- Violence and threats of violence
- Alternating violence and kindness increases bonding
- Isolation increases bonding
- Shame and stigma associated with prostitution, rape, losing virginity increases bonding

A survivor can feel this bond so strongly that s/he might believe if they even think a disloyal thought, the exploiter will know and retaliate.

# Who are the Traffickers?



# Who are the Traffickers?

- Men and women of varying ages, ethnicities, and race
- Pimps
- Family Members/Intimate Partners (boyfriend, spouse, uncle, brother, etc.)
- Employers
- Teachers, Coaches, Activity Leaders
- Strangers

# Indicators and “Red Flags” of Minor Sex Trafficking



# Minor Sex Trafficking Indicators

Some red flags that a person may be involved in sex trafficking:

- Jewelry or tattoos that indicate ownership (money signs, names, crowns, etc.)
- Possesses a lot of cash or articles the person could not reasonably afford
- Frequently travels to other cities without a reason
- Owns more than one cell phone



# Red Flags of Minor Sex Trafficking

- Signs of injury/abuse
- Fearful
- Submissive
- Lack of knowledge about community
- Mistrust of law enforcement
- Fake ID/Claims to be an adult
- Chronic absence from school/Does poorly in school
- Inconsistent story
- May use language referring to “the life”

# Red Flags of Minor Sex Trafficking

- Child has older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Youth uses street slang for sex work
- Youth has run away multiple times or misses a lot of school
- Youth has been “staying with a friend”
- Youth appears scared of consequences to a degree greater than the situation warrants
- Suspicion of a domestic violence relationship
- Several youth tell exactly the same story
- Youth lies about age
- Youth lives in a hotel or has a key or business card from a hotel
- Youth has indications or reports of intimate partner violence
- Youth relies on a “friend” or family member to answer questions on his/her behalf
- Youth is disconnected from social supports
- Youth has had multiple sexually transmitted infections or abortions



# What to Look for: Child Labor Trafficking

- Youth misses lots of school
- Youth not allowed to leave the house or is confined to specific spaces
- Youth fearful of employer/host family
- Several youth tell exactly the same story
- Youth working but not getting paid or is promised future pay
- Youth has had documents confiscated
- Youth is always tired or is unable to rest

Questions to ask to assess if a  
minor may be a victim or survivor  
of sex trafficking or CSEC



# Assessment Questions for Four Types of Control

Pimp

Gang

Family

Boys and  
Transgender

# Assessment Questions - Pimp Control

- Have you ever left home?
- What made you leave home?
- How many times did you leave home?
- What were some of the ways you took care of yourself while you were away from home?
- Did you ever do any traveling while you were gone?
- What places did you go?

# Assessment Questions - Pimp Control (cont.)

- While traveling, who did you go with?
- How long were you gone?
- While you were away from home did anybody keep you from coming back?
- Did anyone introduce you to stripping? If so where did you strip?
- Did you ever go to any shopping malls while you were gone?

# Assessment Questions - Gang Control

- Have you ever been asked to go to a skip party?
- How did you hear about the skip party?
- Were you asked bring any friends?
- Did anyone ever show you any DVD's or YouTube footage of them or someone else harming someone?
- What clique or set were you with?

# Assessment Questions - Family Control

- Have you ever helped your family save money?
- What are some ways you helped?
- Has anyone in your family ever dropped you off at someone's house?
- How long were you gone?



# Assessment Questions - Boys/Transgender Control

- Did anyone ever give you hormone shots?
- Do you have a Mama that helps take care of you?
- Who helped you to become Fierce?
- Are you in a Dance Crew?
- Have you ever worked chat lines?





# Who May Encounter Trafficked Children and Youth?



# Professionals Who May Encounter Youth in Trafficking Situations

- School staff
- Social Service Providers
- Community Groups
- Faith based organizations
- Healthcare providers
- Mental health care providers
- Legal Services
- Runaway/Homeless Youth Service Providers
- Department of Social Services
- Child Protective Services
- Foster Care
- Law Enforcement
- Anyone

# What are the Social Service Needs of Survivors?



# Resources to Consider for Youth

- Local organizations specialized in services for survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault
- Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)
- Immigrant and refugee organizations
- Health services (general practice, reproductive health, hospital services, etc.)
- Mental health services (in-patient, outpatient, and crisis stabilization)
- Counseling services and trauma-focused therapy
- Housing (short term, long term, and transitional)

# Resources for Youth (cont.)

- Legal services
- Immigration services
- Services provided by home country's embassy
- Translation services
- Faith-based community support
- Educational and/or vocational training
- Social service navigators and advocates
- Peer support groups
- LGBTQ services

# When a referral is in the best interest of a youth

- Identify needs that cannot be met through your agency or would be better met through specialized service provision elsewhere
- Find trauma-informed, culturally-appropriate services
- Ask new contacts about their service options in the presence of the youth so that s/he can ask questions
- Discuss each referral option with the youth
- Establish contact who has familiarity with trauma and minor sex trafficking or CSEC
- Provide information on the youth's needs and special considerations but do **not share details with outside providers without the informed consent of the survivor**
- Visit the agency with the youth before arranging services
- Continue to escort the youth to appointments if he or she desires

# Considerations when Choosing an Appropriate Referral

- Awareness and experience around commercial sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking
- Level of professionalism and quality of care
- Non-discrimination policies and cultural sensitivity
- Confidentiality policies
- Procedures for obtaining informed consent
- Security and safety of the agency location and premises
- Language capacity
- Experience with trauma-informed care
- LGBTQ services
- Location and accessibility

# Remedies Available To Survivors

- Immigration relief: T and U Visas
- Eligibility letter for minors
- Vacate and expunge criminal records of prostitution
- Restitution through criminal and civil cases
- Case management services
  - Connect to services
  - Funds to assist client





# TRUE OR FALSE?

Minors who provide sex acts in exchange for money/goods/a place to stay, are considered victims of trafficking

# TRUE!

Any minor who engages in commercial sex is considered a victim or survivor of sex trafficking.

# Case Studies



# Case Study #1

## Could this be Minor Sex Trafficking? What are the red flags?

- You are talking with Justin, a bright 15 year-old boy. Justin says he was recently kicked out of his home after his parents found explicit texts and photos on his phone shared with a male classmate. When asked where he lives, he says he “couch surfs” and has been going on out on some dates with older men who take him to dinner and let him stay over sometimes. He says he doesn’t always like to do it, but it’s been cold lately. He’s heard from other boys like him that there is a woman who let’s them all stay at her place for free for doing basically the same thing, so he might check it out.

# Case Study #2

## Could this be sex trafficking? Why?

- Monica, a 16-year-old African American female, is in the custody of both of her biological parents and has one older brother. She was charged with abscondance and truancy and was placed on probation. While on probation, she ran away from home more than ten times and was subsequently placed at an out-of-state locked-down facility.

Monica never learned about consensual sex. She was sexually assaulted at the age of 12 by her biological brother and this abuse continued until she was 15. Monica's parents refuse to discuss her abuse. They say that they have moved on, and so should she. Monica feels her parents are not listening to her and she rebels.

It is difficult for her to see that it is wrong for adult men to solicit sex from a minor. Monica has ads on online sites like Backpage. She tells social workers that she goes to hotels and motels to give massages, not to have sex. Monica says she is "doing it on her own".

After being home for about two months, she has left home again but has since returned. She is now receiving long term case management from a direct service provider.

# Case Study #3

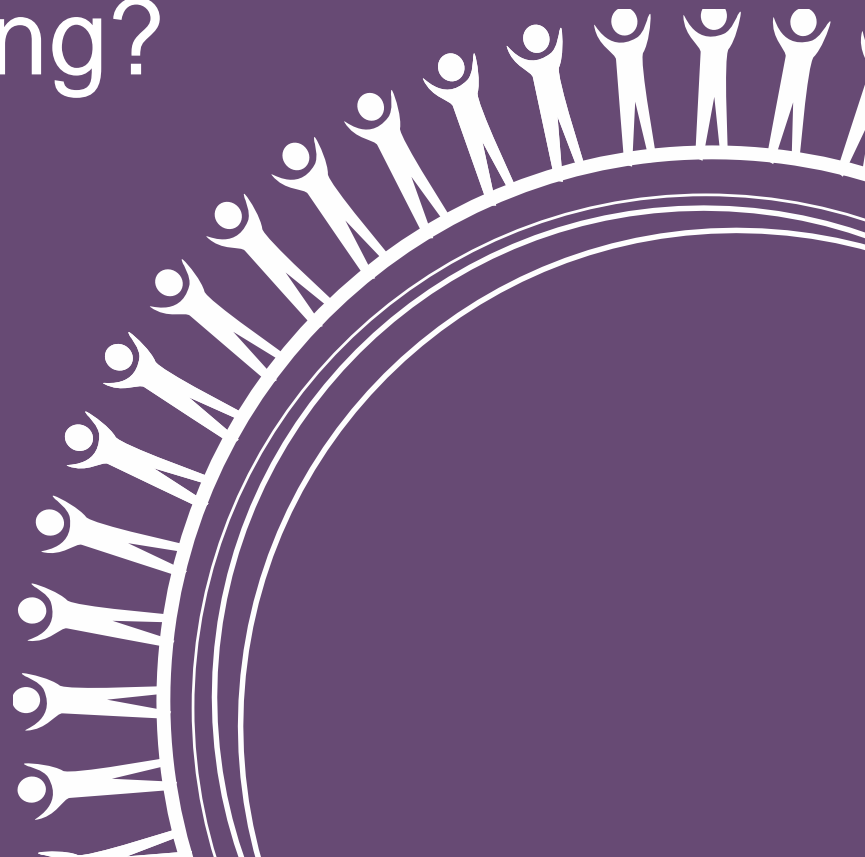
Can you identify the types of control that are exhibited in this case?

- Starting at age 13, Darnell, an African American male, was trafficked by his mother. Suffering from a heroin addiction, Darnell's mom sold him for sex in exchange for money and drugs. Darnell, an LGBTQ youth, was sold on the streets of Washington D.C. for five years.

Darnell only knew that his family needed money and he felt responsible for pitching in and "bringing money into the family." If Darnell didn't do as he was told, he was ignored by his entire family and was not allowed to eat with the rest of his siblings.

At age 16, Darnell was placed into foster care. He continued to work because he was only taught to sell his body for sex to make money. After being out on the street, Darnell met a man 15 years older than Darnell that told him he would look out for him and make sure he was safe. This man later became Darnell's "boyfriend." In exchange for providing food and clothing, Darnell must turn over his money to his "boyfriend." His boyfriend tells Darnell that he keeps his money to make sure it is stored in a safe place.

What do I do if I suspect youth sex trafficking?



# If a youth discloses a sex trafficking situation to you

- **If the youth is in immediate danger** call 9-1-1
- **If the youth resides with his/her trafficker** develop a safety plan with him/her
- **Consider the Youth's Immediate Needs**  
Food, water, safety, medical needs, housing
- **If you are Mandated Reporter**, follow the protocol in your state
- **Always:**
  - Adopt a trauma-informed, strengths-based approach
  - Incorporate the survivor in case planning as much as possible
  - Respect youth's decisions



# What if a youth discloses Commercial Sexual Exploitation?

- Refrain from showing surprise/disgust
- Always convey to the youth that the exploitation was not their fault and that you believe them
- Respect that the youth may still love and desire a relationship with their trafficker
- Consider a multi-disciplinary response, like those offered by Child Advocacy Centers, is strongly recommended
- Understand your role as a mandated reporter in your state

# Federal Service Available to Survivors of Trafficking

- **Nutrition**
  - Child Nutrition Program
  - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- **Medical Services**
  - Health Resources and Services Administration Programs
- **Mental Health**
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Programs
- **Monetary Assistance**
  - Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Compensation
- **Employment**
  - Career One-Stop Centers Core Services
- **Witness Protection and Services during Investigation**
  - Victim Rights and Services – Federal Victim-Witness Coordination
  - Emergency Witness Assistance
  - Witness Security Program

**NATIONAL HUMAN  
TRAFFICKING  
HOTLINE**

Report a tip, connect with  
a referral.

Call: (888) 373-7888

Text: BeFree (233733)

- Free
- Confidential
- 24/7
- Support for survivors,  
service providers, &  
law enforcement



# Questions?

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# Thank you!



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