

Human Trafficking Resources for the K-12 Community



Learn what human trafficking is, how to prevent it in school communities, and what to do to support students affected by the crime.

What is Human Trafficking?

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign website states that human trafficking is a crime that [involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion](#) to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. It is also important to note that [causing someone under the age of 18 to engage in a commercial sex act](#), regardless of using force, fraud, or coercion is human trafficking under U.S. law. Every year, millions of people are trafficked around the world, including students in the American school system.

Those affected by human trafficking can be any race, gender identity, sex, ethnicity, nationality, or immigration status, and no community, school, socioeconomic group, or student demographic is immune to the threat of this crime. Cases of trafficking are found in every area of the country—including rural, suburban, and urban settings alike—with devastating consequences including physical, emotional, and psychological trauma.

Youth Human Trafficking

While there is no standard profile, many traffickers target youth who are vulnerable to exploitation simply because they may be less equipped to make informed decisions when presented with a situation that could lead to trafficking. Peer-to-peer recruitment may also take place in schools, which is when traffickers coerce or force youth under their control into recruiting their peers with promises of payment, better status, or less abuse.

Indicators of Trafficking

Youth affected by human trafficking can exhibit physical, behavioral, or social indicators. Some of these indicators may include:

- Unexplained absences
- Sudden or dramatic changes in behavior
- Newly obtained material possessions like expensive new clothing or electronics
- The appearance of deprivation or withdrawal.

While no single indicator is necessarily proof of human trafficking, recognizing these types of signs is the first step in identifying potential individuals impacted by this crime.

Risk Factors

Potential risk factors that may make students vulnerable to exploitation or trafficking may include:

- Adverse childhood experiences
- History of trauma
- Housing instability/homelessness
- Lack of supportive adult figures

Traffickers recognize these factors may make someone more likely to take risks to access opportunities and stability.



To report suspected human trafficking to Federal law enforcement, please call 1-866-347-2423. To get help from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, please call 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733).



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