

Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Guide

Child sex trafficking is a major global human rights issue – in the U.S. alone, it impacts more than 17,000 young people every year.¹ In this guide you will find important information and resources related to child sex trafficking, as well as ways you can support youth at your Club.

Acknowledgment



A special thank-you to Jerome Elam, child sex trafficking survivor, and President and CEO of the Trafficking in America Task Force, for reviewing and providing valuable input for this guide.

Table of Contents

Definitions	3
Statistics	4
Warning Signs	5
Risk Factors	7
How to Help	8
BGCA Resources	10
National Resources	11
References	12

If a child you know is in need of support, call the 24/7 National Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-800-273-8255** to speak with a trained professional advocate at any time.



Definitions

- **Human Trafficking:** The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud or coercion) for an improper purpose including forced labor or sexual exploitation.¹
- **Forced Labor:** The recruitment, harboring, transportation, providing or obtaining of a person through force, physical threats, psychological coercion, abuse of the legal process, deception, or other coercive means to compel someone to work. Common labor trafficking scenarios 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. Labor trafficking has also been reported in door-to-door sales crews, restaurants, construction work, carnivals, and even health and beauty services.^{1, 2}
- **Domestic Servitude:** A form of human trafficking involving work in a private residence, which creates unique vulnerabilities for victims. A victim of domestic servitude is not free to leave his or her employment, and is abused and underpaid, if paid at all. Their ability to move freely is often limited. Domestic workers, especially women, often confront various forms of abuse, harassment and exploitation.¹
- **Sex Trafficking:** When an adult engages in a commercial sex act, such as prostitution, as the result of force, threats of force, fraud, coercion or any combination of such means.¹
- **Child Sex Trafficking:** The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining or advertising of a minor child (under the age of 18) for the purpose of a commercial sex act, which involves the exchange of anything of value, such as money, drugs or a place to stay for sexual activity.¹
- **Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC):** Child victims of a range of crimes and activities involving sexual abuse or exploitation for the financial benefit of any person, or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits).³

Any person can be a victim of any form of human trafficking. Anyone under 18 involved in commercial sex is considered a victim of human trafficking. Anyone exchanging anything of monetary value for a sex act from a child risks serious legal consequences.



Statistics

Technology has changed the way most traffickers target and recruit children. Some will still seize any available opportunity to cultivate potential victims, including in-person tactics at malls or bus stops, while youth are walking to and from school, and outside of group homes. However, the majority of traffickers now recruit children using social networking apps and sites. In a process called digital grooming, traffickers use information obtained through social media to more quickly relate to and build trust with children.

Currently, there are no accurate ways to track the full scope and impact of child sex trafficking, because so many of these crimes go unreported. The following statistics, based on cases that have been identified and tracked, provide insight into the widespread nature of these crimes and common risk factors that can make a child vulnerable.³

- Human trafficking is the **world's fastest growing criminal enterprise**, valued at about **\$32 billion a year**.⁵
- In the U.S., human trafficking has been **reported in all 50 states**, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. territories. More than 70 percent of reported cases involve sexual exploitation.¹
- The most common age at entry into the commercial sex market is **12-14**. **Fifteen- to 17-year-olds** make up the second most common age range, followed by **18- to 20-year-olds**.⁴
- It is estimated that between **240,000 and 325,000 children are at risk** of being victimized by sexual exploitation each year in the U.S.⁶
- In 2017 the National Human Trafficking Hotline reported receiving calls from over 10,000 survivors. Of these survivors, **30%** were minors who had been sexually trafficked.⁴
- An estimated **1 out of 6 young people** reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as "endangered runaway youth" were likely child sex trafficking victims. Of those, 86% were in the care of social services or foster care when they ran.⁴



Learn the Warning Signs

Children rarely disclose that they have been sexually exploited or abused, but many young survivors do exhibit behaviors, fears and/or physical marks that adults can watch for. Below is a list of possible warning signs that a child has been or is at risk of being trafficked, provided by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This list is not an exhaustive list, but these indicators are red flags. If you see them, you may need to link a child with a professional who can determine whether the child is being trafficked and get them the help they need.¹

Behavioral Indicators

- Unable to attend school on a regular basis and/or has unexplained absences
- Exhibits withdrawn behavior, depression, anxiety, fear or delinquency
- Makes references to frequent travel to other cities without knowledge of their destination or travel plans
- Frequently runs away from home
- Lacks control over their schedule and/or identification or travel documents
- Isn't sure what country, city or town they are in
- Makes references to sexual situations or terminology that are beyond age-specific norms
- Shows signs of drug addiction
- Presence of a noticeably older, controlling or abusive "boyfriend" or "girlfriend"
- Offers coached/rehearsed responses to questions
- Expresses concern for family members' safety if they share too much information
- Expresses the need to pay off a debt
- Brags about making or having lots of money, has a lot of cash or pre-paid cards

Physical Indicators

- Exhibits bruises or other signs of physical trauma
- Is hungry, malnourished, deprived of sleep or inappropriately dressed for weather conditions or surroundings
- A sudden change in attire, personal hygiene, relationships or material possessions
- Is picked up by different people ranging in age and gender
- Has multiple cell phones and/or electronic devices, burner cell phones or erased call logs
- Has keys, receipts or other items from a hotel or motel
- Has multiple fake IDs
- Attempts to conceal recent scars
- Has a new tattoo (often used by abusers to brand victims)

Trafficking Tattoos

Sex-trafficked victims are often coerced into getting tattooed as a way to signify that they belong to a certain pimp or trafficker. Tattoos used by traffickers can vary by region, but there are some characteristics common to sex trafficking, such as a name, symbol, money or barcode. Common body areas for tattoos include the neck, arm and above the groin area.^{1,7}

Descriptions of the most common tattoos among trafficked victims

- **Trafficking Name:** This is the name or nickname that the pimp or trafficker gives the victim. It displays their trafficked name so a buyer can request individuals.
- **Currency:** Dollar signs, money bags or coins are common and may indicate the price a pimp or trafficker charges for interactions with the victim.
- **Barcodes:** Barcodes have been linked to trafficking. No one knows exactly what the numbers are for, but some speculate they represent the amount of money the victims would have to earn in order to receive their freedom.
- **Property of:** The name, symbol, nickname or initials of the trafficker, signifying the victim is their property. Victims are often coerced into getting these tattoos as a way to show that they belong to a person or group and are cared for.

Risk Factors

Any child can become a trafficking victim, but research has shown that traffickers often target children with increased vulnerabilities. Possessing one or more of these vulnerabilities does not mean that a child is being trafficked or will be trafficked, but research has found these risk factors to be common among youth victims. ^{1,8}

- Frequently runs away, especially with more or more reported incidences
- Homeless or “couch surfing,” with no permanent, stable home
- Has experienced a traumatic loss and is in need of emotional support
- Has experienced sexual abuse, especially if it was unreported or unaddressed or resulted in the child being removed from the home
- Has significant substance use issues or lives with someone who has significant substance use issues
- Has significant health issues, including physical and/or mental conditions
- Has a physical or mental disability
- Identifies as LGBTQ and has been kicked out of their home or stigmatized by their family
- Is a victim of bullying at school and does not have a strong social connections; has become isolated from their peers
- Has experienced turmoil at home such as an incarcerated parent, parents going through a divorce, being placed in a foster or group home, or other events disruptive to the home environment



How to Help

There are a variety of prevention efforts that can help reduce the chance of a child becoming a victim of sex trafficking. Many of these prevention efforts are already in place in Clubs.

5 Key Ways to Help Prevent Child Sex Trafficking ^{1,9,10}

- 1) **Education.** Increase the general knowledge and awareness of child sex trafficking, which can help identify potential sex trafficking victims and link them to professional advocates who can help. Partner with local experts on preventing child sexual assault as trainers, board safety committee members and advisors.
- 2) **Recognize the Signs.** Recognizing the warning signs of a potential child trafficking victim increases the ability to identify potential victims inside and outside of your Club.
- 3) **Report Your Suspicions.** You may be linked with trained professionals who can help child trafficking victims and provide them with appropriate resources. As a mandated reporter, you must always report suspicions of child sexual abuse to child protective services and/or the police. If you see any suspicious activity call your local law enforcement agency or the National Human Trafficking hotline. Learn more about mandated reporting of suspected abuse at:
https://www.bgca.net/ChildSafety/ChildSafetyResourceLib/Mandated_Reporting_of_Suspected_Child_Abuse_FINAL.pdf
- 4) **Raise Awareness.** Raise awareness – in your Club, your Club community and with your partners – of child sex trafficking, of ways to recognize signs and risk factors, and of existing resources.
- 5) **Take Action.** Become an advocate for victims and potential victims. Develop a clearly written policy at your Club against child sex trafficking. Post signs around your Club indicating that your Club is a safe space for children and that staff are advocates against sex trafficking. Downloadable signs in 20 different languages are available at:
 - The National Human Trafficking Hotline website:
<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/get-involved/outreach-and-awareness>
 - The Blue Campaign website:
<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/library>

Prevent Digital Grooming^{9,10}

- **Regulate digital usage and online access.** Implement a digital usage policy for staff and members. Visit BGCA.net/Technology for sample use policies and other resources. Digital Literacy Essentials, available on MyFuture, has fun, interactive activities for members to learn about the basics of digital safety.
- **Discuss privacy settings.** Most social media sites and apps have privacy settings. Encourage youth to adjust these settings so only people they have approved can see what they post.
- **Be aware of location-tags.** Some phones and apps use GPS to keep track of users' locations. Encourage young people (or their parents) to disable location-tags in their settings, especially those on photos.
- **Teach youth how to create strong passwords.** Explain that passwords should be more than 8 characters long and contain a combination of numbers, letters and symbols. Encourage them to come up with an acronym or a song so their password is easy for them to remember, but hard for other people to guess.
- **Help youth avoid online scams.** Explain that scams often target children and teens promising money or prizes. Tell youth they should never provide personal information on a website or pop-up without checking with a trusted adult first.

Create a Safe and Positive Space¹

Continue to provide a safe and positive environment for members at your Club. Being in an environment where they feel safe, have a trusted adult that they can talk to, and supportive peers can help young people feel cared for. This sense of belonging serves as a protective factor because isolation and loneliness are vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit.

Establish Open Communication¹

Be open about the dangers of sex trafficking by challenging the myths and misconceptions that glamorize commercial sex workers. Also have conversations about online safety and the ways traffickers use social media sites to mask their identities and true intentions.



BGCA Resources

The BGCA resources on this list can help you develop Club policies regarding child sex trafficking, and learn more about how your Club can help prevent child sex trafficking by reducing risk factors and creating protective factors for the young people you serve.

- **Child & Club Safety**

The Child & Club Safety Team provides Clubs with resources and support to help keep members safe. The Safety Team assists local Club leaders address emerging safety needs and manage urgent safety issues. Critical Incident Reports should be filed with BGCA via BGCA.net or by contacting the Club's Director of Organizational Development (DOD) or Safety Director. The Safety Team has partnered with Praesidium one of the nation's leading safety experts in providing Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training for Staff. Find additional safety resources at: [BGCA.net/ChildSafety/](https://www.bgca.net/ChildSafety/)

- **Suicide Prevention and Awareness Guide**

In this guide you will find resources, tips and important information to help support youth at your Club. You can access this guide on bgca.net at: [BGCA Suicide Prevention And Awareness Guide](https://www.bgca.net/SuicidePreventionAndAwarenessGuide).

- **Be There Toolkit**

This toolkit contains member activities, staff practices and links to resources that can help youth who are coping with life-altering experiences. You can access this toolkit on BGCA.net at: [Be There Toolkit](https://www.bgca.net/BeThereToolkit)

- **Serving LGBTQ Youth**

This toolkit is designed to create understanding, introduce inclusive language and highlight recommended practices for supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning Club members. You can access this toolkit on BGCA.net at: [Serving LGBTQ Toolkit](https://www.bgca.net/ServingLGBTQToolkit)

- **SMART Girls Discussion Guide: CONSENT**

This guide provides an overview of consent and probing questions to create a discussion around consent with youth in your Club. You can access this discussion guide on BGCA.net at: [SMART Girls Consent Discussion Guide](https://www.bgca.net/SMARTGirlsConsentDiscussionGuide)



National Resources

- **Local Police Department**

If you suspect a Club member is a victim of human trafficking, contact your local police department or emergency access number.

- **National Human Trafficking Hotline**

The [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) is toll-free and available to answer calls, texts, live chats and emails, in more than 200 languages: **1-888-373-7888**.

- **The Polaris Project**

A leader in human trafficking that helps survivors restore their freedom, and works to prevent more victims, using data and technology to pursue traffickers wherever they operate. <https://polarisproject.org/>

- **National Children's Advocacy Center**

There are 1,063 local Children's Advocacy Centers around the country, providing a child-focused, multidisciplinary response to violence against children. Most local agencies provide services in prevention, investigation, intervention and treatment with law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, mental health, medical, family/victim advocacy, and other resources working together. Find a Children's Advocacy Center at **256-533-KIDS (5437)** or <https://www.nationalcac.org/find-a-cac/>

- **National Runaway Switchboard**

Through the NRS hotline, services are provided for solution-focused support, referrals to local resources, and education and prevention to youth, families and community members throughout the country, 24 hours a day. 1800RUNAWAY.org

- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)**

NCMEC's tipline provides services to make reports about all suspected cases of child sex trafficking, child pornography, familial child sexual molestation, obscene materials sent to a child, and more. Website: <http://www.missingkids.com>. Report incidents by calling **1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)** or <https://www.cybertipline.org>

- **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has launched *The Blue Campaign*, a collaboration with law enforcement, government, non-governmental and private organizations to combat human trafficking. The website offers tools for teaching, including videos, posters and indicator cards. [DHS.gov/blue-campaign](https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign)

- **BeFree Textline**

Operated by Polaris, the BeFree Textline offers confidential crisis assistance and support, referrals, tip reporting and general information about human trafficking through SMS text message. Text HELP to 233733.

- **NetSmartz**

An interactive, educational program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) that provides age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer on- and offline. The program is designed for children ages 5-17, parents and guardians, educators and law enforcement. [Netsmartz.org](https://www.netsmartz.org)

- **CommonSense Media**

Provides interactive lessons in digital citizenship skills to help youth participate fully in their communities and make smart choices online and in life.

[CommonSense.org/education/digital-citizenship](https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship)



References

1. US Department of State (2018). Trafficking In Persons Report 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2018/>
2. The Polaris Project (2018). Human Trafficking. Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/labor-trafficking>
3. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2019). Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Retrieved from https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/csec_program.html
4. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2018). Missing Children Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.missingkids.com/footer/media/keyfacts>
5. U.S. Department of Justice (2016). Sex Trafficking Law Enforcement Task Force. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ri/pr/sex-trafficking-law-enforcement-task-force-highlighted-during-national-slavery-and-human>
6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2009). Human Trafficking into and within the United States. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/human-trafficking-and-within-united-states-review-literature/trafficking-within-united-states>
7. NapNap Partners for Vulnerable Youth (2018). Tattoos of Human Trafficking Victims. Retrieved from <http://www.napnappartners.org/tattoos-human-trafficking-victims>
8. Polaris (2017). 2017 Statistics. Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/get-assistance/national-human-trafficking-hotline>
9. DeGarmo, J, Phd. (2017). Five Ways You Can Help Stop Child Sex Trafficking. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-john-degarmo/5-ways-you-can-help-stop- b_14079630.html
10. U.S. Department of State (2018). 15 Ways You Can Help Fight Human Trafficking. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/id/help/>