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# The Role of Schools and Communities in Recognizing and Responding to Adolescent Trafficking

NYS Council on Adolescent Pregnancy March 21, 2017

# **The NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence is an executive level state agency, created in 1992.**

Primary areas of focus:

- advise the governor and legislature on policies and practices for the State;
- train NYS professionals from all areas about the intersection of domestic violence and their daily practice;
- serve as a resource regarding the issue of domestic violence by disseminating regular public awareness campaigns publishing materials used by non-profits and victims, distributing local assistance funds, and highlighting best practices in the field.

# Agenda

- Defining adolescent trafficking
- The role for youth serving adults
- Red flags and indicators
- The role of digital and social media
- Creating safety
- Resources



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# Defining Adolescent Trafficking

# Video

- OVS/Youth Trafficking

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM76xeJNCs4>



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# What is Human Trafficking?

Two major types:

- Sex trafficking
- Labor trafficking



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# Sex Trafficking

NYS Definition: *Profiting from prostitution by providing drugs, using false or misleading statements, withholding or destroying government documents, debt servicing, force, a plan or pattern of coercive conduct, or other acts.*

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/humantraffic/default.asp>



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# Labor Trafficking

NYS Definition: Compelling or inducing another to engage in labor, or recruiting, enticing, harboring or transporting another by providing drugs, withholding or destroying government documents, debt servicing, force, or a plan or pattern of coercive conduct.

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/humantraffic/default.asp>



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# Trafficking Myths

- Requires a border crossing (international or state)
- Victims are foreign-born or persons of color
- Are physically restrained or locked up
- Smuggling is required for Human Trafficking



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# Human Trafficking is Modern Day Slavery

- Human trafficking is fast surpassing drug and arms sales
- Slavery is frequently both labor and sex trafficking
- Children and women bear the brunt of the industry
- It is a trade and there is a market



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# Why Is It Important For Youth Serving Professionals To Address Adolescent Trafficking?

# Advocates in Place

- Youth serving professionals are positioned to identify and report child trafficking
- All youth serving professionals have the potential to be advocates for child victims of human trafficking



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# ILO estimates that:

- Children represent 26% (or 5.5 million) of the 20.9 million victims worldwide.
- Many child victims of human trafficking are students in the American school system.
- No community—urban, rural, or suburban—school, socioeconomic group, or student demographic is immune
- School personnel are in a position to identify and report child trafficking.

ILO estimates from 2012

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/human-trafficking-americas-schools>



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# STATS

- 63% of underage sex trafficking victims said they had been advertised or sold online
- 325,000 children are at risk for becoming victims of sexual exploitation in North America
- The average age of entry into the sex trade in America is 14 – 16 years old

Thorn: <https://www.wearethorn.org/child-trafficking-statistics/>



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# **Risk Factors and Indicators**

# Who are the Victims?

- Most victims US citizens
- Frequently victims of childhood sexual abuse, chronic maltreatment and unstable home environments
- Most found through care systems, runaway & homeless youth networks
- Invisible victims: boys and trans persons



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# Potential Risk Factors:

- Lack of personal safety
- Isolation
- Emotional distress
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Family dysfunction
- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Learning disabilities
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Promotion of sexual exploitation by family members or peers
- Lack of social support



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# Indicator Activity

- Break out into small groups.
- List some red flags that might indicate a young person could be a trafficking victim.
- Compare results.



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# Indicators

- Inability to attend school regularly, unexplained absences
- Frequently running away
- References about frequent travel
- Symptoms of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, anxiety, or fear
- Lack of control over a schedule, identification or travel documents
- Hunger, malnourishment, inappropriate dress (based on weather conditions or surroundings)



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# Indicators, 2

- Signs of substance abuse
- Rehearsed responses to questions
- Change in attire, behavior, relationships, or material possessions (e.g., expensive items)
- Uncharacteristic promiscuity and/or references to sexual situations or terminology beyond age-specific norms
- “Boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older and/or controlling
- Attempts to conceal scars, tattoos, or bruises



# Indicators, 3

- Hyper arousal, symptoms of anger, panic, phobia, irritability, hyperactivity, frequent crying, temper tantrums, regressive behavior, and/or clinging behavior
- Daydreaming, inability to bond with others, inattention, forgetfulness, and/or shyness



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# Indicators, 4

- Pressure to pay off a debt
- Concern for the safety of others if he or she shares too much information
- Works long hours with little or no payment
- Cares for children outside the family



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# Working with Youth

- Client centered & trauma informed
- Cultural competency
- Relationship based
- Basic needs assistance
- Crisis intervention
- Safety planning
- Homelessness prevention



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# Who are the Traffickers?

- Surprisingly little is known about traffickers
- 77% are family members, friends and others known to victims
- The perpetrators of this crime don't fit a single stereotype



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# Among Others They Are:

- Criminals
- Individual pimps
- Family operations
- Small businesses
- Loose knit decentralized criminal networks
- Organized criminal operations

# Recruitment

- 14 year olds recruiting others through social media and grooming
- Faith based communities
- Residential settings
- Back page ads/Craigslist



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# The Role of Digital and Social Media in Adolescent Trafficking

# Of the domestic minor sex trafficking survivors that participated in Thorn's 2013 national survey:

- 63% were sold via the Internet at some point during their trafficking situation.
- 62% had access to a cell phone while they were being trafficked.
- 42% had access to the Internet while they were being trafficked.

[Report on the Use of Technology to Recruit, Groom and Sell Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victims](#)



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# Social Media as a Tool

- Technology has become the single greatest facilitator of the commercial sex trade.
- From recruiting and grooming sex workers to finding customers, the internet is being used in every stage of the sex trafficking game.



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# Social Media, 2

- Predators can fix on a potential victim, do their research online, mining social media accounts for information that can help them exploit victims



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# Social Media, 3

Traffickers are willing to provide whatever they identify as the victims needs. If the victim needs

- A place to live – they provide shelter
- A friend – they are the friend
- Protection – become a “Daddy”
- If they are poor – the dream of status and material goods





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# **Creating Safety**

Safety Planning and Collaboration

# Safety Planning

- Youth centered approach
- Discuss strategies for physical and sexual safety
- Define and discuss consent as a segue into exploitation
- Be aware that safety plans will change frequently
- Non-consensual placement can backfire

# Our Responsibilities To Youth

- Increase staff awareness
- Increase parent and youth awareness
- Develop and articulate policies and protocols for recognizing and responding
- Create an environment where vulnerable youth feel safe



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# **Collaboration**

# Activity

Who in your community can you collaborate with to identify and respond to adolescent trafficking?



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# Concerted Community Effort

Collaborate with:

- Community groups
- Organizations that work with youth
- Schools
- Health Clinics
- Law Enforcement
- Social Centers (bowling alleys, sports cubs)



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# Community Awareness and Education

- Community partnership works together to identify nature, scope and prevalence
- Comprehensive awareness program
- Protocol development
- Evaluation of protocol

Human Trafficking in American Schools, Jan 2015, US Department of Education



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# Federal Laws

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 was the first comprehensive federal law to address trafficking in persons. TVPA has been reauthorized several times since 2000.

3 prong approach:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Prosecution



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# NYS Anti-Trafficking Law

- NYS Anti-Trafficking Law enacted in 2007  
Passed to enhance and accelerate investigations by local and state police
- Created new state crimes of sex trafficking and labor trafficking
- Created a process in which victims are “confirmed” as trafficked victims
- Confirmed trafficking victims are eligible for benefits and services

# NYS Safe Harbor Law

- NYS Safe Harbor for Exploited Children Act signed in 2008
- Created to protect sexually exploited children under 18
- Defines children who are involved in these crimes as victims, not perpetrators
- Provides services to children who have been sexually exploited

# NYS Protocol

- 2015 law established social and legal service providers to also make referrals to the NYS Confirmation Process . Victims do not have to report to law enforcement but can still get all the services and supports. <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/bria/trafficking.asp>
- Trafficked person identified and referred to law enforcement or DA.  
(Only if victim wishes to proceed with this process)
- OTDA/DCJS receive referral, assess and review
- Victims confirmed as trafficked and referred to social services or human trafficking programs if undocumented
- If appropriate, referral is sent for certification as a victim under Federal Law



# Resources



Provided on CD-ROM



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# Questions



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