

How to talk to your children about Human Trafficking?

The Federal Trafficking Victims Protections Act (TVPA) defines the crime of human trafficking as:

- The recruitment, harboring, transportation, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age or;
- The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.



Oftentimes, when people first learn about sex trafficking, the first thing that comes to mind is “it only happens in movies”. They do not think about their child or grandchildren becoming a victim. The purpose of this handout is to give parents and guardians some insight and tools to talk to their children about the various age groups and maturity levels on commercial sexual exploitation. It is important to recognize the signs and identifiers of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and talk to your children about these situations. Parents or guardians have a right to know where their minor children are at all times, despite what your teen may argue.

A FEW BASIC TOOLS TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN:



- 1) Know where your kids are at all times.
- 2) Know what your kids are doing online and teach them about internet safety.
- 3) Talk to your kids about sexual exploitation.
- 4) Know the warning signs of sexual abuse in younger children and teens and recognize the warning signs of sexual exploitation.
- 5) Educate yourself on the apps and places they frequent.

If you suspect Human Trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.



Where is your child right now?



One thing is certain—Nearly all teens have a cell phone, and most teens cannot function without their cell phone on hand. Cell phone tracking can help you locate your child’s lost cell phone, and can help keep you notified of your child’s whereabouts at all times; especially in the event of an emergency. Predators and traffickers prey upon children who have the freedom to move around freely without suspicion. Children who are most vulnerable are those who do not have a parent or guardian looking for them. Your child must be taught never to give any personal information, answer questions such as birthdate or social security numbers, or fill out forms online. Today’s parents

are navigating uncharted parenting territory. The good news is that most dangers can be avoided if children and their parents learn about smart internet use.

KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILDREN ARE DOING ONLINE.

The latest Harvard research suggests that 9 in 10 (93 %) of teens have a computer or have access to one at home. Although it may be hard to believe, tech savvy kids as young as 5 years old are now actively using and engaging in social media. Kids online are exploring various websites, emailing friends, chatting with friends through instant messenger and in chat rooms, sending each other pictures and videos, playing games together online, creating websites and web blogs, and searching YouTube for popular “viral” videos and trends. Be sure to place any computer your younger child uses in a common area, so you can monitor what is happening. Pre-teens should never be allowed on chat sites without supervision. For older teens, parents should have the right to ask about browsing history and access to all passwords. When discussing social networking safety with your teen, encourage them to always use discretion when posting any type of photo, location, status, and message. Teens tend to overshare information. They post questionable photos, give their locations and share personal information such as their cell phone numbers and home address. What seems like harmless chatter between friends can end up pinpointing your child’s location and regular behavior to a predator. **Traffickers and predators are masterful at deception and gaining a teen’s trust online first, before meeting online.**

Another way to keep tabs on your kids is to follow them on their social media sites. You may learn a lot about your child from how he or she communicates with peers. Teens should interact with only people they know. Allowing only people you know and trust as “friends” or “followers” is the best way to ensure safety when using social networking sites. Unfortunately, some teens are motivated by sheer volume in the numbers of online “followers”, and fail to think about the dangers associated with a stranger having access to personal information such as photos and locations. Learning how to use social media apps and websites is essential and part of parenting now.



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Teach Your Children to Trust Their Instincts

With so much constant change in the internet space, the best way to equip a child is to teach them to trust their instincts. If something feels wrong, it probably is. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Talk to Your Children

Slavery is a topic that children have learned about at various times in their lives. Most kids believe that slavery ended with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, or three years later with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Kids can relate to the concept of slaves having to work without pay and not having the freedom to escape the situation. This is a logical way to address the topic of commercial sexual exploitation. You can share the fact that there are more slaves today worldwide than at any other time during history.



It may be someone they know !

Despite sensational media coverage, stranger abductions are extremely rare. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, only 115 children per year in this country are victims of “stereotypical” kidnappings, where a stranger takes a child to keep or harm them. Young children are less likely to be targeted by strangers than teens. Nevertheless, it is important to talk to your children about strangers and above all, teach them to once again trust their own instincts. Children should never be left alone with unknown adults and should always travel in groups, where there is safety in numbers.

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION



When do I start the conversation?

Human sexuality is not openly discussed in many American households, yet the topic is glaringly present in all aspects of media seen by kids and teens on a daily basis. These are difficult waters for a child to navigate alone. Most kids under the age of 10 are usually naïve about sexuality and have limited knowledge about sex, and even more limited understanding of rape or sexual exploitation. Human growth and development at school likely occurs during the 5th grade, when students range from ages 9-11. In girls, puberty usually starts around 11 years of age and in boys puberty usually starts around 12 years of age. The normal onset of puberty ranges in girls from 9-16 while in boys it is 12-15. It is best to have these conversations with your children after puberty has begun.

Prepubescent children lack the physical and mental maturity to understand changes in the human body that prepare them for sexual reproduction. It is important to understand that girls who mature early may begin sexual activity earlier than those who physically mature at a slower pace. Where students may learn about reproductive health at school, it is up to the family to teach their kids to feel good about how their bodies look and feel. Parents can teach children at a young age about physical touch and what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. Children should be taught what kind of touch is acceptable, what to do if someone tries to hurt them, and that it is okay to talk about anything that makes them “feel” uncomfortable with a parent, guardian, or responsible adult.

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When you as a parent ask questions, you show that you care about your kids health and safety. Questions to ask your tween or teen:

- “What would you do if a good looking older guy came up to you at the mall and said he thought you were pretty enough to be a model?”
- “Would you give him your phone number?”
- “Is it okay for a stranger to take pictures of you?”
- “Is it okay to send pictures of yourself to a stranger?”
- “Have you ever known someone at school that had an older boyfriend?”
- “Have any of your friends ever talked about getting paid to go on a date?”
- “Do you know what sexting is?” “Has anyone ever sent you a picture that made you feel uncomfortable?”

SEXTING and SEXTORTION

As a parent or guardian, it is extremely important to know if your child is engaging in these activities. Even if your child denies being involved in these activities, ensure that your talking to them about how these practices can affect their life and their reputation.

What if.....

“What if?” questions are an opportunity to practice scenarios with your kids. Roleplaying is a powerful way to teach kids how to handle difficult situations. Act out with your child various situations at different familiar locations—sports practice, walking to a friend’s house, outdoor festivals, Halloween, at the mall, Movie Theater, etc. These “what would you do” conversations can take place at the dinner table or on the drive to school and may help ease apprehension about the topic. You will probably hear, “Oh Mom, Seriously?” In the end, it is better to upset your child so that he or she thinks twice when potentially faced with a difficult situation.

What is Sexting?

Sexting is the sending of sexually explicit photos or text through one's mobile phone to another person. Sexting is more common than you think. Teens sext due to the following reasons:

- Teen may see sexting as the first step to becoming sexually active It is commonly done in a romantic relationship
- Many teens see this as a good way to tell someone that they are interested in them.
- Teens may believe that everyone else is doing it.
- Exploring their sexuality and feelings
- Finding attention from someone else or gain popularity on social media.
- Teens mistakenly believe this is a way to flirt.

What is Sextortion?

Sextortion is a criminal and deviant activity by which adolescents and adults exploit other children and adults for sex and/or sexually themed activities in exchange for not disclosing embarrassing and humiliating information. If the victim does not submit to their sexual directives, they threaten to disclose sensitive information to loved ones, employers, educators, peers or organizations if the victim does not engage in sexually illicit acts.

Know the Warning Signs!



It is important to learn and know possible warning signs.

Staying alert and involved is so important in a child's life!

Warning Signs for Younger Children:

- Gradual or sudden changes in behavior
- Cruelty to others
- Cruelty to pets Recurring nightmares
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Fear of the dark
- Regression behavior like bed wetting
- Unusual interest in/ knowledge of sex
- Expressing affection in ways that are inappropriate for a child of that age
- Sexual Acting Out/ Inappropriate sexual play (with self, other children)
- Fear of a certain person/ intense dislike of being left somewhere
- Change in behavior around a specific person
- Afraid to be left alone Loss of or lack of interest in friends, school sports, or other activities
- Fear of participating in physical activities at school

Teens:

- Extreme and/ or unexplained anger
- Running away
- Low self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors/ self harm
- Seductive behavior Promiscuous behavior
- Eating disorders
- Anxiety and/ or Depression
- Alcohol or substance abuse at young age
- Difficulty establishing relationships with family members and peers at school
- Signs of PTSD from prior trauma
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Inadequately dressed for school
- Teens carrying large amounts of cash with no probable way of obtaining it
- Multiple sexual partners at a young age
- Constantly running away from home
- Often using their friends as “cover-ups” for their whereabouts



The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools is a department of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The mission of the center is to Develop and implement strategies to ensure that students are safer in schools. The vision is for All schools in the state are safer, secure and offer an environment conducive to learning.

Contact Information



NCDPI Website for NC Center for Safer Schools:

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/center-safer-schools>



NC Center for Safer Schools General Email:

cfss@dpi.nc.gov

Follow Us on NC Center for Safer Schools Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NCSaferSchools>

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For additional information on trauma-sensitive/trauma-informed schools, see the TraumaSensitive Schools Training Package developed under contract to the U.S. Department of Education by the National Center of Safe Supportive Learning Environments. <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package>

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