

# UNLOCKING THE NARRATIVE:

*Engaging and working with survivors of  
domestic minor sex trafficking and  
commercial sexual exploitation*

**LOVE146**  
END CHILD TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION



# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Overview of Human Trafficking
- Recruitment and Grooming
- Identification
- Assessment
- Engagement

# DEFINITION

**Child sex trafficking** is the sexual abuse of a child (under the age of 18) by another person in exchange for something of value.

## **Key elements of the definition:**

- Payment can be in the form of money or in kind (e.g., food, shelter, drugs).
- Payment can be paid to the child or to one or more third parties.
- There is no requirement to prove force, fraud, or coercion.
- “Consent” to prostitution, pornography, stripping, or other forms of commercial sexual exploitation is impossible for a child.

# RISK FACTORS

## SOCIETY

Stereotypes  
Materialistic Culture  
Phobias  
Laws and Policies  
Sexualizing Youth  
Migratory Status  
Social Norms  
Inequality  
Media

Poverty  
Street Culture  
Lack of Social Supports  
High Level of Transience  
Limited Employment  
Opportunities  
High Levels of Incarceration  
High Levels of Family  
Disruption  
Gangs

## COMMUNITY

## RELATIONAL

History of Trauma  
Mental Illness  
Low IQ  
Low Self-Esteem  
Personal Substance Abuse  
Lack of School Engagement  
Lack of Supportive Adult(s)

Low Emotional Attachment to  
Caregivers  
Separated/Divorced Parents  
Dating Violence  
Incarcerated/Deceased Family  
Member  
Low Parental Involvement  
Family Substance Use/Abuse  
Bullying  
Peers in "the life"  
Domestic Violence in the  
Home

## INDIVIDUAL



# THE TRAFFICKERS

*Romantic partners*

*Family members*

*Friends/peers*

*Gangs*

*Child sex trafficking without a third party*



# RECRUITMENT AND GROOMING

## *Gaining trust*

- Put in time/Pay significant attention
- Shower with gifts, treats, and compliments
- Express love and care

## *Moving from trust to exploitation*

- Engage in physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse
- Psychologically and emotionally break the child so that he or she becomes completely dependent
- Traumatic Bonding - where a person has dysfunctional attachment to their exploiter

## *Grooming – In-Person vs. the Internet*

# POWER & CONTROL IN LABOR & SEX TRAFFICKING

## COERCION AND THREATS

*Threatens to harm victims or family | Threatens to expose or shame victim | Threatens to report to police or immigration*

## INTIMIDATION

*Harms other victims, children, or pets | Displays or uses weapons | Destroys property | Lies about police involvement in trafficking situation*

## ECONOMIC ABUSE

*Creates debt that can never be repaid | Takes money earned | Prohibits access to finances | Limits resources to a small allowance*

## DENYING, BLAMING, MINIMIZING

*Makes light of abuse or exploitation | Denies that anything illegal or exploitative is occurring | Places blame on victim for the trafficking situation*

## USING PRIVILEGE

*Treats victim like a servant | Uses gender, age, or nationality to suggest superiority | Uses certain victims to control others | Hides or destroys important documents*

## ISOLATION

*Keeps confined | Accompanies in public | Creates distrust of police/others | Moves to different locations | Prevents from learning English/going to school | Denies access to family and friends*

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

*Shoves, slaps, hits, punches, kicks, strangles | Burns, brands, tattoos | Denies food/water | Exposes to harmful chemicals | Forces pregnancy termination | Induces drug addiction as means of control*

## SEXUAL ABUSE

*Uses sexual assault as punishment or means of control | Forces to have sex multiple times a day with strangers | Treats victim as an object for monetary gain | Normalizes sexual violence & selling sex*

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE

*Humiliates in front of others | Calls names | Plays mind games | Makes victim feel guilt/blame for situation | Convinces victim they're the only one that cares about them*

**BUSINESSES, FARMS, DOMESTIC WORK, BEGGING/PEDDLING, STRIPPING, STREET/ONLINE PROSTITUTION, TRUCK STOPS, RESIDENTIAL/COMMERCIAL-FRONT BROTHELS**

# THE MAKING OF A GIRL





# POTENTIAL RED FLAGS/INDICATORS

Frequently running  
away/AWOLing

Multiple anonymous sex  
partners

Sexual/romantic relationship  
with older partner(s)

Affiliation with other youth  
who are confirmed/suspected  
victims of human trafficking

Reported spending time in or  
recovered from a hotel, trap  
house, or known area of  
prostitution.

Posting/sharing explicit  
materials online

Unaccounted for injuries or  
tattoos

Affiliation with  
confirmed/suspected  
trafficker

Possession of unaccounted for  
items (e.g., money, cell  
phone).

Unwilling/unable to provide  
information regarding  
significant other or sex  
partner(s)



# ASSESSMENT

- Availability of basic resources
- Current functioning
- Patient history
- Circumstances related to initial entry
- Association with their trafficker
- Experienced/witnessed trauma
- Coping strategies
- Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional delays



# ENGAGING YOUTH: INTRODUCTION

## *Introduction self/organization*

## *Introduction questions (examples)*

- “Did anyone tell you I was coming?”
- “Why do you think I was asked to come here and talk with you?”

## *Mandated reporter/judgment-free zone*

- Examples of youth having to make tough choices

## *Pause points – allow youth opportunity to share*



# ENGAGING YOUTH: DEMONSTRATING KNOWLEDGE

## *Grooming and recruitment*

- Normalize how common it is to be approached
- Discuss the savviness of the grooming process
- Put names to tactics/behaviors associated with grooming
- Acknowledge it is normal to feel flattered by the approach

## *Social media (tricky because it is ever changing)*

- Ask open questions:
  - What apps are you using?
  - How many friends/followers do you have?
  - How do you decide who to be friends with?
- Let youth explain how apps you haven't yet heard of work
- Allow youth to interject subject of picture sharing
- Explain the grooming process online:  
Following - Liking - Chatting - Texting - Picture Sharing – Meeting



# ENGAGING YOUTH: DISCUSSING THEIR OWN VICTIMIZATION

***Don't assume victimization...ask...***

“Has anything like that ever happened to you?”

***If resistant, can ask:***

Have you ever seen it happening?

Do you have any friends that are involved?

What do you think you would do if you were approached?

***Youth may test your ability to  
handle a potential disclosure***



# ENGAGING YOUTH: INFORMATION ON THE LAWS

## *Human Trafficking related laws in Connecticut*

- Minors (under age 18) cannot be arrested for prostitution
- Minors are guaranteed an affirmative defense and have the right to vacate related juvenile records
- Suspected cases shall be reported to the DCF Careline
- Victims can be classified as “uncared for” to facilitate DCF services
- Cases are to be addressed through Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs)

## *Other related information:*

- How human trafficking related laws vary in other states
- How laws change when they turn 18
- Age of consent
- Inability to consent under the influence



# ENGAGING YOUTH: INFORMATION ON VICTIM STATUS

## *Victim rights*

- Victim compensation
- Victim notification

## *Victim services*

- Hotline numbers
- Specific needs of youth

## *Legal justice system*

- *“That happened to me!”*
- *“Everyone sends pictures.”*
- *“I know everyone I’m friends with.”*
- *“Someone told me I could be a model.”*
- *“I just google pics and pretend it is me.”*
- *“My friends and I just like to mess with people.”*
- *“I would totally fall for that if he was hot.”*
- *“I crop my head out so no one would know its me.”*
- *“He gave me a place to stay and I had sex with him, but I wanted to do it.”*
- *“He’s my friend, he gets me what I need.”*
- *“She told me she could help me make money.”*
- *“One time I needed a ride...”*
- *“My boyfriend really wanted me to have sex with his friend.”*

# BE PREPARED TO RESPOND QUOTES FROM YOUTH



# MAJOR INDICATORS OF TRAUMA BONDING

- Intensely grateful for small acts of kindness
- Denies/rationalizes violence
- Believe they have some control over abuse
- Self-blame for situation and abuse
- Seeks to keep the exploiter happy
- Sees outside authorities/providers as bad guys
- Sees the trafficker as the good guy/protector
- Is thankful and grateful that the trafficker has not killed them
- Inability to engage in behaviors that may assist in their release or detachment

# THE POWER OF WORDS

**PROSTITUTE**

HOE

SLUT

PROMISCUOUS

NASTY

DIRTY

WHORE

MONEY



**SEXUALLY EXPLOITED  
TEENAGER**

VICTIM

INVOLUNTARY

ABUSE

TRAUMATIZED

ALONE

MISUNDERSTOOD

PRESSURE

# YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Call the DCF Careline for all suspected cases of human trafficking

Use the term “human trafficking” when making a report

# CONNECTICUT RESPONSE

- DCF HART (Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team)
  - HART Liaisons in every DCF office
  - DCF Response Practice Guide
  - Credentialing therapists
- MDT lead role
- Designated emergency department(s)
- Victim compensation
- Specialized foster care
- Love146
  - Rapid response
  - Long-term services

# THERE IS NO COOKIE-CUTTER APPROACH TO WORKING WITH THIS POPULATION

...YOU JUST DON'T KNOW HOW LONG YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH THEM. JUST WHEN YOU THINK THEY ARE MOVING FORWARD, SOMETHING HAPPENS WITH THEIR CASE OR WITH THEIR FAMILY, OR THEY SEE SOMETHING IN THE NEWS THAT TRIGGERS THE TRAUMA EXPERIENCE AND SETS THEM BACK SOMETIMES MONTHS IN THEIR PROGRESS. A LOT OF TIMES IT IS ONE STEP FORWARD AND TWO OR THREE STEPS BACK. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR SETBACKS.

*- Service Provider*

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