



U Choose to Know

Number 7

Spotting Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is using **force, fraud, or coercion** to exploit someone for a **commercial sex act**.¹ ***Any minor involved in commercial sex is automatically a victim of sex trafficking*** whether or not force, fraud, or coercion were used. A commercial sex act is doing something sexual for something of value. For teens this could look like an exchange of sex for money, food, drugs, clothes, or just a place to sleep.

Sex trafficking can look different for each person involved. A few examples might be:²

- A pimp controls someone's activities and makes them have sex for something of value
- A family member forces someone to have sex for something of value
- A gang exploits people to have sex for valuables as part of their activities
- A person solicits themselves to earn income or meet basic needs
- Even with no specific trafficker, a minor engaged in commercial sex

It seems hard to believe that the young people you work with and teach could be engaged in sex trafficking, but almost 50% of the victims of sex trafficking are between the ages of 12 and 17.³ To learn more about statistics and risk factors around human and sex trafficking, visit the [Polaris Project](#).

¹ <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/laws/61124.htm>

² Rubenstein, A., Celestine-Donnor, N., Eisler, A., & Finigan-Carr, N. (2016). *Engaging Child Victims of Sex Trafficking: The Role of the Child Welfare Worker* Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Social Work, Healthy Teen Network.

³ Polaris Project. 2017. 2016 Hotline Statistics. Retrieved on 3/26/2018 from <https://polarisproject.org/resources/2016-hotline-statistics>

⁴ Rubenstein, A., Celestine-Donnor, N., Eisler, A., & Finigan-Carr, N. (2016). *Engaging Child Victims of Sex Trafficking: The Role of the Child Welfare Worker* Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Social Work, Healthy Teen Network.



If you think someone is being sex trafficked, here are some clues you can look for:⁴

- Under 18 and engaged in commercial sex
- Runs away for extended periods of time
- Uses prostitution terms or has prostitution related [tattoos/branding](#)
- Prostitution or similar charges
- Provocative social media posts
- Sexual, romantic experiences are inappropriate or unsafe
- Fearful, anxious, depressed, and/or withdrawn; avoids eye contact
- Signs of physical/sexual abuse, confinement, and/or malnourishment
- Not allowed to speak for themselves; not in control of money or documents
- Has access to money or material items that do not fit their situation, such as multiple cell phones
- Numerous inconsistencies in story; reluctant to share information
- Reported recent or multiple sexual assaults
- STDs, unplanned pregnancies

Remember: No one clue, or even a couple clues, means someone is sex trafficked. These are only signals that should lead you to be aware and seek help for this person. Keep reading to learn how to help someone...it may surprise you!

Learn about the experiences of teens who have been sex trafficked:

- This [moving poem](#) written by a survivor of sex trafficking.
- In this [TedX presentation](#) by Kanani Titchen, she shares her experience working with girls who are trafficked.
- Rebecca Bender [tells her story](#) about being a victim of trafficking.
- This woman [shares her experience](#) of being a victim of trafficking at 12 years old.

Resources

[Araminta](#) is a group based in Maryland that works to end human trafficking through education and prevention strategies. They also provide restorative services to survivors.

The Polaris Project runs the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) and is available to answer calls from victims or from concerned community members (including teachers!). They also have a directory of [resources](#) in your area.

Baltimore City Child Protective Services has a 24 hour suspected child abuse screening line. If you are concerned about a young person, you can call 410-361-2235 to speak to a social worker or law enforcement officer.

The [Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force](#) has good information on trafficking in your state as well as local resources.

The Texas Education Agency developed an [introduction to human trafficking](#) for education professionals.

The U.S. Department of Education developed [this report](#) to help schools and teachers better address human trafficking. It includes protocols for school districts in the event of a sex trafficking incident with a student.

The National Center for Homeless Education at the SERVE Center within the University of North Carolina at Greensboro developed this [helpful guide for schools on how to recognize and respond to the trafficking of students](#).

⁵ Eisler, A. (2018). *Human trafficking 101*. Baltimore, MD: Healthy Teen Network; University of Maryland, School of Social Work.



For more information,
visit uchoosebaltimore.org.

If you believe a young person you know is being trafficked, remember the 3 C's:⁵

Be Compassionate: This person may be experiencing abuse, legal issues, isolation, immigration issues, and separation from their family and support network.

Be Cautious: Do not draw attention to their situation; it could put them in danger.

Make the Call: Call the [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#) to report what you've seen: 1-888-3737-888 or TTY 711.

Never address trafficking with a student directly; this could put them in further danger.

Always refer out to a national hotline or other local professional who works with human trafficking issues. Your school social worker should be able to point you in the right direction.

Always remember: It is NEVER a victim's fault when they are trafficked. They are survivors.

