Child Exploitation Resources

> **Protect children from exploitation by recognizing the risk factors and warning signs, knowing how to respond, and supporting students who have been victimized.**

Child exploitation can take many forms and affect young people of any background, demographic, or geographic location. Victimization can take place directly on school grounds as well as through online or social media platforms, and victimized students may suffer physical, mental, and emotional trauma.

Schools are uniquely positioned to support students facing exploitation. Because of the regular interaction between educators and students, school personnel can help identify and report suspected cases of trafficking and exploitation and connect affected students to critical services.

Understanding the factors that make students vulnerable to exploitation, such as adverse childhood experiences, history of trauma, housing instability/homelessness, or lack of supportive adult figures, and recognizing the warning signs is the first step in identifying potential victims. Signs or indicators may include unexplained absences from school, abruptly disconnecting from family or friends, or significant changes in behaviors including online activity, and if observed can be an opportunity to ask more questions or help students get the support they need.

School leaders can provide training and resources on the risk factors and indicators of child exploitation so that teachers and school staff can recognize potential cases, as well as offer age-appropriate safety education programs for students and engage with parents to raise awareness of the issue. School districts should also establish and articulate clearly defined policies, protocols, and procedures, supported by collaboration with relevant local community and law enforcement partners, for school personnel to follow if cases of child exploitation are suspected or disclosed.

To counteract risk factors, identifying and building protective factors and a safe and supportive school community can help to prevent youth from exploitative and trafficking situations. Protective factors can include encouraging youth to seek help, identifying resources to meet student needs, and offering ongoing education about healthy relationships, intimate partner violence, and child sex abuse. Schools should also put in place campus security measures and screen visitors to school grounds and events. As well, providing children, teens, parents, and teachers with information regarding the potential dangers of online environments and how to stay safe online can help prevent many instances of child exploitation.

Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers a variety of resources, programs, and guides that school communities can use to help prevent, identify, and respond to child exploitation, including:

Guides and Reports

- [Child Sex Trafficking in America: A Guide for Parents and Guardians](): This guide offers information for parents and guardians on child sex trafficking, including an overview on the victims and perpetrators, tips for keeping children safer, and warning signs.

- [How to Talk to Youth about Human Trafficking: A Guide for Youth Caretakers and Individuals Working with Youth](#): This guide can be used by any adult who is a caretaker of a youth or individuals who work with youth through formal or informal programming. It includes information about what human trafficking is, how to recognize it among youth, tips for talking to youth about general exploitation, information about building life skills that may help prevent youth from being trafficked, and reporting options if you suspect a youth is affected by human trafficking or being exploited.

- [Human Trafficking in America's Schools: What Schools Can Do To Prevent, Respond, and Help Students To Recover From Human Trafficking (Second Edition)](#): This guide is intended to provide awareness of the current prevalence of child trafficking and the forms it takes; information on risk factors and indicators of child trafficking; details about three prevention tiers and the implications for schools' role in addressing child trafficking; information on how professional development of school staff and prevention education for students and families can reduce the likelihood of trafficking; and details on how policies, protocols, and partnerships with other community sectors can help prevent trafficking.

- [Sex Trafficking of Minors: What Schools Need to Know to Recognize and Respond to the Trafficking of Students](#): This brief provides educators with an overview of the issue of minor sex trafficking and suggests specific steps that schools can take to respond to signs of trafficking among its students. It also offers suggestions for how State Coordinators for Homeless Education and local homeless education liaisons can help guide their states' and school districts' efforts to address trafficking within schools.

Fact Sheets and Tip Sheets

- [Child Sex Trafficking Overview](#): This resource provides an overview of and trends on child sex trafficking as well as the signs associated with child sex trafficking so trusted adults and professionals can recognize potential red flags or indicators.

- [Human Trafficking 101 for School Administrators and Staff](#): This resource offers a definition of human trafficking, a brief overview of who is at risk, and behavioral, physical, and social indicators of trafficking that might be observed by school personnel. It also includes the number to call to report suspected trafficking, and a reminder about the importance of engaging law enforcement in order to protect students' and staff's safety.

Resources and Programs

- [Keeping Children Safe Online](#): This webpage offers tips, videos, and resources to help parents, guardians, caregivers, and teachers help protect children from becoming victims of online child predators.

- [NetSmartz](#): NetSmartz is the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's online safety education program. It provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children how to be safer online with the goal of helping children to become more aware of potential online risks and empowering them to help prevent victimization by making safer choices on- and offline.

- [Project iGuardian](#): Project iGuardian is focused on keeping children and teens safe from online predators through education and awareness. The project is an outreach effort to share information about the dangers of online environments, how to stay safe online, and how to report abuse and suspicious activity.

If you are concerned about potential or suspected child sex trafficking, please make a report to the National Center For Missing & Exploited Children's [CyberTipline](#) or call 1-800-THE-LOST.

For additional information and resources, visit [SchoolSafety.gov](#)'s recently launched [Child Exploitation topic page](#).

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