

## Child Sex Trafficking in America: A Guide for Parents and Guardians

### What is **Child Sex Trafficking**?

Child sex trafficking occurs when a child under 18 is involved in a commercial sex act where sex is traded for money, food, shelter, drugs or anything else of value. This crime is occurring in all types of communities throughout the United States and traffickers are making an alarming profit while victims endure countless days and nights of rape, abuse, torture and violence.

It's important to remember that even if the child believes it was his or her choice, they are a victim, and an adult or perpetrator is exploiting their vulnerabilities. A child cannot consent to sex with an adult. As such there is no such thing as child prostitution and that phrase should never be used when referring to child sex trafficking.

### Know the Warning Signs

Children frequently do not reveal their victimization because they're being manipulated by a trafficker who has physical and psychological control over them, or out of the shame and guilt that may exist as a result of their exploitation. Parents and guardians should familiarize themselves with some of the indicators of child sex trafficking, including:

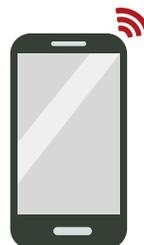
- A history of running away or current status as a runaway;
- Large amounts of cash, multiple cell phones or hotel keys;
- Tattoos or branding related to money or ownership and/or the child is unwilling to explain;
- Signs of current physical abuse and/or multiple sexually transmitted diseases;
- Presence of, or communication with, a controlling older boyfriend or girlfriend;
- Gang involvement, especially among girls; or
- Travel to other states or staying at hotels when he or she runs away.

### How to Keep Your Child **Safer**

One of the most important things you can do to protect your child is to create an environment in which he or she feels comfortable talking with you. Open **communication** is key. Help make your children more aware by explaining the dangers of sex trafficking and by **challenging myths** and misconceptions that glamorize commercial sex. This includes having conversations with them about online safety and how traffickers/pimps use social networking sites and apps to mask not only their appearance but also their true intentions while recruiting new victims.

Do you trust the people with whom your child interacts? **Knowing** who your child is with is always crucial to protecting his or her safety. Also, it's very important to **monitor** what your child does and who your child is interacting with on the internet.

Lastly, if something doesn't seem right, **ask questions!**



**IF YOU SUSPECT  
CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING,**

CALL  
**1-800-THE-LOST®** (1-800-843-5678) OR  
VISIT [www.cybertipline.org](http://www.cybertipline.org)

