

# Talking with Youth About Human Trafficking

A Resource Guide for Caregivers



# Glossary

## Grooming

a gradual process in which a trafficker seeks to gain control over a potential victim to manipulate them into sex or labor trafficking. Traffickers usually follow six steps in the grooming process: (1) targeting a victim, (2) gaining trust, (3) meeting needs, (4) creating dependence, (5) exploiting a victim, and (6) maintaining control.

## Human Trafficking

when someone is being taken advantage of and forced, tricked or coerced to do things they do not want to do. This can include labor trafficking - like working at a job all day without a break or for little to no pay, or sex trafficking - any kind of sexual act online or in person. Both sex and labor trafficking must involve the exchange of money or something of value.

## Labor Trafficking

the crime of using force, fraud, or coercion to convince another person to work or provide a service. Under Florida law, if the person is under 18, there does not have to be evidence of force, fraud or coercion.

## Love Bombing

a manipulative tactic that consists of piling on attention, affection, and making grand gestures early in a relationship and then later making a person feel as if they owe something to the love bomber.

## Photo Meta Data

information, such as date, time, and location embedded within digital photos.

## Sex Trafficking

the crime of using force, fraud, or coercion to convince another person to sell sex (includes any "commercial sex act" like prostitution, pornography, or online sexual acts). Under both Florida and federal law, if the person is under 18, there does not have to be evidence of force, fraud or coercion.



# Human trafficking can affect anyone.

However, traffickers are more likely to target people who are vulnerable, especially children and teens. It is important to become educated on this topic to prevent this crime and keep children and teens – and their caregivers - safe from trafficking.

Here are some facts about what sex and labor trafficking looks like here in Leon County:

- Human traffickers are often **not** strangers, they are usually known and can be family members or friends.
- Abduction is rare. Traffickers most commonly recruit and groom children and teens online, using social platforms or games, **not** by grabbing them off the street. (See glossary for definitions of grooming)
- Men and boys, as well as women and girls, and LGBTQIA+ youth can be trafficked.



## Signs of Human Trafficking

Adults and caregivers must know the signs of human trafficking in order to educate and empower themselves, children, and teens with information to help prevent this crime and stay safe.

Signs of human trafficking are not always easily seen.

### Behaviors to pay attention to include but are not limited to:

- Avoiding friends and family
- Frequent tardiness or absence from school or work
- Loss of interest in things once enjoyed
- Sleeping often when home and staying out late or all weekend
- Having new and older friends or a significant other they met online
- Having large amounts of money, or bragging about traveling or purchasing expensive items with no reasonable explanation
- Expressing fear of an employer or other adults in their life
- Working an excessive amount
- Responding to questions with rehearsed answers
- Starting to use drugs or alcohol in a concerning manner
- Becoming homeless or leaving home to live with an older friend
- Frequently injured without an explanation
- Having secret online accounts

To review additional signs of human trafficking, visit [Surviveandthriveadvocacy.org](https://www.surviveandthriveadvocacy.org).

# Grooming

Traffickers target children and teens because of their developmental stage. They take advantage of their vulnerabilities and often begin the grooming process by promising to meet their unmet needs. This makes it easier for them to access and manipulate them.

## Signs of grooming can include but are not limited to:

- Isolating a child or teen from friends and family.
- Providing a child or teen with meals and gifts.
- Gaining a child or caregiver's trust by seeming overly friendly, helpful and affectionate.
- Asking a child or teen to take sexual/suggestive pictures of themselves.
- Being overly affectionate with a child or teen such as hugging, touching, or kissing.
- Scaring a child or teen into keeping the relationship a secret.

## Having unmet needs and vulnerabilities can include:

- Lacking strong social and emotional connections with friends and family.
- Feeling insecure, unattractive or unworthy.
- Lacking a sense of direction and purpose.
- Dealing with poverty or homelessness.
- Experiencing violence at home, work, school or in the community.
- Untreated or unaddressed mental health needs.
- Lacking a sense of safety at school, work, home or in the community.
- Struggling with substance use or family has a history of substance abuse.
- Having a physical, intellectual or developmental disability.
- Experiencing the juvenile justice or child welfare systems.
- Having undocumented immigration status or limited understanding of the English language.
- LGBTQIA+ youth who are not accepted or supported by their caretakers and community.



# How to Talk to Youth About Human Trafficking

Talking about human trafficking with children and teens can be uncomfortable. Begin the conversation by creating a safe space. It is important to be open and honest during this conversation. No question is too big or too small.

- Ask what they already know about the topic.
- Provide a definition of **human trafficking** that they can understand. (See glossary for definition.)
- Explain internet and safety guidelines. (See page 6)
- Discuss dating and sexual relationships. Children and teens need to know that their bodies are not commodities or objects for others to use for pleasure or money. Sexual relationships should always be explicitly consensual, and they should never have to exchange sex acts for money or safety.
- Talk about unmet needs in the child or teen's life.
- Remind them that traffickers are most often people they know or new friends/significant others they think they can trust.

Make sure the child or teen knows that while it is important to protect themselves, you and trusted adults are here to help. See page back cover for a list of resources.



# Human Trafficking Isn't a One-Time Conversation

Even though it may be uncomfortable or awkward to talk about, human trafficking shouldn't be a one-time conversation. As children and teens grow, we should continue to keep them informed and empowered through regular conversations about human trafficking.

## Here are some tips:

- Encourage them to be aware of both sex and labor trafficking.
- Remind them that knowledge is power and that they can help keep themselves and their friends or family safe by staying alert.
- Assure them that they can always come to you or another trustworthy, safe adult if they need help or see something suspicious.



# Resources



**Scan** this QR code to visit our website.

**Call or text:** 850-597-2080

# Other Toolkit Items



## How To Stay Safe Online

Not every user online is who they say they are or has good intentions. When you're gaming or on social media, avoid human traffickers by asking yourself these questions:

- Is this person asking me to do something that goes against any of my personal or physical boundaries?
- Do I really know who this person is?
- Are they asking me to keep our conversations secret?
- Do I want to be in this friendship or relationship? Or do I feel like I have to?
- Is this person threatening me? Are there signs of manipulation or force?

## Online Privacy & Safety Tips

Talk to a parent or trusted adult and your friends about your online relationships, even if you don't have any concerns. Here are some online safety tips:

- Remove geotags before posting photos and videos.
- Remember, anything can be screenshot or screen recorded without your knowledge.
- Block and report accounts that are asking for personal information or pictures of you.
- Talk with someone about inappropriate behavior online.
- Don't share your personal information online, including your passwords.
- Never meet up with someone online alone or in a home, suggest a public place. Tell your parents or a trusted adult about anyone that is asking to meet you.
- Turn on privacy settings on social media apps and sites.

## Human Trafficking Is Real.

### Here's How to Get Help.

Human trafficking happens when someone is being taken advantage of and forced, tricked or coerced to do things they do not want to do. This can include **labor trafficking** - like working at a job all day without a break or for little to no pay, or **sex trafficking** - any kind of sexual act online or in person. Both sex and labor trafficking must involve the exchange of money or something of value.

It can be hard or scary to talk to your friends or adults in your life about it. Still, you can act to help yourself or someone else.

It is important to know where to get help, even if you only suspect something isn't right. If you think that you or someone you know is being trafficked, you can reach out to these groups by text, email or phone:

### Survive & Thrive Advocacy Center



Scan this QR code to visit our website.

Call or text: 850-597-2080

### National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call: 1-888-373-7888 Text: 233733

Live chat: [humantraffickinghotline.org/chat](https://humantraffickinghotline.org/chat)

If there's immediate danger, call 911

## Stay Safe & Stay Aware In Leon County and Online

### What is human trafficking?

Generally, it is when someone is being taken advantage of and forced to work (labor trafficking) or do things of a sexual nature (sex trafficking) that they do not want to do. Traffickers target people of all ages, races, religions and genders – it can happen to anybody.

### Where does human trafficking happen?

Human trafficking can take place at everyday public places such as the mall, on the street, at bus stops, and even in neighborhoods. Traffickers also target and recruit people online on social media and gaming sites.

### Who are human traffickers?

Human traffickers can be almost anyone, including family members or friends. They can pretend to be someone who wants to help you and can act very caring and respectful. Sometimes it can be a stranger, but usually it's someone you or a friend knows or someone who takes the time to get to know you through grooming.





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**Thank you.**

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