



Human Trafficking  
in **AMERICA'S SCHOOLS**



## - Human Trafficking Webinar Series –

# The Impact of Bias, Inequities, and Injustices in Supporting Students Impacted by Human Trafficking

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*Wednesday, June 29 2022 | 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET*  
*Transcript*

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**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to our webinar, The Impact of Bias, Inequities and Injustices in Supporting Students Impacted by Human Trafficking. This is the eighth in the series of webinars sponsored by the US Department of Education since January of 2020, to focus on the critical role America's schools play in addressing human trafficking. We're so pleased to have you with us today. My name is Cindy Carraway-Wilson, and I'm a training specialist for the National Center on Safe, Supportive Learning Environments, or NCSSE. NCSSE is funded by the office of safe, and supportive learning environment. Excuse me, the office of Safe and Supportive Schools, in the office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the US Department of Education. Our aim at NCSSE is to help build the capacity of state education agencies, districts, and schools to make school climate improvements, foster school safety, and maintain supportive, engaging, and healthy learning environments to support the academic enrichment and success of all students. To learn more about NCSSE and to access a range of resources that address school climate and conditions for learning, we encourage you to visit our website.

To give you a sense of what the website looks like and what it includes, here we share some of our most popular products on the left and an image of our homepage on the right. We also share the latest resources and event coming out of the field via social media. So please do follow us on social media. Please note that all the materials you see today, including the slides, the referenced resources, and the archived version of the recording will be available at the event webpage within this website. In fact, some of the materials, including the slides, and the speaker bios have already been posted. Please also note that as you access previous... You can access previous webinars in the human trafficking

series by visiting the webinar series webpage, which is also listed here, and is now posted in your chat box. Now I'd like to speak a little bit about who is in the room today. First, I'm happy to share with you that we have over 1,096 people who are registered for this webinar.

When you registered, we asked you to share with us what role you hold, and what you're doing and why you came to this webinar. So, you can see from this slide that the majority of people selected specialized instruction support and other. Under the other category, this included a variety of people from various different practice subjects, including a number of people from the courts and legal systems, including juvenile justice employees, CASA volunteers, attorneys, probation officers, and other court officials, and employees. We also have a number of individuals who came in through local nonprofits, including libraries, other community based organizations, providing social work services, and advocacy groups. We also have a number of folks from local state and federal health departments, just to name a few different roles that are represented in our audience today. As I already mentioned, we did also ask you your primary reason for joining this webinar.

You can see from this slide again, that the bulk of folks chose either that other category at 30%, or at 36%, that you indicated you had a personal interest in the topic of human trafficking. Under that other category, several of you described in more detail, personal interest around the topic of human trafficking. Others of you spoke about your advocacy work, your work in intervention, and in investigation in human trafficking cases, you also mentioned that you are working to support foster children, and to be able to ensure that your own children within the school systems can remain safe. Now, I'd like to go ahead, and review the agenda for today. We've already completed number one, for the most part, the introduction logistics. Next I'll be introducing Miss Ruth Ryder from the US Department of Education who will give us a more formal welcome. Then we'll move on to presentations by two of our speakers that will help to set the context for the panel discussion, which is our fourth item where we'll invite all three of our speakers to engage with us in a conversation.

Finally, we'll wrap up at the end and offer you the opportunity to give us feedback through the feedback form. Now I'd like to go ahead and welcome Ms. Ruth Ryder, who's going to take a few moments to give us the formal welcome and to talk to us more about the ways in which the Department of Education is addressing human trafficking. Thank you so much for joining us. Ruth. Ruth is the deputy assistant secretary at the office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the Department of Education. She has provided significant leadership to the department's efforts to address human trafficking over the past several years, including providing the welcoming address for many of our webinars. More details can be found about Ruth in the bio found at the NCSSE website. Ruth?

**Ruth Ryder:**

Thank you, Cindy. And welcome to all of you joining us for this important discussion today on behalf of the US Department of Education and Secretary Cardona, I extend our sincere appreciation for all you do. Your attendance today demonstrates a commitment to ensuring a positive school climate for all

students of diverse identities. I hope you will find today's content helpful in your continued efforts to build a safe, supportive learning environment for every student, including those who have been impacted by human trafficking, or who are at risk of being trafficked. Given the changes in our communities and the world, it's more important than ever to be aware of how the differences among us might lead to assumptions about specific groups of people. Today, we will explore how bias systematic inequities, and injustices impact the way we identify, and support students impacted by trafficking.

The conversation today will require us all to be courageous and open in exploring our own perspectives, and the perspectives of others as well as the cultures of our schools. We expect that this webinar will provide information about the impact of bias and perhaps more importantly, concrete suggestions for ensuring students experience equity and the robust supports they need to succeed in school. The webinar reflects the department's ongoing commitment to addressing human trafficking. As a member of the interagency task force to monitor and combat trafficking in persons, we here at the department are committed to helping educators support students affected by trafficking. Since early 2020, the department has led a series of projects to strengthen that support. Let me tell you a bit about them. First, we have produced with the support of the national center on safe, supportive learning environments, NCSSE, this webinar series addressing human trafficking.

Today's webinar is the eighth in the series as Cindy identified. Earlier events in the series have discussed the latest research in child trafficking. The critical nature of online safety as students find themselves increasingly engaged in virtual environments, the general reintegration of students into school settings after extraction from trafficking, the effective engagement of individuals with lived experience in trafficking, and actions we can take to reduce student vulnerability in the face of community risk factors. We also offered a webinar that focused on how school personnel can meet the mental health needs of students exiting from trafficking as they reentered, or continued in school. We hope you'll check out the archived webinars of this series at the link, now appearing in the chat box. And I also hope that you'll join us for future human trafficking webinar series events.

We have also produced two critical reference documents related to human trafficking. The first document is a revision of a popular resource Human Trafficking in America's School. The update was released in January, 2021 with a goal of bringing the document up to date with recent developments in the field. The downloadable resource support school personnel in their role as caring, principled adults who can look out for warning signs of trafficking involvement of students, and implement appropriate interventions as warranted. You can access this guide at the link now appearing in the chat. The second document we produced is addressing the growing problem of domestic sex trafficking of minors through PBIS. This practice brief addresses how domestic minor sex trafficking can be approached using existing school strategies, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports. The link to this brief now appears in the chat for your reference. To compliment the human trafficking in schools guide,

we recently released human trafficking in America's school staff development series.

It's comprised of three brief online videos with subject matter experts, including those with lived experience in trafficking sharing information you need to know and discussion questions individual staff or teams of staff can explore afterwards, along with posters, and social media website graphics to reiterate key messages. The titles of the three videos are here on the slide. We encourage you to check out the series by using the link now being posted in the chat. Soon, we will release a supplement to the human trafficking in America's school's guide that will highlight strategies schools can use to effectively engage individuals with lived experience in trafficking prevention efforts. This guide builds on suggestions and ideas offered in the fifth human trafficking webinar, effective engagement of individuals with lived experience. That was offered in January of this year. Please keep watch for the release announcement of this valuable resource.

Please know that all these resources are rooted in the latest research and best practice information available while drawing from the wisdom of individuals with lived experience and trafficking prevention advocates. As I mentioned earlier, our work on these resources has been an important part of the department's commitment to supporting your efforts to address the trauma of trafficking. All these resources can be found on a dedicated human trafficking webpage on the US Department of Education's website. This webpage is committed to providing key resources and reference documents to educators who are supporting students impacted by trafficking in America's schools. With that, I would like to thank you again for joining us today. I and the entire team at the US Department of Education recognize the important work you are all undertaking to create safe, supportive environments for all students, including those who have been trafficked, or are at risk of being trafficked. Thank you again for all that you do. Back to you, Cindy.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much, Ruth. We deeply appreciate your ongoing leadership and continued support, and encouragement of this work. We appreciate the welcomes that you're consistently doing for us. Now, I'd like to take the time to go ahead and introduce the first speaker for... The second speaker for today, Dr. Jacquelyn Meshelemiah, who is coming to us from the Ohio State University, where she is an associate professor at the College of Social Work. She will provide us with some information that will begin to set the context for that panel discussion. Jacquelyn?

**Jacquelyn Meshelemiah:** Thank you, Cindy. Thank you all for joining us this afternoon. I will speak with you all for about 20 minutes to provide a context for today's presentation. I'm going to go ahead and get started and talk about my title first. Oh, I'm sorry about that. The title of today's presentation is the impact, I'm sorry, there's something going on here. The Impact of Bias, Inequities, and Injustices on the Identification, Treatment, and Support of Diverse Students Impacted by Human Trafficking. And so that's going to be the focus of today's conversation for the next 20 minutes. So, let me tell you how it's broken down. I'm going to explore how intersectional identities in this case, race, ethnicity, gender, class,

identification, with the two spirit LGBTQ community increases, or increased adolescent vulnerability to trafficking. And when I'm talking about intersectional identities, I'm talking about those multiple intertwined social identities. I want to review the ways bias, explicit, when you're aware of it, and implicit, when it's unconscious affect the identification of students who are at risk of, or are being trafficked.

And so when I talk about bias, I'm referring to a prejudice towards someone. I want to explore how factors of identity play into assist some responses to traffic young people, and this includes actions and inactions. And then last I'm going to leave off with recommendations. I'm going to describe a whole school response to human trafficking from a social justice and equity lens. And when I say whole school response, I'm referring to macro, mezzo, and micro approaches. And when I refer to justice, I'm talking about dismantling barriers, and equity I'm referring to allocation of resources to overcome isms, racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism to start. And so that is the focus on outline for the next 20 minutes. Let me move on then to the next slide. So, let me define first what human trafficking is. And this document is a really lengthy document, it's a really important one for those of you who are invested in this work to read in its entirety.

And so the two terms that are identify in the TVPA of 2000 is sex trafficking, and labor trafficking. The two often overlap. All forms of trafficking involved labor. However, when it comes to sex trafficking, we're talking about commercialized sex. And so in terms of breaking it down, both may fall with recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining, and then there's some other additional steps or activities involved for sex trafficking versus labor trafficking. But what I want to point out just briefly here is that if the person is less than 18 years of age, this person does not have the ability to consent to commercialize sex. And in terms of labor trafficking, the purpose is to subject individuals to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. So please take a moment to read that TVPA when you get a moment, let me also provide a context from our remarks for the next 18 minutes or so. I assert that human trafficking thrives on the isms. There are conditions present in society that allows for this to take place.

And what happens, it results in a precarious of marginalized, and intersectional identities of students to be perpetrated on. And so these marginalized identities then are used to justify inequalities, and inequities again, and again, and again. So these justifications for marginalization are reinforced and embed into the infrastructure of this society. So, let just tell you what that means. So when you look at the slide here, it shows that human trafficking is a complex web of isms and systems. Human trafficking that last concentric black circle cannot exist without all the other forms of oppression being present, and allow for it to take place. Capitalism, racism, and nativism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and so many other forms of oppression allow for human trafficking to take place, and produces a pool of individuals who are considered to be disposable, and used for trafficking purposes.

When you look on the very top at the various systems, the military, social, health, political, judicial, religious educational, so forth, this is how the oppressive systems manifest themselves. They're carried out through these particular systems and more. When you look at the outcomes on the orange box there, these are some things that happen as a result of these oppressive systems operating within other systems in our interactive, and dynamic way. It results in lack of digital access to individuals, fatal shootings by law enforcement officers, disparity in home ownership, unemployment rate, that's very high. Poverty, wage earning gaps, and the list goes on, and on. Poor health, underfunded schools involving with child serving orgs, or juvenile justice systems and even victims internalizing the isms. These outcomes end up being push factors, leading people to look for ways out that once again, puts them in a vulnerable position to be susceptible to being trafficked.

When you look at the ACE's, the adverse childhood experiences, unfortunately, way too many children in society experience adverse childhood experiences during their childhood. And these adverse childhood experiences, or ACE's, include mental illness, substance use, incarcerated relative, oftentimes a parent, or a guardian, several types of abuse, physical, emotional, or sexual, neglect of two types, physical or emotional. Domestic violence, and divorce, or separation. So my point in showing this particular slide is to reiterate human trafficking does not happen in a vacuum. It is not something that happens because it is just in itself. It is part of a complex of interactive systems, and isms that continue to make conditions right for such oppression. Let me move to some research then, I'm sorry, about some research around intersectional identities. I'm going to limit to just four identities today, but there is many more to discuss in terms of human trafficking. Let's look at race and ethnicity, gender, class, and identification with the two spirit LGBTQ community, because this increased adolescent vulnerability to trafficking.

Let's talk about some research in the next six bullet points. So in one particular national study by Swaner, and colleagues, it showed that when it comes to commercialized sex, black girls in particular composed of 23% to 92% of victims in six cities, even though they represented just six to 38% of the population, this is what we call disproportionate. Black girls are disproportionate involved in commercialized sex. When we look to American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander girls, they're also much more likely to be sexually exploited than their non-native peers, according to the US Department of Education. Now let's look at some data from the US Bureau of Justice Statistics. So, between 2008 and 2010 nonwhite children accounted for 77.8% of those cases involving child sex trafficking, and the majority of them were black and Latinx children. This gets at a hint of racialized minority students, [inaudible 00:22:00] ...children being disproportionately victimized. Trans children, also experience systemic oppression and exclusion. And this leads them into, again, to be in a precarious position, where they may have to resort to trading sex for housing, food, and work, according to Chang and colleagues.

And now to who traffickers target. They target audiences and populations and children who they feel are economically or socially vulnerable people. This includes for example, of many groups, impoverished youth, housing insecure

youth, youth who are experiencing abuse of many types, or youth who are involved with severe drug use. So, when you look at the data, you can see the disparity in who is being trafficked in this country. Let me move on to my next slide then, in terms of biases, explicit, and implicit, in terms of how it affects identification of students who are at risk for being trafficked, we all have biases, so it's really important that we are a lawyer of those biases, especially when we worked with minors, and students in schools. Let's go to a research study around mandated reporters, and I understand that many of us on this call are mandated reports in this country. This particular study found that out of the 557 mandated reporters, 57.2% believed that some adolescents girls choose to engage in prostitution.

There are adults who actually believe that children choose to be in commercialized sex. And if you just remember the definition I gave to you from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, there is no such thing as child prostitution. Let me get to the research now by Epstein, two different studies about her work around adult applying bias, and how this harms black girls in particular. In a 2017 piece Epstein and colleagues found that more adults perceived that black girls are perceived by more adults than their white peers at almost every stage of childhood, starting at age five, and really coming to fruition at age 10 through 14, that black girls are more adult than their peers. They call this adultification, the denial of childhood to black girls. And so what this identification does, it makes black girls appear less innocent, more grown, and then subject to more harsher treatment in schools. So, even the slightest infraction will lead to a harsher punishment for these students who are perceived to be more adult-like and should know better.

Blake and Epstein also found that adults overwhelmingly hypersexualized black girls, this whole Jezebel portrayal about being promiscuous and interested, and highly engaged, and consenting to sex even with adults. This is harmful to girls, [inaudible 00:25:07] a subsequent treatment. And now to native women and girls, they suffer physical and sexual violence in both the United States, and Canada, more than any group of people. And it's because of this hyper invisibility of their suffering, and their presence in both countries that this is the norm, and it needs to be addressed. And then the last misstep we engage in as a country in terms of our tendency of the United States to view human trafficking from a singular lens from sex trafficking alone. And this unfortunately leaves an opportunity for us to miss potential victims in a myriad of settings who are victims of labor trafficking in this country. And we need to broaden our perception, and reality, and understanding of both forms of human trafficking in this country. And now to system responses, actions, and inactions, and how these factors play into how traffic young people are approached from a systemic perspective.

And what I'm going to show you now, I'm going to show how these responses fall into three major categories, victim blaming, being punitive in nature, or just being dismissive. And I know the writing may be a little small there. So let me just kind of tell you about this one study that referred to you earlier about that mandated reporters. And this particularly important, a striking research project it's found that one in 10 mandated reporters believe that child sex trafficking is

blown out of proportion. Out of proportion. And this is in line with some of the discussion around calling scholar activists and folks who are human trafficking activists, and advocates as alarmists, when I say to you, even one child is too many in terms of child trafficking. This same study also showed that 1.3% to 18.5% of mandated reporters said that it would depend if they would report a 17 year old engaging in commercialized sex activities, even if it involved, and they knew about rape, sexual exploitation, a pimp being involved, pornography pressure by peer to engage in sex work, but even work in a strip club.

Even if all of these elements were present, some stated it would depend if they would report it. That's unfortunate. When it comes to being punitive, we've already talked about students who are vulnerable, that includes students who are not in schools. And so being penalized in schools, especially when you're being adultified as a child, puts you at risk for being outside of school. So, according to this particular report by Chang and colleagues, it reports that children of color are disproportionately suspended and expelled, making them vulnerable to be victimized as traffic persons. We're going to have to really stay on top of our punitive approaches to children's behaviors in schools. And then there's the one we hear too often that dismissive one. When we start talking about disproportionate representation of trafficked children. Some will argue that the victim could be anybody. Well, the victim tends to be somebody in particular, according to all the data from all of the sources I'm familiar with. And in this particular study, Gerassi and Pederson filed an inner study with 24 social workers that some did not believe that two spirit LGBTQIA+ plus students were increased risk for sex trafficking.

Well, this is contrary to the data that's out there and that's unfortunate. Well, what do you do? There are many things that we all can do. And Deputy Assistant Secretary Ruth Ryder referred you to a number of impressive guides. And I just want to come back to one of them in particular, this one. What schools can do to prevent, respond, and help students to recover from human trafficking, second edition. I would encourage you all to take a moment to read this 28 page guide. It is an easy read, a clear read, and a crisp strategic plan for how to intervene, prevent, and help students who are at risk for being trafficked. Have some more ideals for you as a social worker and as a scholar activist, engaged and committed to this work and saving the lives of those who are out there or being a change agent. And so my recommendations fall in three different areas, macro, mezzo, and micro.

Now I won't go into details because this PowerPoint will be available to you at a later time, but at the macro level, let's think large overhead practices, policies, procedures, and processes that we can do and engage in to better prepare ourselves to make macro level changes. And when it comes to mezzo at the school level, it involves often, it should involve, hiring, and including the right people in the schools, social workers, counselors, nurses, staff, teachers, agencies, and child serving organizations, including training all of us to be involved, and educated about human trafficking, understanding microaggressions, implicit bias, and cultural competence, and reflecting on the data, to be aware of the data and making changes based on that data. And then the last level at the micro level, think about, personally, what can you do to



make things better for students in your schools, and in your classrooms. And by looking at multi in a multidisciplinary way about how a child functions in the school, and away from school.

So think about the content, the curriculum, the organizations, the conversations, and resources available to students, and then to close this out, and I wish I had more time to talk more about this, but we'll get to more of this during the panel discussion. I want to leave this quote with you, "The CDC treats all forms of violence as connected, and deeply rooted in poverty and inequality", as I've said, many times. "Individuals who experience one type of violence are more likely to experience other types, and certain factors are known to predispose individuals to being victims, perpetrators, or both." I say all this to say that silence is violence, and it's really important that we are a part of the solution and not a part of the problem. Thank you.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much, Jacquelyn. That was a wonderful presentation with a lot of great suggestions, which you're right, we'll go into deeper during our panel discussion. Now, I'd like to take the time to go ahead and introduce Mr. Lugine Gray, who's the regional child and youth trafficking coordinator with the Louisiana Child Youth Trafficking Collaborative. And he's going to provide us a bit more of context so that our panel discussion can have a nice grounding space to start. Lugine?

**Lugine Gray:** Hi everyone. My name is Lugine Gray. I'm the regional child and youth trafficking coordinator for the Louisiana Child and Youth Trafficking Collaborative. I will be talking a little bit about the dimensions in which human trafficking manifests within our schools, and within our community. I'm going to first talk about saying that victims of human trafficking are often marginalized by society to begin with even prior to the victimization and these three dimensions that human trafficking manifests within our community within our schools always fall in a form of force, fraud, and coercion. [inaudible 00:32:59] Force is physical force, which includes kidnapping, physical violence, drugging, non-consensual drugging, threats with weapons and denial of medical care. Fraud is foster deceptive work offers, promises of employment, marriage or better life or debt bondage. And coercion is a psychological and mental emotional control that includes threats of violence, control of children photographing in illegal situations, long hours without reprieve, controlling communication and withholding important documents.

The main thing that I want everyone to take away from this is the inability to walk away, which is what is the real, or perceived threats victims of human trafficking always are forced with the inability to walk away. [inaudible 00:33:55] Labor, child labor, and labor trafficking. Oh, I'm sorry. Labor, child labor, and labor trafficking. This happens a lot within our community, within the youth and within the schools, right? But there's different dimensions of it. While labor trafficking is illegal, there could be an example of a misunderstood form of labor trafficking that greatly impacts the marginalized populations, which is youth force, and criminal activity, which I will talk about next, but labor exploitations [inaudible 00:34:33] ...work legally, but is denied basic legal rights, such as fair conversation. Child labor is youth working under the legal working

age or engaging work that is harmful to the health, development, or education. Here in Louisiana, 14 is a legal working age in Louisiana, but some types of employment are off limits to the youth under age of 16 and 18.

This is going to be important when you see kids within your school system where there's a middle school or high school who are working, but they may be working jobs that may be deleterious to their health. And labor trafficking is a person who was forced, defrauded, or coerced into providing labor services. Youth forced [inaudible 00:35:09] ...activity. One example of misunderstood form of labor trafficking that greatly impacts the marginalized populations is youth forced into criminal activity, that we've been seeing a lot during the rise of COVID. Here in Louisiana, it manifests as youth breaking into cars, but in other states, I'm pretty sure it manifests in different ways. Youth forced into criminal activity requires that there be an element of force, fraud, or coercion. And it often begins when the youth are very young, or very vulnerable. And they come from backgrounds where they already see a lot of community violence within their neighborhood or within their own households. And traffickers can also be a family member, or a friend, or a neighbor, or pretty much their own peers sometimes. And it usually involves threats, implied violence or acts of violence.

Safe harbor laws. Dr. Jacquelyn touched on the provisions a little bit, but this is the law that pretty much protects minors from being arrested, or charged for prostitution related offenses. As it stands, I think there's 30 states. It might be one to two more that has these laws enacted. And that means any person under the age of 18 that is involved in a commercial sex act is considered a victim of human trafficking, and forced fraud, or coercion does not have to be proven. So, we're moving from a more punitive measure, in which in the past victims of human trafficking we're actually criminalized to more victim centered approach in which their coercion doesn't have to be proven, and they're also given like victim services. The grooming [inaudible 00:36:42] The grooming process is very important because even with increased training and awareness, there are so many barriers to identifying human trafficking victims, and victims never, or hardly ever self-identify as victims, either because of fear of the trafficker or trauma bond, psychological coercion, leading the victim to think that the trafficking is not their fault, and is that their choice.

And some of the grooming processes that works is to target the victim. They befriend, they gain trust. They feel a need. They isolate them while creating independence, which is like a trauma bond. They abuse them while meeting their needs. And at the end of it, they maintain control of the victim. Various identification, like I said, previously victims often don't self-identify as victims, for many reasons. One is fear. Another is safety. Another one is shame, and humiliation. Another one is trauma bond to the trafficker. Another one is past experiences with the system that gives them a form of distrust within the system. They may not see trafficking as trauma compared to other life events, language barriers, and cultural barriers. And that's it. I tried to keep it within five to 10 minutes.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much. You're definitely on time there, Lugine. I appreciate that. And again, we appreciate that increased information that you provided us specifically the idea of the forced fraud, and coercion, and the different ways to consider labor trafficking, I think will be very helpful in our panel conversation. So, now I'd like to invite all of the speakers to bring their webcams up. And I'd like to introduce Ms. Tanya Gould, who is a lived experience expert, and the founder of Identifiable Me. And she is a survivor of domestic sex trafficking, child pornography, sexual abuse, and controlling relationships. So, she brings that lived experience and her current work in advocacy, and sport of victims of trafficking to this conversation.

And we really want to welcome you on board to join our conversation. And thank you so much, and now we're going to take the slides down, we'll go to our gallery view. And we're going to enjoy our conversation with all of our panelists. So, let's begin with the idea of vulnerabilities. Our two context setting presentations spoke a little bit about vulnerabilities, and what makes young people particularly vulnerable school settings to trafficking. So, what aspects of identity or circumstances place some individuals at greater risks? Miss Jacquelyn, if we could start with you?

**Jacquelyn Meshelemiah:** Sure. I will reiterate what I said earlier about vulnerable populations. And people often say that anyone can be trafficked, it can happen to anyone, but as I asserted earlier, human trafficking disproportionately affects black, indigenous, people of color, and students in this country. And it becomes more complex when you look at these intersection of identities among these students. So, again, those who are most at risk and vulnerable include racial minoritized persons, members of the two-spirit LGT communities, low income families, girls, immigrants, migrants, housing insecure, children, children involved with child serving organizations, and juvenile justice, and people who are involved in persistently oppressed populations. And the vulnerability is because of this, these individuals are viewed as disposables, throwaways, less worthy, and not worthy of protection. So essentially marginalized identities that are not protected lead students to be trafficked in this country.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you for that clarification, for sure. It's a very broad... When you hear it as a list like that, it can be kind of shocking in that list format. But I think you covered that really well. Mr. Lugine, do you have one something you want to add to the conversation?

**Lugine Gray:** Yes. I think Dr. Jacquelyn pretty much said it very eloquently and very excellent. As someone who was a human trafficking case manager, and as someone that now does MDT human trafficking coordination for my region. Literally what she's saying is true. Traffickers can't... They usually go where people congregate, but what we always see that it's always people from the most marginalized, and vulnerable population. Native American, two-spirited communities, and African American females within Louisiana, and across the nation are the highest percentage of people who are victims of human trafficking.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you. And miss Tanya?

**Tanya Gould:**

...having me. So, when it comes to persons of color from communities that are underserved, there's already this sense of powerlessness, and helplessness that kind of permeates through those communities, not just, well, so for me, growing up, I had a hard time navigating systems for resources. So systems were present. I just had a hard time not having support navigating them, and I didn't have support from family members. So, I honestly needed within the system like professionals who could guide me because at home and in my community, remember it was at home and within my community that I experienced the trauma. And so trust is crucial, and traffickers, they always appear trustworthy. And so to understand my own place in the world, like the sense of belongingness, the validation, those were vulnerabilities were challenging within my community.

And then coming out into the world, seeing type of vulnerabilities exist there. And so traffickers also know that schools may not have protocols and procedures set up. And so that's a vulnerability. Traffickers also know that when it comes to mandated reporting, a lot of mandated reporters don't do it for reasons, many different reasons, but one, they don't want to continue to see their own community be torn apart. And so there is nothing to really incentivize mandated reporting. And so, because traffickers, excuse me, traffickers see all of this, they know all of this, and that's why they can spend their times in communities that are underserved.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:**

Great. Thank you. And I think all three of you spoke a little bit about those multiple identities, the identity of the individual, the identity of community, and the multiple identities that both the community and the person hold. So I think that's really important. Sticking with the vulnerabilities question for a little bit, when we think about schools, sometimes missing cues about trafficking, what are some particular vulnerabilities that they might miss that are more specifically affected by bias, or inequities that might be individual or within that school culture? Mr. Lugine, I'd to start with you today on this question.

**Lugine Gray:**

Yeah. I think truancy... a big issue that a lot of teachers and a lot of school leaders struggle with. And instead of addressing the issue with the kid in a very holistic trauma informed way, they always criminalize the kid and just state the kid is bad, but we should be asking, what is this kid running away from? Why is this kid not going to school? But instead they look as a kid as a bad person, which builds that distrust within a system that traffickers later take advantage of that makes them more successful to that type of life. So I think truancy is a big one, and have having really good behavior intervention as specialists here in Louisiana, in New Orleans, a lot of their charter schools have implemented behavior intervention and specialists, which is like a safe place that kids can come, and talk to about anything, whether it's problems with other teachers, or problems with other kids. And that person's whole job is to listen to them.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:**

Right. So being able to being able to have that ability to have courageous conversations in the school. And your first response reminds me of a quote from Dr. Bruce Perry, and a subject of, one of his new books is to rather than ask what's wrong with you, ask what happened to you, right? And always keep that in the forefront of our minds. Thank you. Tanya, can we go with you next?

**Tanya Gould:**

So, I would like folks to think about it in this way, when it comes to having, like... It feels like a lack of control over your own outcomes, but not just your own outcomes, but, and in speaking, in terms of what administrators, or staff, or personnel are people are thinking, your child, as a child, as a minor, you feel like there's no control over that. Especially when you have experienced trauma. You're kind of unsure about what's going on and who's the adult here, right? And so there's a lack of control over outcomes in the child's mind. And not just that, but ideas and concepts around some issues that kids deal with like not just [inaudible 00:46:10] ...feel like they're messy, or they're a problem, right? And so issues like teen pregnancy issues like STIs, low community, or family support for education or higher education.

And so all of these biases and thoughts about a particular child's outcome, it is already there before the child is present, right? And the child can feel this and already knows this is happening. This is something that I feel, and I've also, I felt it, but I also hear it from other kids that I work with. Like they'll say, "Miss Tanya, what does it really matter? They already have their mind made up about me." And so we have to push through that because traffickers know this. And so in spite of what anyone wants to believe, traffickers, that's why they can pull, they can ask... My trafficker asked me, "What are your dreams? What do you want to do? what inspires you? What makes you feel good?"

Like all those wonderful questions where when I would talk about it I actually earned a scholarship to college, but it was something I didn't want really want to do, but it was okay. But I took it anyway, because that was the opportunity in front of me. So, it's not about kids not taking opportunities when they see them. It's just, some of the opportunities are just based off of what someone thinks you can do because of your situation, which is very unfair.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Absolutely. So it's really important for school personnel to really kind of be open, and build hope and build connection with students, and see them. And ask those really relevant questions. And rather than just having traffickers ask, right? Thank you. Thank you. And Miss Jacquelyn?

**Jacquelyn Meshelemiah:** Yes. I really like both the Lugine and Tanya's point about vulnerability, bias, and equity. It's really important for schools to train their faculty, staff, administrators, to identify vulnerability, to identify biases and inequities in the system. And I know that some schools are doing very well. They're doing the best that they can. And so schools need assistance. So I would encourage more school systems to hire chief diversity officers, and diversity advocates to help do some of this work, to increase that understanding of what vulnerability looks like, especially in racially minoritized, and disenfranchised students. So I say it comes down to a learning curve, knowing like Tanya just said, when the students actually vulnerable, and then being in a position to respond and act based on those vulnerabilities, and identities.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you so very much. All right. Our third question for this discussion is around that grooming process, what might educators, and other school personnel see that is indicative of someone being groomed for trafficking, and how might bias play into the noticing of this? And Tanya, if it's

okay for you specifically, I'd love for you to talk to the audience about the stuff that you talked to me about when we first met around youth and your response.

**Tanya Gould:**

I totally love this. This is my soap box, so forgive me. So for me I see, and was also my experience, I'd say the grooming process starts at home. So, first I want to say one of the vulnerabilities is just being young, right? Being young and naive. And just in that space, which should be allowable without someone taking advantage of that. But also there's a responsibility, right? That adults and community have the kids that are young because they should just be able to make mistakes. They should be able to have this space where they're learning and growing. But also understanding that not all homes are healthy, right. And so for me, the grooming process started at home where my mom was, she was single. And so here's an opportunity for a man to come into her life, and to make promises to her, right? Not knowing that he would eventually sexually abuse me, and then exploit me in other ways.

And so but the grooming process is also a little deeper than that, because think about you have these homes that have single parents in them, and for my situation, and I know people can relate to this, you're kind of taught to as a child, you have to be good for this new person that's coming into our life, right? So even though he's exploiting you and although this is happening, you have to show up and this person, and be a good person, same thing with the trafficker. You have to show up, you have to be good, you have to do your job so things go well. And then when it comes to the culture, when it comes to, and I know we'll talk maybe a little bit about social media, so the thing would be like, where is the healthy guidance on what it means to be guided by community and home that partnership so that children can just be children, right? Instead we have all of these grooming pieces, traffickers don't have to do anything with that. They already have a community to do it for them.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Right. And I remember in our first conversation that we spoke to when a young girl, you were specifically speaking about the girls, when a young girl comes in dressed provocatively, a lot of folks assume it's its YouTube, and it's TikTok, and they're just a kid being a kid and being provocative. So, that's what really drew me into your conversation on that subject, so thank you for that. And I'd like to go to Dr. Jacquelyn now.

**Jacquelyn Meshelemiah:** Sure. I think this is a very important question around grooming and the best way I can think about grooming is if it's too good to be true, it's too good to be true. Let's talk for example, hypothetically, about immigrant, or migrant children presenting in your schools in such a way that there's a little bit about their experiences, they're having in your families, their communities, but all of a sudden, the students are presenting a way that's out of character, more material things. They have this new uncle, this great guardian, all of a sudden, and things are just in your gut. Something is out of order with this immigrant or migrant child. This is too good to be true. I think that sometimes when these too good to be true signs emerge in our students, we miss them. We miss them, but I want to encourage everyone to go with their gut.

If all of a sudden Uncle Benny is showing up, or aunties showing up, or there are new material, things that students never had before, never presented with before is not consistent with their lifestyle, or material things presented, whether they're domestic students, or migrants, or immigrants, we need to check ourselves and go with our gut instinct and investigate and ask the right questions. And if the teacher's not in a position to do it himself, or herself, or herself, I would encourage someone on board to be able to ask the right questions to get at the bottom of this sudden new guardian friend, loved one, or material things.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Absolutely. And I'm glad that you pulled in this idea that it doesn't have to be the teachers who's seeing it, but that they should know who to refer to in the school if they suspect something is going on. Thank you. And Mr. Lugine?

**Lugine Gray:** Yeah, I really like that point, Dr. Jacquelyn, because I believe that we all have a role to play in a fight against human trafficking. And especially when it comes to the undocumented, and immigrant community, and something you touched on a lot, also Tanya, when you said one of the first conversations you had was he was like, "What is your dreams?" We do know that people who are unaccompanied minors, who are coming to America, or the United States from a different part of the Americas, or from overseas have like these visions of making it in America, or these visions of just like being seen as equal, which makes them extremely, extremely vulnerable to someone who is a trafficker who will come in and try to like befriend, gain their trust and feel a need, but then eventually isolate them and abuse them while meeting their needs. And it takes a community, and it also takes us leveraging people outside of school systems within like the faith community here. In the south, we have a huge faith community or in other areas of the community, because traffickers are very, very highly intelligent.

They withhold a lot of documents and if you're an undocumented person, or if you are like an unaccompanied minor, the documents you have are literally your lifeline and traffickers are known to withhold the documents as a form of controlling, giving that person inability to walk away. So, the grooming process is something that we all should be... That plays into psychological [inaudible 00:55:17] ...something that we all should be more cognizant of.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Right. And I think this was... I'm glad that this particular topic came up because that's been hot and heavy in the Q&A box for the webinar, that folks are very curious about how to support new immigrants, or newcomers to the country, because we do know that folks play on that dream theme. And if it's done by a trafficker, it can be very compelling and really pull young people in. Let's take a minute to just kind of address just a little bit more on that immigrant topic. Like what are some quick things that pop into your mind about how can you, how can we, as people who want to support children take that American dream theme and refocus it in a way that's going to be supportive of young people rather than exploitive? Does anybody want to respond to that?

**Tanya Gould:** I will. I think we... Well, we have to be honest about the process. We can't deliver false promises and we need people who are willing to hold someone's

hand. Because when people are... You have to remember that everyone comes with a backstory, not everyone's backstory is like yours. And just remembering that you're working with a person in front of you, and it's important to be honest, and make sure that I think everyone should be trauma informed, and victim centered because you just never know what the person has gone through. And you want to hear and listen, because if you come to the table with your own ideas, because of your own story, it's just not going to work. And so, if you're going to be in this line of work, this is not a nine to five, like be prepared to be truthful, transparent, honest. Make sure you have backup resources, make sure you have a team, make sure if you don't know something when you know someone who does know it.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you so much for that response. I know that was a slightly different angle here. And there's lots of places where schools have resources that they can talk to young people about the steps to get to their dreams and their hopes. So thank you for that. I'd like to move on our next question. And this one focuses in on digital wellness a little bit. Now we're going to be offering an entire webinar focused on online safety and digital wellness as it relates to trafficking. And for today, I'd like to briefly just talk about how social media being online plays into trafficking, particularly for young people who might be marginalized, or be experiencing bias, and inequities. And I'd like to begin with Mr. Lugine here.

**Lugine Gray:** Yes. Shared Hope International came out with a pretty scathing report on the numbers of kids who found their trafficker through social media, and it was more than 70%. Social media has become like the new frontier for people who try to target the youth, because it's near a house, without actually physically being in your house. And even the gaming rooms, I've serviced clients who said they met their trafficker in a Call of Duty game, and chat. Or they met their person on Snapchat, so we definitely have to be more cognizant about social media have to be more cognizant about data sharing in general and be more cognizant about like what we let our youth, or people in our community have access to when it comes to the internet.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you. Thank you. Miss Tanya, would you like to respond?

**Tanya Gould:** Absolutely. Social media is definitely a grooming tool. There's no boundaries, right? There's no boundaries like there used to be, especially the [inaudible 00:59:11] ...to the access of [inaudible 00:59:14] ...aren't really...

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Miss Tanya, we're losing your audio. If you could turn your webcam off for one moment, and see if that improves it and then give us your response again?

**Tanya Gould:** Yeah. Now?

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Keep going.

**Tanya Gould:** Can you hear me? You good?

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Yes.



**Tanya Gould:** Sorry. Okay. All right. So, I don't know where I cut off, but so we're talking about boundaries, and so popularity is important to kids, right? And so what they see online is more real than what you have in life. And so being able to help kids navigate reality and boundaries is really important because all of it, the access to what's online is just, it's just wide and it's just there. And there's really no protections around that. And so it's very highly sexualized as well. So, kids are constantly thinking about what they're seeing and what will keep them popular, what will get them likes and if they don't have guidance around that that's where we find that type of vulnerability.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you. And again, I just want to invite folks to keep an eye out for the webinar we'll be offering on this, and we'll go into more detail on the how of that during that webinar. Our next question is around some steps that school personnel can take to broaden their equity lens, to increase awareness, and mitigate the impact of personal bias as well. We're going to briefly respond here. And Dr. Jacquelyn, I'd like to begin with you.

**Jacquelyn Meshelemiah:** Sure. The first thing I would say is that we need to assess if we are part of a problem, or part of the solution, the work starts with each individual. And so I encourage folks to take the implicit association test, to see where you fall, look at your results. Are you part of the solution, or you're part of the problems? And look at those results, reflect and do something different when your agency or yourself, if you're challenged about being inequitable inconsistent, I would encourage you again, to look into mirror, to assess and see if you're part of the problem or part of the solutions. Then the last one I want to talk about just briefly is less examined policies, practices, procedures, processes, and people in positions. Are we doing what we're supposed to do at school systems? Are there gaping holes around looking out how marginalized students are treated, how disenfranchised students are in school, and how do we exclude minoritized students in day to day practices in school? I encourage schools to look long and hard at how they conduct themselves.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you. And we will put the link for that in the Harvard Implicit Bias Assessments into chat momentarily. Those are very powerful. And the first step is awareness. where do we fit? And then we can figure out what we can do about it. Thank you. Lugine?

**Lugine Gray:** Yeah, I really appreciate everything Dr. Jacquelyn is saying today. Awareness is definitely a big thing, but also becoming more informed on the issue. Right now, this field of human trafficking is, anti-human trafficking versus expanding, and there's more information. There's more case studies being put out, and there's no excuse to not, especially if you're a leader, community leader, or a education, a person in education. There's no excuse to not become more informed on the issue. And to see how better ways you can help people. And I think the big part of that is listening to survivors, amplifying their voices, and making sure that they're at the center of where you get your information from.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you. And Miss Tanya, we'll come back around to you and I hope, I hope your audio's good.

**Tanya Gould:** Yes. So, oh, good. Okay. I think teachers, and personnel, yeah, personnel need to study culture like, and not just color when it comes, or culture when it comes to color, gender, but like culture of like where they live or trends, right? So that they're aware what's gone on in their community, and how kids are responding. I think they should think about apps that kids have access to, and understand what those types of trends are. Even if experts can be brought in to talk about trends that teachers could identify, and see, and understand so that teachers can respond, and be approachable, and knowledgeable, and relevant. Kids are watching. And hopefully they could help prevent or, I mean, no help...

Hopefully they can really like bring in that child, parent relationship as well, because sometimes parents won't understand what's going on in school. Teachers don't know what's going on at home. So, if there was some more interaction there with helping students, with helping the school with helping parents, and parents coming to school and learning like what kids are doing and what... Because they're in school all day. Right? So what do they have access to? What are they sharing? Kids know when other kids are being exploited. Like another kid knows that's happening, right? So if this school is more relevant, and knowledgeable about what's going on, that's really helpful.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you so much. Now we're on to our final question, it's one of my favorites. What gives you hope that we can apply an equity lens to protect our diverse student populations of human trafficking? Miss Tanya, I'd like to start with you.

**Tanya Gould:** Oh, okay. There I am. So, for me it would be as a survivor, it would be about collaboration. And like I said earlier, really, it's about taking ego out of the room, and remembering the humanness. Like we are all human. And if we can remember that, then there are so many ways that we can be relevant, and understand each other on a basic human level. And then I believe compassion can flow from there. Because if you notice that just on a human level, kids may not be getting their basic needs met. You're not going to have certain biases, because you're just concerned about some basic needs, because you can understand that, right? And so I'd like to see more a collaboration on just making sure that kids have the healthy spaces that they need in order to grow and learn. And it does take everyone working together.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much. Dr. Jacquelyn?

**Jacquelyn Meshelemiah:** And I agree with Tanya 100%, but in terms of what gives me hope this entire webinar series gives me hope. It signals to all of us that this is important, and the Department of Education has taken this very seriously, and that excites me. As far as this country, I feel that we're at a place where we're reckoning with the reality that racism, heterosexism, classism, and all the other forms of oppression are real. And that we need to address them head on. That we're at a point in time, a moment in time where we have to really think about how we conduct our affairs, and make seismic changes so that we can provide environments where people feel like diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging matters that every student in this country matters. And that's why having webinars like this

can give us tools so that we can create those spaces, and places for students to thrive in education today.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. And I want to thank you also for adding the word belonging in, because I think that's such an important word that we sometimes forget that schools do, and can create that sense of belonging for our students. And Mr. Lugine?

**Lugine Gray:** Oh, I think what gives me hope is just the ongoing momentum that's happening in the human trafficking field. I remember six years ago, me trying to give a training, and the pushback was we don't need human trafficking training because it doesn't happen here. And now there's more people becoming aware of what's happening. So, I guess the ongoing momentum by the work that Ms. Jacquelyn's doing and survivor leaders like Ms. Tanya is doing is definitely helping us. So they give me hope. This gives me hope.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you. And I think you should add yourself, the work that you're doing is just as relevant. So thank you so much.

**Lugine Gray:** I'm just support. I'm just support.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Well, I want to thank you. We're coming to the end of our time together, and I want to applaud our speakers for such valuable information. You bring a wealth of knowledge. I could sit here and listen to you all day. So I want to thank you for coming in and leaning into this conversation. It's a pretty sensitive subject, and I think that it was handled really well by everybody. Our question box is still populating. So I also want to thank you as attendees for coming here today, and for actively participating, there were suggestions coming through our Q&A box. There were questions coming in, there's interest here, and that's an important place to have these conversations continue to happen. And again, as Ruth said earlier, it takes courage to lean into the conversations that can become uncomfortable sometimes. So, for both our presenters, as well as our attendees, thank you so much for being here today.

And we'll go ahead and bring the slide deck back up at this point. And thank you for moving it for me. We have a big thank you here to everybody, as I've already said. And I want to remind folks that we have a number of high interest webinars on our human trafficking series still coming up, we actually have two more coming up. As a participant in today's event, you're going to receive notice of those webinars as the announcements, and everything are finalized, and we hope that you can attend those webinars with us as well. They will also be posted on the Department of Education webpage with the links, our next human trafficking webinar's actually scheduled to take place August 10th. And we'll focus on exploring the impact of forced labor and labor trafficking on students, and what we can do to identify and provide appropriate supports to them.

Our webinar after that will be on September 14th. And we'll focus, as I had mentioned earlier on the concepts of online safety, and digital wellness for students. I want to thank you again for your participation today, and hope to

see you next time. And before you leave today, I'd like to invite you to provide us some feedback on our short feedback form. We really do take the information that you give us seriously, and it will guide our future offerings in the series. And we're very interested to see, and hear how you feel we did today on this topic. Thank you so much and have a wonderful rest of the day.