Addressing Human Trafficking in America’s Schools

*Prevent, Respond, Recover*

**Did You Know?**

Human trafficking is the exploitation of a person through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of forced labor, commercial sex, or both. Child trafficking includes both sex and labor trafficking, and many of the thousands of victims are students in American schools.

It is imperative to know that children under the age of 18 can never be responsible for or complicit in their own abuse.

**What Should You Look Out For?**

Consider some of the warning signs that could indicate potential trafficking involvement. These same warning signs may result from a variety of challenges a student is facing. Regardless of the reason behind them, evidence of these indicators warrants referral to appropriate student support services.

**Student risk factors include:**

- Poverty
- Family instability
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Academically off-track

**Especially vulnerable are students who are:**

- LGBTQIA
- Runaway or homeless
- Involved with the child welfare or juvenile justice system
- Currently dropped out of school
- Experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities or differences
- Undocumented or unstable immigration status, migrant worker
- An unaccompanied minor

**Indicators of trafficking could be students who exhibit:**

- Exhaustion
- Visible injuries
- Lack of control over money or identification
- Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Seemingly coached responses to questions

**What Can You Do?**

**PREVENT** | Help your school develop and/or sustain a plan that includes strategies to identify and address the risk factors for child trafficking, such as creating a safe school climate and building relationships with community-based mental health organizations and those that work with victims of human trafficking. Include outreach to, and active engagement of, local trafficking survivor/victim groups to inform your efforts.

**RESPOND** | Help your school identify and respond to suspected child trafficking using a trauma-informed approach that follows school protocols, including access to high-quality mental health supports/services. Include outreach to, and active engagement of, local trafficking survivor/victim groups to inform your efforts.

**RECOVER** | Help your school play a significant role in supporting student recovery. To find ways schools can provide social-emotional, educational, and mental health supports to students who have experienced trafficking.

For additional information on human trafficking, go to [https://www.ed.gov/human-trafficking](https://www.ed.gov/human-trafficking). If you have concerns regarding a student based on the information above, contact your local student support personnel or National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888).

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