

Trafficking Risk Factors, Indicators & Grooming

Risk Factors

All children are considered at risk for trafficking, although girls are trafficked at significantly higher rates. Victims can be any nationality or race. A student who feels isolated, abandoned, emotionally distressed or has low self-esteem is vulnerable. A child who lacks family support or social support is also at risk. Other risk factors include:

- Previous abuse
- Problems at home
- Drug addiction
- Gang connection
- Poverty
- Runaways/homeless
- Foster or migrant youth
- Disabilities
- Mental/behavioral health issue
- LGBTQ
- High prostitution areas
- Looking for a boyfriend

Behavioral Warning Signs

- Controlling "boyfriend"
- Restricted schedule
- Attends school inconsistently
- Runs away from home
- Often travels to other cities
- Avoids eye contact
- Gives coached answers
- Overtly sexual behavior
- Unusual sexual knowledge
- Changes in friend groups
- Gang involvement
- Changes in school performance
- Withdrawn/depressed/fearful
- Uses trafficking terminology

Physical Warning Signs

- Changes to hygiene
- Changes to appearance
- Few possessions
- Cash/hotel keys/phone
- Poor health
- Sleep deprived
- Tattoos
- Signs of injury/abuse
- Substance abuse

Grooming Behaviors

Traffickers look for children through social media, friends of friends, neighborhoods, schools, bars, adult clubs and places youth hang out. They may traffic a relative. Victims are rarely kidnapped.

- Develop a caring relationship
- Date or mentor the child
- Make false promises
- Give food/housing/money/drugs
- Use a youth to recruit
- Recruit online (develop trust/send gifts)
- Request nude images (online blackmail)
- Separate from family/friends
- Take ID/money/phone
- Use manipulation/lies
- Control with drugs
- Abuse or threaten harm