

# Sex Trafficking Awareness

Trigger Warning: this document contains potentially distressing information.

**Sex trafficking** is a form of sexual exploitation and is a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada. It can include recruiting, harbouring, transporting, obtaining or providing a person for the purpose of sex. It may involve the use of force, physical or psychological coercion or deception. Anyone can be targeted for trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, however women and girls make up the most frequently targeted group.

Indigenous and racialized individuals are especially vulnerable to experiencing sex trafficking. The intersections of colonization, intergenerational trauma, systemic discrimination and barriers to accessing service compound, which increases the vulnerability of being targeted by traffickers for Indigenous women and girls—of whom comprise a disproportionate number of trafficked persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation, in Canada.

**Grooming** A trafficker or exploiter will groom a youth by promising to buy them trendy clothes, take them shopping or pay for haircuts and manicures to gain their trust and affection. Exploiters will have victims believe that material items equal respect and worth.

After this the victim often feels dependent on the trafficker or trusts them, this is when the exploitation starts. The trafficker may tell youth that they “owe them.” This guilt and coercion leads to the act of being sold. (KCA AHT Prevention Guide).

Caring adults and students within schools can promote a sense of student belonging, increase protective factors, help to reduce risk factors associated with sex trafficking and support early intervention through identification and appropriate response, including connecting impacted students to supportive services.

## SIGNS OF SEX TRAFFICKING



Suddenly having a new or second cellphone with a secret number



Withdrawning from family and friends



Suddenly spending time with an older person or people



Wearing more sexualized clothing



Having a new partner or friend they won't introduce to friends/family



Having new clothing, jewelry, etc. that they can't afford to buy



Frequently missing



Absences from school or a decline in school performance



Being secretive about their activities



Signs of physical abuse such as bruising, cigarette burns, fractures etc.



Accessing technology in high frequency, long durations and with intense focus, in the absence of parental controls and supervision. Being very secretive of on and offline contact, content and conduct.

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## HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WITH A DISCLOSURE:

- Remain calm. Your response to a disclosure is very important.
- Remember that making a disclosure is a highly vulnerable experience. Provide a safe space for them to disclose.
- Listen to your child without judgement. Believe what they are saying/telling you.
- Assure them that their safety is a priority.
- Consider your bias: avoid projecting your own feelings; strive to understand the choices your child has made, the barriers they experience, and empathize with their current situation.
- Be mindful that the re-telling of their story/situation may be traumatic and when you receive the disclosure you should make all efforts to reduce re-traumatization.
- Be aware of, and soften, your body language.
- Mirror the language they use to describe their situation/experiences i.e if they say “boyfriend,” use this term.
- Let them take the lead in sharing, avoid leading the conversation (do not probe for their story, instead listen respectfully, provide support).
- Consider your next steps—calling the police, the school principal, and/or the Canadian Human Trafficking hotline.
- Work with your child and inform them of actions/next steps.

## HELP PREVENT SEX TRAFFICKING:

- Discuss the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships with your child.
- Listen openly when your child discusses relationships.
- Be mindful of secretive behaviour, especially where your child is hiding contacts, content and conduct.
- Regularly check-in and supervise your child’s technology use.
- Be mindful of your child accessing technology in high frequency, long durations and with intense focus.
- Set limits: technology usage, time away from home, school absences.
- Be aware of and educate yourself and your child about sex trafficking.
- Know what to do if you have worries or concerns your child is being lured or groomed.

To view the complete Keewatin Patricia District School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol document, please visit [kpdsb.ca/pages/view/child-protection](http://kpdsb.ca/pages/view/child-protection).



## RESOURCES

There are many resources available for youth, parents and concerned adults regarding the prevention of sex trafficking and how to get help if you or someone you know may be in a dangerous situation. For a list of local and national resources, please visit [childprotection.kpdsb.ca](http://childprotection.kpdsb.ca).

**CANADIAN HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE: 1-833-900-1010**