

THINGS TO KNOW About Human Trafficking

- Nearly 80% of human trafficking is for sex, and 19% is for labor exploitation.
- More than 80% of trafficking victims are female.
- In 2019, one in six reported runaways in the U.S. were likely a victim of child sex trafficking.
- Child sex trafficking has been reported in all 50 states.
- The average age of child sex trafficking victims reported missing to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is 15 years old.
- Trafficking victims will “recruit” other victims and commit other crimes at the compulsion of their trafficker.
- Victims oftentimes do not see themselves as victims and rarely “cry out” for help.
- Victims often have a “bond” with their trafficker, and feel they love/care for them.

THIS COULD BE **YOUR CHILD!**

It all started for me as your typical teenage girl. I grew up in Blue Springs, MO, and was the daughter to a single father and sister to two younger siblings. I always did very well in school and even played sports. From the outside, you couldn't really tell that I was suffering from feelings of depression and rejection. Eventually, I began to act out and rebelled against everyone and everything. My vulnerabilities were exploited, leading to my first rape, abortion, and drug addiction. I ran away from home and was groomed by traffickers who sent me to Las Vegas to work in strip clubs. Eventually, I ended up in Washington, D.C., where I was forced into sexual slavery from the age of 14-17 years old. I would escape one nightmare only to be manipulated into another horrible situation. This destructive path nearly consumed my life entirely until I had an intervention. Looking back now, I often ask myself what could've prevented this? Could someone or something possibly have stopped me from experiencing all those years of suffering? What if I had been better informed on the dangers of human trafficking? What if I had a better understanding of when and where it could've happened to me? Could all of this have been avoided? As it is for me, I want to make others aware and to help prevent the crimes of human trafficking before they destroy more lives.

— Kay, a human trafficking survivor

National Human Trafficking Hotline:

1-888-373-7888

Text: “HELP” to 233733

Emergency Assistance

1-800-525-5555 or cellular *55

Email: HT@mshp.dps.mo.gov



SOURCES:

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (2020)
Retrieved from missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking

Polaris Project (2020)
Retrieved from polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/

CONTACT US:

Missouri State Highway Patrol
1510 East Elm Street
Jefferson City, MO
65101
573-751-3313



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

IT'S REAL. IT'S HAPPENING.

RIGHT HERE.

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is illegal exploitation of a person through force, fraud, or coercion. It takes the form of:

- Sex Trafficking
- Forced Labor
- Domestic Servitude

Human trafficking is not specific to age, race, or gender. It occurs in rural, suburban, and urban areas across Missouri. These victims are from all socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of education. In each instance, victims are forced or coerced to work for little or no pay. For minors, those under the age of 18, force, fraud, or coercion doesn't have to occur. If they are involved in commercial sex, it's human trafficking!

WHO IS AT RISK?

Trafficking victims likely have compounding vulnerabilities, such as:

- Low Self-esteem
- Family Breakdown
- Abuse/Neglect
- Trauma
- Disability
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Addiction
- A combination of factors

Runaways and foreign nationals are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Traffickers will seek out those who are vulnerable and use their vulnerabilities to gain control of them. They may offer a job to help with financial stress, promise a modeling job, or simply offer a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship filled with "love." Victims are often coerced into sexual acts "one time," to pay bills or pay back debt. Once this happens, it becomes very difficult to say no. Their relationship quickly changes to one of manipulation and control with violence often following.

ENTICEMENT.

it starts here.



WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS?

Signs of trafficking are not always obvious, and may include:

- Abrupt change in attire, behavior, or relationships
- The presence of an older "boyfriend" or "girlfriend"
- Unexplained school absences
- Traveling with an older male/female who isn't a guardian
- Sudden presence of expensive material possessions
- Signs of psychological coercion, such as depression, anxiety, and/or an overly submissive attitude
- Lack of control over his/her schedule, money, and/or items proving identification
- Physical trauma (bruises, cuts, burns, scars)
- Poor health, as evidenced by sexually transmitted diseases, malnutrition, or serious dental problems
- Coached/rehearsed responses to questions
- Uncharacteristically promiscuous behavior or references to sexual situations or terminology that are beyond age-specific norms
- Tattoos or other branding marks
- Substance abuse or addictions, selling drugs
- Chronic running away
- Homelessness

If you notice any of these behavioral indicators, start paying closer attention to your loved one.



HOW TO PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

Help your loved one develop and maintain self-esteem and healthy relationships. Create open lines of communication and stay involved.

- Know with whom your child is spending time.
- Monitor your child's electronic activity to include internet use, email, and social media accounts. It's acceptable to have your child's passwords to monitor their activity.
- Create your own social media account and follow them. Know what they are looking at, what social media outlets they use, and with whom they are communicating. Knowing who their "friends" are, both in real life and virtually, is important.
- Be able to locate your child at all times. There are apps available for this along with services through your wireless provider.
- Routinely talk with your child about the dangers of social media.
- Remind your child to not give out personal information or share pictures.
- Pay attention to your child. Trust your instincts and ask questions if something seems different with them.
- Be aware of what's happening in your community/schools.



These tattoos are examples of how traffickers may mark or brand their victims.

Photo Credits: The Independent; MO Attorney General's Office