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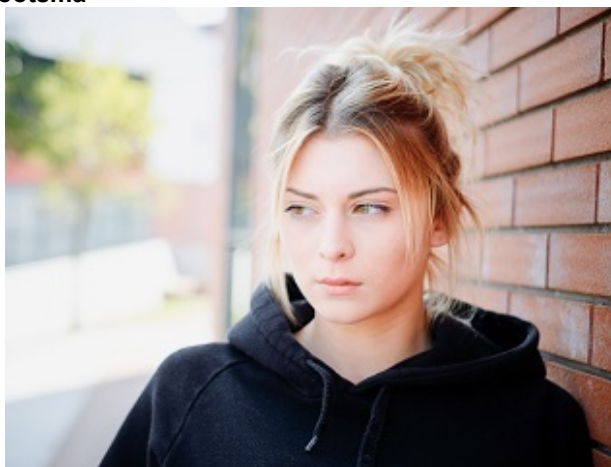
Sex Trafficking: What We Can Do to Help



Sex Trafficking: What We Can Do to Help

By Caitlin Bootsma

The sex trafficking of children and youth is not only a



devastating reality across the globe, it is just as prominent here in our own country as it is elsewhere. And, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, trafficking is on the rise—with a 25% increase from 2017 to 2018.

January is Sex Trafficking awareness month and, to start, it's helpful to have a clear definition of what child trafficking is. As UNICEF explains, "Child trafficking is the recruitment, coercion, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of children under the age of 18 for the purpose of exploitation."

The sex trafficking of minors victimizes foreign nationals brought into the U.S., but it also applies to U.S. citizens, too. Tragically, trafficking can—and does—happen anywhere, including within our own communities and neighborhoods.

As caring adults, we can make an impact on these tragic statistics. The first step is to educate children and youth through education about boundaries and safety. Some actions to consider include:

- Teach children from a young age about appropriate and inappropriate touching. For example, a parent can remind their children when helping them with a bath that no one else should be touching them or viewing them where their bathing suits usually cover (unless it's for medical reasons, and the parent is also there, too).
- Explain to kids that they should never agree to keep a secret from their parents and that you, as a safe adult, will always

What is your opinion?

Did you already know that child sex trafficking occurs in all 50 states with children who are citizens of the U.S.?

- Yes
- Yes, but not that it was so prevalent
- No, I thought it was more of an International problem
- I've never really thought about it.

Submit Vote!

Last Week's Poll

What is one thing you can do to help promote the Gospel message of equality in dignity?

- Talk to the children in my care about equality and how to treat others. 33.74%
- Learn more about the systemic causes of discrimination and how they can be overcome. 10.53%
- Pray for the end of hate and ignorance. 10.53%
- Be aware of my own actions and words and how they might affect others. 41.84%
- I haven't really thought about it. 3.37%

Total Votes: 741

listen to them and believe them if they come to you with something difficult.

- Continue the education as they get older by explaining things like slavery, manipulative adults and coercion in an age-appropriate way. Let them know they can always trust their gut instinct if an adult doesn't seem safe (even if it's someone they know well!).
- Teach kids about internet safety, including the dangers of oversharing on the internet, posting or receiving naked pictures, talking to strangers online, and more.
- Install internet accountability software on all devices to help protect them and foster ongoing conversations about safe internet use.
- Know where your children are at all times, and who they are with.
- Keep your eyes open to signs of trafficking or abuse, including changes in behavior, extreme defensiveness or aggression toward others, nightmares, anger, anxiety, lack of interest in activities that previously made them happy, promiscuous activity or self-destructive behavior. Additional signs they might be being groomed by a trafficker include suddenly having large amounts of money or receiving expensive gifts.

Let kids in your care know they can always come to you about anything that disturbs or confuses them, and they will not be in trouble. Fostering open communication and trust with children is a crucial way to protect them from exploitation.

What else can we do to fight sex trafficking? Spread awareness! The more people who [recognize](#) that sex trafficking is happening in our communities, the better chance that children can be rescued.

To report a suspected case of human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking hotline at 1-(888)-373-7888.

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