



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN & YOUTH IN CANADA

A Prevention and Early Intervention Toolkit for Parents

CHILDREN OF THE
STREET SOCIETY

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PREFACE

A WORD FROM CHILDREN OF THE STREET SOCIETY

Children of the Street Society is dedicated to preventing the sexual exploitation and human trafficking of children and youth in British Columbia through education strategies, public awareness initiatives, and family support. Our mission is to take a proactive approach through public awareness, education, and early intervention strategies, while offering direct care and support to families. We believe that investing in preventative measures leads to a decrease in the need for intervention and enforcement services, which is cost-effective over the long term.

With the increased demand for parent support, increasing numbers of inquiries, and disclosures, this toolkit is designed to help parents and families stay vigilant in keeping their children safe and protected from being exploited or trafficked. It is a valuable tool for parents to learn about the Canadian legal system, available resources and supports, as well as updated trends amongst youth in Canada. The information will allow parents to gain an in-depth look at how today's digital culture plays a prominent role in the onset of sexual exploitation, including ways to safeguard online activity and stay up-to-date on new and emerging social media trends. Parents will also receive tips on how to cope with stress, practice self-care, set boundaries, and maintain communication with their child. The toolkit will discuss effective parenting approaches and provide a comprehensive list of resources. After reading this toolkit, parents may be shocked and disturbed. However, they will be prepared and equipped to help prevent their children from being exploited.

This toolkit was designed in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including parents affected by the issue, experiential youth that have been exploited, law enforcement personnel, frontline service workers, teachers, Aboriginal community members, and those committed to preventing and combating sexual exploitation and human trafficking in BC and across Canada. The information in the toolkit reflects what youth who have exited and their parents have told us when coping with the issue of sexual exploitation. The toolkit addresses a variety of vulnerable subgroups, however, it is important to note that sexual exploitation can happen to anyone.

Our vision at Children of the Street Society is a world where children and youth are safe and free from all forms of sexual exploitation. We believe that the family unit and overall community is a valuable tool in the prevention of sexual exploitation and trafficking. We encourage you to share this toolkit with your community and social groups to help raise awareness about sexual exploitation and prevent our youth from experiencing this horrendous crime against humanity.

Please note that if you have concerns regarding your child's behaviour or interactions with others, it is important to contact professional support immediately.

Children of the Street Society
www.childrenofthestreet.com

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR



Throughout my career in social work, I had the great pleasure of traveling to Cape Town, South Africa to work in the child welfare sector. I felt blessed to have been given such an opportunity. However, I felt deeply saddened by a number of things I witnessed while living and working there. Upon returning home, the main thing that stuck out most and replayed in my mind was the buying, selling, using, and trading of children and youth for sexual purposes. I found myself constantly thinking of the issue, unsure of how this heinous crime against humanity could happen so frequently. I began to research the topic in more depth only to be utterly surprised and dismayed at the extent in which it was occurring in Canada.

It did not take me long to realize that I wanted to devote my career to combating this issue in any manner I could. My graduate school thesis at the University of Northern British Columbia focused on the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking from a policy perspective, which enabled me to understand what our province and country as a whole is doing to fight the issue and protect our youth. My frontline experience working with victims and survivors has put the issue into context for me and allowed me to understand its complexity and severity. Given my experience and research, I can say without a doubt, that Canada is not immune to the issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

I am extremely passionate about the work that is being done from a prevention based framework. I believe that the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking not only affects victims and/or survivors but also parents, siblings, extended family members, caregivers, teachers, peers, and the community as a whole. We all have a role to play in the protection of our youth: the most vulnerable individuals in our society. I believe that if prevention efforts are properly understood and implemented by parents and caregivers, there would be a decrease in the rates of youth sexual exploitation and intervention methods as well.

I hope that this toolkit will be a valuable tool for parents, allow for a better understanding of the issue, and show them that they are not alone. The toolkit is designed to help parents recognize questionable/risky behaviours and red flags, while navigate through challenges and hardships they may be experiencing themselves. The information provided in this toolkit is in no way meant to be disrespectful or offensive. In consultation with respected and valued professionals and Experiential Voices, the toolkit is meant to reflect our current situation in Canada.

It is my dream to have the toolkit distributed across the province and country to raise awareness about sexual exploitation and human trafficking. We can win this fight and put an end to this crime against humanity. We must remain positive and optimistic for a brighter future in which all children are free from all forms of exploitation!

INTRODUCTION

Welcome!

Who is this Toolkit For?

This toolkit is for parents and caregivers dealing with issues of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. In particular, it gives information about warning signs, recruitment tactics, and current trends in youth behaviour. It is also a resource for parents needing support services for themselves and other family members. Though primarily suited for parents, this toolkit can be useful for anyone that integrates education about sexual exploitation into their work, including frontline service workers, teachers, social workers, police officers, counsellors, lawyers, Indian Band staff, community Elders and peer educators. While many of the resources and services are specific to British Columbia, this toolkit takes into account a variety of communities across Canada, encompassing various population groups and the unique vulnerabilities each one may present.

How was this Toolkit Created?

This parent toolkit was developed primarily using community-based research methods. Interviews and surveys were conducted, both face-to-face and via video conference and telephone, with experiential voices, parents, and pertinent community stakeholders committed to tackling the issue of sexual exploitation in Canada. This acted as a powerful tool to bring diverse voices together and address common issues. Strong partnerships were developed, based on the work of each participant in the field of preventing and combating sexual exploitation. Information was also drawn from literature, academic research papers and public community agency materials. Members of Aboriginal and LGBTQ+ communities were consulted directly to identify culturally and community specific issues as they relate to sexual exploitation.

TERMS USED IN THIS TOOLKIT

Aboriginal: any individual that identifies as being First Nations, Inuit, or Métis

Children (or Youth) in Care: an individual in the care of the provincial child welfare system (i.e. Ministry of Children and Family Development in BC)

Experiential Voice: a survivor of sexual exploitation or a parent or family member of a survivor

LGBTQQIP2SAA: (referred to as LGBTQ+ in this manual) any individual that identifies as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexual, pansexual, two-spirited, aromantic, asexual, and others

Newcomer: anyone who is new to Canada, including immigrants and refugees

Parent: a person who is responsible for a child's care including guardians, caregivers, foster and adoptive parents

Sexual Exploitation: when youth are forced to provide and trade sexual favours in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, drugs, alcohol, material items as well as non-material items such as love, belonging and acceptance

Survival Sex: when an individual is motivated to exchange sexual services in order to meet their basic survival needs (e.g. food, shelter, drugs)

Trafficked Person: any individual who is identified by authorities as meeting the criteria under the Palermo Protocol, self-identifies as a trafficked person, or is receiving services under this designation

Youth: any person under the age of 18 years old



SECTION 1: WHAT IS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

In this section, you will:

- › Learn the definition of sexual exploitation and human trafficking
- › Debunk common myths and stereotypes about sexual exploitation and human trafficking
- › Look at who is most vulnerable to being sexually exploited
- › Be able to identify red flags and warning signs of potentially exploitative situations

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION DEFINED

Sexual exploitation is the sexual abuse of a minor that involves youth being manipulated into exchanging a sexual act for money, drugs, shelter, food, transportation, love, acceptance or any other considerations.

“Human trafficking is one of the most insidious and complex crimes in Canada. It involves coercion, manipulation, the preying on those who are vulnerable, the exploitation of core needs.”

– Larissa Maxwell, Manager of Anti-Human Trafficking Programs, The Salvation Army Deborah’s Gate

Human trafficking is the act of controlling another person by means of force, threat or deception for the purpose of exploiting them. Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery where victims are treated as possessions that can be bought and sold. Victims can be of any age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, income, or geographic location.

For a more detailed explanation of sexual exploitation and human trafficking as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada, please refer to [Appendix 1](#).

Children of the Street Society recognizes that the topic of sexual exploitation and human trafficking can be distressing for parents, especially if you are experiencing it firsthand with your child. This toolkit is intended to provide support, hope, and helpful advice for parents who are coping with this crisis in their families. When speaking about sexual exploitation, it is imperative to remember the importance of language. We don’t want to make a youth feel disrespected, insignificant, or unworthy. Therefore we need to be mindful of the language we use. It is crucial not to use derogatory words or words that may be offensive or oppressive in nature.

At Children of the Street Society, we believe that the word ‘work’ should never be paired with the word ‘sex’. When we think of what the word ‘work’ means to us, we think of a chosen profession, something to earn an honest and legal living. When we pair this with the word ‘sex’, it tends to normalize the act of sexual exploitation, shame the victim, and make them believe it was their fault for the negative encounters they experienced. It essentially promotes the idea that youth choose to be exploited and are responsible for the choices that led to their situation.

“A child cannot be a prostitute ... a child is *prostituted*.”

– Diane Sowden,
Executive Director,
Children of the Street

COMMON MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

When we don't have a clear idea of what sexual exploitation is or acknowledge the extent to which it is happening in our own country, it becomes easy to believe myths and stereotypes perpetuated over the years through the media.

We quickly jump to conclusions about what type of people these victims are, where they come from, and why they end up in the position that they are in. The term 'human trafficking' quickly ignites images of whips, chains, and individuals from third world countries being held hostage in dirty, underground rooms and basements. Similarly, people think of sweat shops or child labour in foreign countries. While this still holds true, myths about sexual exploitation ignore the reality of what is happening to Canadian youth.

"That will never be me ... next thing you know you're waking up and you're **there**."

– Experiential Voice

MYTH: ONLY YOUTH WHO COME FROM A BAD FAMILY ARE EXPLOITED.

FACT: Sexual exploitation and trafficking can and does happen to any youth, regardless of their age, ability, ethnicity, gender, religion, family income, class, or sexual orientation. Youth who come from healthy, supportive families can be exploited.

MYTH: HUMAN TRAFFICKING ONLY HAPPENS OVERSEAS, IN THIRD WORLD, OR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

FACT: Canada is not immune. Sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking happens more frequently in Canada than one might think. In 2014, the RCMP Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre reported that 93% of Canada's trafficking victims within the Criminal Justice System came from Canada.

MYTH: BEING EXPLOITED FOR SEXUAL PURPOSES IS A ONE-TIME OCCURRENCE.

FACT: Sexual exploitation is an ongoing cycle of physical, emotional and psychological abuse. In many cases, exploiters take several weeks or months to groom the young victim before the exploitation begins. Victims can be exploited/trafficked for years at a time and are often unaware that they are being exploited, making them vulnerable to being in more than one exploitative relationship.

MYTH: ONLY FEMALES ARE SEXUALLY EXPLOITED.

FACT: Sexual exploitation can happen to boys and young men as well as transgender youth. While it may look different and happen through different avenues, boys are not immune. Boys can be targeted as victims of sexual exploitation, however they may be less likely to disclose or seek support due to social stigmas, prejudice, embarrassment, or fear.

MYTHS CONTINUED

MYTH: DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION IS ALWAYS A FACTOR WHEN SOMEONE IS BEING EXPLOITED.

FACT: Youth without drug and alcohol addictions are not exempt. Conversely, having an addiction does not mean a youth will become a victim. While drugs and alcohol are widely used by traffickers and exploiters to keep their victims under control or as a means to cope with the abuse, there are other ways to instill fear and intimidation. Some youth may be addicted to the concept of love, affection, and romance; something that traffickers and exploiters effectively prey on.

MYTH: IT IS EASY TO EXIT OR GET OUT OF SEXUALLY EXPLOITATIVE SITUATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS.

FACT: Not all sexually exploited/trafficked youth see themselves as victims. Because victims are groomed for a long time, the exploiter may trick them into thinking they are in a relationship and use guilt to keep them entrenched. Most exploiters use verbal and physical threats to ensure their victims do not leave them. Victims are often brainwashed into thinking that they are worthless and that no one will help them or care about their situation.

MYTH: IT IS THE YOUTH'S FAULT THAT THEY WERE EXPLOITED.

FACT: Exploiters and traffickers target youth because of their vulnerability and lack of life experience. Victims are often manipulated for a long time by exploiters and traffickers. They use a variety of tactics such as giving the youth extra attention, false affection, gifts, isolating them from their friends and families, and introducing new lifestyles to the youth (drugs, alcohol, parties, etc.). Sexual exploitation does not recognize personal choice.

MYTH: TRAFFICKERS AND EXPLOITERS ARE ALWAYS ADULT MALES.

FACT: Exploiters and traffickers target youth because of their vulnerability and lack of life experience. Victims are often manipulated for a long time by exploiters and traffickers. They use a variety of tactics such as giving the youth extra attention, false affection, gifts, isolating them from their friends and families and introducing new lifestyles to the youth (drugs, alcohol, parties, etc.). Sexual exploitation does not recognize personal choice.

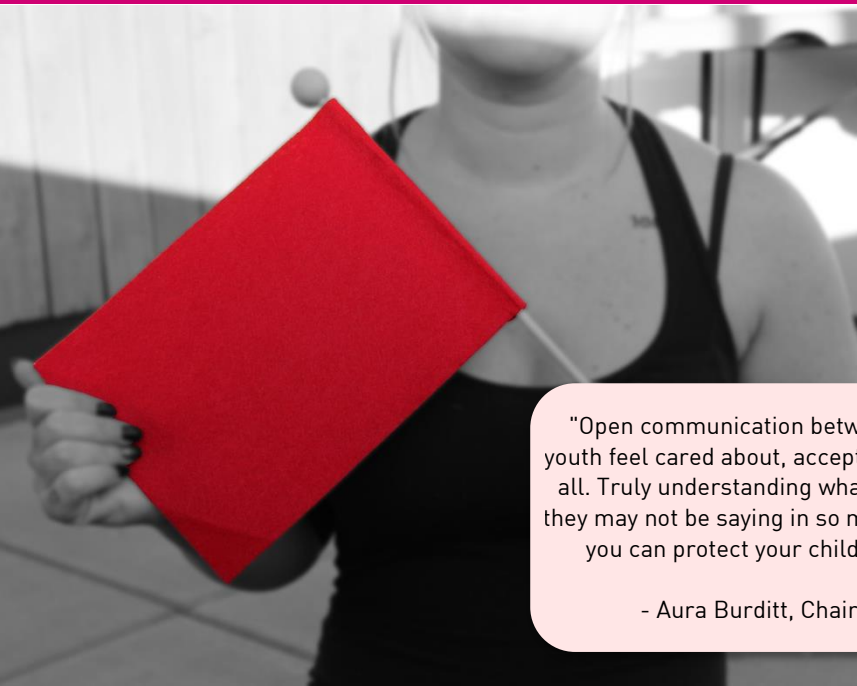
WHO IS MOST VULNERABLE?

One of the most important messages to remember as a parent is that *sexual exploitation can happen to anyone* regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, family history, ethnicity, religion, or geographic location. There are, however, a number of factors that may make a youth more vulnerable to being exploited and/or trafficked.

Traffickers and exploiters are experts at identifying vulnerable youth through their interactions. Whether online or in person, traffickers strategically prey and manipulate youth based on their weaknesses and unique vulnerabilities. The following is a list of individuals who are more vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual exploitation:

- › Runaway, homeless, or impoverished youth
- › Youth who are in foster care
- › Youth who have experienced sexual, physical, or emotional abuse and neglect
- › Youth who live with mental health barriers and diagnoses
- › Youth who identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender, or two-spirit
- › Youth who have FASD or struggle with alcohol and drug addiction
- › Youth who have low self-confidence and esteem
- › Immigrant youth or newcomers to Canada
- › Youth who identify as Aboriginal
- › Youth who question their security and sense of belonging to their community, school or family
- › Youth who lack culturally appropriate programming in surrounding communities
- › Youth who have learning disabilities or cognitive impairments

WARNING SIGNS



Parents should be on the lookout for and pay close attention to warning signs. The presence of warning signs does not necessarily mean your child is being exploited. You may recognize a lot of these behaviours as being characteristic of typical teenage behaviour. However, the warning signs should be recognized, noted, and discussed with your child.

"Open communication between parents and their children is key to ensuring youth feel cared about, accepted, and heard. LISTENING is the most important of all. Truly understanding what your young person is thinking and feeling (which they may not be saying in so many words) is critical to identifying the **red flags** so you can protect your child from predators and other harmful influences."

- Aura Burditt, Chair of the London Anti-Trafficking Committee

ATTITUDES

- › Withdraws from family, friends or peer groups, and extra-curricular activities
- › Maintains a high level of secrecy and is reluctant to share where they have been or with whom
- › Responds to conversation as if they are reading from a practiced script
- › Unexplained mood swings
- › Angry, confrontational, or abusive
- › Secretive about their daily life routines
- › Protective of new relationships, providing little information when asked
- › Appears to be protective of loved ones or fears for their safety

“There’s a
reason why
kids stop
talking.”

– Experiential
Voice

BEHAVIOURS

- › Comes home late or past curfew for unexplained reasons
- › Disappears for extended periods of time (days, weeks, months)
- › Hangs around with new and different groups of friends including older individuals
- › Wears expensive clothing or jewelry that he/she could not normally afford
- › Receives phone calls from blocked or private phone numbers
- › Secretive about internet usage including sites and contacts
- › Has an online relationship with someone they have never met in person
- › Has a significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend
- › Receives unexplained gifts from secretive sources
- › Frequents hotels or unusual locations to meet friends
- › Adopts slang and speech that is ‘street’ level talk
- › Has pre-paid calling cards, credit cards, hotel room keys, business cards
- › Has pornographic images or videos of themselves openly available or posted online
- › Does not attend school or is working during school hours
- › Has numerous taxi numbers programmed into cell phone



PHYSICAL ABUSE INDICATORS

- › Unexplained bruises, cuts, and broken bones
- › Black eye(s)
- › Tattooing or branding symbols such as names on neck, wrists, or lower back
- › Cigarette burns on body
- › Physical scarring, scrapes, or scratches

Along with a youth's change in behaviour and attitude, he or she may leave clues around the house that can be warning signs indicating they are prime targets or victims of sexual exploitation. Such clues may not be an immediate cause for concern, however, it is important to initiate a conversation with your child to understand why such activity is occurring. Parents should be mindful of clues as they may help in criminal investigations. Some of these clues are:

- › Unexplained money
- › Drug-associated objects
- › Acquiring a cell phone that was not purchased by parents
- › Long-distance phone bills
- › Business cards or matchbooks for unusual individuals or places of business (i.e.: nightclubs)
- › Large amounts of condoms and condom wrappers
- › Debts on bank accounts
- › Memberships to phone services



Growing up, your child may display one or more of the above listed red flags. When these changes or behaviours are apparent, it is important to take action as soon as possible. Ask your child probing questions, engage in open communication and express your fears and concerns. Your child will understand from this that you care about them and their overall safety. It will also demonstrate your approachability, so your child knows they can come to you at any time with concerns.

SECTION SUMMARY

Sexual exploitation can be defined as the sexual abuse of a minor that involves youth being manipulated into exchanging a sexual act for something in return. Human trafficking is the act of controlling another person by means of force, threat or deception for the purpose of exploiting them. It is important to remember that exploited youth are victims and are not to blame for the negative encounters they have experienced.

There are many stereotypes and misconceptions associated with the issue of sexual exploitation. When thinking about human trafficking/sexual exploitation, many people picture a young girl enslaved in a developing country. In reality, sexual exploitation occurs in Canada and happens to youth with a wide variety of backgrounds. That being said, there are factors that make particular youth more vulnerable to the tactics of traffickers and exploiters. This includes youth who identify as Aboriginal, LGBTQ+ youth, newcomers to Canada, adopted children and children in care, youth from low-income families, youth who live with mental health barriers and diagnoses, as well as youth who have low self-esteem.

It is important for parents to be on the lookout for warning signs that may indicate their child is being trafficked or exploited. Warning signs may include high levels of secrecy regarding daily routines or new relationships, disappearing for extended periods of time, wearing expensive clothing or jewelry that he/she could not normally afford, a significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend, or acquiring a cell phone that was not purchased by parents. While some of these behaviours may seem characteristic of a typical teenager, they should still be noted and discussed with the youth.

SECTION 2: WHO IS EXPLOITING OUR YOUTH?

In this section, you will:

- › Understand who is exploiting youth
- › Learn about the increase in peer-to-peer exploitation
- › Understand the role of gangs and organized crime in the sexual exploitation of youth

PIMPS

When we think of what a pimp or trafficker looks like, we tend to see what the media and popular culture portrays. The image of a pimp has not only become glamourized through music, music videos, television, and movies but has also significantly distorted the reality. Youth may idolize such individuals and their lifestyles, blurring the reality when recruitment, luring, and grooming take place. Similarly, it has been engrained in our minds that only a certain 'type' of person would have the audacity to commit such crimes. Because of these misconceptions, both youth and parents often do not recognize exploiters.

"Pimps are a little harder to spot because they come in all shapes and sizes."

– Experiential Voice

WHAT PARENTS THINK

Parents teach children to beware of predators in the community. We teach our children that exploiters are:

- › Men
- › Uneducated
- › African American
- › Creepy
- › Strangers
- › Gangsters
- › Old
- › Lower class
- › Loners

WHAT YOUTH THINK

In today's society, youth are bombarded with images of exploiters as:

- › Rich
- › Well-dressed
- › Large social networks
- › Good looking
- › Multiple girlfriends
- › Respected
- › Popular
- › Luxurious lifestyle
- › Above the law

VS

What is Actually Happening

Pimps have become increasingly hard to profile. We must not categorize all traffickers and exploiters under one specific heading. In Canada, there has been a wide range of profiles of individuals who have been charged and convicted with sexual assault offences and human trafficking. Just like victims, traffickers and exploiters come in all shapes and sizes. Parents must be aware that exploiters can be:

poor MALE EMPLOYERS COACHES
religious leaders girlfriend FAMILY young
OLD teachers model/talent agent
online friends FEMALE elders gang members
boyfriend STRANGERS rich peers

QUICK TIPS:

* Rather than focusing on what a trafficker may look like, parents should focus on having discussions with youth about warning signs and tactics for recruitment and control.

* Even individuals who you would least expect can be exploiters, for example close family members, peers, and those in positions of trust or authority.

PEER-TO-PEER EXPLOITATION

A recent and growing trend amongst youth is peer-to-peer exploitation. One way this happens is the sharing of sexual images or videos over the Internet or through electronic devices. Some youth may not recognize that they are exploiting their peers or understand the severity of their actions. The affected youth usually does not know that the images are being shared. The sender may be doing it to gain popularity or acceptance among friends.

Another form of peer-to-peer exploitation is when youth recruit other youth into the exploitative situation. For example, a youth who is being groomed, receiving gifts, and living a luxurious lifestyle may invite their other friends to give it a try. They may see this as an opportunity to make some extra money or gain popularity. They may outweigh the negative costs associated with the situation in favour of the material benefits they are receiving from their trafficker.

Lastly, a female youth may become what is known as a ‘**bottom bitch**’, someone who is at the top of the hierarchy when working for a pimp. This is the female who has either worked for the pimp for the longest, has made the most money, or is favoured by the pimp. The title provides status and power over the other females. With a title like this, however, comes responsibility

and duties, including recruiting other females to earn a higher profit for the pimp/trafficker. In some cases, recruiters take the share of the earnings of the girls they have recruited. As recruiters move up in the hierarchal chain, they try to get rid of street level work. This type of recruitment may be encouraged or forced by the pimp through verbal and physical threats and abuse. A 'bottom bitch' may also be viewed as the pimp's main girl. When this is the case, he will not want her to work or perform as many sexual acts for profit as before. Therefore, a female may be more inclined to recruit other girls to lower the amount of work that she has to perform.

QUICK TIPS:

If you know your child is recruiting other youth, try connecting with school liaison officers or school counsellors to warn them of what is happening. By informing them of potential peer-to-peer recruitment, conversations can be held with students to raise awareness in the community. This can help children in the school as well as families to better recognize potentially exploitative situations.

GANGS & ORGANIZED CRIME

What is a Gang?

A gang is a group of three or more people that plan and carry out criminal acts, often for profit. Gangs often use manipulative and violent tactics to carry out their activities. Gang members may identify themselves through common names, symbols, tattoos, colours, clothing, and graffiti. Gangs range in size and can be broken down into various categories depending on their structure, level of criminal activity and membership. While most gangs are comprised of men, we must not ignore the fact that female gang associates, gang members and female-only gangs exist as well.

Similar to our discussion about victims of sexual exploitation and traffickers, it is unrealistic to categorize gang members and youth who engage in criminal activity into one category. Youth gang members can be from any cultural, ethnic, or socio-economic group. Gang members can come from low-income communities, as well as upper and middle class communities.



Street gangs are the most common type of gang group in Canada, since it is easy to become a member. Youth are often readily welcomed into this type of gang in order to build credibility and to enhance their overall profile in the community and with their peers. Street gangs typically have lower levels of sophistication and are more prone to committing random acts of violence and what some may refer to as “petty street crimes”. They may claim a particular area in a community as their own for criminal activity. Street-level gangs are often less organized and structured and tend to operate in and around schools, reserves, and community neighbourhoods. Recruitment for this type of gang is open because any type of youth can be involved and turnover is generally very high.

Organized crime groups differ from street level gangs in that they tend to be much more structured and hierarchical. For example, they may have exclusive membership based strictly on family, ethnicity, geographical location, or criminal connections. Organized crime groups have flourished over time and have established a reputation in the community through the many high profile violent crimes they have committed. Organized crime groups tend to commit more serious crimes such as kidnapping, extortion, trafficking, exploitation, weapons-related crimes, and crimes of extreme violence. They may build relationships with members of street level gangs in order to make more money. For example, they may use street-level gang members to commit crimes in order to avoid getting caught themselves. As a result, youth in street gangs typically view this as an opportunity to rise to the top, earn more street credibility, and be respected by those in higher positions.



“Gangs recruit regardless of ethnicity and socio-economic status. They recruit based on what people can bring to the table.”

– Sergeant Lindsey Houghton, Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of BC

FEMALE INVOLVEMENT

Traditionally, we have come to view the role of females in gangs in a specific manner – much different than how we view male involvement. We think of girls dressed in scantily clad outfits, riding in the front seat of the car, hanging off of the arms of high profile gang members. Through the mass media, girls are often viewed as a privilege and an accessory, someone who is on display as ‘arm candy’ or a ‘trophy’. Females are portrayed as playing more secondary roles and are submissive to gang members. Society views them as girlfriends and partners, innocent and oblivious to the life of crime that surrounds them.

While this can most definitely be the case, a major shift is taking place. More and more, we no longer see submissive, passive roles. Rather, females are now either taking active participatory roles or are being used and exploited for a variety of reasons, including:

- › Carrying drugs and weapons (domestically and internationally)
- › Taking out home or car leases in their name
- › Enticing victims of crime and conducting business
- › Collecting money for gangs
- › Scheduling appointments and meetings for gang members
- › Recruiting future gang members

The above list demonstrates how females are being used and exploited for reasons that divert police attention away from gang members and gangs as a whole. Female youth often view this type of involvement as voluntary and do it because they “love” the gang member they are doing it for. They often use their relationship status as an excuse for doing things for the gang. These youth fail to recognize that they are being used and exploited as they believe they are being asked to commit such acts because their “partners” truly love them.



While female gang involvement can seem harmless, the harsh reality is that females are also being coerced into more damaging, harmful, and dangerous situations. For example, female youth may be exploited for sexual purposes and forced to perform sexual acts for gang members, new associates, and business partners. Gang members may also sexually exploit their female associates to pay off accrued debts or settle unfinished business. If we remember that gangs and organized crime groups perform illegal activities to earn a profit, it makes sense that we are seeing gang members move away from selling only guns and drugs. For example, guns and drugs can be sold once whereas a girl can be sold over and over again for multiple profits.

WHY YOUTH JOIN GANGS

Why do youth join gangs and commit crimes? There are many parallels between how youth are recruited into gangs and how they are sexually exploited. As parents, we need to understand why our youth seek out gang life or are vulnerable to recruitment tactics employed by gang members. Youth may join gangs because they:

- › have limited attachment to family, friends and community
- › lack a sense of connection and belonging to their cultural identity
- › may have poor parental supervision and have experienced abuse and violence
- › have family members or close peers that are involved in gang activity
- › have experienced long term or multiple placements in the child welfare system or justice facilities
- › experience academic failure, truancy, or have dropped out of school
- › have had a history of unhealthy, dependant relationships
- › have mental health and/or substance abuse issues
- › come from low-income communities and view gangs as a way to make a living

REMEMBER:

Youth may experience one or more of the above, however it does not automatically mean that they are involved in a gang or being exploited.

WHY YOUTH STAY IN GANGS

As parents, we need to put ourselves in our children's shoes to understand why leaving a gang is easier said than done. What is going on behind the scene that keeps a youth in gang life?

1. Some youth believe they have found their true sense of community. The emotional stability and sense of connectedness that the gang provides allows them to feel like they are a valued part of a community.
2. Youth who have committed crimes in gangs may feel they are tainted and there is no hope for a brighter future.
3. Gang members have brainwashed youth into believing that this is the lifestyle that they are meant to live and that society will view them as outcasts if they choose to leave.
4. Youth may be drawn to a particular lifestyle of drugs, alcohol, parties, sex, etc. The immediate thrill they may experience in this lifestyle would be difficult to have if they left.
5. Sometimes multiple gang members rape youth victims ('gang rape') in order to groom youth for the situation they will be introduced to as well as to instill fear. This type of behaviour keeps victims compliant and afraid of leaving.
6. Youth may not have earned enough profit for the gang to pay back debts that they have incurred. As a result, the youth is afraid of seeking support services or contemplate leaving until these debts have been paid off.
7. Some youth may believe that they know too much. For example, they may believe that after leaving, they will get hurt by remaining members or may be guilty by association.
8. Gang members may have brainwashed the youth into believing that they are owned by the gang. This could be done through psychological fear tactics, physical abuse, or branding.



REMEMBER:

A high number of gang involved youth have experienced traumatic life events such as abuse, neglect, maltreatment, or violence. Parents should let their child know that they are open to hearing about their feelings and experiences and that no matter how severe the situation, things can always get better.

QUICK TIPS:

- * Help instill hope and optimism about the future with your child by helping him or her set and achieve personal goals.
- * Recognize that even the most disruptive behaviours are often the result of fear and anxiety associated with traumatic life events.
- * Teach techniques to help manage your child's overwhelming emotional reactions.

For more information about gangs and youth gang prevention, please refer to the following document created by British Columbia's Ministry of Justice:

<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/crimeprevention/shareddocs/pubs/youth-gang-prevention.pdf>

For more information and education on gangs, including prevention and awareness tools, please visit the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of B.C.'s website:

www.endganqlife.ca

SECTION SUMMARY

Individuals that live off the earnings of a person being sexually exploited are called pimps. Parents tend to picture pimps as men, old, creepy, lower class, and uneducated. Many kids, however, have been influenced by the positive portrayal of pimps in the media and popular culture; they view them as rich, good looking, well respected, living a luxurious lifestyle, and above the law. In reality, Canada's criminal justice system has seen a wide range of profiles of individuals being charged and convicted of sexual exploitation. Exploiters can be male or female, a stranger or someone known to you, respected leaders or even a youth's peer.

Peer-to-peer exploitation is a growing trend amongst youth. This may occur in the form of sharing sexual images or videos over the internet. Exploited youth may also recruit other youth, viewing it as an opportunity to make extra money or gain favour. Female youth may also become a **bottom bitch**, someone who is at the top of the hierarchy when working for a pimp, where they may be given responsibility in recruiting or training the new girls.

Youth can also be exploited by gangs. A gang is a group of three or more people that plan and carry out criminal acts, often for profit. Youth are most often recruited into *street gangs*: gangs that are less organized and have lower levels of sophistication, tending to operate in and around schools, reserves, and community neighbourhoods. *Organized crime groups* are more structured and hierarchal, committing more violent and serious crimes. Organized crime groups may recruit youth in street gangs to commit crimes in order to avoid getting caught themselves. While females have traditionally played a more submissive or secondary role in gangs, a noticeable shift is taking place where their roles have escalated to carrying drugs and weapons, enticing victims of crime, collecting money, or recruiting future gang members. Rather than feeling exploited, females may see their involvement as voluntary or an expression of love. However, these activities are at risk of escalating and females may be coerced into more damaging or harmful situations where they could be expected to perform sexual acts for gang members or business partners.

Youth join gangs for a variety of reasons. Many of the characteristics that make a youth vulnerable to sexual exploitation are similar to gang involvement, such as: having limited attachments to family and community, experiencing unhealthy or abusive relationships, living with mental health barriers or substance abuse issues, or coming from low-income communities. Leaving a gang can be very difficult. Youth may stay in gangs because they believe they have found a true sense of community, they feel they have been tainted or know too much, out of fear or guilt, or they may be drawn to certain aspects of the culture.

SECTION 3: HOW & WHERE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OCCURS

In this section, you will:

- › Recognize commonly used tactics for recruitment and control
- › Learn where sexual exploitation can potentially happen

RECRUITMENT TACTICS: LURING AND GROOMING

RECRUITING	LURING	GROOMING
The act of selecting and enlisting new victims to be exploited	Communicating with a youth for the purpose of committing a sexual offence	Selective tactics used to prepare a youth for exploitation
This process is selective and carefully planned by traffickers and exploiters based on their victim's vulnerabilities.	This can happen immediately, early on in the relationship or after a bond is established. Traffickers may plant the seed early on in the interaction. However, if there is resistance, they may back off and continue the grooming period until a better opportunity arises.	This process can take days, weeks, months, or even years. Grooming can happen online as well as in person. The trafficker uses this time to develop a relationship with a youth to gain trust and chip away at his or her boundaries.

"If it seems weird in real life, it's equally as weird on social media."
– Jesse Miller, Social Media Expert

TACTICS Traffickers use to recruit, lure and groom youth for sexual exploitation:

- › Posing as a boyfriend, girlfriend, or lover
- › Gifting (i.e.: jewelry, cell phones, computers, clothing, pets)
- › Promising a better lifestyle
- › Providing alcohol and drugs
- › Providing emotional stability, love, and companionship
- › Offering free rides
- › Providing housing or shelter
- › Posing as a confidant, trusted adult, friend, peer
- › Brainwashing youth with romantic ideas
- › Using other victims to seek out and recruit potential future victims
- › Meeting and befriending the victim's family and friends
- › Making youth feel like their parents are out of bounds and unfair in their decision making
- › Paying for personal grooming (i.e.: hairstyles, nails, waxing, etc.)
- › Hosting parties for youth

“Guys convince you of all kinds of shit and you start to eventually believe it all.”
– Experiential Voice

TACTICS traffickers use to control youth to keep them from seeking help or leaving the situation:

- › Committing physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (i.e.: drugging, beating, raping and other forms of degradation)
- › Sextortion and distribution of sexually explicit images or videos
- › Withholding personal identification (e.g.: drivers licence, healthcare card, passport)
- › Isolating a youth from his or her friends or family
- › Verbal threats of harm towards the youth’s family and friends
- › Brainwashing and psychological abuse
- › Forced drug use
- › Forced drug debts
- › False promises of better lifestyles
- › Impregnating a victim to create a familial bond
- › Projecting blame and responsibility onto victims
- › Appointing a victim as a ‘bottom bitch’ (please see terminology page)
- › Branding or tattooing with labels to signify ownership

“He told me it would be good money, better than a full time job. He made it sound very alluring. I could get laid every day and get paid. There wasn’t a lot of talk about what the day to day would look like.”

– Experiential Voice

RULES imposed on victims by pimps, exploiters, and traffickers:

- › Youth must never know a pimp’s real name or identity and must refer to him by street names or nicknames
- › To avoid physical violence or becoming the property of another pimp, girls must not make eye contact with other pimps
- › Girls will always be below their pimp in rank or social status
- › Pimps and traffickers will set nightly monetary quotas that the youth must achieve
- › Victims must always be referred to by their ‘working girl’ names

REMEMBER:

- * Not all exploited youth are addicted to drugs or alcohol. Traffickers also exhibit control over youth by exploiting their unmet core needs such as love, affection and belonging.
- * Youth who have disabilities or experience cognitive or developmental delays may be more vulnerable to exploitation based on their lack of decision making and critical thinking skills.
- * Youth may innocently attend parties with older teens or adults without realizing that they will have to provide sexual services and acts.

WHERE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OCCURS

There are a number of places where sexual exploitation can happen. Large urban cities are prime targets for traffickers. However, geographic remoteness does not diminish the risks of being trafficked. With coercion and deception as the underlying elements, there are a number of places in which initial recruitment, luring, and grooming can occur.

Some common places are:

- › Online
- › Work
- › Modeling Studios
- › On Reserve
- › Foster/Group Homes
- › Alleys
- › Apartments
- › School
- › Shelters
- › Rehabilitation Centres
- › Shopping Malls
- › Strip Clubs
- › Playgrounds
- › Massage Parlours
- › Home
- › Nightclubs & Bars
- › Restaurants
- › Public Transit
- › Airports
- › Theatres
- › Truck Stops



QUICK TIPS:

We don't want to instill fear in our children. Rather, we should teach them to be aware that potentially dangerous and harmful situations can happen anywhere and to anyone.

REMEMBER:

If there is an alarm bell in your head, it is worth the investigation. Start the paper trail and make notes, as this information may be used in possible future investigations. For example, keep records of phone calls, license plate numbers, dates and times that youth are with certain individuals.

SECTION SUMMARY

Traffickers are able to exploit youth through the deceptive and coercive actions of recruitment, luring, and grooming. Traffickers select and enlist new victims (recruitment) through communication for the purpose of committing a sexual offence (luring). To prepare youth for exploitation, traffickers, use selective tactics (grooming) that develop trust and reduce boundaries in the relationship. Traffickers may pose as a boyfriend or girlfriend, a trusted confidant or peer, or they may try to entice youth through promoting a better lifestyle, gifting, providing alcohol and drugs, free rides, or shelter. To keep youth from leaving or seeking help, traffickers may use tactics such as abuse, isolation, sextortion, threats, instilling fear, projecting blame and responsibility, or making false promises.

Youth are vulnerable to sexual exploitation in large urban cities as well as geographically remote locations. Recruitment, luring, and grooming can occur online, at home, at school, at work, or in places where youth commonly hang out, such as shopping malls, public transit, playgrounds or restaurants.



SECTION 4: THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

In this section, you will:

- › Understand why, where, and how youth are being recruited, lured, and groomed online
- › Become familiar with the dangerous and popular trend of sexting & sextortion
- › Learn how to help your child when they are the victim or perpetrator of a sexting crime
- › Learn how to navigate your child's digital footprint
- › Develop an understanding of proper online social etiquette
- › Begin to identify online terminology and commonly used social media apps and websites

ONLINE LURING AND GROOMING

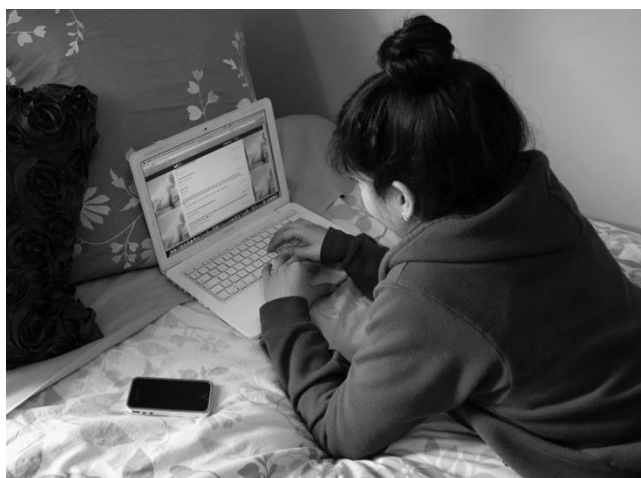
The most common and easiest way that youth are lured and groomed for sexual purposes is through the internet. Youth are lured online when someone with a sexual interest in the child prepares them for future sexual contact. Once your child is allowed on the internet or provided with technology (iPod, iPad, gaming device, cell phone) you must begin conversations about internet safety.

DID YOU KNOW?

Canada is ranked **number two** in the world for hosting the most child sexual abuse images online (Every Image, Every Child, 2009).

"You can get a girl as quick as you can get a pizza." – Experiential Voice

TIPS FOR COUNTERACTING ONLINE EXPLOITATION



SPEND TIME, NOT MONEY

A trafficker or exploiter will groom a child 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 children believe that material items equal respect and worth. When a child believes that materialistic things will enhance their lifestyle or mean greater happiness, their judgment is skewed and they become more vulnerable to being sexually exploited. It is important to help our children understand that money and

material things do not equal self-value and self-worth. If parents spend quality time instead of buying material items, children will gain a sense of connectedness and belonging rather than feeling the need to seek this type of attention elsewhere.

EXPOSURE

A trafficker and exploiter will lure and groom a child by promising to take them on trips around the world, take them for lavish dinners, or hang out with interesting people. Youth are vulnerable because they are taught to value these types of worldly experiences. Try to expose your children to other cultures, regions, and food from early childhood. This doesn't mean you have to take them on trips around the world every year, but start simple. Expose them to these attractions through music, documentaries, encyclopaedias, and language classes. By engaging and exposing your child to unique experiences, he or she will become knowledgeable about the world in which they live in. Exposure and exploration can help children face their fears and anxieties in a healthy manner. Dialogue and discussion can emerge through different experiences, allowing parents to connect on a deeper level with their children.

NO MORE STRANGER DANGER



A trafficker or exploiter will befriend a youth during the grooming period. This can happen over weeks, months, or even years. By acting and posing as a boyfriend/girlfriend, friend, confidant, or support person, exploiters gain the trust of youth and are not viewed as strangers. As parents, we need to step away from speaking to our children about strangers online. In most cases, youth don't want to talk to old, creepy strangers. They want to speak to youth similar in age or perhaps a couple of years older. They want to speak to their friends. Traffickers and exploiters do a very good job of pretending to be these fictitious friends. By the time the youth feels ready to step away from online interactions and meet up in real life, the person they are meeting is not a stranger. They have formed a bond and view these individuals as anything BUT a stranger. Parents must connect with youth to discover and understand who their online 'friends' are.

"If you say to your child to never meet a stranger in real life that they've been communicating with online, we're missing the boat"

– Experiential Parent

EXPLORING SEXUALITY

“Parents must demonstrate their approachability on a variety of topics in order for the youth to trust that they can go to them regardless of the topic.”

– Constable Jennifer Gibbs, Mobile Youth Services Team

During adolescence, youth are prone to exploring their sexuality and figuring out who they are. They may begin to explore their bodies in ways that are new and exciting. During the initial grooming phase, traffickers may use sexually inappropriate language with youth in their conversations. Alternatively, exploiters may expose youth to pornographic images or perform sexual acts in the view of a child through pictures or videos. Youth may not recognize that boundaries are being crossed and this behaviour is not acceptable. Traffickers and exploiters may encourage children to send images of themselves, normalizing sexual activity between adults and children.

Similarly, traffickers may have children engage in sexual acts, behaviours, or poses and then save or screenshot the images/videos on their device. The photos and images will then be used against the youth as blackmail. For example, by way of harsh threats, a youth may feel obligated to do whatever a trafficker says he or she has to do because they are fearful that the photo or video will be distributed publicly. This fear increases when an exploiter has access to a youth’s contact list on their social media site or mobile phone as the photos or videos can be sent to all of their contacts.

RESISTING THREATS & FALSE PROMISES

Traffickers and exploiters manipulate and sexually exploit youth by promising them bright futures as well as threatening them verbally, mentally, and physically. A trafficker or exploiter may threaten to hurt themselves if the youth leaves or abandons them. Similarly, they may threaten to hurt the youth’s family members or friends if they try to leave or confide in their parents or police about what is going on. Parents should teach children to resist such threats and feel comfortable approaching them when something is going on. Parents should also speak to children about false promises and that if it seems too good to be true, it usually is. Youth need to look beyond the surface of what is being promised to them to gain a better understanding of potentially exploitative situations.

“It’s not who your child is, it’s who they are connected with.”

– Diane Sowden, Executive Director of Children of the Street Society

QUICK TIPS:

www.cybertip.ca is Canada’s national tip-line for reporting the sexual exploitation of youth online.



This term is commonly used amongst youth and refers to the sending of sexually related texts, images, or videos from one technological device to another. Sexting generally attracts attention rather than respect. While most youth like attention, not all attention is positive and can be extremely harmful when it comes to sexting. Your child may be a victim, a perpetrator, or a bystander – all of which carry negative consequences. While this type of behaviour is extremely common, parents must remember that not all children and youth participate in this type of behaviour.

Sextortion: a form of sexual exploitation that involves non-physical forms of sexual coercion to gain sexual favors from the victim. The abuse of power is the means of coercion and is typically performed when the perpetrator threatens to release sexual images of the victim or information to the public. This can be done by online predators as well as by peers.

Cyberbullying: a form of bullying that takes place using electronic technology (cell phone, computer, tablet, gaming console) as well as communication tools (social media site, text message, chatroom, website). The bullying can include mean or derogatory text messages or emails, rumours posted on social networking sites, embarrassing photos/videos and fake profiles. Typically, cyberbullying includes sexual elements.

REMEMBER:

- * Based on the sexual elements involved, police can typically find grounds for luring in cases of sexting and cyberbullying.
- * Even if your child is a bystander who is in receipt of the distributed material, he or she could face criminal charges under child pornography laws.

SENDING & RECEIVING

The sending, receiving, or distribution of sexual images online or through text messages can have detrimental short and long term damages for BOTH the victim and the perpetrator:

DID YOU KNOW?

Sending or receiving a sexually suggestive text, image or video of an individual under the age of 18 is considered child pornography and can result in criminal charges (Criminal Code of Canada) .

SHORT TERM DAMAGES

- › Bullying and humiliation from peers
- › Physical, mental, and emotional harassment
- › Isolation from family or peers
- › Bad reputation
- › Suspension or expulsion from school
- › Loss of trust from parents, teachers, classmates

LONG TERM DAMAGES

- › Rejection from community
- › Conviction, charges, or jail time
- › Denial of scholarships, college admissions
- › Registry as a sex offender
- › Restrictions on living arrangements
- › Denial of future employment

When Your Child is the Victim



CREATE SAFE SPACES

Our children may be reluctant to tell us what they are going through for a variety of reasons, especially when it comes to sexting. Perhaps they do not want to get in trouble or are ashamed of having produced such images of themselves. Youth may be unsure of how you can help them or are afraid of retaliation from their peers if their parents find out. While the need to identify alleged offenders and perpetrators is an obvious priority when sexual abuse images are found, the emotional needs of children should be prioritized.

By creating safe, non-judgemental spaces for your children to interact and connect with you, they will feel more inclined to come to you when they or someone they know is in trouble. Do not assume that just because things are going well at home, there are not issues elsewhere in your child's life.

“My parents would feel uncomfortable whenever I would begin to share.”

– Experiential Voice

(On why it was difficult to share personal experiences with parent)

REMOVE THE PICTURE/VIDEO

Your child may come to you when they have been the victim of sexting, sextortion, or cyberbullying. It is important to make the removal of the photo the main priority. Do not blame or shame your child, but rather help to restore their dignity in a positive manner. You can start by contacting the service provider of the social media site to request that they remove the content.

Police can also assist in removing content from the internet or social media site. Once the incident is reported, police can begin the tracking and identification process to help remove unwanted photos or videos. Also, if the sexting incident involves threats, blackmail, or intimidation, you can report it to the police.

QUICK TIPS:

You can find a list of instructions on how to remove online content on popular websites and social media platforms at www.needhelpnow.ca.

REASSURANCE

When a youth is the victim of a sexting crime, he or she may experience a variety of emotions and negative feelings. This will be an extremely hard time for your child and it is important that you reassure them that they are not alone. Staying connected with your child and supporting them as best as you can will let them know that you will get through this hard time together. Validate your child's emotions and feelings and let them know that you are willing to take the necessary steps to help. You will have to avoid focusing on your own emotions and focus solely on your child during this difficult time.

DO SOME RESEARCH

Sit down with your child to discuss the facts about the issue. This may be uncomfortable for you but remember that it is equally uncomfortable for them. Ask your child probing questions in a non-judgmental manner to find out what was sent, to whom, and where the photo or video was posted. This can provide helpful answers as to how to proceed. Explore options with your child's school and see what steps can be taken to communicate with the families of the children involved in the sexting issue. You may also want to contact the police.

OUTLINE CONSEQUENCES

While this can be a difficult time and your child is the victim of a crime, parents should be clear that there are consequences for the behaviour. Disciplinary action should be done in an appropriate time frame with rational and fair consequences, without anger from parents. It is important to remain supportive and not belittle your child. They made a mistake and with mistakes come consequences as well as great learning opportunities.

“I was ashamed
to talk to my
family.”

– Experiential
Voice

Talk to your child about errors in judgment and how these can negatively affect their life. Some possible consequences may include restricting cell phone/internet use, suspending social media accounts, or increasing supervision of their online activity. Parents should instruct the youth to not retaliate against their perpetrator. Send the message that two wrongs do not make a right. This will help teach accountability, responsibility, and ownership which can help the learning and healing process.

CREATE A SAFETY PLAN/PLAN OF CARE

Your child may feel violated, unsafe, and insecure after a sexting incidence occurs. To help empower them and maintain a level of safety, try creating a safety plan together. Your child's safety plan will help let them know who they can turn to when they need to talk, what to do if the situation arises again, or they find themselves in danger. The safety plan will include positive role models and trustworthy adults that the youth can turn to in order to help keep them safe and protected against predators.





When Your Child is the Perpetrator

REMAIN CALM

It can be extremely difficult when you find out that your child has been involved in a sexting crime, particularly as the perpetrator or distributor of sexual images. You may experience a whirlwind of emotions but it is important to remain calm. Your child is human and as humans, we all make mistakes. This does not make your child a bad person. It also does not make you a bad parent. Trust in your parenting abilities to get you through this rough time in your child's life. By remaining calm, you will be able to think with a clear head and navigate accordingly.

INTERVENE IMMEDIATELY

By being proactive and intervening immediately, your child will get the message that this is a serious issue and that steps need to be taken to address what has happened. You might receive a number of reactions, emotions, and responses from your child when you confront them about what has happened, but it is important to obtain their version of the story. You may need to report the incident to the police. Depending on the severity of the situation, your child may be arrested. Reporting incidences to police can also prevent other children from being victimized.

DO SOME RESEARCH

Get as much information as you can from your child. They may not know that they have committed a crime or alternatively deny involvement in the overall activity. Remind your child that they are not a bad person but rather made an error in judgment and a bad decision. Ask your child when they received the photo or video, what they did with it, what the purpose of distributing it was, and who they sent it to. Do not be judgmental, critical, or angry. Speak to your child about taking responsibility and ownership for their actions so that the issues can be solved.

LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE

Don't jump to conclusions. Do not assume that your child was pressured by peers to engage in this type of activity or that they are completely innocent. You might have to do some digging and look beneath the surface to understand why your child distributed or requested sexual images. What were his or her motivations? Was it to fulfill an unmet core need or to seek attention from peers or family members? It is critical to examine why your child committed these acts in order to prevent it from happening in the future, and to seek any help and support that your child might need.

OUTLINE CONSEQUENCES

It is critical that your child understands that there are consequences for negative behaviour. This is not about making your child feel guilty or shaming them further. However, they need to know that what they have done is damaging and they will be disciplined accordingly. With discipline and consequences come opportunities for growth, development, and learning. Your child can reflect on how this has affected not only their life but the lives of those involved. By considering the feelings, emotions, and experiences of others, your child will learn to not commit these types of crimes in the future.

BE SUPPORTIVE

Although you might be experiencing stress, anxiety, or feelings of frustration and anger, try to remain clear headed and be a supportive parent. Your child needs proper guidance during this time in order for them to learn and grow in a positive manner. If you are supportive, your child can express their concerns, feelings, and emotions with you. You can teach them empathy towards others and reinforce that as humans we make mistakes. This does not mean they are a bad person but rather made a bad decision. Help your child learn from their mistakes. Do not minimize what has happened but rather work to reduce the likelihood of it happening again.



SEEK HELP

If your child is continuously acting out, you may consider seeking professional help. For example, you may want to have them attend counseling sessions with a youth worker to reveal underlying issues. Alternatively, your child may require support through outside resources to deal with bullying or distress they may experience as a result of this issue.

DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS: THE PERMANENCY OF ONLINE ACTIVITY

YOU ARE WHAT YOU SHARE

Youth may not be very forthcoming about what is going on in their lives. Technology and the internet have led to a secretive lifestyle, one that is often dismissed in conversations with parents. From sending innocent photos, to being lured and groomed, sexting, or befriending strangers online, youth can make mistakes caused by inexperience, miscommunication, and improper guidance.

DID YOU KNOW?

7 of the top 10 favourite sites for Canadian youth are about posting and sharing information and content (Media Smart, 2014).

“Decisions you make now will impact and affect you later in your life.”

- Matthew Taylor,
HUSTLE at Health
Initiative for Men

Everything that your child posts online through social media affects their “brand”. Pictures, status updates, conversations, accessed sites, and video chats can all have a long lasting effect on their lives. “Digital footprints” are what our children post and distribute online and can be hard to erase. Children and youth may not realize the negative effects and permanence of what they post online. It is important to explain that they should never post anything online that they would be upset about people seeing, regardless of privacy settings.

SPEAKING TO YOUTH ABOUT THEIR DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

- › Encourage youth to treat their online life just like their regular life. Let them know that if they wouldn’t say something to someone’s face or want a large amount of people to know something private, then they should not post it online.
- › Explain that they must be accountable for what they post online and that their behaviours, actions, and posts can have negative consequences.
- › Teach children and youth that a picture is worth a thousand words and can tell a lot about who a person is and what they would like the public to know about them.

“Once you send an image, it is always there and you can never get it back.”

- RCMP Internet Child Exploitation Unit



STOP
DO NOT
FORWARD

QUICK TIPS:

- * Try searching your child’s name (real name, online aliases, nicknames) in popular search engines, blogs, and social media platforms to see what comes up on their record.
- * Try searching hashtags (#) to understand what youth are talking about online.

SOCIAL [N]ETIQUETTE: HOW TO BE SAFE AND SOCIAL ONLINE

As parents, it is *your* responsibility to ensure the safety of your child online. Rather than restricting or banning youth's online usage, there need to be conversations between parents and youth about proper and improper ways to behave online. Just as it is a privilege to be given a family car for the first time, it is a privilege for your child to be allowed online through your supplied internet account and internet devices. While teaching children and youth the importance of online safety and accountability, parents must be accountable too. Determining right from wrong can sometimes be hard and youth are going to make mistakes. However, we can begin having these discussions the moment they start interacting online to prepare them for future interactions.

TIPS FOR PARENTS



Speaking to Youth about Online Safety

- › Stress the importance of privacy. Explain that just as you would not provide strangers with your credit card number or SIN number, you should not provide your address, telephone number, or school name.
- › Teach youth that oversharing personal information can lead to manipulation, mistreatment, and exploitation.
- › Explain to your child that adults and older individuals should not be trying to become friends with children and youth.

Safeguarding Children and Youth Online

- › Do not allow youth to have computers in their room. Keep computers and laptops in a common area in the house that can be seen from a variety of angles. Cover built-in web cameras on laptops to avoid being watched or spied on from traffickers and exploiters.
- › Cell phones should not be kept in the bedroom at night. Most online luring and grooming happens throughout the evening when the child is most likely alone with their cell phone. Have a common area for charging all household cell phones at nighttime.
- › Do not allow youth to have cell phones and other technological devices in the bedroom or private areas during sleepovers with peers.
- › Download apps to monitor your child's online activity. There are apps that allow you to track incoming and outgoing text messages, deleted histories, sites visited and much more. Similarly, take screenshots or pictures of your child's computer screen or mobile device when necessary.
- › Keep a record of your child's passwords and user names for social media sites and email accounts. Perform regular privacy and security setting checks on your child's cell phone and social media outlets.

QUICK TIPS:

- * To help avoid sexting issues, teach your children to respond to unwanted sexts and dangerous solicitations by saying that their parents regularly monitor their online/cell phone usage.
- * Using real life sexting stories from the media can open up great dialogue between you and your child. Your child is less likely to be defensive and more open to sharing their own similar situations or concerns.

Preventing Sexting & Sextortion

- › Teach your children how to respond if they are the recipient of a sext message. Inform them of the social and legal consequences they may encounter if they save or forward the message.
- › Remind them of how easily and quickly images and videos can spread virally.
- › Discuss topics such as healthy relationships to explore signs of abusive or controlling behaviours.
- › Parents should also discuss peer pressure and how a seemingly innocent sext message can severely affect their life and/or the lives of others. While youth may be unsure of themselves, sexting is not the appropriate way to mature or explore their sexuality.

REMEMBER:

When it comes to online gaming, while chasing high scores and questing may be the name of the game, privacy considerations should not be an afterthought. Providing personal information is often a requirement to access online gaming for the purpose of finding gamers nearby. Parents must speak to youth about protecting IP addresses, home addresses, phone numbers, social insurance numbers, school names, etc.



TEXTING TERMS AND SEXTING LANGUAGE

Are you frustrated, confused, worried, annoyed or out of the loop because you feel like your child is speaking a different language? That's because they are!

Nowadays, youth are constantly bombarded with new terminology and lingo. It can be hard for parents to keep up, let alone understand what their child is saying (both verbally and online). It is important to try to decode your child's vocabulary. By familiarizing yourself with the lingo, you will be able to communicate more effectively, initiate conversation, and identify potential risks and exploitative situations.

See [Appendix 3](#) for some texting and sexting abbreviations that youth currently use.

"If you're going to monitor your kid online, you need to know the language."

- Diane Sowden,
Experiential Parent

REMEMBER:

You may come across explicit and inappropriate content when searching particular words or codes. It is important not to jump to conclusions. Instead, talk to your child about what they are saying online or via text message.

QUICK TIPS:

If you come across words or slang that you are unsure of, please visit:

www.noslang.com

www.urbandictionary.com

www.internetslang.com

www.transl8it.com

www.netlingo.com

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES & APPS

Become Familiar with Social Media

With technology constantly evolving, youth have many different ways to connect online. It can be hard to monitor this when we don't know what each site or app is capable of doing.

"Anything I don't know, I just Google it."

- Experiential
Parent

It is important that parents expand their understanding of where sexual exploitation occurs online. While social networking sites are common and easily accessible, this ignores a wide range of other websites that can be used to seek out vulnerable youth. For example, when youth are battling personal issues such as eating disorders, self-harm, drug use, or weight issues, they may join public forums to meet other youth who are experiencing similar issues. While these may seem like helpful resources, they can also be a perfect place for traffickers and exploiters to seek out and lure vulnerable youth by posing as support networks, friends, or lovers.

Educational Websites for Parents (Online Safety)

Association of Sites
Advocating Child Protection

www.asacp.org

Get Cyber Safe

www.getcybersafe.gc.ca

Web Aware

www.bewebaware.ca

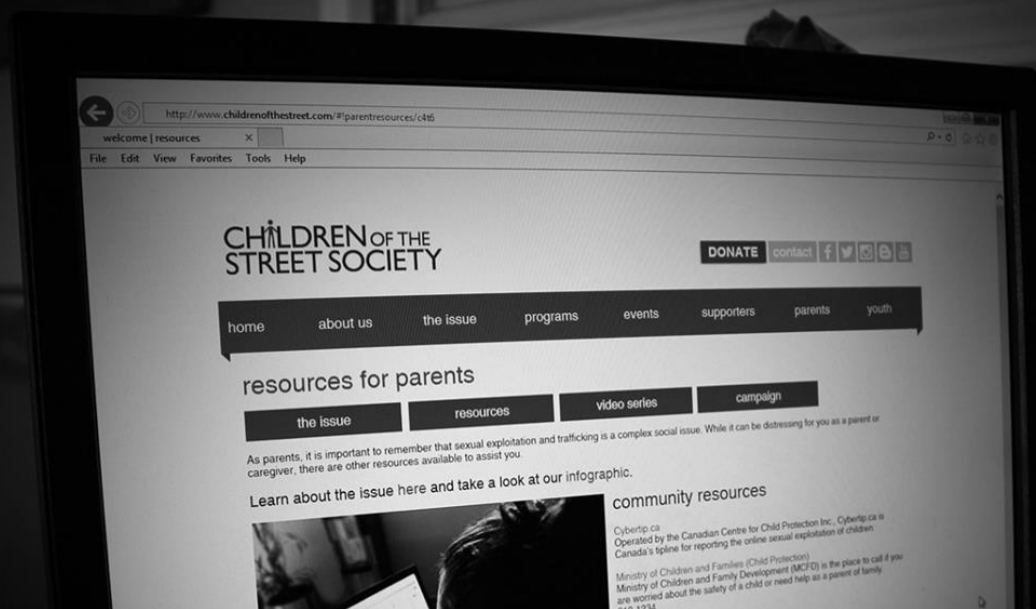
Stay Safe Online

www.staysafeonline.org

QUICK TIPS:

* Sit down with your child and have them help you create a social media account. They may be frustrated with how little you know but they will take pride in how much they know themselves. This can spark great conversation around privacy settings.

* Become friends with your child online. This will give you access to their friend lists, posted photos, and status updates.



SOCIAL MEDIA & APPS

The following is a list of some popular social media sites, websites, and downloadable apps that youth are frequently connected with via their cell phone, gaming consoles, iPads, iPods, computers, and laptops. By entering the name of the app or site into an online search engine, you can learn more about how it operates, what type of information can be shared, and how to set privacy settings to protect your child's identity and well-being.

Instagram



Facebook



Twitter



Snapchat



ASK.FM



KiK



WhatsApp



Whisper



Reddit



Flickr



Skype



Tumblr



Pinterest



Badoo



Vine



Tagged



Shots



Tinder



Youtube



Grindr



SECTION SUMMARY

Technology has greatly impacted the issue of sexual exploitation. A child may be recruited, lured, and groomed online before they even meet their exploiter face-to-face. Parents therefore need to not only monitor their child's activities outside the home but also monitor what they do inside the home while on their phones or online.

Online traffickers will promise to buy youth material gifts such as clothes, haircuts, and manicures. They will entice youth with exciting opportunities like trips around the world, lavish dinners, or hanging out with interesting people. Ultimately, they will promise anything that will gain the youth's trust, respect, and affection. Online, exploiters are able to pretend to be anyone they want to be. By the time they have met in person, the exploiter is no longer a stranger but a trusted friend. Traffickers will often try to encourage youth to explore their sexuality through the use of sexually inappropriate language, exposure to pornographic images, and normalizing sexual activity between adults and children by exchanging images or videos.

The term *sexting* refers to the sending of sexually related texts, images, or videos from one technological device to another. *Sextortion* is a form of sexual exploitation to gain sexual favours from the victim by non-physical forms of sexual coercion, typically threats to release sexual images or information. This can be done by online predators as well as by peers. When your child is the victim of sextortion it is important to create a space for them to communicate with you that is safe and free of judgment. Once that has been established, removing the picture should be the main priority. Your child may feel upset, violated, and unsafe. It is important to provide support and reassurance, as well as encouraging accountability and responsibility through discussions regarding the consequences of certain behaviours. When your child is the perpetrator of sextortion, it is important to remain calm and intervene immediately. Gathering information and looking beyond the surface is key to understanding the bigger picture. When your child is the perpetrator, it is important to outline consequences and help them to consider how this has affected the lives of those involved. Throughout this process, try to remain calm and supportive.

Online activity is public and hard to erase. It is important to have conversations with children regarding their 'digital footprints'. Just as it is a privilege to be given a family car for the first time, it is a privilege for your child to be allowed online through your supplied internet account and internet devices. It is also a responsibility and should therefore require introductory lessons before use is permitted. Certain safeguards, such as banning all devices from the bedroom, can help to keep their activity in the open.

Discussions regarding proper online etiquette, outlining what is okay and what is not, can help children to become net safety smart. Finally, in order to have effective communication with their children and to identify potential risks, parents should learn about the social media sites and apps their child is frequenting as well as become familiar with online language.

SECTION 5: WHY SEXUAL EXPLOITATION HAPPENS

In this section, you will:

- › Understand the number one reason why sexual exploitation continues to be an issue
- › Explore some common themes presented to youth within the media
- › Understand attention seeking behaviours and how they play a role in the exploitation of youth
- › Comprehend how and why some youth are manipulated into exploitative situations

As parents, we naturally care for and protect our children as best as we can. We give them attention, support, guidance, and unconditional love. We encourage them to make healthy, rational choices and to become valuable, contributing members of society.

When we hear about youth who have been sexually exploited or individuals who are exploiting others, it is common to think that he or she must have come from a troubled home, filled with abuse, absent parents and a lack of guidance or emotional stability. Sure – these can be indicators and risk factors, however the trouble lies when we stop at that and fail to break down the issue from a deeper perspective.

DID YOU KNOW?

As of 2012, there were over 14,000 children and youth who were victims of sexual offences in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2014).

DEMAND



As a society, we make assumptions and jump to conclusions before understanding the facts. We view the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking through a “them” versus “us” lens. We ignore the responsibility and ownership we have as a society to protect our youth. When we blame victims or their families, we ignore the issue and act as if it will never affect us. This type of mindset fails to understand **WHY** youth are being exploited.

The topic of sexual exploitation tends to focus solely on the victim, which in the majority of cases are females. There are still people that believe that individuals (specifically youth) choose this type of lifestyle. Some believe that if youth chose not to engage in dangerous and illegal activity, such crimes against them would not be committed.

This is where our views NEED to change.

If being exploited was about choice, then it is about the choice of the trafficker and the consumer. It is the choice of the trafficker to recruit, groom, lure, abuse, sell, and make a profit from an innocent youth. Traffickers and pimps ensure that there is an endless supply of youth to distribute for financial gain.

Similarly it is the choice of a consumer (“John” or “Jane”) to purchase and pay for sex from a minor. If there was no demand, sexual exploitation of children and youth would not exist. If people did not pay for sex, there would be no need to buy, sell, corrupt, brainwash, abuse, and break the youth of our world. Traffickers, pimps, and purchasers of sex play a large role in the exploitation of our youth.

“The reason this happened is because somebody out there did this to her.”

– Glendene Grant,
Experiential Parent

QUICK TIPS:

Do not use the term **child prostitute** or **child prostitution** as this implies that the youth chose this situation. It negates the fact that someone took advantage of them and that they are being exploited for sexual purposes. Use terms such as **sexually exploited youth, victim, survivor,** and **forced prostitution of minors** to emphasize the fact that your child is not at fault.

SOCIETAL INFLUENCES ON MALES

In western culture, young men are expected to be strong, in control and able to look after themselves. They are expected to know everything about sex and sexuality. While both males and females can become victims of sexual exploitation, males play a larger role in being the exploiter/trafficker as well as the buyers of sex. Young men are influenced in a number of ways that normalize the acts of sexual exploitation. For example:

- › Video games such as Grand Theft Auto allow players to exercise extreme physical and sexual violence against women to complete missions.
- › Events such as birthday parties and bachelor parties are expected to have sexual favours involved in the form of strippers, exotic dancing, or prostitutes.
- › Music icons have glamourized the pimp culture often showing men dressed in expensive clothing with flashy jewelry, surrounded by women and girls in lingerie.
- › Pop culture and mass media instill a belief that strength, control, and physical dominance represents true masculinity.
- › Young males are pressured to view pornography, which can influence and promote unhealthy relationships with women and girls.
- › Pornography may imply that there was consent provided by the individuals involved or that consent for engaging in sexual activity is not an issue.

Society tends to portray sexual exploitation as a female related issue. There is a hidden history of male sexual exploitation, often making male youth and their families feel as though they are immune to the issue. There is a lack of discussion about male youth being victimized by traffickers and exploiters. As parents, we need to step away from the mindset that just because our child does not fit the typical stereotype of a 'victim' does not mean they are not at risk. Remember, sexual exploitation does not discriminate based on gender.

IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE.



INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA

Television. Movies. Music. Video Games. Books. Social Media.

There is no doubt that the mass media has a profound influence on the youth of our generation. With constant, unsupervised exposure, youth are continually subjected to negative and potentially harmful messages that can be linked to sexual exploitation in a number of ways. By nature, children depend on their surroundings for social clues on acceptable behaviour. With inaccurate and unrealistic images and messages provided through advertising and popular culture, it should come as no surprise that values are misplaced, self-esteem is jeopardized, and self-worth is questioned by today's youth.

PROMOTION OF MATERIALISM

Advertisers focus on a youth's desire to fit in, be popular, and have the best clothing and accessories. Youth are overwhelmed by messages that promote the idea that certain products will help them be popular, accepted, and desired. Youth are not encouraged to value family, friends, or personal goals but rather objects that can be bought with money. The media promotes the idea that self-esteem can be bought and paid for. If popularity and self-worth are based on having certain products, clothing, or hairstyles, lacking these may cause them to become a social outcast. What child wants to be an outcast or unpopular?

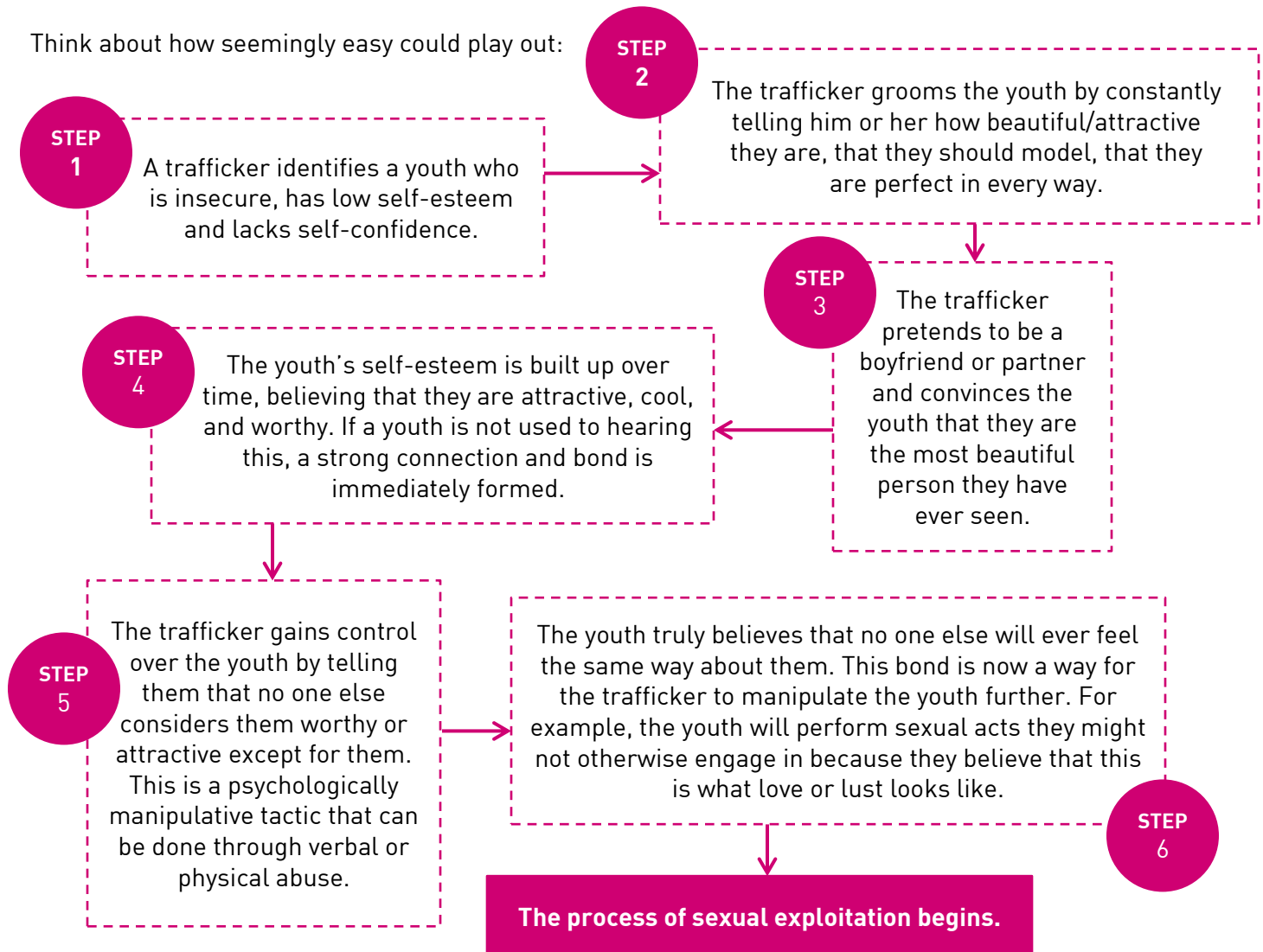
Traffickers are extremely strategic in how they prey on a youth's vulnerability. A trafficker can identify a youth who may not be able to get material things from parents or friends. In the grooming phase, traffickers buy youth gifts or take them shopping, which enhances their self-esteem. For example, at the beginning of the school year, all children want to go back-to-school shopping. If parents are unable to buy desirable items for their children, who will? Traffickers and exploiters are smart and tactful in this sense. They take youth on shopping sprees to buy the latest technology, clothing, makeup and shoes. Anything that parents say they can't buy, a trafficker will promise to buy.

*Perfect Skin. Perfect Hair. Perfect Body. Perfect Image. **Flawless.***



These are only some of the messages that youth, specifically females, are constantly bombarded with through advertisements and mass media. The media portrays the idea of what true beauty is to youth. From magazines to movies, drug stores to grocery stores, our youth are presented with the notion that you have to be perfect or else you will face ridicule from peers and society as a whole. Traffickers use this to their advantage.

Think about how seemingly easy could play out:



Once recruited, traffickers continue to use the promotion of materialism to their benefit. In the beginning stages, youth begin to see a large cash flow coming in. Youth are in awe over this as the money coming in is used to buy new clothes, handbags, shoes, and getting their hair or nails done. Youth, who otherwise would not have access to so much money, begin to see a change in lifestyle.

Similarly, youth who have future goals of attending college or university may initially view this as a clever tactic for financial planning. Youth become so involved and interested in the material and financial benefits they are receiving that they fail to recognize that they are being exploited, that these benefits will not last, and that they come at an enormous price.

“Materialism is huge in that world.”

– Experiential Voice

PROMOTION OF UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Popular culture delivers unrealistic and false messages to youth about relationships, dating values, and the value of marriage. Not only does it place an extremely high emphasis on finding true love, youth are constantly hearing that their life is not complete without a boyfriend/girlfriend/partner. Movies have females believe that their value and worth is based on being appealing to a popular boy. There is also a notion that females should be attracted to “bad boys”. Additionally, the media instills a belief that sex should happen quite regularly, that it always feels good and that even popular, respected, and cool people have dysfunctional and violent relationships. Youth are also subjected to television shows that promote and support cheating and infidelity. This creates many mixed messages which result in youth believing that:

- › Their trafficker is their ‘partner’
- › Their trafficker can do no wrong
- › They are in a ‘normal’ relationship
- › That this happens to everyone
- › That it is ‘normal’ for men to purchase sex
- › Their life is complete with this person involved

WHAT MAKES YOUTH VULNERABLE?

Attention-Seeking Behaviour

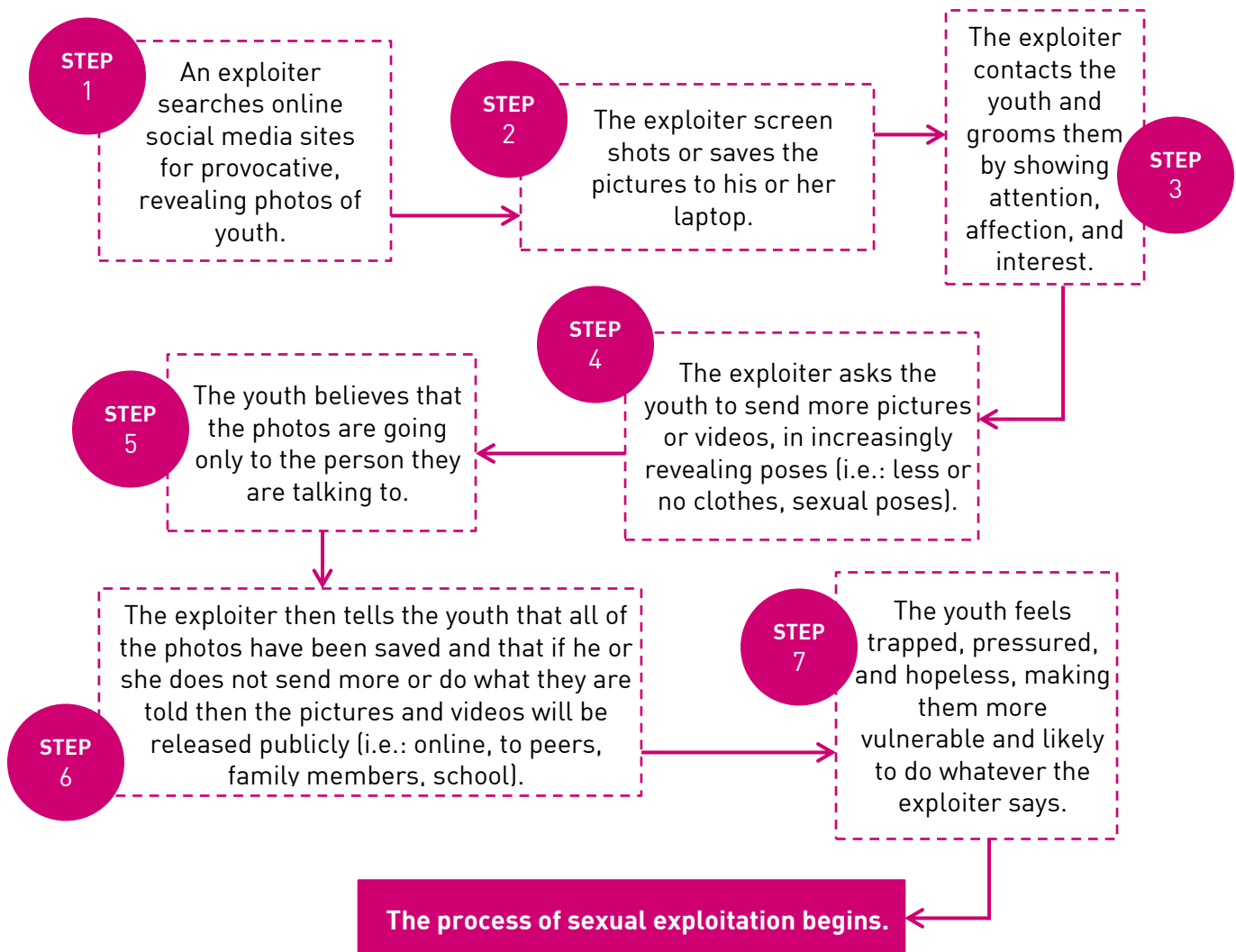
At the most basic level, children require positive attention and reinforcement, guidance, and support. When this type of attention is not received at home from parents, it is only natural for youth to seek this through their interactions with other people. Looking for positive reinforcement and acceptance should not always be viewed as a negative experience. For example, youth may seek out peers who share similar passions, hobbies, and interests. This may fulfil their core needs of acceptance, love, and support. Building a strong network of friends can provide a youth with a sufficient amount of attention that is needed to feel included and wanted in their community. When this is not easily achieved, youth begin to act out or seek attention in negative places. For example, youth may:

- › Take or send provocative photos or videos
- › Dress in scantily clad outfits
- › Seek out online relationships
- › Hang out with older crowds
- › Experiment with drugs/alcohol to brag about mature experiences

“Social media plays a huge role in the exploitation of young people and teens. It is probably one of the main sources for perpetrators to look and contact victims.”

– Experiential Voice

Youth may not recognize the potential risks and dangers of their actions. Their behaviours may lead them to be coerced into exploitative situations by peers, partners, or online predators. For example:



REMEMBER:

- * No youth consents to being exploited.
- * Do not assume that you would automatically know if there was a problem. Most youth feel ashamed or embarrassed to speak to their parents about sexual exploitation.
- * Growing up is a learning process and we all make mistakes. When your child makes a mistake or an error in judgement, do not criticize them or belittle them. Engage in a healthy discussion to promote positive growth and development.

SECTION SUMMARY

Sexual exploitation happens because there is a demand for it. When people are willing to pay for sex with minors, traffickers and exploiters will supply it. Sexually exploited youth are not to blame.

While both males and females can be either the perpetrators or victims of trafficking, males are most commonly exploiting youth and purchasing sex. Societal influences and mass media play a large role in normalizing the acts of sexual exploitation. Graphic video games that encourage extreme physical and sexual violence, events where purchasing sexual favours in the form of strippers or exotic dancers is expected, the glamourization of pimp culture, and the pressure for young men to view pornography, all serve to normalize the acts of sexual exploitation.

The media also influences our youth to become more vulnerable to the promises and enticements of traffickers. Advertisers prey on a youth's desire to fit in and the media promotes the idea that self-esteem can be bought and paid for. Youth receive unrealistic and false messages from popular culture about relationships and dating values that can cloud their judgment in regards to their trafficker.

Children require positive attention and reinforcement, guidance, and support. When these core needs are not being met, youth may seek attention in negative places, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

SECTION 6: UNIQUELY VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

In this section, you will:

- › Learn why some populations are more vulnerable to being sexually exploited
- › Recognize unique characteristics of various populations
- › Learn how parents within each population can support and best protect their children
- › Understand gender differences in the experience of sexual exploitation

Sexual Exploitation Can Happen to Anybody.

However, some youth are *more vulnerable* based on the population they identify with. Let's examine some vulnerable communities in more detail to understand why:

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

The domestic trafficking of Aboriginal women in Canada is an extremely serious issue. As a consequence of colonization, residential school trauma, and community breakdown, there has been an over representation of Aboriginal women and girls who are exploited for sexual purposes. It is important to remember that this must be viewed as exploitation and human trafficking and NOT a natural consequence of the culture that one was born into.

DID YOU KNOW?

Aboriginal women are 3 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be a victim of violent crime (Statistics Canada, 2009).

Colonization involved various types of traumatic abuse in physical, sexual, spiritual, mental and emotional forms. While Aboriginal communities continually try to heal from these historical abuses, they are still dealing with ongoing consequences. As a result, exploitation is just one form of abuse that Aboriginal communities are challenged with.

WHY ARE ABORIGINAL YOUTH MORE VULNERABLE TO BEING EXPLOITED?

There are a number of root causes that put Aboriginal youth, specifically females, at risk of being sexually exploited:

Colonization & Residential Schools

- › The destruction of social structures and the family system through widespread violence and abuse has left some communities dysfunctional. Language, culture, identity, economic status and parenting abilities have all been disrupted, which leads to increased rates of violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, and suicide.
- › Colonization damaged a culture which traditionally honoured women and gave rise to the perception (believed by some people to be true) that Aboriginal women and girls are available sexual objects.

“It’s a cycle that has been passed on from generation to generation.”

– Aboriginal Frontline Service Provider



Lack of Sexual Exploitation Education

- › With inadequate resources and a lack of formal education in rural and remote areas, Aboriginal youth sometimes do not understand healthy boundaries and relationships or the negative consequences of exchanging sexual favours for money.
- › Aboriginal youth may be fearful or reluctant to talk with their parents about sexual exploitation because of inter-generational patterns of sexual abuse as well as the taboo associated with the topic.

Violence

- › Increased family breakdowns because of violence have resulted in many Aboriginal youth being placed into foster care. This contributes to a sense of cultural loss, making Aboriginal youth more vulnerable to sexual exploitation as a means to meet basic emotional and practical needs.
- › The cycle of violence that has become normalized in communities continues into relationships and the trafficking process.

Poverty

- › With limited opportunities for employment and education on reserve and in rural and remote communities, Aboriginal youth are forced to move in search of survival opportunities.
- › With little or no money for housing, Aboriginal communities are faced with homelessness, which can lead to youth being exploited to meet their basic survival needs of housing, food, and clothing.

Isolation

- › Many Aboriginal youth living in rural areas are attracted to large cities, as they are centres for health, education, and family services. Upon arrival, the youth experience culture shock, lack of communal and familial support and lifestyle changes which traffickers and exploiters use to their advantage.
- › Chances for recruitment may increase once an Aboriginal youth relocates to an urban centre because of ease of access to certain technology and centrally located transportation hubs, community centres, and services, which can be prime areas for recruitment.

Substance Use

- › Some Aboriginal youth experiment and struggle with drug and alcohol addiction not only as a result of family history but to numb the pain, shame, and humiliation of being abused or sexually exploited.
- › Youth are invited to parties where they are provided with free drugs or alcohol which can seem attractive and enticing.

Gang Involvement

- › Aboriginal females may gravitate towards gangs in order to feel accepted and have a sense of control over their lives.
- › Drug providers and gang members maintain Aboriginal youth's continued presence by continuing to feed existing addictions.

Racism

- › Based on false representations of Aboriginal peoples in the media, Aboriginal girls are often perceived as easily available, sexually active, or promiscuous. Historically, there has also been a tendency for police to criminalize these victims.
- › The criminal justice system, police, and media continue to perpetuate stereotypes of the Aboriginal community which further marginalize Aboriginal youth.

HOW & WHERE?

Aboriginal youth from both rural and urban areas are at risk of being sexually exploited and/or trafficked. Sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth can happen both on and off reserve, however in smaller communities it can be less visible and harder to detect. In coastal communities, fishing and freight boats arrive daily. With a lack of activities to engage in, coupled with a sense of anonymity in isolated communities, fishermen and boat employees buy sex and engage in sexual activity, often with minors. Sexual exploitation can look different depending on whether it occurs inside or outside of Aboriginal communities, including reservations. In small, rural communities, everyone knows each other or may be related to many people. Because of this, youth may be sexually exploited by trusted adults or individuals within the family unit, recreating intergenerational patterns of abuse. As a direct result, children and youth may find it extremely difficult to not only recognize they are being exploited but to tell someone, for fear of shame, rejection, or community isolation. Because of the impact of colonialism and conditioning, youth lack the courage to stand up and voice their concerns.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Highway of Tears is a series of over 1200 unsolved murders and disappearances of young women along a section of Highway 16 between Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

A large number of the victims have been identified as Aboriginal community members with unique vulnerabilities, susceptible to hitchhiking from remote areas to large cities. For more information regarding the Highway of Tears, please visit: <http://www.highwayoftears.ca/>

Aboriginal youth may be subjected to sexual exploitation by members of their own community in the following ways:

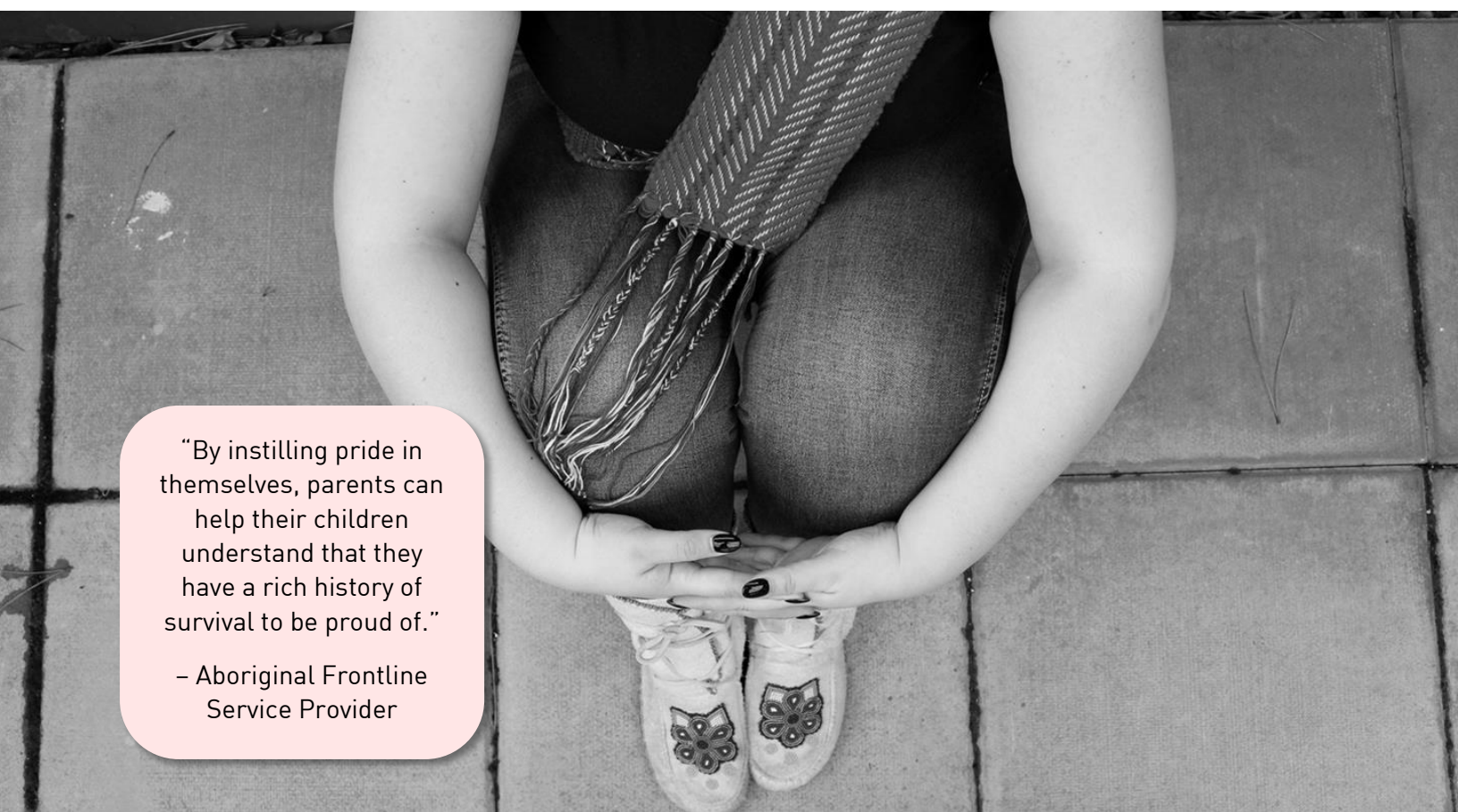
- › Partying with older relatives or community members on a regular basis
- › Hitchhiking to neighbouring communities or urban city centres
- › Receiving drugs or alcohol at parties in exchange for sexual favours
- › Hanging out with, partying with, or dating individuals who are older than themselves

Aboriginal youth may be subjected to sexual exploitation by members from outside of their own community in the following ways:

- › Being promised a better lifestyle off reserve including access to shelter, food, and clothing
- › Receiving technology that may not have been otherwise attainable
- › Going on shopping trips, to parties, movies, and sporting events in large cities
- › Receiving bus or plane tickets to go to the city to meet their new partner ('boyfriend')

Aboriginal youth may not recognize or acknowledge that they are being exploited because:

- › Peers and surrounding community members may condone the behaviour.
- › There is no monetary exchange for the sexual favours being provided.
- › The exploiter is in a position of power and high status in the community or is related to the youth.
- › The abuse has been perpetuated over the years and has become normal in the community.



"By instilling pride in themselves, parents can help their children understand that they have a rich history of survival to be proud of."

– Aboriginal Frontline
Service Provider

TIPS FOR PARENTS OF ABORIGINAL YOUTH

- 1 Try to instill a sense of responsibility in your child from a young age, to strengthen their sense of belonging and connectedness to their community. For example, introduce your child to traditional song and dance, the creation of artwork, storytelling, smudging, sweat lodges, prayer, or the making of ceremonial regalia.
- 2 Refuse to remain silent! Community silence is the worst enemy. Try to open up the dialogue with youth to speak about issues that may be affecting your community. Open communication can also help to diminish and remove shame and stigma youth may be experiencing.
- 3 Work with community members and other families to use resources effectively rather than compete for them. Become an advocate for youth when they are unable to speak out for themselves.
- 4 Be a community mentor that youth can look up to for guidance and support. The transference of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom is sacred; this can be compromised by written word, therefore it is important to lead by example through actions and spoken word.
- 5 Reflect on your own past experiences. Explore storytelling to share intergenerational stories with your child. This can help break the cycle of violence and abuse in your community and create a positive experience for children.
- 6 Encourage males to become strong leaders in the community who are protective, respectful, and uphold traditional values.
- 7 Explore healthy relationships and what they look like with your child. Encourage youth to develop healthy relationships with a range of adults in the community.
- 8 Teach your child about cultural and ceremonial practices to help them feel connected. Create opportunities for them to learn about their language and history. Help to restore your child's balance to self, family, and the community they belong to.
- 9 Support your child in developing decision-making skills so that he or she can make good choices on their own. Discuss consequences of negative choices and how this can impact their life. Be open and honest in this dialogue by creating strategies and real-life scenarios
- 10 Build a trusting relationship with your child by engaging in open communication. By being involved in their lives, you can learn a lot about where your child is coming from.

REMEMBER:

* Instead of continually focusing on the trafficking and exploitation of Aboriginal youth, parents should adopt a holistic approach that begins by acknowledging and teaching children about the history of the Canadian context and Aboriginal culture as a whole.



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, or questioning, experience three times more personal harassment on the internet, social media, or text messaging compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers (GLSEN, 2011).

WHY ARE LGBTQ+ YOUTH MORE VULNERABLE TO BEING EXPLOITED?

Low Self-Esteem

- › When an LGBTQ+ youth grows up surrounded by homophobia, they may have extremely low self-esteem. An exploiter may provide a sense of belonging to the youth, showering them with love, affection, and affirmation. Traffickers will manipulate and lure youth easily by simply accepting their sexual orientation and identity.
- › When family members are homophobic, youth may feel discomfort or disapproval which can cause low self-worth. They may go elsewhere looking for attention and engaging in risky behaviours.

Isolation

- › If isolated early on from family, religion, and culture, youth look for other relationships at a young age. They may not recognize that they are being exploited because they are focused on the intimacy of the relationship and maintaining a sense of belonging in the gay community.
- › A lack of age appropriate intimacies can result in 'sugar daddy' relationships where older individuals exploit younger ones for sexual purposes.

Beauty & Objectification

- › In today's society, beauty and youth are highly valued. For those youth who have not developed a strong sense of self, being treated as a prize and arm candy can be very attractive.
- › Rather than increase self-esteem, being "positively" objectified and admired by others can lower a youth's defences against advances and approaches from exploiters and traffickers.

History of Abuse & Neglect

- › A history of abuse or neglect may result in a lack of independent living skills. Youth may seek fantasy type relationships and fail to see that the relationship is exploitative.
- › Youth who have been neglected by family members may not realize that an exploiter is trying to systematically isolate them further. Youth may think that no one else cares about their well-being and that they have no one else to turn to in times of trouble or need.

Homophobia

- › As homophobia is widespread, there may be few opportunities for healthy friendships. This can result in youth looking for acceptance in the adult social scene, which can be highly sexualized and based in bars and night clubs.
- › Youth may feel ashamed or embarrassed to speak about their sexuality. They may receive negative messages and not understand their own emotions. This can lead to risky behaviour, unhealthy relationships, and alcohol or drug abuse.

Attitudes Towards Sex

- › There is a myth that young men are driven by sex, with little regard to the context in which it is bought or supplied.
- › The gay culture has been portrayed as highly sexualized by the media. Some youth are taught to believe that sex and intimacy are separate, which can lower the value of sexual acts. There is a belief that sex can be negotiated or is required as part of a contract.

“Sexual exploitation [in the gay community] is much more subtle and the lines are very blurred.”
– Matthew Taylor,
HUSTLE Program (Health Initiative for Men)

HOW & WHERE?

Possible exploiters of LGBTQ+ youth are different than those of non-LGBTQ+ youth and include:

- › Co-workers, employers, supervisors
- › Taxi drivers, doormen, bartenders, bouncers
- › Landlords and homeowners
- › Men and women within the community (both known and unknown to the youth)

LGBTQ+ youth may experience sexual exploitation when:

- › They are solicited online through social media apps to meet up and hook up.
- › They are given drugs, alcohol, or other material items in exchange for sexual favours.
- › They are treated as a commodity (i.e.: prize, arm candy, display feature).
- › They are expected to perform sexual favours for a place to sleep at night (i.e.: survival sex).

LGBTQ+ youth may not recognize or acknowledge that they are being exploited because:

- › They believe that this type of behaviour is common in the gay community.
- › The gay culture may separate the act of sex from intimacy, devaluing the act itself.
- › They receive love, affirmation, and a sense of belonging from the exploiter.
- › The individual who is exploiting them is their partner, boyfriend, or friend.

TIPS FOR PARENTS OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH

- 1 Engage with your child. LGBTQ+ youth require and deserve the same level of care, respect, and support as non-LGBTQ+ youth.
- 2 Do not assume that heterosexuality is the norm. Educate yourself on facts about sexual orientation and gender identity. Try and learn new language and correct terminology to effectively communicate with your child.
- 3 Become involved in the LGBTQ+ community by learning what resources are available. This will demonstrate your support to your child and let them know that even if you cannot help, there is someone who can. When your child is connected with the LGBTQ+ community from an early age, they will have greater access to information and positive role models.
- 4 Encourage and praise your child for coming to you to discuss issues and concerns. Send the message that you are there to listen and give advice whenever they need you.
- 5 Don't make it ALL about your child's sexual orientation. It is important to encourage your child in other aspects of life such as school, sports, hobbies, friends, and career.
- 6 Do not place blame on anyone, especially your child. Your child's sexuality and gender identity are never the 'fault' of anyone, including yourself. Thinking in terms of fault and blame suggest to your child that he or she has done something wrong.
- 7 Talk about safer sex. Safe sex is safe sex regardless of the gender of the people involved so educate yourself on a variety of safe-sex methods to discuss with your child.
- 8 Don't assume. Ask questions – this is better than assuming and blocking out the conversation completely. Your best resource is your child and they will be able to answer many of your questions. Asking questions can be scary, but not having the answers is scarier.
- 9 Understand that your child's sexuality does not affect all of their choices. It is just one piece of their identity.
- 10 You and your child are not alone. LGBTQ+ parents and youth are everywhere. Find parent support groups to contact parents who may be experiencing similar issues and concerns.

"Parents need to know that there are resources out there if you need them. Information is your best resource."

– Matthew Taylor,
HUSTLE Program (Health Initiative
for Men)

REMEMBER:

The process of coming out is extremely difficult. When a child decides to confide in their parents, it demonstrates immense courage and a high level of trust.

NEWCOMERS TO CANADA

When newcomers arrive in Canada they may experience differences in culture, customs, traditions, religions, language, and lifestyle. Youth may experience culture shock and struggle to fit in with their new community and school. They may not understand that they have the right to be treated with respect in Canada. It is extremely important to teach children what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour and that they must establish personal boundaries. Parents should speak to their children about acceptable forms of work and state clearly that exchanging sexual services is not legal employment.

DID YOU KNOW?

On average, Canada welcomes around 250,000 immigrants every year (Statistics Canada Immigration Overview, 2014).

WHY ARE NEWCOMER YOUTH MORE VULNERABLE TO BEING EXPLOITED?

Loss of Identity

- › When a youth moves to another country, the process of fitting in and belonging can be overwhelming. The language, education system, and/or dress code may be different. They may look and feel different from other children at school, which can cause a youth to seek support and acceptance in other relationships.
- › If they are also being bullied or discriminated against, a youth may become confused about their sense of identity and suffer decreased self-esteem. Traffickers prey upon these vulnerabilities.

Pressure from Parents

- › Newcomer youth may be pressured by parents to achieve high academic performance and choose certain careers. These youth may be afraid to reach out to their parents and talk about their problems and concerns. This can open up the window for a trafficker to begin the grooming process.
- › If parents are rigid and strict, these youth may feel as though their parents do not understand what they are going through, resulting in attention-seeking and rebellious behaviour.

Stress

- › Moving to a new country can cause tension and disruption in the family unit, specifically between parents. Youth who feel stressed and do not want to put additional strain on their parents might look for support from people outside the family unit.
- › During the relocation process, youth may feel financial stress as jobs may not be readily available for newcomers. Traffickers and exploiters may present opportunities to the youth to make money. Youth may find these opportunities harmless in the beginning as they are making money to support themselves and their family. Exchanging sexual services for money might be viewed as a good alternative to low paid, or no work.

HOW & WHERE?

Canada is considered one of the safest and most developed countries in the world, bringing in thousands of immigrants annually. Traffickers and exploiters target newcomers because they are not familiar with Canadian culture, customs, and norms. Exploiters seek out curious youth and quickly befriend them, grooming them with gifts, trips, and money to support their families.

Newcomer youth may be subjected to sexual exploitation by:

- › Landlords or home-stay parents
- › Teachers, tutors, or mentors
- › Employers, supervisors, or co-workers
- › Taxi drivers or bus drivers

“Our youth are the future.
We need to build them into
strong leaders.”

– Frontline Service Provider

These youth may experience sexual exploitation when:

- › A landlord or home-stay parent does not respect privacy or personal boundaries.
- › A teacher forces the youth to perform sexual favours in return for good marks.
- › Employers, supervisors, or co-workers make sexual advances or force the youth to perform sexual favours in return for a wage increase or job promotion.
- › A taxi driver gives youth rides in exchange for sexual favours.

Youth may not recognize or acknowledge that they are being exploited because:

- › No one has educated them or spoken to them about what sexual exploitation is.
- › An exploiter or trafficker may have them believe that this behaviour is the norm in Canada.
- › They may be afraid of deportation or criminal charges if they speak up.
- › They do not know Canadian laws and may be afraid to say ‘no’.



TIPS FOR PARENTS OF NEWCOMER YOUTH

- 1 Stay involved in your child's life. Take notice of your child's new lifestyle, interests, activities and friends.
- 2 Remember that the relocation process is just as challenging for your child as it is for you. Take the time to talk about how you are both feeling and the effects of all the changes.
- 3 Keep in touch with your child's teachers, tutors, and caregivers. It is important to stay on top of schoolwork and assignments and monitor their behaviour in school.
- 4 Try to keep up with your children as best as you can by taking ESL classes. This will help you communicate better with your youth and answer their questions.
- 5 Inspire, empower, and encourage your child. Participate in activities outside of the home and school setting. This will instill a sense of belonging to the community while promoting meaningful, healthy and positive interactions.
- 6 Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are community based programs and support services that can help you transition and settle in Canada. Drop-in groups can assist with problems and issues that you may be having with your youth. A settlement worker can also act as a mediator between youth and parents.
- 7 Continue to embrace and practice cultural traditions and customs. This will allow youth to stay connected to their heritage and roots without feeling ashamed or embarrassed.
- 8 Do not feel guilty for deciding to immigrate. The process may be overwhelming and hard at times but be confident in the decision you and your family made. You may experience hardships with your youth as a result but do not give up. With patience, perseverance, and support, you will get through these challenges as a family.
- 9 Give your child the freedom to be a kid. Allow them to explore and find themselves. Your child will make mistakes along the way, but it is important to remain open and be a supportive individual in their life for them to come to when they need help.
- 10 Connect with services that bring people of your culture, language, and heritage together. Seek out like-minded individuals who may share the same religion, language or come from where you do, to maintain a sense of belonging and involvement for yourself. Engaging in services and activities specifically geared towards newcomers can help integrate family into the community in a positive, healthy, and productive manner. You may feel a connection with these individuals as well as be able to share your experiences and work through them with a strong support network in place.

REMEMBER:

Canada is an individualistic society where people are expected to figure out life on their own. For youth who come from collectivist societies, moving to Canada can be a huge challenge. Don't take it personally when your child wants to explore and step away from traditional gender norms.

ADOPTED YOUTH AND YOUTH IN CARE

WHY ARE ADOPTED YOUTH AND YOUTH IN CARE MORE VULNERABLE TO BEING EXPLOITED?

Residential Care / Foster Homes / Placements

- › Gathering large numbers of vulnerable children and youth together in the same place acts as a magnet for exploiters and traffickers.
- › Youth in residential settings, foster homes, or individual placements may connect and build friendships with peers based on their past experiences. Traffickers may prey on and befriend different groups of friends at one time. Similarly, if one youth is recruited and groomed, the process of peer-to-peer exploitation is rapidly increased.

Loss of Belonging

- › Youth who have been moved between families, across cities, or to and from various foster homes, may not feel connected to a community and lack a sense of belonging.
- › Youth may seek out relationships to fulfil core emotional needs. When these types of relationships are exploitative, youth may feel as though they have no one to turn to or confide in.

Self-Esteem

- › Due to a history of abandonment, neglect, and abuse, these youth may have a diminished sense of self-worth. They may not have a true understanding of self or their place in the community. A trafficker may create a safe space and enhance their self-worth during the grooming process.
- › Adopted youth and youth in care may feel different from their peers or other family members. They may feel that they do not belong, causing them to seek out acceptance and belonging from a particular group of friends.

Developmental Issues

- › Because adopted youth and youth in care may have difficulty establishing attachment to caregivers, they may look for love, guidance, and support from individuals outside of the family unit.
- › Youth who have experienced life in care may have negative responses to stress. They may be afraid to talk about their life, practice self-harm coping strategies, or detach and isolate themselves from the family unit.

Decision Making Processes

- › Adopted youth and youth in care may not have developed the skills to make healthy life choices or exercise sound judgement.
- › Youth may rebel and act out against their adoptive or foster parents. They may make impulse decisions or choose to disobey as a means of being heard. Their decisions may have negative consequences, including being exploited by a trafficker.



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Approximately
2,000 children are
adopted annually
in Canada
(Adoption Council
of Canada, 2011).

HOW & WHERE?

Adoptive and foster parents must be aware of their child's unique vulnerabilities and how these are exploited by traffickers. Similarly, it is important for parents to step into the child's shoes and recognize the child's past experiences to understand what makes them more vulnerable to being recruited, lured, and groomed.

Adopted youth and youth in care may be subjected to sexual exploitation by:

- › Peers, friends, or acquaintances
- › Foster parents, siblings or other children in care who live with them
- › Employers, supervisors, or co-workers at group homes
- › Members of the community (both known and unknown to the youth)

Adopted youth and youth in care may experience sexual exploitation when:

- › They feel neglected or abandoned by their family, and long for connection and affirmation.
- › They engage in risky behaviours (i.e.: drug or alcohol use) to cope with negative emotions.
- › A foster sibling or peer in care recruits them into the situation.
- › Proper education and awareness has not been provided by adoptive parents.

Adopted youth and youth in care may not recognize that they are being exploited because:

- › They sense a connection or feeling of belonging with their exploiter/trafficker.
- › They view the trading of sexual favours for material benefits as a means of survival.
- › They are used to being moved around and transferred to new lifestyles and housing situations.
- › They have gotten used to a life of being let down, put down, or abused.

TIPS FOR PARENTS OF ADOPTED YOUTH AND YOUTH IN CARE

- 1 Set clear boundaries and daily routines. This may need to be done slowly to allow time for your child to settle in and familiarize themselves with the new setting.
- 2 If you have children of your own, reassure the adoptee that they are welcome in the family. Treat them as you would your biological children. There should be no special treatment.
- 3 Be patient when your child tests you. They may be trying to figure out how much they can trust you and how secure their place is in the family.
- 4 You cannot, will not, and do not need to replace the parents who came before you. Be confident in the decisions that you make with your child concerning their development and overall well-being.
- 5 Embrace your child's individuality. Forcing children to be like you or someone else in your family unit is offensive and suppresses the greatness that they already possess. Encourage them to be proud of who they are as individuals. Help your child to maintain their culture if it differs from yours.
- 6 When a foster child comes from a previous foster home, support their decision to keep in contact with foster siblings and parents. This encourages a support system and keeps them connected with positive role models.
- 7 The child in your care is just like any other child. They will make mistakes in their life. They need to know that you will still love them. This does not mean there cannot be consequences but rather that they will be able to learn from their mistakes and be forgiven.
- 8 Find out what your child's life was like before they came to live with you. Perhaps they have been abused, abandoned, neglected or emotionally mistreated. This may explain particular behaviours and actions. Learn to embrace their cultural heritage and identity and encourage them to research their family history or background.
- 9 Communicate effectively. Listen well and give clear messages. Children who have been previously abused or neglected may feel worthless or that their emotions are not worthy of being heard. Being an effective communicator and listener can provide your child with important skills that will help them in future relationships.
- 10 Find a peer support group for both yourself and your child. This may help your child to normalize his or her feelings and strengthen their overall sense of belonging. Therapists and counsellors who specialize in adoption-related issues may be able to provide support.

REMEMBER:

* Adolescence is a time of turmoil for most kids, especially kids who have joined their families through adoption or foster care placements. Along with figuring out who they are and who they want to be, adopted youth and youth in care have to integrate their past experiences into their new lifestyle.

SECTION SUMMARY

While sexual exploitation can happen to anybody, some youth are more vulnerable based on the population they identify with.

Aboriginal youth, girls in particular, are significantly more likely to experience sexual abuse and to be trafficked. The trauma and abuses experienced through colonization and residential schools have greatly impacted the aboriginal community. Youth in this community may be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to a lack of understanding of the issue, familial violence, poverty, isolation, substance use, gang involvement, and racism. Sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth can happen in rural and urban areas, both on and off reserve. In response to this issue, parents of Aboriginal youth can try to strengthen their child's sense of connectedness to the community through exposure to traditional practices and ceremonies as well as through storytelling. Other tips include encouraging healthy relationships for your child, supporting the development of their decision-making skills, and creating dialogue with your child about issues affecting the community.

LGBTQ+ youth may be more vulnerable to being exploited due to low self-esteem, isolation from family or community, a history of abuse or neglect, a lack of healthy relationships or opportunity to speak about their sexuality due to widespread homophobia, and the hyper-sexualisation of gay culture in the media. LGBTQ+ youth may be exploited by co-workers or employers, taxi drivers, bartenders, landlords, or men and women within the community. This can happen online or when they are expected to perform sexual favours for drugs, alcohol, or a place to sleep at night. It is important for parents of LGBTQ+ youth to create a safe space for discussion about their sexuality that is free from judgment, assumptions, and blame. There are also many resources and support networks for LGBTQ+ youth and parents that can limit isolation and encourage connectivity.

Newcomer youth are vulnerable to sexual exploitation because they may not have an understanding of what is and is not acceptable behaviour in this country. They may also not know what resources are available to them if they have any questions or concerns. They may be experiencing a loss of identity and low self-esteem, pressure from parents, or increased stress to contribute to the family income. Newcomer youth may be exploited by landlords or home-stay parents, teachers, employers, or taxi drivers. Newcomer parents need to stay connected and involved in their child's life, trying to understand their struggles and seeking out programs and services that can help in the transitional time of settling into a new life in Canada. It is important for newcomer youth to remain connected to their culture and traditions but also feel the freedom to explore and embrace the new opportunities available in Canada.

Adopted youth and youth in care may lack a sense of belonging, have low self-esteem, experience difficulty establishing attachments to their caregivers, have difficulty making healthy relationships with peers, experience a sense of abandonment and neglect, or have difficulty responding to stress or making healthy life choices due to traumatic life experiences. Exploiters prey upon these vulnerabilities. It is important for adoptive and foster parents to set clear boundaries and establish daily routines, while still providing a safe and accepting environment that embraces their child's individuality and fosters communication. It may also be helpful to encourage your child to maintain connections with former foster siblings, parents, or friends if they have moved frequently.

SECTION 7: IMPACTS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

In this section, you will:

- › Understand the deep and complex impacts that sexual exploitation has on your child
- › Understand the cycle of emotions that a parent could experience upon first indication that your child may be sexually exploited
- › Understand how sexual exploitation can affect the family unit as a whole

IMPACTS ON YOUTH

When a child or youth is sexually exploited or is the victim of a sexting crime, the effects can be deep and complex, producing both short and long term impacts on their overall development. The effects on your child will vary based on the severity of the crime, their personality, and, most importantly, on their available support networks.

EMOTIONAL IMPACTS

- › Shame
- › Anger
- › Hurt
- › Humiliation
- › Resentment
- › Embarrassment
- › Trauma
- › Guilt
- › Suicidal thoughts

SOCIAL IMPACTS

- › Harassment
- › Bullying
- › Threats
- › Suspension
- › Unemployment
- › Extortion
- › Expulsion
- › Isolation
- › Denial of scholarships

CRIMINAL IMPACTS

Youth may experience criminal consequences when they are involved in sexual exploitation, as either a victim or a perpetrator. For example, your child may unknowingly distribute child pornography, engage in behaviour that involves coercion and extortion, or take part in the abuse of victims. These behaviours can result in criminal charges and jail time. Youth may not realize that these charges can stay on their record for many years, possibly putting them on a sex offender registry.

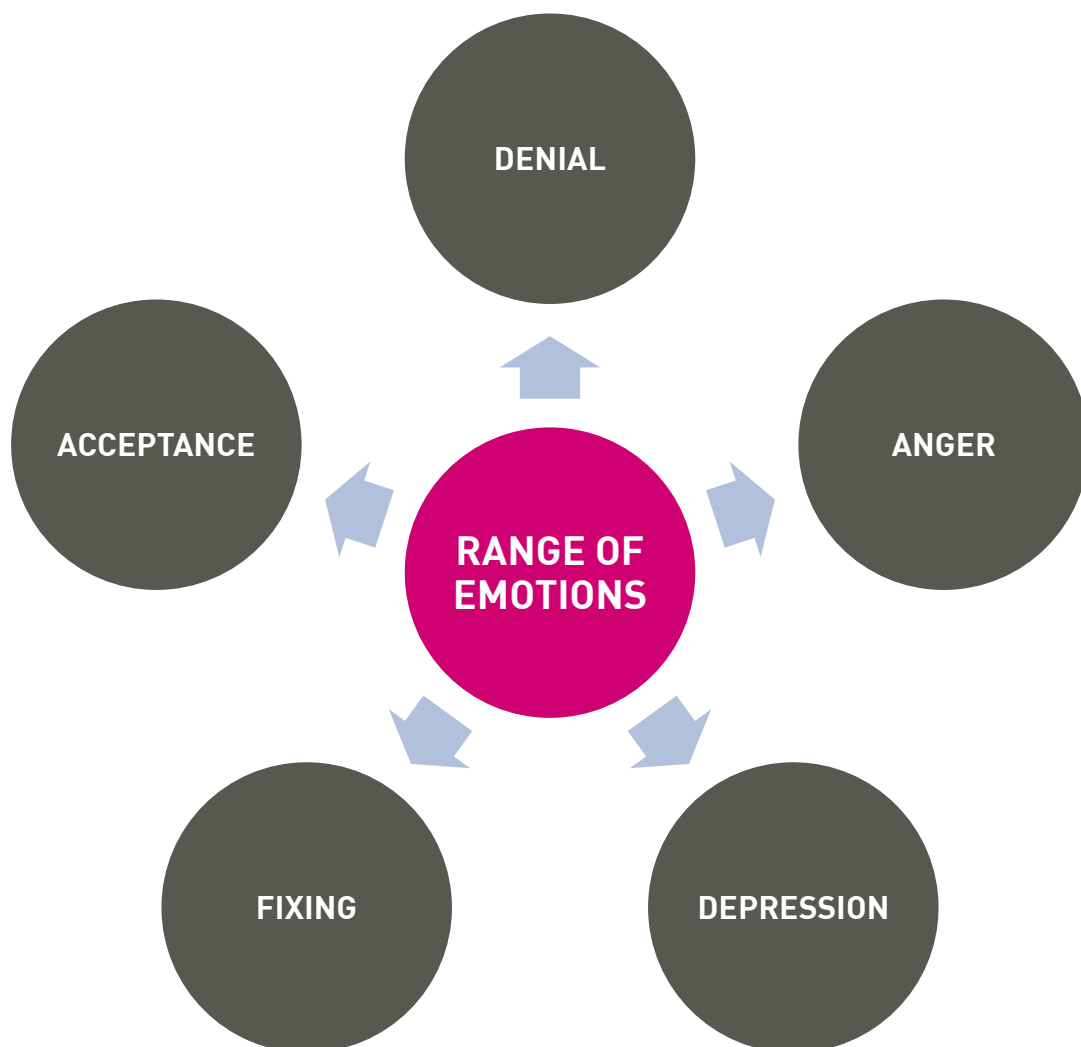
QUICK TIPS:

* If your child is self-harming or showing signs of suicidal tendencies, seek professional help immediately.

* Try to speak to your child about the potential negative consequences for the future. Although your child might only be in elementary school, it is important to speak to them about implications for future jobs or education.

IMPACTS ON PARENTS

As a parent, when it comes to your attention that your child may be exploited, you will likely experience a wide range of emotions. These emotions may follow a cycle of grief. This grieving process does not mean that you have completely lost your child, but their loss of innocence or childhood, as well as your loss of the family unit, beliefs, security, expectations, and trust in society as a whole. You may only experience some of these emotions or you may experience them in a different order. You will probably also find that you and your partner react differently to the same situation. However, understanding these emotions is important in processing the situation and finding the appropriate support and help.



Range of Emotions

Denial

Denial indicates feelings of shock, confusion, and disbelief. Often thoughts such as, “This can’t be happening, I would have known” or, “This happens to other people’s children, not mine” may be running through your mind. To accept this is actually happening would push you further into a feeling of helplessness and so denial appears to be the easier option. Parents often fail to understand that sexual exploitation happens to your child. It is not something they chose.

Anger

As you start to accept the reality of the situation, you look for information and reach out to available services. The complexity of the issue soon becomes apparent. You may find there is a lack of information and a lack of support from those you thought would be able to help, resulting in frustration. You may be angry at the system, with yourself, or with your child. As anger grows, parents can start to feel isolated from family, friends, and service providers. Misunderstandings and miscommunications occur often. It is important to remember that your anger is a reflection of deep care and concern.

Depression

With depression comes feelings of shame, guilt, and discouragement. As you try to pursue every solution or resource available, you might feel that there is no one to help. You might also experience extra pressures from work or your child’s school as you try to balance your home life. Extra stresses and pressure can result in lack of sleep and unhealthy eating habits, which make the negative feelings you might be having worse. You might also experience a strain or breakdown in your closest relationships. You and your spouse or partner may disagree on solutions and courses of action. As you try to understand the situation you may even start to blame each other for what has happened. Further, family members and the community often fail to understand the complexity of the issue and try to provide simple solutions. This may leave you feeling hopeless, frustrated, and alone.

Fixing

When you enter this stage, you may experience a “second wind”. Rather than being overwhelmed by the service gaps or system deficiencies, you decide that you will do something about it. While it may give you purpose and make you feel like you’re doing something productive, it is not always good or healthy. Parents may try to become investigators, spying on their child and researching their every activity. There is risk in this as it could put your child at greater risk or may interfere with an ongoing investigation. Everyone has their own expertise and even if you are not aware of what is going on behind the scenes, it is important to use the services available and allow them to do their work. Know your role as a parent: you are not a police officer or counselor. This recognition can also help to relieve an unnecessary sense of responsibility.

Acceptance

Acceptance does not mean that you believe the situation is okay, nor does it mean you have accepted that your child is being exploited. Rather, it reflects a coming to terms with reality. You have accepted that you cannot control everything and have identified your role and how you can help without interfering with the work of others. You may also begin to accept that your situation is different from that of other people because your experiences and circumstances are unique. No one else need agree with what you are doing, as long as you and your child agree. You recognize that this is not who your child is, but rather something that has happened to them. Once you have accepted the situation, you can start to create a plan of care for your family and decide what you are capable of doing, going forward.

IMPACTS ON OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

Sexual exploitation also affects the family unit as a whole. Do not forget about or dismiss other members of the family and their emotions. Parents, siblings, and extended family members may feel embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, hurt or scared themselves.

“If sexual exploitation is happening in the household, it is affecting the whole family.”

– Experiential Parent

Emotional & Psychological Trauma

Emotional and psychological trauma can result when family members are subjected to the harsh realities of a family member being sexually exploited. For example, when siblings hear stories of what victims have been made to do by their traffickers, they may experience stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, nightmares, and more. They may also live in fear of what could happen to them personally. As a result, siblings and parents may have a decreased ability to concentrate and may be constantly distracted by the immediate problem at hand. Family members may experience depression, panic attacks, and feelings of hopelessness. It is important to note that family members may not display signs and symptoms of emotional trauma right away but rather have delayed reactions.

Sibling Rivalry

With a large majority of the focus placed on the youth who has been exploited, other siblings may feel disconnected or ignored. They may feel as though their feelings and needs have been neglected. As a result, siblings may feel resentful towards the affected youth. They may start to ignore them or act negatively towards them through verbal or physical abuse. Sibling rivalry may occur as youth begin to battle for their parents attention. Siblings may also begin to act out or display attention seeking behaviours to gain the attention of the parents.

Family Breakdown

Sometimes the experience of sexual exploitation can be extremely overwhelming and simply unbearable. Arguments about parenting styles may arise between parents. Trust may diminish and communication between family members may break down as well. The stress that occurs when a child is sexually exploited can add to existing family pressures and concerns, ultimately leading to the overall breakdown of the family unit. If this is the case, it is important for children to understand that divorces and separations are not their fault and they should not feel responsible.



SECTION SUMMARY

Sexual exploitation can have a big impact on your child as well as on you and the rest of your family. The effects on your child can be deep and complex and will vary based on the context, their personality, and the available support networks. They may experience emotional impacts such as shame, hurt, or suicidal thoughts; social impacts such as bullying, extortion, or isolation; or even criminal consequences.

As a parent, you will likely experience a wide range of emotions that may follow a cycle of grief. It is important to remember that the cycle of emotions you go through will look different from another's, maybe even your partner. You may experience denial, feelings of anger, depression, and a need to fix everything yourself. Eventually, you may move towards accepting the reality of the situation and being able to create a plan of care for your family.

Sexual exploitation also affects the family unit as a whole. Family members may experience emotional and psychological trauma by being subjected to the harsh realities of a family member being sexually exploited. Sibling rivalry could also arise if siblings feel resentful towards the affected youth for monopolising attention. High emotions, stress, extra pressures, and diminished communication within the family may even lead to a breakdown of the family unit.

SECTION 8: LEAVING THE EXPLOITATIVE SITUATION

In this section, you will:

- › Learn how leaving the exploitative situation is not as easy as you think
- › Develop compassion and empathy for the aftermath of this terrible crime against humanity

FACTORS AND BARRIERS FOR LEAVING

“My parents thought they knew but they didn’t understand. They asked why I didn’t leave him but that’s easier said than done.”

– Experiential Voice

It is normal for parents to feel frustrated, angry, sad, guilty, and ashamed when their child is sexually exploited. Parents may ask themselves the following questions:

What am I doing wrong?
Why won’t my child just leave?
What is wrong with my child?

What can I do to make my child leave the relationship?

Simply put, it is not that easy. As youth become entrenched, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to leave. Many youth do not recognize that they are being exploited. Others feel relief when leaving but miss the benefits and perks. Parents must recognize and understand that there are many barriers to leaving and in most cases, it will not happen overnight. It is also important to remember that while your child may remain in the relationship or situation, they are not choosing to be exploited. Rather, this is further indication of their victimization.

“What I feared most was him and what he was capable of doing.”

– Experiential Voice

Some common barriers that prevent youth from leaving an exploitative situation:

- › Being under the control of a pimp or trafficker who threatens their well-being if they leave
- › Drug and alcohol addiction that is being supported by the exploitative situation
- › Attachment to the freedom, independence, acceptance, and material/financial benefits of the situation
- › Feelings of shame and worthlessness
- › Poor self-esteem associated with the belief that they have no positive skills to contribute to the outside world
- › Isolation from family, friends, peers, role models, and support groups in the community
- › Fear of change and adjustment to a ‘normal’ lifestyle
- › Loss of excitement and freedom from curfews or parental guidelines
- › Fear of judgment from parents, friends, social workers, counsellors, police, or judges

“I needed a reason to get my shit together.” – Experiential Voice

Various factors may cause a youth to leave the exploitative situation.

Negative factors:

- › Experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event
- › Rape
- › Assault
- › Drug overdose
- › Pregnancy
- › Illness (e.g. a sexually transmitted infection)

“Abusers put false ideas in my head of what would happen to me if I left.”
– Experiential Voice

Positive factors:

- › Being disillusioned by the lifestyle and culture of the exploitative situation
- › The ability to leave the situation due to not being fully entrenched
- › Becoming involved in a relationship with an individual who does not want the youth to be in the exploitative situation
- › Finding a supportive adult or role model who is committed to helping them find legitimate work
- › Becoming involved in a training program or school in order to gain employable skills
- › Finding employment or volunteer work
- › Obtaining housing or social assistance
- › Being involved in pro-social activities such as extra-curricular sports or clubs

“Currently, there is no one manner of exiting.”

– Constable Jennifer Gibbs,
Mobile Youth Services Team

REMEMBER:

Leaving the exploitative situation does not happen overnight and some youth go back and forth for many years. Rather than reacting as if something is wrong with your child, help your child understand that you love them but do not support the situation they are in. Let them know that you are not willing to give up on them and will support their leaving whenever they are ready to do so.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP

Whether your child is being recruited and groomed, is already entrenched, or is in the exiting process, there are a number of things you can do as a parent to help accommodate your child's needs and provide a supportive and empowering environment.

REMEMBER:

Children are treated as adults when they are sexually exploited. The dynamic of relationships in the home are going to change and treating them according to their chronological age may not be appropriate or promote a healthy recovery.

Express Concerns

If you suspect that something seems out of place or that your child is being sexually exploited, trust your instincts. Take time to develop and open the lines of communication between you and your child. By speaking with your child on a one-on-one basis, you can express your concerns in a clear and concise manner. Be factual in your conversation and let your child know that you have valid reasons for concern. Your child will recognize your genuineness and become more open to speaking with you. Be open to hearing what your child has to say and refrain from placing the blame directly on them. Your child should understand that you are open to discussion and that they can come to you at any time.

"I told my daughter I didn't know how to do this and I wanted to support her the best way I could."

– Experiential Parent

Put Yourself in their Shoes

Keep in mind that discussing personal matters with parents during adolescence can be a scary experience. To avoid being criticized and judged, youth tend to keep things to themselves or reach out to their friends for support. Don't take it personally when your child resists reaching out to you for help. Rather, show empathy and try to understand that they may feel ashamed or embarrassed to discuss personal or taboo topics with you. They may also be afraid for their family's safety. By putting yourself in your child's shoes, you may begin to understand the issue from a different viewpoint.

For example, you may begin to understand why your child is engaging in attention-seeking behaviour, why they are hanging out with certain groups of people, or why they are attracted to certain lifestyles. If your child is entrenched in the exploitative situation, remember that the experiences they endure can be extremely traumatic and hard to verbalize. When meeting up with your child for coffee or a meal, try not to centre the conversation around their exploitative experience. Rather, have conversations about good memories, family, pets, or positive experiences. When your child is ready to speak to you and discuss their experiences, they will. In the meantime, remember that this is something that has happened *to* them and does not define who they are. Engage in conversation about other aspects of their life, including positive people and family members that miss them.

"It is never the youth's fault. There is always an underlying reason as to why it's happening in the first place."
– Diane Sowden, Executive Director of Children of the Street Society

Never Give Up

There is a difference between supporting and enabling your child. Supporting your child does not necessarily mean supporting the situation. It means identifying your child's unique needs and doing whatever you can to support their transition out. It is imperative that parents provide unconditional support to build trust with their children. As hard as this time may be for the whole family, parents must not give up on their child. Youth may not accept your support at the time, however they will always remember the second you give up on them. Be persistent in helping your child regain optimism in their life. If you have to close the door, don't lock it.

"It's your job to
maintain connection."

– Experiential Parent

Investigate

If your child is displaying nonverbal cues or significant changes in behaviour and temperament, be proactive and do some investigating to see if they are being recruited, groomed, or exploited. As a parent, you have the right to investigate your child's online activity as well as question their actions, behaviours, and whereabouts. Ask questions, find out where your children are hanging out and with whom. Follow up with them regularly and verify their answers.

If you discover that your child is being exploited or is the victim of a sexting crime, work with them to investigate the details. By gathering important details, your child will understand that you are on their side and that you will do whatever is in your power to help. Investigating and looking beneath the surface can open up conversation between you and your child. It will help them understand that you are working with them to protect their best interests and prevent potentially exploitative situations. By keeping a record of important information such as names, phone numbers, and locations, you can pass this along to the police if need be. If your child is being exploited, remember your role as a parent and not a police officer. To decrease further harm and damage, leave detailed investigations to police.

"You HAVE to hold on. Don't ever let go. She'll come back again."

– Experiential Parent

Set Boundaries

Compromising on house rules in the hopes of maintaining a relationship with your child will not help the overall situation. By staying consistent with boundaries, including internet usage, you will continue to provide your child with a structured and non-judgmental environment that creates stability and protection. Refrain from trying to become friends with your child or their friends. It is important to respect your child's boundaries as well as their privacy. While youth should feel comfortable approaching you and speaking with you, you should continue to implement rules and structure. Youth need to know that you are there to protect them and that they can trust you with issues that may be bothering them without criticism, judgment, or overreaction. When your child is being exploited, actively connect with them and invite them home for family meals and get-togethers. However, remember to set boundaries about when they can come home and with whom to ensure safety for the entire family.

Seek Help & Support

You are not alone. Let your child know that you will find the support services that they need. This may include counselling, healthcare services, police and legal services, drug and alcohol treatment, or educational support from their school. Your child may also be dealing with undiagnosed mental health issues. Trust your instincts if you think that there may be something wrong and do your best to help your child receive an independent, confidential assessment by a trained professional.

It is important that you also seek support for yourself and other family members. Family counselling can be a great technique to let everyone share their emotions and feelings about the crisis that the family is experiencing. Seek out and connect with support networks of parents who may be experiencing similar situations. This may help you voice concerns in a non-judgmental forum with like-minded parents in your community.

“Exiting and rehabilitation supports must be trauma informed, compassionate, prepared, and patient. The road to recovery is long, but it is possible.”

– Larissa Maxwell, Manager of Anti-Human Trafficking Programs
The Salvation Army Deborah’s Gate

Create A Plan of Care

It is only natural that conflict and stress occurs in the family unit. When parents come together to create a safety plan or a plan of care, concrete and healthy arrangements can be made for the child as well as other family members. A solid plan of care can ensure a partnership between parents, allowing them to act in the best interests of the child. It can help ensure that both parents are on the same page when it comes to dealing effectively with their child. Creating safety plans can help to open up the dialogue between parents to express concerns, doubts, fears, and emotions. It can help facilitate conflict resolution and compromises that can be beneficial to the whole family. Remember: do not blame either parent for the situation.

For more information on Family Safety & Care Planning, please see [Appendix 4](#).

REMEMBER:

Parents cannot force their child to leave the situation, however, healthy, positive connections with parents and other caring adults can help with leaving.

THE AFTERMATH: NOW WHAT?

Life will look a lot different after your child successfully leaves. Youth who have been sexually exploited will have a hard time readjusting to their new lifestyle. It can be a difficult time of adjustment for parents and the rest of the family as well.

QUICK TIPS:

- *Avoid blaming – the situation is NOT your child’s fault, nor is it the result of bad parenting. This is something that happened TO your child and does not define who they are.
- *Help your child develop good self-esteem by praising accomplishments and positively reinforcing good behaviour.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

It may take a long time for your child to adjust and adapt. Keep in mind that a youth is very vulnerable right after leaving the exploitative situation and in danger of re-entering. Consider the following changes that your child will face:

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Sleeping & Eating Patterns:

Sexually exploited youth often work at night and sleep during the day.

Value of Money:

Sexually exploited youth may not understand the value in money and equate certain monetary values with sexual favours.

Pay Patterns:

Sexually exploited youth are often paid immediately after the sexual favour is purchased therefore they may have a hard time adapting to being paid weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly.

Drug & Alcohol Use:

Substance use often increases once a youth is exploited because he or she is using it to cope with loneliness and stress.

Worldview:

Sexually exploited youth often have a certain survival-type mentality to cope and will view situations and scenarios as a means to survive.

Location:

Sexually exploited youth may need to be relocated to prevent re-entry or destructive behaviour.

QUICK TIP:

When your child is in the process of leaving, remember to continue to monitor both cell phone and online activity, as exploiters often continue to reach out to youth who have exited in an effort to re-engage them in exploitative behaviour.

“I don’t watch violent TV shows because I still get flashbacks.”

– Experiential Voice

Parents can also seek support for their child to help them work through some of the emotional issues and trauma that they encountered. It is important to remember that youth are fragile and need guidance and support to deal with their emotions and feelings. More specifically, when a child has been sexually exploited, they may not fully understand the magnitude of the emotional repercussions. To prevent relapses and negative consequences in their future, parents must understand the following issues:

Trauma Bonding

- This is when victims form an attachment to their exploiter or trafficker. Through careful recruitment and grooming, traffickers are able to create a unique relationship and bond with their victims. As a result, victims believe that they are in love and that their trafficker is truly their partner. Youth may have a hard time letting go of this bond. They may feel confused or angry at why the person they loved committed such acts against them.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- This disorder may develop after your child has been exposed to one or more traumatic experiences while they were exploited. Symptoms may include recurring flashbacks, avoiding personal interactions, sleep disturbances, anger, aggression and self-mutilation.

Stress Disorders

- Youth who have been sexually exploited may experience a variety of stress disorders. Symptoms vary and the severity of the disorder may increase if not treated. Your child may suffer from panic attacks, repetitive triggering thoughts, or fear of specific situations. Their daily functioning may be impaired as well. Your child may need counselling or therapy or even prescribed medication. It is important to acknowledge the wide range of stress disorders and actively seek the appropriate treatment.

Anxiety

- Anxiety is a state of inner turmoil where an individual fears and worries over events in the future. The threat may be real or perceived. Individuals with high levels of anxiety may withdraw, have problems concentrating, or experience restlessness and sleeplessness. They may have constant anxious thoughts and be afraid of embarrassment or public humiliation.

QUICK TIP:

If your child has been a victim of sexual exploitation, perhaps you can ask them about their readiness and willingness to connect with other youth in their community to help them leave or seek appropriate support services. This should only be done when your child has successfully left the situation themselves and are stable enough mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

SECTION SUMMARY

Leaving a sexually exploitative situation can be very difficult for a youth. Threats from a pimp, being under their control, drug and alcohol addiction, feelings of shame and worthlessness, poor self-esteem, as well as isolation from family and community can all serve as barriers for youth to leave. Youth may leave after experiencing a traumatic event, or as a result of factors such as finding a supportive role model, meaningful employment, obtaining housing or social assistance, or becoming involved in a relationship with an individual who does not want the youth to be in the exploitative situation.

To help, it is important to have honest and open discussions with your child where you can clearly communicate your concerns without placing judgment. By putting yourself in their shoes, you may begin to understand the issue and their perspective. It is also important to support your child by never giving up on them and trying to identify their unique needs in the situation. If you suspect your child may be in an exploitative situation, it is okay to try to investigate in order to protect your child. Creating boundaries and maintaining structure within the house is also important for protecting your child and the entire family. It is important to know that you are not alone: seek help and support from available services and create a plan of care strategy for your family that will help you to plan your next steps.

Youth who have been sexually exploited will have a hard time readjusting and adapting to their new situation. They may face a change in sleeping and eating patterns, different pay patterns at work, the effects of increased drug and alcohol use, a different worldview, as well as a change in location and lifestyle. There are also many emotional repercussions that youth may experience. Trauma bonding occurs when victims form an attachment to their exploiter or trafficker. Breaking this bond may be very difficult for the youth. They may also experience post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, or a variety of stress disorders as a result of their exploitative situation.

SECTION 9: PREVENTION TOOLS FOR PARENTS

In this section, you will:

- › Learn how to talk to your child about sex and sexual exploitation
- › Develop and enhance communication skills to better connect with your child
- › Learn how to build your child's self-esteem while promoting healthy relationship boundaries
- › Discover new and unique pathways for preventing your child from being exploited

SEX AND EXPLOITATION EDUCATION

When we speak to our children about sex and sexuality, we generally focus on the following topics:

- › Sexually Transmitted Infections
- › Abstinence
- › Physical Development
- › Masturbation
- › Condom Use
- › Pregnancy
- › Puberty
- › Pleasurable Feelings

"Parents can open up dialogue by being vulnerable themselves first. We cannot promote personal development in someone else's life if we are not doing it in our own lives."

– Larissa Maxwell, Manager of Anti-Human Trafficking Programs
The Salvation Army
Deborah's Gate

While these are important areas to discuss, we often forget about an extremely important topic: sexual exploitation.

The issue of sexual exploitation should be at the forefront of conversations with children and youth when it comes to exploring their bodies, relationships, and engaging in sexual activity. Starting early and doing a little bit at a time can help keep children from feeling overwhelmed. If we don't speak to our children about positive sexual health and the issues that can arise, then who will? Who will convey important messages to youth about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour?

Providing young people with information that is age-appropriate can make it easier for them to understand that sex is a natural part of human development. It also makes it easier to speak with them about the more complicated aspects of sexual intimacy as they grow older. When communicating, remember to speak *with* your child rather than *at* your child. This will allow them to feel like an equal rather than a less-than member of the family.

"Don't talk down to kids, talk to them at their level."
– Doug Spencer, Transit Police

QUICK TIP:

If you are struggling to connect with your child through conversation, try printing resources from the computer that can be used as teaching tools. Leaving these resources in your child's room will let them know that you are there to talk when they are ready. Your child can begin to learn about sexual exploitation in its various forms and approach you when they feel ready. This allows youth to feel a sense of control over their lives and not feel bombarded or nagged at.

REMEMBER:

The objective is not to scare your child, but rather to educate them and provide them with the tools to recognize warning signs of unhealthy relationships.

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

As children begin to walk and talk, they also begin to learn about their bodies. As a parent, you can open the door to sexual education by teaching children the proper names for body parts. If and when a child points to a body part, tell them what the proper name for it is and explain which body parts are private and not to be shown to others. Do not laugh or get embarrassed. Parents should not make speaking about private parts a taboo topic but rather offer direct, age-appropriate responses.

Many toddlers will express their natural sexual curiosity through self-stimulation. Parents can teach children that masturbation is a normal and healthy activity, however, it must be done in private. Conversations surrounding privacy can include speaking about who is allowed to touch them including when, why, and how. This can teach your child that no one is allowed to touch their private parts without their direct permission. Similarly, it can open up conversation about trusting adults in their life. When first beginning the conversation with children, it helps to think ahead of time about what you want to say. For example, if parents convey the message that boys and girls are the same except for some body parts and that they can do and experience the same things, they will begin to understand from a young age that they are not immune to certain issues our society faces based on their gender. Beginning conversations with children from an early age can promote and enhance effective communication in the future.

“Teaching kids that it is okay to ask questions about normal bodily functions is healthy and not something dirty.”

– Frontline Service Provider

PRETEENS

As youth grow and develop, conversations with them can become increasingly more descriptive. Parents can have open and direct communication with youth about sex, including how babies are made, safe sex practices, and sexually transmitted infections. Your child will have questions during puberty regarding changes in their bodies and pleasurable feelings they may be experiencing. It is important to speak truthfully and explore these topics as they are a natural part of development. However, it is also important to speak with youth about the potential dangers of sexual behaviour, including sexual exploitation, rape, sexual abuse, and child pornography. Talking about the legal age of sexual consent can also allow them to recognize unhealthy relationships both for themselves and amongst their peers. These types of conversations are not meant to scare youth but rather provide them with the tools to be able to identify unhealthy and unsafe situations as well as establish healthy personal boundaries. With the increase of online activity and technological advancements, you can also begin to speak to your children about how to identify exploitative online relationships. Engaging in dialogue with your child about sexual exploitation can help them respond to unsafe situations and get help from trusted adults.

REMEMBER: Avoid simple answers for complex issues, engage in dialogue and stick to the facts and the truth.

TEENAGERS



By the time your child reaches their teenage years, they will have likely learned about sex and sexuality from a variety of sources. Perhaps they are sexually active themselves. It is in this period of time that most youth will adopt particular attitudes about sex and sexuality, being highly influenced by what they see in the media, interactions with peers, and conversations at home. Parents need to help their youth adopt healthy attitudes by discussing what type of beliefs and behaviours contribute to sexual violence, abuse, and exploitation. Help your teenager separate fantasy from reality. For example, what they see in films or pornography may not be an accurate portrayal of reality. Similarly, parents can help children recognize sexually exploitative advertisements or music. Challenging popular artists and their lyrics can help youth become more aware of what sexual exploitation looks like and start conversations about what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.

Parents can also speak to teens about how to help a friend who discloses they have been a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse. By providing your child with real-life accounts of criminal charges, children can recognize that there are criminal consequences for illegal behaviour. Help teens acknowledge sensual feelings by differentiating between feelings of love and lust. Parents can help children develop positive feelings of intimacy without sexual intercourse by talking about boundaries and healthy relationships. Additionally, conversations about material benefits from a relationship can provide youth with a proper understanding of luring and grooming techniques, both online and offline.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is one of the most important aspects of your child's development. It is the passport to a lifetime of positive mental health and social happiness. Positive self-esteem is the foundation of your child's well-being and can allow them to feel good about themselves, have the courage to try new things, and to take pride in themselves. It can protect your child from pimps, traffickers, and recruiters as they often prey upon weak, vulnerable youth with low self-esteem. As children grow older, parents need to recognize that it is not just about achievements and subsequent praise, but rather a more well-rounded approach that includes skills and coping strategies for challenges that may lie ahead.

How can parents build their child's self-esteem and empower them to become confident, secure youth?

Provide a Safe Environment

Provide your child with a safe environment for them to learn, grow, and tackle challenges and risks. This not only refers to physical safety but also an environment that supports and encourages your child to try new things. Parents need to stand back and let children explore options and make their own choices. By showing your child that you have faith in them, you can give them more freedom and allow them to feel trusted to make healthy choices. By encouraging your child to step outside of their comfort zone, you are building their self-confidence and independence in a healthy manner, urging them to be motivated and challenged. This positive freedom can help your child feel good about themselves and their accomplishments. It can also let them know that failure and challenges may arise and that they can turn to you for support and guidance.

Exposure to Failure

Parents can help young children when they experience disappointment and failure. This can provide your child with the resilience to pick themselves up and try again without seeking support from outside sources. When our children understand that failures and setbacks are a normal part of life and can be worked through with proper support and communication, they will be less likely to participate in attention-seeking behaviours such as drug and alcohol use, promiscuity, and criminal acts to cope with negative emotions. Parents should help children build positive coping mechanisms that enable them to overcome challenges. Empowering youth and building confidence comes from trying, failing, and trying again. Constant or inaccurate praise and affirmation can confuse children and erode self-esteem. It can make them think that they are perfect or should be perfect. This can set children up for future failure when they discover that they are not perfect.

"It is of utmost importance for parents to teach their children by example. Showing respect for everyone and treating them as equals will show young people the value of every individual. Fathers, especially, should continually mentor their sons in this regard with both words and actions."

– Stan Burditt, Men Against Sex Trafficking

Provide Responsibility

Providing your child with responsibility is something that can be started at any age. Age appropriate chores around the household can become part of their routine and will provide a sense of accomplishment when completed. Avoid providing too much responsibility as this can be overwhelming for children. Starting off with minor chores and working towards more challenging responsibilities can provide your child with the knowledge that they are able to function independently. This can empower youth by increasing self-worth and dignity and not have them become reliant on others to achieve success.

Be a Role Model

Our children learn so much more from the way parents live their lives rather than what they teach. Parents should model the person they wish their child to be. It is important to be a positive role model for children, displaying positive behaviours and actions. One way that parents can empower youth is by being proud of their bodies despite its imperfections, for example by valuing wrinkles as a sign of experience. Focusing on positive and proactive ways to handle certain situations can let your child know that material items will not fix imperfections or insecurities. Teaching your child that true beauty comes from the inside can instill healthy values and morals and act as a strong deterrent to grooming and gifting from traffickers and exploiters.

Value Opinions

It is no surprise that teenagers have a lot of opinions. It is important to include teens in everyday family decisions and implement some of their suggestions. When they are invited into the adult world and treated as grownups, their self-esteem can be enhanced, as they feel their thoughts and opinions are genuinely valued. Youth who feel respected are better able to recognize warning signs of mistreatment or disrespect. When you listen to your child, they will feel their voice matters. As a result, they will be more secure in standing up for their rights and not allowing others to mentally or emotionally abuse them. Also, your child will feel more comfortable coming to you with their issues and concerns.

Stop Comparing

Low self-esteem often comes from feeling inferior. It is important for parents to avoid comparing their children with each other or with anyone else. By instilling a sense of autonomy in your child, they can feel valued as an individual. Your child can focus on themselves and be their own person without having to worry about what someone else is doing. Your child will then understand that it is important to go down their own path at their own pace and resist peer pressure.

BUILDING CHARACTER

While preventing our children from being abused, exploited, and trafficked is important, parents must not forget that we can help prevent our children from becoming traffickers and abusers as well as purchasers of sex. There are ways to strengthen character in young boys and male youth to prevent gender violence and sexual exploitation from occurring.

Talk to your child about what character means to them. Ask what kind of person they want to be known as. What type of traits, features, and qualities do they want to be known for? Ask your child how far they would go to get noticed. Discuss with them what they would do if they knew someone who was exploiting others? Having these types of open conversations with youth can help them to identify traits in themselves that ignite pride, confidence, and optimism.

The following is a list of ways that youth can prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking:

- 1** Approach sexual exploitation as both a man's and woman's issue. Recognize that it can involve individuals of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- 2** Become an empowered bystander and confront exploitative peers by speaking up rather than looking away.
- 3** Question personal attitudes and language that may perpetuate sexism, homophobia, violence, or exploitation.
- 4** Refrain from funding sexism by not buying things that are sexually exploitative or degrading towards women, such as pornography.
- 5** Become educated about sexual exploitation and teach others.
- 6** Become a school ambassador and speak out about sexual exploitation in the school system from a demand perspective to help end the purchasing of sex.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP BOUNDARIES

Boundaries help to encourage healthy and secure relationships. They can also protect someone from abuse and exploitation. Setting boundaries can help your child to understand the type of relationship they want.

When teaching your child about healthy boundaries, emphasize that boundaries are not meant to make them feel trapped. It is not a sign of distrust but rather an expression of what makes him or her feel comfortable and what they would like or not like to happen in the relationship. Boundaries should not restrict your child's ability to hang out with friends or participate in activities and hobbies they enjoy. Neither should your child have to share their passwords for email, social media accounts, or cell phones.

The following tips can help your child create and maintain healthy relationships:

- › **SPEAK UP:** if something is bothering your child, encourage them to speak to a supportive individual rather than holding it in. Provide them with a support network to turn to when they experience conflict or personal issues.
- › **COMPROMISE:** disagreements are a natural part of healthy relationships. Teach your child to resolve conflicts fairly through open communication and compromise.
- › **RESPECT:** both parties are worthy of mutual respect. Offering reassurance and encouragement to partners can be helpful in building each other up as opposed to putting each other down. However, youth must be aware that just because they are in a relationship does not mean they have to constantly be together or share private information. Remind children that healthy relationships require space.

When your child learns what healthy relationship boundaries look like, they will be better equipped to recognize warning signs of potentially exploitative situations.



CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD

Connecting with your child can be difficult and you may be worried and afraid. It can be hard to figure out how to give positive reinforcement and raise internally motivated children. Be aware that constant nagging, harping, or punishment can push children away and promote risky, attention-seeking behaviour. Criticism and punishment can also damage a child's spirit and diminish self-esteem.



Focusing on praise and reward can reinforce a child's self-worth and motivate good behaviour. It is important for parents to put their relationship with their child before the behaviours they display. This means separating the child from the behaviour. Your child is not a bad person, but they may behave badly.

Describe the Situation

Describing the situation will help you see the situation from each other's point of view. Tuning into your child's experience can reduce tension and lead to joint problem solving. It can also help reframe issues in a positive way and better understand the complexity of your child's behaviour. Describing situations with your child can promote compromises and fair consequences. Try to present questions as issues to be discussed rather than as judgment.

Express Your Feelings

Parents should express their feelings if they want their children to do the same. Children experience a wide range of feelings but they may not always have the words to describe them. It is important to assure your child that everyone, including yourself, has feelings and that no feelings are too big or too little to talk about. When children feel safe to express their feelings and know how to do so in socially appropriate ways, they are less likely to exhibit behaviour problems.

Teaching children how to deal with uncomfortable emotions and sad feelings can be helpful in reducing attention-seeking behaviours. Just as with any behaviour you are trying to teach your child, it is essential to model healthy ways to deal with feelings. Pointing out times when you feel angry or frustrated can help teach children to recognize positive coping skills. Asking your child how they are feeling each day can engage them in conversation, and make talking about emotions a normal part of family life. Try using 'I' statements versus 'you' statements when speaking with your child. It can make a huge difference in what they hear.

Gain Perspective

Parents will inevitably experience a wide range of emotions and hardships when dealing with children and youth. Regardless of how hard we try to relieve negative emotions, they persist. However, it is important to keep things in perspective. Avoid jumping to conclusions and making rash decisions based on your emotional state.

Rather than focusing on the outcome of situations, focus on the effort that was put in. This can help children take pride in their strength and determination. By gaining proper perspective, parents can focus on encouragement instead of judgment or criticism. Taking the time to analyze situations is important to outline rational and fair consequences for inappropriate actions and behaviours.

Acknowledge

Acknowledge when your child does something positive or completes a task. This does not have to be a grandiose gesture, but it is important to acknowledge when your child succeeds, regardless of how big or small. Your child needs to know that you agree with their internal assessment and that what they did is right. A simple smile or pat on the back can go a long way to validate your child's actions. Simple acknowledgements can facilitate co-operation and give youth a sense that they've been heard. Parents should also acknowledge failures and disappointments rather than sweep them under the rug. Acknowledging that your child has failed can provide a safe outlet for discussing where they went wrong and how they can do better in the future. Your child cannot learn, adapt, and grow if their failures are ignored and not talked about in a safe and constructive manner.

Spend Time

Children don't need material things. Rather, they need time and presence. Spending time together as a family is essential for building strong family ties, making lifelong memories, and creating an environment that builds self-esteem and character. Rather than focusing on the quantity of time, focus on the quality of the time spent together. Spending quality time with family can lower the chances that your child engages in risky, attention-seeking behaviour. Sharing time can also lower the risk of unresolved family conflict. It is a time when life lessons like sharing, fairness, and compassion can be reinforced without conflict. As our children grow and change, family time can be a great way to get to know your child better. Reinforce that your child is cared for, loved, and belongs in the family through every phone call, brief visit, or meeting.

Say Sorry

The trust and respect earned from the gesture of an adult apologizing to a younger person is immeasurable. Two simple words, 'I'm sorry', can have a monumental impact on a child, cementing the parent-child relationship and providing the child with a sense of safety and well-being. When parents accept responsibility and apologize, they are saying it's okay to be human and therefore imperfect. They are modeling accountability and demonstrating that taking ownership is more important than the mistake itself. Apologizing to children can also let them know that being wrong and making mistakes is not the same as being weak. Asking for forgiveness is not only more important than covering it up but is also a sign of strength and courage.

"Parents must have rational conversations, NOT punishment-based conversations."
– Karen Zilke, MCFD Yankee 20 Unit

Assert Authority

Regardless of your child's age, you are the main authority figure in their life. Denying requests to attend certain events or hang out in certain areas tells them that you love them and care about their safety. Gently saying 'no', with an occasional touch of humour, will demonstrate that boundaries are inspired by love and are meant to protect. Although there can be room to negotiate, teens often equate love with safety. Your child may not thank you for checking in on him or her or keeping track of their whereabouts, but that does not matter. Your child needs to know that you see yourself as their parent and not their friend or peer. If you demonstrate that you have good judgment by helping make sound and rational decisions, they will turn to you in times of trouble. If you are too permissive or seen as a pushover, your child may not feel confident approaching you in times of need.

Be An Example

Parents are role models not only through their interactions with their children but through the examples they set in attitudes and behaviours. Parents can contribute to their child's personal growth by addressing their concerns, sharing their lives, and maintaining a healthy perspective. Role models are humans and humans make mistakes. Parents who admit to their faults and wrongdoings and learn from them are powerful influences for a child's emotional health and growth. By addressing problems and conflicts in an age-appropriate manner, parents can encourage their children to address their own concerns. Displaying moral and ethical behaviour can help transmit values which can counter the negative influences children may receive from peers or the mass media.

UNIQUE PATHWAYS OF PREVENTION

While communication, awareness, and education are effective ways of prevention, they are not the only way. Think outside the box and consider unique and creative pathways that may speak more directly to your child.

Theatre

Community theatre groups are an excellent way to keep children engaged in their community while promoting their education and overall development. Theatre can enhance artistic development, mental and emotional skills, as well as social skills. Your child's self-confidence can be improved through public speaking and interaction with peers. Children can learn to overcome challenges and differences in order to achieve a common goal. Theatre and play groups also require youth to follow timelines, use self-discipline, and accept feedback.



Sports and Extracurricular Activities

Being involved in sports can help youth develop positive attitudes, perspectives, and outlooks. They can become motivated to work harder and set higher goals. Athletic youth try hard to pursue excellence and success, not perfection. Bonding with coaches can provide a strong support system, acting as an additional outlet for issues they may be going through. Engaging in sport can help instill leadership in youth, making them want to be positive role models. Part of being an athlete is learning how to persist through difficult tasks, especially when the going gets tough. Sports can help children learn positive techniques to deal with great pressure, which can translate into how they deal with pressures off of the field, for example with family, friends, and peers.

Creative Arts

Whether your child participates in arts and crafts, poetry, painting, or drawing, these activities can promote creativity and bring out their true personality. Art builds self-confidence by allowing children to be imaginative and inventive. These skills can help them in problem solving, getting along with others, and understanding the world in which they live. Art projects can teach children to stay focused on their goals and not give up on tasks until they are completed. Creative arts can promote cooperation and interaction with others while also fostering individuality and independence.



Storytelling

Stories hold the key to traditions, rituals, and acceptable social ways. The messages that are passed on through stories promote loyalty, self-respect, responsibility, honesty, trust, and the importance of community. All of these messages can help young people who are in relationships. Stories can help teach youth about being human and how to be leaders in their community. It can also create bonds, increase listening skills, and help to foster effective and positive communication. Storytelling is interactive and can help answer questions that youth have about the world they live in. Sharing stories can create connections and keeps children and youth engaged. It can also be an important way for youth to learn about their heritage, keeping them connected to their family and community.

SECTION SUMMARY

For parents, communication is key. Speaking with your children about sex, sexuality, and sexual exploitation will not only educate your child but it will also create an opportunity for dialogue where youth feel comfortable and safe to speak to you about such matters. Your child will learn about sex regardless of whether or not you decide to speak with them about it. By starting this discussion at an early age and adding content as they mature, it allows you to take part in your child's sex education and help equip them to navigate through our highly sexualized culture.

Building self-esteem in your child is one of the most important aspects of development, positive mental health, and social happiness. It is one of the main prevention tools against falling into destructive behaviours or being vulnerable to the tactics of pimps and traffickers. Self-esteem can be built by providing a safe environment for your child to grow, take risks, make mistakes, and learn from those experiences. Instilling a sense of responsibility through age-appropriate chores and challenges, being a role model for your child, valuing their opinion and including them in decisions, as well as celebrating their individuality and uniqueness, all help to build your child's self-esteem.

Building positive character is vital in preventing your child from becoming traffickers, abusers, or purchasers of sex. Ask your child about what kind of qualities and traits they want to be known for and help them to identify those traits in themselves. Empower them to speak up about sexual exploitation or abuse that they may witness and question personal attitudes and language that may perpetuate sexism, homophobia, violence, or exploitation.

Discussions regarding healthy relationship boundaries will help your child to understand the type of relationship they want. Speak with them regarding support networks they have to turn to, healthy conflict resolution techniques, and the importance of mutual respect in a relationship.

It is important for parents to put their relationship with their child before the behaviours they display in order to reinforce their self-worth and motivate good behaviour. Have a discussion around the situation in order to understand each other's point of view. Express your feelings and encourage your child to do the same to create opportunity to discuss healthy ways to cope and deal with different emotions. Gain greater perspective by acknowledging positive behaviour, while still discussing the negative situation in order for them to grow. Other ways to build a connection with your child is to spend quality time with them, model good behaviour such as saying sorry when you have made a mistake, and being sure to maintain your authority and set boundaries in order to create a safe environment for them to grow.

There are also some unique pathways of intervention that may connect more with your child. Joining a community theatre group; storytelling opportunities that pass on traditions, rituals, and positive messages; creative arts; and sports or extracurricular activities, are all creative ways to help your child feel more connected.

SECTION 10: GETTING HELP

In this section, you will:

- › Understand how you can help your child during a difficult time
- › Learn about various and multiple resources your child might require for support and assistance
- › Acknowledge that you cannot do it on your own
- › Learn how to properly and effectively practice self-care

Finding out that your child has been or is being sexually exploited can be an extremely difficult and traumatic time. You may be doubting your parenting skills and become upset and frustrated that your child did not confide in you earlier. Remember that your child may not have reached out to you for a number of reasons, including:

- › Embarrassment, shame, or anxiety
- › Belief that the exploiter is a loving partner
- › Fear for personal and family safety
- › Fear of repercussions from crimes they may have committed
- › Difficulty in speaking about sex and sexual relationships
- › Fear of disappointing loved ones

“Parents are victims too.”
– Experiential Parent

Discovering that your child has suffered abuse will cause you to feel a variety of emotions – all of which are valid and understandable. Remember you are not alone and **YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME.**

“For every dollar that has been made off of someone’s abuse, we must invest at least that much back into their recovery.”

– Larissa Maxwell, Manager of Anti-Human Trafficking Programs
The Salvation Army Deborah’s Gate

FOR YOUTH: A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH



Parents should recognize that sexual exploitation is a complex crime and they may need help dealing with it. Even when the family unit is strong and works together, the needs of your child will depend on their unique experience. Parents should use a multi-disciplinary approach when dealing with a child who has been sexually exploited or trafficked. While some individuals may only need the help of one particular service, others may require a variety of services and programs to help address a multitude of concerns.

“The community needs to be equipped with tools on how to deal with youth that are put in these situations. The youth need to feel supported and not shamed.”

– Frontline Service Provider

Youth who have been sexually exploited suffer physical, psychological, behavioural, and attitudinal changes. All of these can present difficult challenges to parents and must be addressed. Investigating your child’s experience will allow you to better understand what resources you can either help provide yourself or get from professionals.



“If someone feels safe, there is a higher chance they will give a statement.”

– Diane Sowden, Executive Director of Children of the Street Society

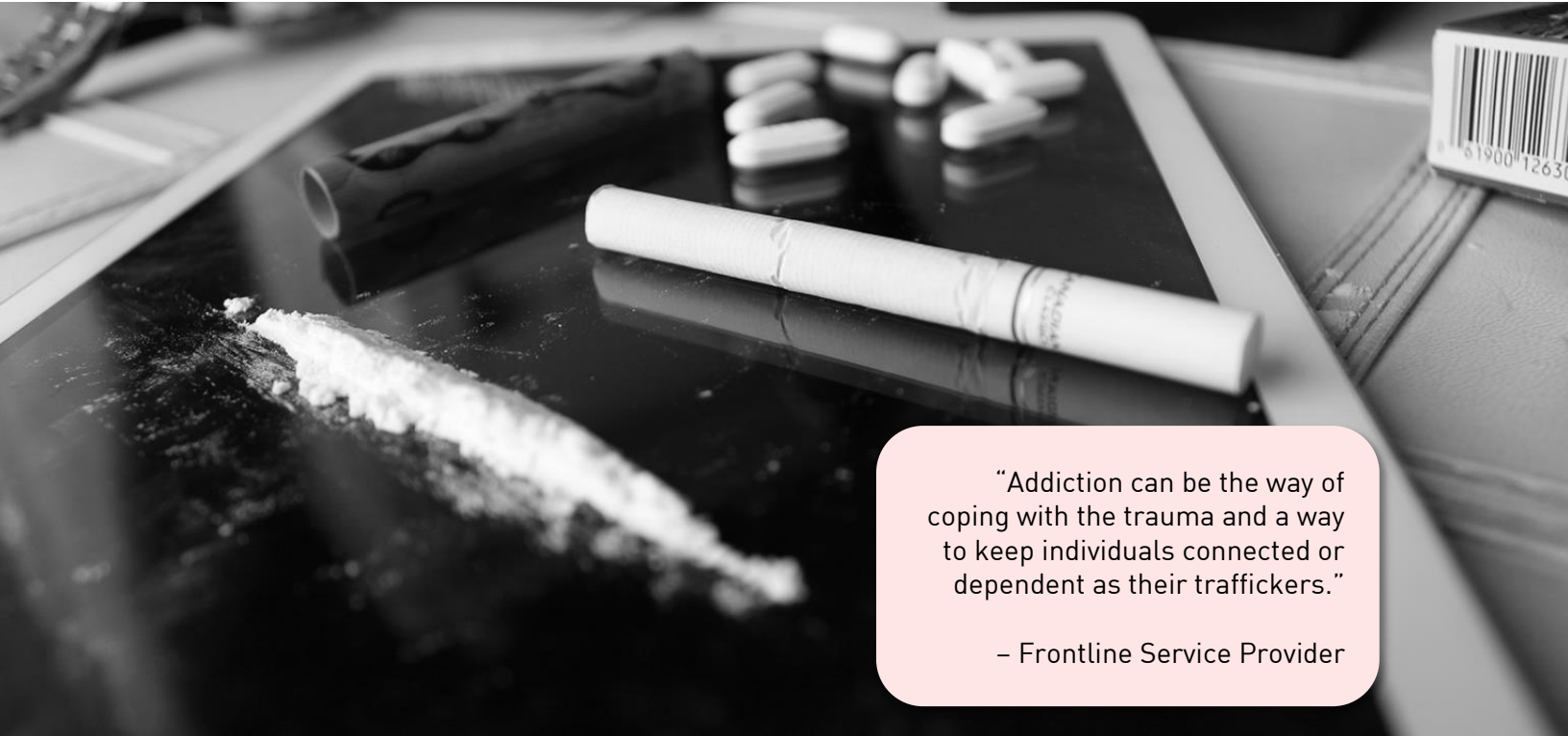
Police & Legal Services

If your child was the victim of sexual exploitation, they may need help from the police or the courts. During the leaving process, your child may need protection and require a restraining order against their trafficker. Or, your child may wish to press criminal charges against their trafficker or pimp. Contact the police about this. If there is a court case, contact victim services (at the police department or at court). Their job is to support victims and help address fears about testifying in court.

Drug/Alcohol Treatment

When your child is rescued from or leaves an exploitative situation, they may need detox services to come off of drugs. Withdrawal from drugs should be done safely. Proper treatment for addiction can include residential treatment facilities, support groups and sponsors, counselling and prescribed medication.

Counselling can help your child understand why they are using, how their addiction has affected their health, how it affects family members, and how to cope with emotions positively through other avenues. Counselling and treatment may be temporary, but the addiction may be long term and your child may need ongoing support to battle their addiction as a result of being exploited.



“Addiction can be the way of coping with the trauma and a way to keep individuals connected or dependent as their traffickers.”

– Frontline Service Provider

Health Care Services

When a child or youth is exploited for sexual purposes, they are at risk for diseases and sexually transmitted infections. Your child may need tests at a sexual health clinic, medication to treat infections, or routine checkups. Due to drug use, physical violence, or lack of self-care, dental services may also be necessary.

“One day, all the bottled up emotions inside her will come out. It is something to watch out for.”

– Experiential Voice

Emotional Support & Counselling

When a child or youth is exploited, they experience severe emotional trauma. This can have negative impacts on their overall health and well - being, making them more vulnerable to experiencing future trauma. Your child may not be willing to share some of the experiences they endured, so it is important to get counselling from a therapist or psychologist. Counseling services can help youth get the support they need to speak openly and honestly about their feelings in an environment free from judgment or criticism.

Social Media Support

If your child is the victim of an online sexting scandal, they may need help from a social media outlet to have the pictures or videos removed immediately. They may also need help reporting the perpetrator to police.



School Support

Victims of sexual exploitation may need help dealing with the perpetrator. For example, school liaison officers can help find out who was involved, possibly suspending or expelling students, and looking at restitution options. Your child's school can also make sure that your child is not in the same classroom as their perpetrator. If the trafficker is outside of the school setting, school officials can implement security measures.

During the time your child was exploited, they may have missed a lot of school and need help reintegrating into the school setting or getting educational support.

Friends, Peers & Community

Do not underestimate the importance of having your child's friends and peers help them through this difficult time. Healthy friendships can help your child navigate through painful emotions and provide an outlet for concerns and fears. A strong connection to friends and community can be a good distraction as well as protection from future involvement in an exploitative situation. If your child does not have a solid network of friends, they may need your help understanding what it means to be a good friend and how to meet new friends.

"It's human connection that keeps people safe."

– Karen Zilke,
Ministry of Children
and Family
Development,
Yankee 20 Unit

Employment

If your child has been sexually exploited, their ideas surrounding employment may be altered significantly. They may need support and guidance on what it means to hold a proper job. For example, career counseling can help your child understand acceptable wages, working hours, and interactions with clients. Your child may also need help writing a resume.

If your child has never held a legitimate job, they may think they have nothing positive to put on a resume. There are ways to turn negative experiences into positive qualities, for example, "reliable, hardworking, and great time management skills". Your child may need help looking for work and preparing for interviews. Consider volunteer opportunities which can help provide positive role models and mentors. Teach your child to be persistent in job hunting.

FOR PARENTS: TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Your child is not the only person affected by sexual exploitation. The experience can be very difficult and painful for parents. You may fear judgment from community members, friends, and extended family. You may feel extremely anxious, stressed, helpless or depressed. The emotional and physical resilience needed to maintain a job, keep a home routine, and control finances must not be overlooked. Get help and practice self-care. By taking care of yourself, you can enjoy a quality of life that will help you and your affected child move forward together. You will be in a better position to make healthy decisions and communicate more effectively with your child.

Self-care operates on a *'for you, by you'* basis. It is about identifying and meeting your own needs, especially during stressful situations. Self-care includes anything you do to look after your physical, mental, and emotional well-being. While this can seem like a challenging task, it can also become part of the healing process and help keep the family unit together.

"You have to take care of you so you can be there for your kid."

– Experiential Parent



"You have to get support and practice self-care."

– Experiential Parent

PHYSICAL SELF-CARE

FOOD

When life becomes stressful and anxiety levels soar, people sometimes forget to eat. An important self-care goal is to eat *something* at each meal, even if it is a small amount. Another goal is to limit your intake of fast food. Proper nutrition helps regulate heart rate and blood pressure. Be mindful of overeating to compensate for negative feelings and emotions.

MEDICAL CARE

Parents should not ignore what their bodies are telling them. Taking care of medical needs is an important form of self-care. Remember to go for regular checkups and take medication and vitamins as needed.

EXERCISE

Exercise is a great way to release stress and pent up anger. It is also a positive distraction that can combat feelings of sadness and depression. You don't have to buy a gym membership. Start by going for a walk on your lunch break or each evening after work or dinner. Try listening to your favourite music while you are walking, as this can help you feel calm and ease your nerves.

SLEEP

Being restless and unable to sleep due to nightmares, fear, or worry is completely normal. Although everyone's sleep patterns will be affected differently, it is important to at least try to follow a proper sleep schedule. For example, try to be in bed before 11:00 pm on weeknights. Not only will this help you get enough sleep, it can help improve your ability to work, drive safely, and decrease levels of burnout and overall stress. Similarly, be mindful of oversleeping or not getting out of bed. If you feel like this is happening, try to set an alarm or a specific schedule to adhere to each day to ensure that you wake up and get up.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

While life can be chaotic when dealing with sexually exploited youth, parents must try to find the time to do activities that they enjoy. Beware of doing things purely to escape, such as watching too much TV or spending too much time on the internet. Becoming involved in a sport or hobby can help parents find like-minded friends as well as motivate them to continue to persevere each day. Try engaging in leisurely activities with partners or friends on a specific night and enjoy positive company.

EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE

COUNSELLING

One of the most important realizations you can have as a parent is that it is okay to ask for help. Sometimes you can't do it on your own and need support networks. Get support from a family counsellor, social worker, or personal therapist to help release pent up emotions and work through struggles. Attending counselling sessions can also help you work on your relationship with your child in a healthy environment, free from hostility, judgment, and anger.

REFLECTIVE WRITING

Keep a journal and practice reflective writing. This technique can help you record your thoughts and feelings on paper so that you can manage them more effectively in the future. Try writing in your journal once a week and slowly increase the number of entries. Write about what you are experiencing as well as goals for the future relationship you strive to have with your child. This exercise can be very therapeutic as well as a log of events for progress by you and your child. Being honest about your feelings and emotions will allow you to de-stress and reflect in a healthy manner.

MEDITATION

Relaxation techniques and meditation can help with emotional and physical self-care by decreasing stress and focusing on breathing. It involves paying attention to your mind and bringing your attention toward a chosen focal point. There are many things you can focus on, so try experimenting to see which focal point creates the most powerful experience for you. Instead of focusing on something specifically external, simply focus your attention on being in the present moment. Meditating does not have to be an activity that takes a long time. For example, every morning when your alarm goes off, spend one to two minutes in bed deciding what you are going to do for yourself that day. Meditation can also involve praying, attending religious services or seeking spiritual guidance.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

Emotional self-care can also involve the people around you. Make sure that the people in your life are supportive. Nurture relationships that make you feel good about yourself. Be wary of friends or family who only call when they need something. Similarly, cut back on time spent with friends who do not make time to listen to you or leave you feeling tired or depressed. Choose the time you will spend with friends and family wisely and consider letting friendships and relationships go if they consistently bring you down or make you feel bad about yourself. One way to set boundaries is by screening calls. There is no rule that says you have to answer your phone every time it rings. If you don't feel like talking on the phone, call people back at a time that is more convenient for you. Set boundaries by saying "no" to extra responsibilities as well.

SECTION SUMMARY

When you find out that your child has been or is being sexually exploited, it can be a very difficult time for them as well as for you. Your child will probably need help dealing with the things they have experienced, and as a parent you will want to do all you can to help them. It is important to seek help for your child in a way that reflects their unique situation and needs. A multi-disciplinary approach will help to address the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual effects from their experience. Your child may need police and court services for protection, pressing charges, or testifying in court; drug and alcohol treatment; health care; social media support if your child was a victim of an online sexting scandal; emotional support from a therapist or psychologist; support from school; support from friends and peers; as well as support and guidance for seeking employment.

Getting help for yourself is also important. Self-care is about identifying and meeting your own needs to prevent and combat stressful situations. Physical self-care may include eating healthy, exercising regularly, following a proper sleeping schedule, medical care, and leisure activities that you enjoy. Emotional self-care may include seeking out counselling, reflective writing to record and process your thoughts and feelings, meditation and relaxation techniques, as well as setting healthy boundaries for your own relationships.

FINAL WORD

We hope that you have found this toolkit useful. At Children of the Street Society, we are actively working towards a world where children and youth are safe and free from all forms of sexual exploitation. With this toolkit, we hope that you can educate yourself and your family to better protect your children. We hope that stereotypes of sexually exploited youth have been challenged and that you now have the knowledge and tools to help prevent sexual exploitation. We also hope that you have learned new ways of helping children who are being exploited.

If you or your child is ever in immediate danger, call 911 immediately.

RESOURCES

Please visit our website at
www.childrenofthestreet.com/resources
for a list of support services and
resources throughout British
Columbia. Resources are listed by
service type and region.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LEGISLATION

The Criminal Code of Canada can provide us with a greater legal understanding of the acts of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Along with these specific offences, there are numerous supplementary offences that often accompany this charge.

Legal Age of Sexual Consent

The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits any sexual activity between an adult and a person under the age of 16 with the following exceptions:

As long as the older person is not in a position of trust or authority over the younger and:

- 1) One person is 12 or 13 years old and the other is less than 2 years older or
- 2) One person is 14 or 15 and the other is less than 5 years older

- › Any sexual activity between an adult in a position of trust or authority towards a person between the ages of 16 and 18 years
- › Any sexual activity without the consent of a person at any age
- › The use of people under the age of 18 for exploitative sexual activity (i.e. prostitution, pornography, or where there is a relationship of trust, authority, dependency, or any other situation that is otherwise exploitative of a young person)

Sexual Exploitation: Section 153(1)

Every person commits an offence who is in a position of trust or authority towards a young person (i.e.: teacher, community youth leader, coach), who is a person with whom the young person is in a relationship of dependency or who is in a relationship with a young person that is exploitative of the young person and who

- › For a sexual purpose, touches, directly or indirectly with a part of the body or with an object, any part of the body of the young person, or
- › For a sexual purpose, invites, counsels or incites a young person to touch, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object, the body of any person, including the body of the person who so invites, counsels or incites and the body of the young person.

Human Trafficking: Section 279.01(1)

For a charge under this offence, the evidence must indicate that the suspect has:

- › Recruited, transported, transferred, received, held, concealed, or harboured the victim, or exercised control, direction or influence over the movements of the victim; and
- › Done this for the purpose of exploiting the victim or facilitating their exploitation

Human trafficking includes three elements:

- Act: recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, or receiving people
- Means: threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or abuse of power, or paying someone in control of the victim
- Purpose: exploitation

Human Smuggling vs Human Trafficking: What's the difference?

It can be difficult to distinguish between human trafficking and human smuggling as the two terms are often used interchangeably. It is important to remember that human trafficking and smuggling are *not* the same thing.

Human trafficking is about the control of a person for the purpose of exploitation whereas ...

Human Smuggling is when individuals are transported and moved to a new country, often illegally, in return for a financial or material benefit. Upon arrival at the final destination, the individual is set free and has no ties to their smugglers. In some cases, a person who has agreed to be smuggled into a country becomes a trafficking victim at the hands of the smuggler.

Exploitation: Section 279.04

Causing a person to provide a labour or service by engaging in conduct that could reasonably be expected to cause the victim to believe that their safety, or the safety of someone known to them, would be threatened if they did not provide that labour or service. It would apply to the use of force, deception, or other forms of coercion.

Procuring: Person under 18 Years: Section 286.3(2):

Everyone who procures a person under the age of 18 to offer or provide sexual services for consideration; or, for the purpose of facilitating the offence of obtaining sexual services for consideration, *recruits, holds, conceals or harbours* that person; or *exercises control, direction or influence over the movements* of that person

Child Pornography: Section 163.1

(1) Child Pornography: a photograph, film, video, or other visual representation that shows a person who is or is depicted as being under the age of 18 and is engaged in explicit sexual activity or the dominant characteristic of which is the depiction, for a sexual purpose, of a sexual organ or the anal region of a person under the age of 18

(2) Making Child Pornography: making, printing, publishing, or possessing child pornography for the purpose of publication

(3) Distribution of Child Pornography: a person who transmits, makes available, distributes, sells, advertises, imports, exports, or possesses child pornography

*** Please Note:** Child pornography images and videos must be explicitly sexual in nature and intention

Publication of an Intimate Image Without Consent: Section 162.1(1)

Everyone who knowingly publishes, distributes, transmits, sells, makes available or advertises an intimate image of a person knowing that the person depicted in the image did not give their consent to that conduct, or being reckless as to whether or not that person gave their consent to that conduct is guilty.

*** Please note:** This specific law is designed to protect those individuals who are not protected under Child Protection laws.

The following is a list of criminal charges in the Criminal Code of Canada related to sexual exploitation and human trafficking:

Luring a Child: Section 172.1(1)

Every person commits an offence who, by means of a computer system, communicates with a person who is or is believed to be under the age of 18 for the purpose of committing a sexual offence including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual touching, and abduction

Keeping a Common Bawdy-House: Section 210(1)

Everyone who keeps a common bawdy-house (brothel) is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment

**Material Benefit from Sexual Services Provided
by Person under 18 Years: Section 286.2(2):**

Everyone who receives a financial or other material benefit, knowing that it is obtained by or derived directly or indirectly from the commission of the offence of obtaining sexual services for consideration.

Sexual Interference: Section 151

Every person who, for a sexual purpose, touches, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object, any part of the body of a person under the age of 16

Invitation to Sexual Touching: Section 152

Every person who, for a sexual purpose, invites, counsels or incites a person under the age of 16 years to touch, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object, the body of any person, including the body of the person who so invites, counsels or incites and the body of the person under the age of 16 years

Uttering Threats: Section 264.1(1)

Everyone commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat to cause death or bodily harm, burn, destroy, or damage real or personal property, or kill, poison or injure an animal that is property of the person

***Please note:** The Criminal Code of Canada is subject to change.

For the most up-to-date version, please visit <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46>

APPENDIX 2: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TERMS

The following is a list of some commonly used terms in the world of sexual exploitation and amongst sexually exploited youth.

Term	Meaning
Bad Date	When a customer/john refuses to pay, takes their money back, robs the youth, or one who assaults and abuses the individual sexually, physically, or verbally
Busted	When a person who is sexually exploited is repeatedly victimized until they are 'busted' or 'broken'
Cappers	Person(s) who takes screen shots of youth online without their consent or knowledge
Chumped Off	To bully, diss, or make fun of someone
Gay for Pay (G4P)	A male who identifies as heterosexual but may perform sexual acts with other men for survival purposes
Girlies	Girls in magazines or sexual images wearing minimal clothes or naked, typically in soft-core pornography
Glory Hole	A secluded private booth where a male can insert his penis and is stimulated by a hidden individual on the other side of the wall
Heat Score	A person or activity that will draw the attention of police
High Track	An area where purchasing sex from an individual will be more expensive than average and will most likely consist of younger workers
Hustler	A term most often used to describe a male sex worker
Jacked up	Physically or mentally stimulated from the effects of a drug, stimulant, or alcohol
Johns/Janes	A man (John) or a woman (Jane) who purchases sex
Life	A sexually-transmitted or terminal disease
LG/LB	A term used to refer to a "little girl" or "little boy" who is perceived to be promiscuous or a target for exploitation

Term	Meaning
LG Party	A party where older individuals invite younger youth, ("LGs/LBs") to exchange sexual acts for popularity, drugs, alcohol, or acceptance
Low Track	An area where purchasing sex from an individual will be inexpensive/cheap due to the appearance, age, or addiction, of the worker
Madame/Mammasan	A female exploiter, pimp, or woman who manages a brothel
Main Girl/Bottom Bitch	The girl who a pimp will reserve for himself, or the one who is most favoured, or forced to manage and keep other youth in line through threats and violence
Regular	A consistent, repetitive customer who will interact with the same youth for sexual purposes
Scooper	Youth who are actively recruiting other youth into sexual exploitation
Spot	Someone who ensures that sexually exploitative activities are not noticed by the public or police by being on watch and look out duty
Stroll	An area where sex is sold
Square	A person who is not knowledgeable about or involved in the sex trade industry or street life
Sugar Daddy/Momma	An older person who poses as a lover and provides a youth with money, necessities and gifts in exchange for sexual acts
Top	A term used in anal sex where the person referred to as the top will be the individual who is anally penetrating
Trick Pads	The apartment, hotel room, or house of a pimp where sexual exploitation occurs
Turned Out	Refers to when a sexually exploited youth was first forced to begin working
Turning a Trick	Performing a sexual act (<i>e.g. she turned tricks for money</i>)
Turf	The neighborhood over which a street gang asserts its authority

APPENDIX 3: TEXTING TERMS AND SEXTING LANGUAGE

The following is a list of some of the abbreviations currently in use.

TEXTING TERMS

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
ASL(R P)	Age/Sex/Location (Race/Picture)
BF / GF	Boyfriend / Girlfriend
BRB	Be Right Back
CT	Can't Talk
CD9	Code 9 - means parents are around
DOC	Drug Of Choice
EOD	End of Discussion
FOMO	Fear Of Missing Out
GTG	Got to Go
IDK	I don't know
(L)MIRL	(Lets) meet in real life

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
MorF	Male or Female
MOS	Mom Over Shoulder
Noob	Newbie (often an insult to someone who doesn't know much about something)
P911	Parent Emergency
PAW	Parents are Watching
PIR	Parent In Room
POS	Parent Over Shoulder
PRW	Parents Are Watching
S2R	Send To Receive (pictures)
W/E	Whatever
WTF	What the Fu**?

SEXTING LANGUAGE

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
8	Oral Sex
143	I Love You
BAE	Before Anyone Else
DTF	Down To Fu**
FMH	Fu** Me Harder
GNOC	Get Naked on Cam (webcam)
GNRN	Get Naked Right Now
IIT	Is It Tight?
CU46	See You For Sex

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
Q2C	Quick To Cum
RUH	Are You Horny?
TDTM	Talk Dirty To Me
NIFOC	Naked In Front Of Computer
SorG	Straight Or Gay?
JO	Jerk Off
RU18	Are You 18?
YWS	You Want Sex?
IWSN	I Want Sex Now

APPENDIX 4: FAMILY SAFETY AND CARE PLANNING

The following is a list of topics and discussion questions for parents that can help open communication about the safety of the family unit:

RULES & CONSEQUENCES

- › What is the policy on drug use in the home?
- › What are some fair and rational consequences for our children's behaviours?
- › What are the rules around computer use in the home?
- › Where will we store cell phones/computers/tablets at night?
- › What will we do if we discover our child is the perpetrator of a sexting crime?
- › What are the rules regarding social media profiles?
- › What are the rules when our children have sleepovers with their friends?
- › What are the rules around using the family car?

COMMUNICATION

- › How will we maintain open and honest communication between ourselves and with our child?
- › What will we do if we find out someone is trying to lure or groom our child?
- › How can we share parenting duties and responsibilities amongst each other?
- › What type of parenting style and discipline style will we use?
- › How will we communicate/ with other parents in the community?
- › What is our 'worst case scenario'?
- › How will we be positive role models for our children?
- › How can we work together to pick our battles with children?

SAFETY & WELL-BEING

- › At what point will we contact the police for intervention and help?
- › How will our other children be protected?
- › At what point will we decide that it is no longer safe for our child to remain living at home?
- › If we feel that our family is in danger, where will we go?
- › How we will prepare for emergency situations?
- › How will we monitor our children's online behaviour?
- › At what point will we search our child's bedroom/personal belongings?
- › Where will we keep our children's identification documents and passport?
- › What is the plan when we discover that our child is the victim of a sexting crime?
- › How will we react to threats made against our child or family?
- › When should we review the safety plan?

FAMILY UNIT

- › Will we talk about the situation with our other children?
- › What are some ways we can practice self-care together?
- › How will we maintain a sense of normalcy in day-to-day life?
- › How much information will we share with extended family members?
- › How can we support the emotional and psychological needs of our other children?
- › When will family check-in be?
- › How will children be involved in decisions about the family?
- › Will we have the same parenting style for our other children?

PLANNING

- › How will we support our child when they are ready to leave the situation?
- › What is the plan when our child calls us in the middle of the night asking for help?
- › At what point do we file for a Section 28/98 order? *(BC specific)*
- › Who will have sole custody of the children should a divorce or separation occur?
- › What will we do if we learn that our child is self-harming?
- › What will we do when we discover our child is not going to school?
- › How will we deal with the lifestyle changes our child will experience upon leaving?

RESOURCES

- › What are some support networks we can turn to?
- › Who will be involved in our network of support systems?
- › When will we seek support from a social worker or outside agency?

ABOUT CHILDREN OF THE STREET SOCIETY

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES, TAKING CARE OF OTHERS (TCO²)

TCO² is an interactive school-based workshop for youth (ages 10-17) about preventing sexual exploitation and trafficking. Using live role-plays, monologues and engaging activities, youth learn what sexual exploitation is, who is involved, how to prevent it from happening, and available resources to get help. TCO² reaches approximately 25,000 youth in British Columbia every school year.

YOUTH ART ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

The Youth Art Engagement Project is a multi-session social justice art project that engages high-risk youth. Youth are educated about a variety of youth related issues, and create artwork that reflects the content they learned. The project wraps up with youth sharing their artwork through a public art gallery event to further raise awareness to the greater community.

ADULT EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Adult education workshops teach adults about recognizing, understanding and preventing sexual exploitation and trafficking. They are designed for parent groups, service providers, police officers, social workers, nurses, school staff and other adult populations that work with youth. Workshops include It Can Happen To Anyone (ITCHA) and Helping Others Prevent Exploitation (HOPE).

YOUTH DIVERSION PROGRAMS

Our youth diversion programs, Total Respect of Ourselves and Others (TROO) and Being Respectful of Others (BRO), are designed to address sexting among youth, and divert youth away from the youth criminal justice system. The programs are run in partnership with Vancouver Police Department Youth Services Section and are full day interactive sessions for youths and their parents.

MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Our annual media campaigns (print, TV, radio and online) are aimed at raising awareness about multiple aspects of the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and youth. Our campaigns target predators, youth, parents and the general public. Our multi-award winning campaigns include: Predator Watch, Just One Photo, and Hooked.

FAMILY SUPPORT

We offer direct support for parents and families of victimized youth. Support is provided on an individual basis, which include creating a plan of care, community resource referrals, legal information, and other forms of help needed. Children of the Street Society supports 50-60 families in BC every year.

Learn more at

<http://www.childrenofthestreet.com/programs>



Fuchsia coloured daisies symbolize efforts to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and youth. Fuchsia is a combination of red (for red light districts) and purple (the national colour for violence prevention). The daisy is a flower that represents childhood innocence.

CHILDREN OF THE
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