



# human trafficking

FAMILIES TOOL KIT



Catholic  
Charities  
USA®



## Catholic Charities USA Families Tool Kit

American girls and boys are at serious risk of being sexually victimized. Some people think it only happens to little kids and poor kids. Surprise! It can happen to your son or daughter, to their friends and kids they know at school. Bad people lure young people away from home, abuse them, and keep them against their will.

American children are being “trafficked:” recruited, forced into slavery, harbored, and transported for sexual exploitation. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that there are approximately 125,000 American children who are sexually victimized within the United States. Another 300,000 American children and youth are at risk each year of becoming victims of sexual exploitation. The average age is 13.

Surprisingly, 75 percent of the children are from middle class backgrounds. How could this happen? Children are lured from inside their own homes through the Internet. They are contacted in homes of peers or associates, in schools, malls, entertainment centers, and adolescent dance clubs. Often the lure is with the promise of money, designer clothes, or affection.

When children run away from home and are in a strange city an adult or another child may approach in the bus or train station offering “security.”

Commercially sexually exploited children cut across socio-economic, race, ethnic and gender lines. The child is usually isolated and alienated. Once the trafficker moves children from their hometown into a strange city, the trafficker can easily force them to provide sex to strangers, often at hotels or at sports events.

### To Parents

Vulnerable children can be exploited through:

- Their need for love and affection,
- A need to belong or fit in,
- Low self-esteem (unsuccessful in school, physically handicapped, learning disability),
- Physical or psychological needs: home problems, self-medicating.

Some indicators that a child is being lured by unscrupulous adults:

- Self-destructive behavior, drop in grades, truancy, fear of adult males.
- Sleeplessness, nightmares, stomach aches, headaches, changes in appetite.
- Mood swings, phobias, and depression.
- Unresolved issues/arguments at home, attitude changes, running away.
- Secrecy and lack of truthfulness often isolated from friends.
- Out of the home a lot but reluctant to give names of new “friends” or destination.
- Extraordinary concern about appearance, wanting to look “sexy.”
- Possessing extra money, jewelry or clothes.
- Sudden use of alcohol or drugs.
- Abusive and sexualized language.
- Seeking pornography and internet contacts.



## To Young People

You can protect yourself from being lured or abducted:

1. Don't go out alone.
2. Always tell an adult where you are going, who your friends are.
3. Say "No" if you feel threatened or receive offers from friendly kids or adults: male or female.
4. Never go somewhere with someone you don't know.

## Act Smart

Now you are aware, you know the facts. Bells will go off in your head if you're faced with a risky situation.

## Warn Your Friends

Don't let your friends get hurt; clue them in to the dangers.

## Who to call

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

1-800-THE-LOST

Covenant House Hotline (1-800-843-5678)

## Links

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

<http://www.missingkids.com/>

Who is there to Help Us? – How the System Fails Sexually Exploited Girls in the United States

[www.ecpatusa.org](http://www.ecpatusa.org)

Stolen Childhoods: Sexual Exploitation of Children. Deborah J. Richardson, Pages 1 -9, 11, 18 & 19.

Project Safe Childhood

<http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov>

“Prostitution – What is it? Prostitution of Children. Missing and Exploited Children article

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

“Prostitution of Children and Child-Sex tourism explains why children become involved. [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

PVCP - Victim Issues: Prostitution: Power and Control Wheel

Table by Kenneth Lanning, FBI re Sexual Victimization of Children

Samantha's Mom's Story – a young woman helped by a residential program called “Children of the Night” <http://childrenofthenight.org>

Child Prostitution: Global Health Burden, Research Needs and Interventions.

Brian M. Willis. Published in Lancet 2002 – discusses the worldwide problem.