

# Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery and results in serious human rights violations, including severe physical and psychological injury to its victims. Sex trafficking also includes prostitution.

Some of the risk factors associated with sex trafficking are also similar to domestic violence and sexual assault. The following is a partial list of similar factors: chemical abuse, intimidation by or involvement with gangs, physical and emotional isolation, prior sexual or physical abuse, poverty, immigration status or race, lack of preventive education about sexual exploitation, mental health issues, sexual orientation, language barriers, age.

Some of the common paths that lead to sex trafficking are: relationship with someone involved in prostitution, history of prostitution in the family, homelessness - often due to estrangement or rejection by family, drug/alcohol abuse, solicitation by an adult.

Sometimes traffickers establish a romantic, platonic, or maternal relationship to forge an emotional bond that makes it difficult for a trafficked person to say no to the demand to perform prostitution or to leave the situation. In some other cases, members of the family are involved in prostitution, so participation in prostitution is not only demanded, but is normalized at a young age.

The average age of entry into prostitution is 12-14 years of age. Recruitment happens in some places like shopping malls, strip clubs, correctional facilities, drop-in centers, homeless shelters, and schools. Recruitment also happens by electronic means such as the internet.

Recruitment can happen anywhere and in any neighborhood store, bus stop, school, or by another woman. Recruitment is not just in big cities or their suburbs, it is also on reservations. Recruitment is anywhere - anytime!

Trafficked women and girls can be found in a vast majority of different places. Some of the most common places are escort services, massage parlors, saunas, strip clubs, hotels, casinos, private parties, or larger events such as conventions or sporting events. Some traffickers may also bring women to or solicit local women at rural bars to strip and perform prostitution during hunting seasons. Sex

trafficking has been in our area for some time, and is now becoming more visible as a growing issue for our women and children. Although we do not have any exact numbers of victims of sex trafficking, we do know of some local businesses that have this happening and the business owners may or may not be aware of it.

Some of the people involved consist mainly of men who come from suburbs or the city. The first group is the “frat boy type,” men who get intoxicated and then seed out prostitution for “fun.” The second and largest group consists of men addicted to this type of sexual experience. Often these men come from the suburbs or the city and have significant relationships with women, whether dating or married. The third, and smallest, group is the criminal sexual predator. These men have been convicted of rape or sexual assault, and prey on individuals in prostitution.

Sex trafficking victims are often restricted, controlled and coerced in ways not recognized. Victims that are brought here from another country may have their documentation taken away from them and be told that they “owe” a debt and will have their documents returned once the debt is paid. The amount of the debt is overwhelmingly high compared to the amount of money that the victim may be given or may “earn,” making it impossible to pay the debt off. Some of the victims that have been recruited, forced, or coerced may be moved from state to state or country to country to make it more difficult to track the “ring.” International victims may also be threatened with Immigration and being “deported.” There is different ways in which Immigration will work with victims to ensure that they are protected from further victimization.

If you suspect sex trafficking, you should notify authorities and you can remain anonymous. The authorities will do the investigation. If you are a victim of sex trafficking, please seek help. Victims can seek help in police stations, hospitals, domestic violence sexual assault programs, and through social service agencies in the area that they are located.

If you would like more information on sex trafficking, contact the DOVE (Down On Violence Everyday) Program at 218-935-5554 or the 24-hour crisis line at 1-877-830-DOVE (3683).