



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EDUCATION

RECRUITERS FEMALES & PEERS LESSON #10



NOTE TO PRESENTER

Log in to WalkingWise.com and refer to the Implementation Toolkit for classroom teaching tips.

Most importantly:

DEFINE SCHOOL POLICY

Establish a sexual exploitation reporting protocol with a trauma-informed response. The Walking Wise Implementation Toolkit provides a sample protocol.

AGE & AUDIENCE

This presentation can be edited by following the procedures on page 3 to align with your school policies, specific age groups, and the involvement of at-risk audiences.

SUPPORT PROCEDURE

Provide your students with guidance on how to access immediate help or arrange a private meeting with a social worker, counselor, nurse, school resource officer, or another trustworthy staff member to report concerns about themselves or a peer.

SECOND SAFE ADULT

Ensure a second trustworthy adult, such as a teacher, is present in the learning setting to observe student reactions and identify those who may benefit from a follow-up meeting. This person should remain focused and free from other duties during the presentation.

NOTE TO PRESENTER

This PDF contains the same content as the PowerPoint presentation but has been condensed into fewer pages for easier reference. For live presentations, please use the PowerPoint version. It reveals bullet points one at a time.

Meaningful learning takes time. By introducing topics gradually over several years, educators can create steady growth in awareness and understanding.

Our recommended teaching plan offers a long-term path for middle and high school students to build knowledge and confidence.



5-YEAR TRACK

PARENTS & STAFF

#1 Myths & Reality

6th GRADE

#2 Trustworthy vs. Unsafe Adult
#3 Grooming Process

7th GRADE

#4 Pornography Link
#5 Sextortion Scheme

8th GRADE

#6 Male Victims
#7 Runaways as Targets
#8 Rural Risks

9th GRADE

#9 Human Traffickers
#10 Female & Peer Recruiters

10th GRADE

#11 Family Secret
#12 Hidden Buyers

NOTE TO PRESENTER

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Walking Wise encourages the use of Slido.com, an interactive digital tool, to enhance audience engagement. For more information, contact us at support@WalkingWise.com. Once configured, integrate Slido polling and add a post-evaluation to the PowerPoint presentation.

Presenters are encouraged to edit speaker notes to match their speaking style (viewable in presentation mode). You can also delete slides and content from this Walking Wise presentation to ensure the information aligns with your school policies, is age-appropriate, and fits within available class time. However, the slides are copyright-protected and may not be reworded without prior written permission from Walking Wise.

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- Insert new PowerPoint slides.
- Remove the Walking Wise logo and copyright "©2026 Walking Wise" from the new slides.
- Always add your organization's name or logo to each new slide.

Please delete this instruction page before presenting to audiences.



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For revision requests, please email us at: support@WalkingWise.com.

STATISTICS

Why Study Results Can Vary

- **Some crimes are never reported, making it hard to reveal the entire issue.**
- **Studies collect information in different ways, leading to different results.**
- **Small studies may not represent everyone.**

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In this presentation, we'll discuss statistics, but it's important to note that while statistics provide valuable insights into an issue, they cannot be relied upon entirely.

Here are a few reasons:

UNREPORTED

Victims often do not report the crimes committed against them due to fear, shame, or manipulation.

INCONSISTENT COLLECTION

Geographical areas have different legal definitions for sexual crimes, which may make data hard to compare.

FOCUS GROUPS

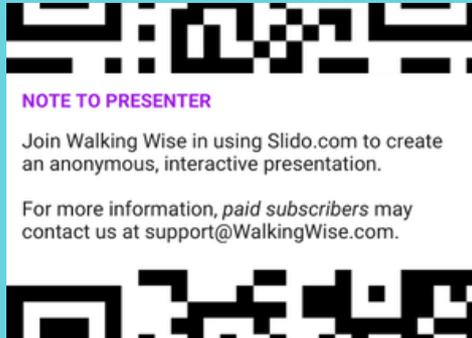
Small or specific focus groups participating in a study or survey may not accurately reflect the diversity or experiences of the broader population.

INTERACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Use Slido for Anonymous Questions

Presenter Instruction

After setting up Slido for this lesson, add the assigned access code or QR code to this slide so participants can join at Slido.com using their computers or phones.



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NOTE

For Online Interactive Polling with audiences:

Join Walking Wise in using Slido.com to create an anonymous user experience.

Contact us at support@WalkingWise.com for more information.

Upon activating Slido.com:

Determine whether the Q&A feature will be enabled. If activated, a staff member should monitor questions and comments to ensure they remain appropriate for the audience. Slido's moderation tools allow administrators to delete or hide inappropriate submissions.

SENSITIVE TOPICS WILL BE DISCUSSED

CONTENT NOTICE

We'll be discussing serious safety issues today.

Some topics may be difficult to hear.

If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can step out and speak with a trustworthy adult for support.

You're not alone—help is available.

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NOTE TO PRESENTER

Presenter Guidelines for Delivery

Present the information in a calm, matter-of-fact way and avoid sensational language.

Avoid graphic details. Focus on understanding behaviors and staying safe.

Never blame victims. Responsibility always belongs to the person who caused harm.

Maintain a steady tone. Students often mirror the presenter's emotional cues.

Do not ask students to share personal experiences.

If students laugh or react awkwardly, stay calm and continue teaching.

Always pair risk information with solutions and support.

Remind students they are not alone and help is available.

FORMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

WALKING WISE



KNOWLEDGE serves as a powerful defense against sexual predators.

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Education is one of the strongest tools for preventing exploitation.

When young people understand how predators operate, they are better able to recognize manipulation and avoid dangerous situations.

Reinforce that awareness increases safety.

CONFRONTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

WALKING WISE



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

includes grooming,
sextortion, pornography
& sex trafficking.

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Sexual exploitation can include:

GROOMING

Building trust to manipulate someone.

SEXTORTION

Threatening to share private images.

PORNOGRAPHY

Involving vulnerable people in creating sexual images or videos.

SEX TRAFFICKING

Manipulating or forcing someone into sexual activity in exchange for money or something of value.

VOCABULARY



VOCABULARY

- **Recruiter**
- **Shrewd**
- **Bottom Girl**
- **Love Bombing**
- **Trauma Bonding**
- **Exploitation**
- **Peer Pressure**

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Understanding vocabulary terms related to the behaviors of sexual predators can empower young people to recognize warning signs of harmful situations.

Knowing terminology helps them identify manipulative tactics predators use to build trust and exploit vulnerabilities.

With this knowledge, young people are better equipped to spot red flags, understand that these behaviors are abusive, and feel more confident reporting predators to trusted adults or authorities, potentially preventing further harm.

VOCABULARY

RECRUITER

Someone who encourages or convinces others to join a company, organization, or group.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

RECRUITMENT

Name a type of organization that uses recruitment to attract people?



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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com: Open Text Poll

Name a type of organization that uses recruitment to attract people?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- Employers
- Professional Sports
- Human Traffickers
- Gangs
- Military
- Colleges
- Organized Crime

Recruitment simply means trying to get people to join something. Not all recruitment is bad.

Legal organizations recruit openly, explain expectations, and allow people to say no without consequences.

Illegal recruitment often involves lies, pressure, or manipulation, especially targeting people who are vulnerable.

This discussion is meant to help students understand that traffickers use recruitment the same way businesses do—but for harm and profit.

ANSWER

Legal Recruitment

- Businesses
- Military
- Colleges & Trade Schools
- Sports Teams & Clubs

Illegal Recruitment

- Organized Crime Groups
- Street Gangs
- Labor Trafficking Networks
- Sex Trafficking Operations

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Message Especially for Teens:

Businesses worldwide use explainer-style animation as a training tool for their employees. So, this 3-minute Walking Wise animated video series is appropriate for both teens (ages 11+) and adults to learn how sexual predators use manipulation, intimidation, and coercion to exploit young people.

NOTE

Log in to Walking Wise.com to watch the three-minute animated video with audiences.

VOCABULARY

SHREWD

To be clever or to use sharp judgment, sometimes at the expense of honesty or fairness.



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OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

WOLF & SHEEP METAPHOR



What does “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” mean, and how does it explain illegal recruiter behavior?



WOLF & SHEEP METAPHOR

Metaphors Help Explain Ideas

- **Hidden Danger:** A “wolf in sheep's clothing” is someone who looks safe but has harmful intentions underneath.
- **False Appearances:** Recruiters may use kindness, attention, or friendship to hide their true, harmful motives.

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- METAPHOR

Metaphors help explain an idea by comparing it to something more familiar or easier to understand. Example: Saying "the classroom was a zoo" helps clarify that the classroom was noisy and unruly by comparing it to something familiar (a zoo).

- WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

The “wolf in sheep’s clothing” refers to a story where the wolf uses trickery to capture sheep. The wolf invades the herd by disguising itself in a sheep’s woolly coat. This metaphor refers to people who hide their true intentions by pretending to be someone they are not to gain acceptance into a group or with another person. Often, their motive is to manipulate or control someone. Eventually, the pretender’s true deceitful nature is revealed by their actions.

When attempting to trick young people, a trafficker might pretend to be a friend or a family member. They may also work to appear trustworthy by providing guidance or taking a special interest in a particular young person.

VOCABULARY

BOTTOM GIRL

A female who is appointed by her trafficker or pimp to manage the various functions of the sex trafficking operation.



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OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

BOTTOM GIRL



What are the characteristics of a “Bottom Girl” in the commercial sex trade?



This question is about understanding manipulation—not blaming victims.

BOTTOM GIRL

Characteristics

- **Position:** The 'Bottom' is second in command of the operation.
- **Long History:** She has often known her Trafficker for a long time.
- **Trusted:** The Trafficker trusts her.
- **Meets Demands:** She meets the Trafficker's financial expectations.
- **Controls Others:** She finds new recruits and manages others being trafficked.

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Shamere (2012, March 23). Unavoidable Destiny | The Reality of the "Bottom Girl Part I, Shared Hope International. Sharedhope.org.

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Characteristics are observable roles, patterns, responsibilities, or traits commonly associated with a position – not personality traits or moral qualities.

• OPERATIONS

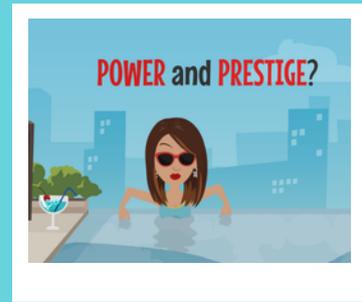
Pimps run sex trafficking businesses and assign a female, the bottom girl, to manage or oversee their business operations. She is second in command and usually has the most extended work history with her pimp, has earned his trust, and makes the most money compared to others trafficked by the pimp.

Source

Shamere (2012, March 23). Unavoidable Destiny | The Reality of the "Bottom Girl Part I, Shared Hope International. Sharedhope.org. Retrieved January 23, 2025, from <https://sharedhope.org/2012/03/23/unavoidable-destiny-the-reality-of-the-bottom-girl-part-i/>

RESPONSIBILITIES

What are the responsibilities of the
“Bottom Girl?”



BOTTOM RESPONSIBILITY

TRANSPORTATION
CONTROL MONEY POST BAIL
RULES
DISCIPLINE
ARRANGE CLIENTS

Trafficking Duties

- Lures new victims by grooming recruits.
- Arranges the 'client' meet-ups.
- Transports victims to the 'client' location.
- Collects money from 'clients' for her trafficker.
- Disciplines victims to enforce their trafficker's rules.
- Posts bail for her trafficker & others.

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Shamere (2012, March 23). Unavoidable Destiny | The Reality of the "Bottom Girl Part I, Shared Hope International. Sharedhope.org.

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• RESPONSIBILITIES

The bottom girl is responsible for running various functions of her pimp's business. She is usually required to lure new girls into the commercial sex trade, schedule clients, collect money, transport girls to clients, discipline the other trafficked girls, and bail out of jail the other girls or her pimp - should arrests occur.

Source

Shamere (2012, March 23). Unavoidable Destiny | The Reality of the "Bottom Girl Part I, Shared Hope International. Sharedhope.org. Retrieved January 23, 2025, from <https://sharedhope.org/2012/03/23/unavoidable-destiny-the-reality-of-the-bottom-girl-part-i/>

VOCABULARY

LOVE BOMBING

Manipulating someone by giving attention, affection, compliments, or gifts to gain power in the relationship.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

VOCABULARY

TRAUMA BONDING

Manipulating someone by switching between abuse and acts of kindness or affection to create a deep emotional attachment.

RECRUITERS
FEMALES & PEERS

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OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

EMOTIONAL ABUSE



How can emotional abuse cause a recruiter to target their friends or peers?



EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Reward & Punishment Cycle

- **Grooming:** Traffickers use attention, gifts, and praise to meet emotional needs and create a false sense of love.
- **Controlling:** Over time, Traffickers introduce fear, using physical and psychological abuse to enforce obedience.
- **Trauma Bond:** A cycle of love and abuse creates a sense of loyalty, preventing victims from making their own decisions.

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Chambers R., Gibson M., Chaffin S., Takagi T., Nguyen N., Mears-Clark, T. (2022, January 30). Trauma-coerced Attachment and Complex PTSD: Informed Care for Survivors of Human Trafficking. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, Volume 10, 2024 – Issue 1, p. 43.

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TRAUMA BONDS

Victims experience coercive dynamics rather than voluntary decision-making. Trauma bonds can impair judgment and decision-making, increasing vulnerability to manipulation and control.

In trafficking situations, responsibility rests with the trafficker. When victims recruit peers, it is commonly linked to fear, survival pressure, or emotional control rather than free choice.

Source

Chambers R., Gibson M., Chaffin S., Takagi T., Nguyen N., Mears-Clark, T. (2022, January 30). Trauma-coerced Attachment and Complex PTSD: Informed Care for Survivors of Human Trafficking. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, Volume 10, 2024 – Issue 1, p. 43. Retrieved April 24, 2024, from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23322705.2021.2012386>

VOCABULARY

EXPLOITATION

Abusing one's position of power against a vulnerable person, often for personal gain or money.



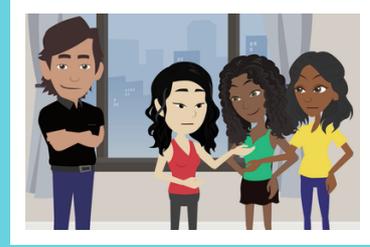
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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

RIVALRY



Why do pimps instigate rivalries among the women they control?

RIVALRY

Maximize Profits

- **Flaunt Status:** Traffickers single out the 'Bottom Girl' to create the illusion of reward, authority, and privilege.
- **Instill Competition:** Favoritism sparks jealousy and rivalry, motivating others to compete for the favored position.
- **Profit Driven:** Traffickers use rivalry to promote working longer and taking greater risks to make more money for the trafficker.

RIVALRY

Instigating rivalry is a documented control tactic in commercial sexual exploitation. By creating competition and false hierarchies, traffickers reduce solidarity, isolate victims from one another, and shift focus away from the trafficker's control. This dynamic increases compliance and productivity while reinforcing dependence on the trafficker for perceived safety, status, or approval.

The bottom girl's life appears prestigious, prompting the other young women to covet her authority. The pimp flaunts her as his preferred companion by putting her in the front car seat, sleeping with her, and giving her power over the other girls. This favoritism stirs envy and motivates the other girls to out-earn the bottom girl by serving more clients to gain this position of power. The pimp's goal of creating rivalry is to make more money.

FEMALE TRAFFICKERS

Can women operate as human traffickers?



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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com Multiple Choice

Can women operate as sex traffickers?

- A) YES
- B) NO
- C) UNSURE

ANSWER

A) Yes, women operate as human sex traffickers, too.

Women can serve as traffickers in multiple contexts, including organized operations, family exploitation, and online recruitment.

Female traffickers may use relational trust, caregiving roles, or deception to manipulate and recruit victims. They often gain trust more easily, especially with girls. This is why it's important to focus on behaviors and warning signs, not gender.

Their involvement highlights that trafficking roles are not limited by gender, and tactics often mirror those used by male traffickers.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Can women operate as sex traffickers?

- A) YES
- B) NO
- C) UNSURE

NOTE TO PRESENTER:

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MULTIPLE CHOICE: A

ANSWER

Yes, women can operate as human traffickers.

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Shamere (2012, March 23). Unavoidable Destiny | The Reality of the "Bottom Girl Part I, Shared Hope International. Sharedhope.org.

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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com Multiple Choice

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FEMALE TRAFFICKERS

Types of Female Traffickers

- **Madams:** Women may run brothels, escort services, or illicit massage parlors.
- **Family Trafficker:** Some women exploit children within their own families.
- **Online Recruiter:** Women may use fake job offers (e.g., modeling) or pretend to be an online-only friend or girlfriend.
- **False Caregiver:** Females can also pose as a mother figure.

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Shamere (2012, March 23). Unavoidable Destiny | The Reality of the "Bottom Girl Part I, Shared Hope International. Sharedhope.org.

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• FEMALE TRAFFICKERS

Women of different age groups can operate as sex traffickers. They can appear less threatening than men, making them effective in deceiving victims. The term “madam” is widely used to describe a female trafficker.

- PERSONA
- PERSONA

Rather than being portrayed as a boyfriend or “daddy” figure, women often present themselves as a “mother,” provider, or protective figure. They can present as a friend, a mentor, a dominant older girlfriend, or a romantic partner. They can also assume the persona of a savvy business manager, flaunting themselves as an image of success or a glamorous, luxurious lifestyle.

• FAMILY TRAFFICKING

Some women traffic family members, including children or other relatives, often out of financial need or coercion from others, such as husbands, boyfriends, or drug dealers.

• ONLINE PLATFORMS

Women may operate online, using social media to lure victims with fake job offers, modeling opportunities, entertainment careers, or romantic relationships.

FEMALE DEFENDANTS



About what percentage of people charged with human trafficking offenses are female?



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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com Multiple Choice

About what percentage of people charged with human trafficking offenses are female?

- A) 1% female
- B) 10% female
- C) 15% female
- D) 20% female

ANSWER

B) About 8-10% of the defendants in human trafficking cases are women.

Data from multiple years of U.S. District Court prosecutions show that most defendants are male, with females consistently representing a small minority—generally about 8–10% of defendants.

Source:

Bureau of Justice Statistics, Human Trafficking Data Collection Activities, 2022 and 2024 reports (U.S. Department of Justice).

Retrieved January 22, 2026, from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/human-trafficking-data-collection-activities-2022> and https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/human-trafficking-data-collection-activities-2024?utm_source=chatgp

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MULTIPLE CHOICE: B

ANSWER

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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com Multiple Choice

What percentage of people charged with human trafficking offenses are female?

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VOCABULARY

PEER PRESSURE

The influence friends or peers have on someone to adopt certain behaviors, attitudes, or values to fit in or be accepted.



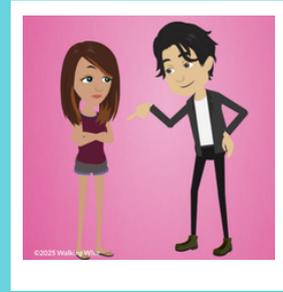
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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FRIEND RECRUITMENT



What are ways a peer can recruit friends or acquaintances into sex trafficking?



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RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Peer recruiters often exploit trust, friendship, and shared goals to manipulate friends into trafficking.

Tactics include normalizing exploitation, gradually introducing peers to trafficking environments, offering promises of independence, and connecting them to adults or authority figures who will exploit them.

These strategies leverage emotional bonds, peer influence, and unmet needs to gain compliance.

FRIEND RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Techniques

- **Normalize:** Promotes trading sex for money by “teaching the ropes.”
- **Manipulate:** Arranges double dates to ease a friend into the business.
- **Promises:** Encourages running away to pursue freedom or a better lifestyle.
- **Connections:** Arrange for friends to meet the trafficker posing as an acquaintance, boyfriend, boss, employer, or job recruiter.

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Baird, K., & Connolly, J. (2023). Recruitment and Entrapment Pathways of Minors into Sex Trafficking in Canada and the United States: A Systematic Review. *Trauma, violence & abuse, 24*(1), 189–202.

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FRIEND RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Techniques

- **Easy Money:** Brags about how much money can be earned quickly.
- **Substance Use:** Offers free drugs or party invitations to target peers who use substances.
- **Vulnerable Friends:** Targets teens with limited support networks or unstable home lives.
- **Health:** Exploits teens with mental or physical health challenges.

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FRIEND RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Techniques

- **Glamor:** Makes selling sex, drug dealing, or gang involvement seem exciting.
- **Invitations:** Use social invitations to lure friends into exploiting situations.
- **Imposter:** Poses as a friend, displaying support or trustworthy behaviors.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

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COMMON RECRUITERS



Who is most often responsible for recruiting victims into sex trafficking?



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Baird, K., & Connolly, J. (2023). Recruitment and Entrapment Pathways of Minors into Sex Trafficking in Canada and the United States: A Systematic Review, *Trauma, violence & abuse*, 24(1), 189–190.

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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com: Multiple Choice

Who is most often responsible for recruiting victims into sex trafficking?

- A) Classmates
- B) Boyfriends
- C) Female Friends
- D) Family Friends

ANSWER

B) Boyfriends, in particular, having an older boyfriend is a risk factor for young females.

Some “boyfriend recruiters” operate as part of a larger trafficking network and collaborate with peers, gangs, or adults within the commercial sex trade. This highlights that exploitation can be both personal and organized.

Source

Baird, K., & Connolly, J. (2023). Recruitment and Entrapment Pathways of Minors into Sex Trafficking in Canada and the United States: A Systematic Review, *Trauma, violence & abuse*, 24(1), 189–190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211025241>

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NOTE TO PRESENTER:

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MULTIPLE CHOICE: B

ANSWER

Boyfriend. Older boyfriends, in particular, are known to create fake romantic relationships.

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- D) Family Friends

ANSWER

B) Boyfriends, in particular, having an older boyfriend is a risk factor for young females.

Some “boyfriend recruiters” operate as part of a larger trafficking network and collaborate with peers, gangs, or adults within the commercial sex trade. This highlights that exploitation can be both personal and organized.

Source

Baird, K., & Connolly, J. (2023). Recruitment and Entrapment Pathways of Minors into Sex Trafficking in Canada and the United States: A Systematic Review, *Trauma, violence & abuse*, 24(1), 189–190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211025241>

COMMON RECRUITERS

Boyfriend Recruiters

- **For Money:** Some boyfriends pressure their partners into commercial sex to earn cash for themselves.
- **For Control:** They manipulate, threaten, or pressure their partner to gain power over them.
- **Criminal Ties:** Some have gang connections and lure victims by pretending to be their boyfriend.

COERCION

Boyfriend recruiters often exploit emotional trust and romantic attachment to control victims. They may pressure partners into commercial sex for financial gain, use manipulation or threats to establish power, and leverage criminal affiliations or connections to maintain control. These tactics rely on the victim's emotional bond and the trafficker's ability to disguise coercion as a relationship.

Source

Baird, K., & Connolly, J. (2023). Recruitment and Entrapment Pathways of Minors into Sex Trafficking in Canada and the United States: A Systematic Review. *Trauma, violence & abuse*, 24(1), 189–202. Retrieved January 30, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211025241>

VICTIMS TARGET PEERS



Why might a victim cause the same harm to someone they know?



VICTIMS TARGET PEERS

Traffickers Deceive Victims

- **Unrecognized:** Victims often don't realize that crimes are being committed against them.
- **Normalized:** Traffickers make exploitation seem normal.
- **Coerced:** Traffickers convince victims that they chose to participate, and there's no way out.

Source

Chambers R., Gibson M., Chaffin S., Takagi T., Nguyen N., Mears-Clark, T. (2022, January 30). Trauma-coerced Attachment and Complex PTSD: Informed Care for Survivors of Human Trafficking. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, Volume 10, 2024 – Issue 1, p. 43. Retrieved April 24, 2024, from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23322705.2021.2012386>

VICTIMS TARGET PEERS

Why Target Peers

- **Threats:** Victims may be pressured or coerced by traffickers.
- **Safety:** Cooperating can seem like the safest choice.
- **Quotas:** Recruiting can lower the financial demand on them.
- **Status:** Recruiters may receive preferential treatment, such as being the 'bottom.'
- **Unaware:** Victims might not realize they're putting peers at risk.

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Family and Youth Services Bureau. (2022). TIPSHEET: Peer-to-Peer Human Trafficking Recruitment in RHY Settings: Trauma-Informed Response. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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PRESSURE

Victims may be forced or coerced into recruiting peers due to threats, manipulation, or pressure to meet quotas. Acting as a recruiter can temporarily improve their safety or status within the trafficking structure. Many victims do not fully understand the consequences of recruiting others and remain under the trafficker's control throughout the process.

Source

Family and Youth Services Bureau. (2022). TIPSHEET: Peer-to-Peer Human Trafficking Recruitment in RHY Settings: Trauma-Informed Response. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved January 23, 2026, from <https://www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org/files/2022/11/Tipsheet-on-Peer-to-Peer-Recruitment-human-trafficking.pdf>

MISTAKEN MENTOR

Why do some recruiters view themselves as mentors rather than traffickers?



MISTAKEN MENTOR

Recruiter Mindset

- **Childhood Abuse:** Early abuse can distort a recruiter's viewpoint, making manipulation seem natural for survival.
- **Normal Lifestyle:** Growing up around exploitation can make trafficking seem like a normal way to live or make money.
- **Helping Friends:** Some recruiters justify their actions by thinking they're providing access to money, housing, or drugs.

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CHILDHOOD ABUSE

Peer recruiters and bottom girls are often survivors of early abuse in their childhood, having endured various forms of abuse, such as neglect or mental, physical, or sexual abuse.

Unfortunately, these experiences normalize criminal adult behavior, leading the recruiter to misunderstand the fact that enticing friends into their traffickers' circle is a form of victimization.

They may genuinely believe they provide access to a better life or a glamorous lifestyle. In their distorted viewpoint, they may even think that they are helping friends in poverty, those facing homelessness, or assisting friends with substance addiction in gaining access to drugs.

TRAFFICKED RECRUITERS



How can a recruiter be just as victimized?



TRAFFICKED RECRUITERS

Victimized Recruiters

- **Victims Themselves:** Many recruiters are trafficked before or while they are recruiting others.
- **Pressure to Comply:** Traffickers place intense pressure on recruiters to follow rules and make money.
- **Punished for Failing:** Recruiters may face threats or violence if they don't recruit, control others, or meet quotas.

TRAFFICKED RECRUITERS

Recruiters can be trafficked just like other victims, experiencing manipulation, intimidation, and coercion.

For example, a trafficker may impose severe punishment if the recruiter fails to meet required quotas or profits, does not successfully recruit new individuals into the pimp's network, or if the "bottom girl" is unable to control the other girls under her authority.

VICTIM OR CRIMINAL?



OPINION: Should recruiters be held legally responsible for their role in human trafficking?



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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com Open Text

OPINION: Should recruiters be legally responsible for their role in human trafficking?

ANSWER

Responses are open text.

This question is meant to spark critical thinking about accountability and the complexity of human trafficking. Recruiters can be either criminals or victims themselves, depending on whether they were making independent choices or were coerced or groomed.

Encourage students to consider intent, coercion, and consequences:

- Did the recruiter knowingly exploit someone?
- Were they pressured by others or part of a larger network?

VICTIM OR CRIMINAL?

Legal Consequence

- **Recruitment of Minors:** Recruiters may be prosecuted as traffickers if they target children or teens under 18.
- **Coerced Adults:** Recruiters may be prosecuted if they exploit adults using force, fraud, or coercion.
- **Victimized Recruiter:** Recruiters might be considered a victim if they were trafficked as a child or forced or tricked as an adult.

THE LAWS

Legal frameworks recognize that recruiters can have dual roles as perpetrators and victims. Laws distinguish between recruiting minors, coercing adults, and situations in which the recruiter was previously trafficked.

Source

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386, 114 Stat. 1464 (2000). Retrieved January 23, 2026, from <https://www.congress.gov/106/plaws/publ386/PLAW-106publ386.pdf>

TRAFFICKING LAWS



How do U.S. laws protect people from human trafficking crimes?



CRIME AGAINST MINORS

Safe Harbor Laws

- **Federal Protection:** Minors (under 18) are protected by federal law when involved in human trafficking crimes.
- **Always Victims:** Minors are always considered victims and never have to prove they were forced, tricked, or threatened.
- **Safe Harbor Laws:** Help ensure minors are treated as victims—not criminals—and connected to care and support.

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H.R.3244 - Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000

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SAFE HARBOR LAWS

In the United States, federal law recognizes minors involved in sex trafficking as victims and encourages protection rather than punishment.

Each state has its own Safe Harbor Laws, which explain how minors should be treated within that state's justice and child welfare systems.

While federal law sets the overall expectation, states are responsible for establishing and enforcing their own Safe Harbor policies, including access to services such as counseling, shelter, and legal support.

Minors can never legally consent to commercial sex, which is why their protection under the law is stronger, in that it does not require that children prove that the use of force, fraud, and coercion was used against them.

Source

H.R.3244 - Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/106th-congress/house-bill/3244>

Safe Harbor Laws can protect individuals from being prosecuted for certain crimes committed while they were trafficked.

ASK FOR HELP



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ASK FOR HELP



What are ways young people can ask for help?

ASK FOR HELP



How to Ask for Help

- If you are in immediate danger, dial 911.
- If the sexual predator IS a family member, consider telling a trustworthy adult.
- If the sexual predator is NOT family, consider telling a parent.
- If you are a student in school, consider telling a trustworthy teacher, coach, school nurse, social worker, counselor, resource officer, or principal.
- To gain internet access for help, consider using a computer at your school or a public library.

24-Hour Hotline for Help

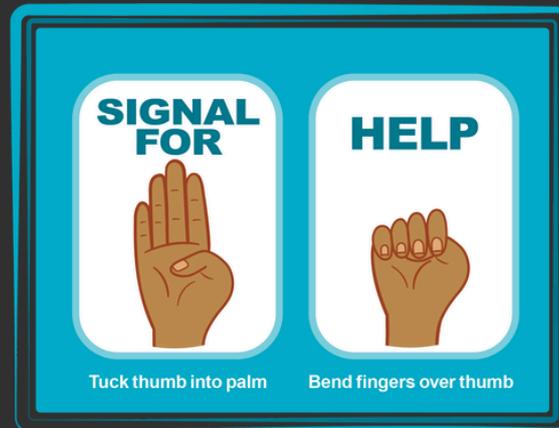
- ✓ National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888 or TEXT 233733
- ✓ Rescue America 833-599-FREE (3733)
- ✓ National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-HOPE (4673)
- ✓ National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 800-THE-LOST (843-5678)
- ✓ National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-SAFE or TEXT 88788
- ✓ National Runaway Safeline 800-RUNAWAY (786-2929)

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Presenters may ask their audience to consider adding a few "hotline for help" phone numbers in their cell phone contacts or take a photo of this slide.

HAND SIGNAL FOR HELP



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Source: Canadian Women's Foundation, April 2020

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Although the hand signal for help has not yet achieved universal recognition, it may discreetly get someone's attention in urgent situations.

SILENT

It can be used silently.

UNTRACKABLE

It leaves no digital footprint.

CONCEALED

It can be done secretly when a perpetrator is in the vicinity.

SIGNALS DISTRESS

Combining the hand signal with a distressed facial expression might help attract the attention of an individual unfamiliar with the signal's meaning.

Source

Canadian Women's Foundation, April 2020

EVALUATION



NOTE TO PRESENTER

If you would like to conduct an online student evaluation, *paid subscribers* may contact us at support@WalkingWise.com for information about using Slido.com.

Otherwise, refer to the Walking Wise lesson plan on this topic to access a pre- and post-student survey.



Two ways to conduct a pre-/post-student evaluation:

- 1) Use the pre/post survey in the Walking Wise lesson plan for this topic.
- 2) Activate Slido.com to conduct an online survey.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS



1. How would you rate this lesson?
2. What was the one thing you liked?
3. What one thing should we improve?

slido.com
#XXXX

If using Slido: Replace "#XXXX" with your organization's custom Slido code.

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Online Interactive Polling
SLIDO.com: 3-Question Survey

IF SLIDO IS ACTIVATED:

Follow the instructions provided on WalkingWise.com to access your school or organization's custom Slido QR code and #code, which the audience will use to complete the 3-question evaluation.

Please encourage your audience to scan your organization's custom QR code to share what they enjoyed and what could be improved about the lesson.

Please send any feedback you want to share to Walking Wise at support@WalkingWise.com.

Thank you!

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To access additional resources about female and peer recruiters, please refer to the last page of Lesson Plan #10 on the Walking Wise Learning Platform.

We welcome your feedback at support@WalkingWise.com.