

# Human Trafficking in Minnesota Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION.

### What can I do to help?

Engage in real talk about trafficking and exploitation. Believe and support survivors. Get information from credible sources. There are everyday ways to have an impact. Visit [Real Talk about Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(link\)](#) for ideas. Find ways to support and volunteer with community-based services providers. For even more ideas, connect with a [Regional Navigator](#). Whatever you choose, it will make a difference.

### As a parent, how can I keep my kids safe?

Start by reading [A Parent's Guide to Safe Harbor \(PDF\)](#). Normalize conversations about sex and healthy relationships. Discuss what healthy work environments look like. Regularly talk about the hard stuff—so your child is comfortable sharing when something doesn't feel right. Learn the signs and indicators of trafficking and exploitation. Pay attention to your children – monitor their internet use, be alert to friends who are much older, or who tend to isolate your child from others.

### What should I say to someone who might be being trafficked or exploited?

Typically, people don't tell others or may not realize they are being exploited or trafficked. Listen without shame or judgment. Stay calm and validate the person's experience. Responses such as: "I believe you," and "I care about you," may be helpful. Avoid trying to 'fix' the situation and offer unconditional support. Share resources and give options, but do so without pressure. Respect and recognize a victim's ability to make decisions for themselves. Do not try to rescue the victim. It can be dangerous for you and the victim to try to interfere directly with the trafficker.

### I've heard the word exploitation. What does that actually mean?

Trafficking is one form of exploitation or abuse. Exploitation often involves taking advantage of a person's vulnerabilities. Commercial Exploitation of Children by itself is a crime. Commercial sexual exploitation occurs when someone exchanges sex for anything of value or a promise of something of value such as money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, or higher status in a gang or

group. Another person may or may not be involved in arranging this exchange. If a third person is involved then it is sex trafficking.

## Where does trafficking and exploitation happen?

In plain sight and in every area of the state. Labor trafficking may happen in agriculture and construction industries, workplaces, homes, restaurants, cleaning services, and other places. Sex trafficking may occur on the street, in vehicles, in hotels, abandoned buildings, homes, casinos, strip clubs, truck stops, massage businesses, hunting lodges, ice houses, and elsewhere.

## Who would do something like this?

Most traffickers and exploiters operate close to where they live. They may be a trusted adult or even an authority figure. Usually, they are known to the victim and may be a friend, employer, family member, or romantic partner. Traffickers usually slowly deceive and manipulate people over time. This process is called grooming. It is often accompanied by other forms of abuse, fraudulent practices, and exploitation.

## What is grooming?

Grooming is a technique used by abusers to gain access to victims, and even convince them to accept the abuse. Abusers groom their victims by building a relationship of trust and emotional connection with their victim. Grooming may include building up the victim's confidence, providing gifts, offering affection, and isolating them from others. Abusers use this tactic to reduce the risk of getting caught by appearing as a trustworthy adult. Parents, family members, friends, and others in the victim's circle may also be targeted for grooming so the abuse is either undetected or not believed.

## This happened to someone I know. We didn't see it coming. What did we miss?

The reality is that it can happen to anyone regardless of gender. Traffickers and exploiters deceive and manipulate youth over time. In the beginning, it may even seem like a friendship or a romantic relationship. The exploiter may shower a person with gifts, affection, compliments, and will try to make a person feel special. There may be false promises of a better life, a job, of love, and money. Eventually, it transitions to trafficking or exploitation. Under *Minnesota state law*, victims are not required to show the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

## What should I say to someone who doesn't believe trafficking and exploitation happens?

It is hard to hear about the impact and human toll caused by trafficking and exploitation. It may unsettle a person's worldview and sense of safety. Share why you care, what you have learned, and listen to their concerns. For tips, reach out to a community-based services provider or [Regional Navigator](#). Take care of yourself. Stop the conversation if it takes a direction you're uncomfortable with.

## **What is the difference between human trafficking and human smuggling?**

Human smuggling and human trafficking are often confused. Human smuggling is the transportation of people illegally from one place to another, often across international borders. The people who are smuggled often choose to make the journey themselves in order to flee difficult conditions such as poverty or violence. They are often seeking safety or better opportunities. They may be paying someone else to help them with the journey. Human smuggling is a crime against the borders and boundaries set by nations, not a person.

Human trafficking (sex or labor), on the other hand does not require movement anywhere. It can happen in one place, or many. It can happen in person or even online. It is not consensual, and is a crime against the victim. A human trafficker may use force, fraud, coercion, or other ways to exploit a person.

## **What is a credible source for information on human trafficking? How can I determine it is credible?**

Misinformation often circulates online through social media, message boards, and other public forums. These websites are not the best place to find for credible information on human trafficking.

Credible information on human trafficking include data that comes from government and evidence-based research and evaluation sources. In the United States some key sources are the United States Department of Justice, Polaris Project, and state agencies with human trafficking prevention programs such as the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

If information is unvetted, seems extreme, or if has no supporting citations it may not be credible. If you are not sure about a data source or its credibility you can contact the Safe Harbor program at MDH at [health.safeharbor@state.mn.us](mailto:health.safeharbor@state.mn.us) or Polaris at [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org).

## **How can trafficking and exploitation be stopped?**

Prevention requires an awareness of who the traffickers are (can be anyone, male and female), how traffickers work, and who the victims are. Exploitation and trafficking impacts some groups

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and people more than others. Consider how stories about racism, sexual orientation and gender identity, hunger, homelessness, joblessness, lack of access to health care, geographic isolation, sexual violence, domestic abuse, disability, and immigration status connect to human trafficking and exploitation.

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