



Building capacity for teen pregnancy prevention and youth development.



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## Child Sex Trafficking

Teaching sexual health education often prompts conversations about the ways that young people can be exploited. One of those vulnerabilities is child sex trafficking, also known as commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The US Department of Justice defines child sex trafficking as, "...the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a minor for the purpose of a commercial sex act."<sup>[1]</sup> Offenders of this crime, commonly referred to as traffickers or pimps, target vulnerable children and gain control over them using a variety of manipulative methods. In the context of this article, the term "child" is used to include any person 18 or younger.

Any child could be a victim of child sex trafficking. However, certain children and youth are more vulnerable, including homeless or runaway youth, African American and Latinx youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth who are involved in the child welfare system (e.g., foster care, group homes).<sup>[2]</sup> For specific population statistics, please see [THORN](#).

Traffickers often seek out vulnerable children, using manipulative strategies to control their victims. Traffickers may use food, clothing, a safe place to stay, or attention as a means of establishing a false sense of trust. Once they gain control of the child, the traffickers sexually exploit them for profit. Traffickers maintain control through continued use of physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. The impact for children who are trafficked often includes severe psychological effects including, but not limited to, depression, self-hate, and feelings of hopelessness.<sup>[3]</sup> Sometimes, children are unjustly arrested and jailed for prostitution. It is important to note that the person committing a crime is the trafficker, not the child.

We can help children/youth understand that it is never their fault if they are being abused and/or trafficked. For guidance on how to help youth in these situations and for general information about various aspects of trafficking, please see the resources below.

- [1] <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/child-sex-trafficking>  
[2] <https://www.thorn.org/child-trafficking-statistics/>  
[3] <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/child-sex-trafficking>

## Action for Educators



Learn the [indicators](#) that suggest the existence of child sex trafficking



Lead a [schoolwide](#) response to trafficking



Decrease child vulnerability by [educating](#) yourself, parents/caregivers, and young people on what trafficking is and what everyone can do to eliminate victimization.



Use the Human Trafficking [Assessment Tool](#) for Educators

### Additional resources:

- [Washington State Human Trafficking Statistics](#)
- [Child Sex Trafficking Identification Resource](#)

## Sexual Health Education Legislation Update

There are currently two sexual health education bills being considered by the Washington State House of Representatives and Senate, [HB 2184](#) and [SB 5395](#). Both bills require every Washington State public school to provide comprehensive sexual health education. You can visit the [Washington State Legislature website](#) to track the progress of each bill. You can also [email your representatives](#) or call your representatives at 1-800-562-6000 to comment on the bills.

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