

Social Media's role in Human Trafficking Recruitment

Information for Parents



Agenda

Introduction

Lecture & Activity

Q&A



Who We Are



About Us

Family Connections is the Essex County **Hub** for New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S). NJ4S-Essex services are all about strengthening the social, emotional, and mental health of local students, their parents, and their educators.

Now more than ever, students deserve support. Social, emotional and mental health are key to student safety, wellness and success.

Our team of **50+ prevention and mental health professionals** are specially trained in the latest Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) and have **lived experience** in Essex's diverse cultures, languages, and communities. We serve all Essex public school students, with a special focus on 6th-12th grade students in underserved, high-need communities.



Tier 1

services include universal prevention education for students, parents, and school staff in **grades pre-K-12.**





Tier 2

services include more focused group prevention programs for students, parents, and educators in **grades 6-12**.



Tier 3

services include individualized assessments and both individual and group counseling for **6th-12th grade** students and families as well as linkage to ongoing treatment.



Objectives

At the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Discuss social media facts and define human trafficking
- Identify potential human trafficking that may be occurring with your child
- Learn tips for talking to your child about general exploitation
- Provide Information about building life skills that may help prevent your child from being trafficked
- Learn reporting options if you suspect a youth is affected by human trafficking or being exploited



Aspects of this presentation is based on 'How to talk to you about Human Trafficking: A Guide for Youth Caretakers and Individuals Working with Youth' – Blue Campaign

Youth and Social Media

Social Media is a Societal Norm

- In 2020, Americans spent an average of 1,300 hours on social media. During this time, teen usage of Tiktok and Instagram rose dramatically
- The American Psychological Association has stated they do not expect teens will leave social media anytime soon



Negative Impact of Social Media

Instagram magnified body image issues for one in three teenage girls, and all teenage users of the app linked it to experiences of anxiety and depression.

Research tells us that higher screen time spent posting and sharing photos on Facebook or Instagram is associated with less body acceptance and more obsessing about appearance.

Multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts.



Social media is training us to compare our lives instead of appreciating everything we are.



No wonder why everyone is always depressed

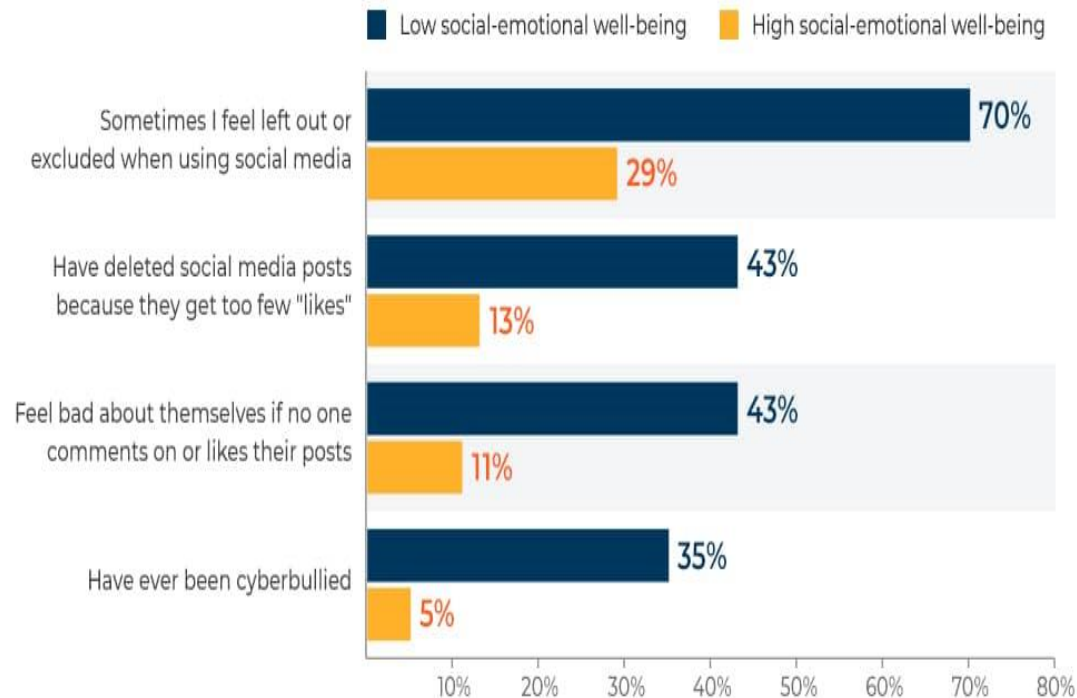
Bill Murray

Harmful Effects of Social Media

- False information on social media may be viewed as real
- It can lead to addiction
- It can put a distorted lens on appearances
- The more time spent on social media the more at risk for cyberbullying
- It normalizes risk-taking behaviors
- Youth may use it in search for validation



Negative Social Media Effects Over US Teenagers by Emotional Wellbeing



Source: Statista

Social Media in Human Trafficking Recruitment

Online recruitment has existed for as long as there has been widespread access to internet platforms. Traffickers may build an intimate relationship with a victim through social media or advertise fake or deceptive job opportunities. Recruiters of traveling sales crews even post photos of daily cash profits to entice potential victims and agricultural labor recruiters may advertise for U.S. visa contracts via social media.

Source: [Human Trafficking and Social Media - Polaris \(polarisproject.org\)](https://polarisproject.org)



Social Media in Recruitment

Traffickers use social media against victims when they isolate them from their support systems by restricting or heavily monitoring social media use. Traffickers also use social media to impersonate victims, spread damaging rumors, distribute intimate images, or stalk a victim's account activity even after they have left the trafficker.

Source: [Human Trafficking and Social Media - Polaris \(polarisproject.org\)](https://polarisproject.org)





**Using emojis & social media
to lure victims**

Defining Human Trafficking and its factors

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Causing someone under the age of 18 to engage in a commercial sex act, regardless of using force, fraud, or coercion is human trafficking under U.S. law. Human traffickers use various forms of force, fraud, and coercion to control and exploit victims. These forms include imposing of debt, fraudulent employment opportunities, false promises of love or a better life, psychological coercion, and violence or threats of violence.



Who are Traffickers?

There is no single face of traffickers, they can be any gender, age, or race. To victims, they can be:

- “Pimps” or a romantic partner
- Employers or other professionals
- Community leaders or people of prominence
- Family members
- Friends or peers
- Strangers
- Connected by mutual friends



Human Trafficking Misconceptions

MYTH	REALITY
When someone is trafficked, they are kidnapped and held against their will.	Being trafficked may be a gradual process. It may take weeks or months of grooming and manipulation by the trafficker before a victim is exploited. Victims may appear to have free will but are often controlled by their trafficker through fear and other forms of mental manipulation. They may not even identify themselves as a victim.
Traffickers are older men who prey on young girls.	The person who lures a youth into a trafficking situation is often one of their peers, a member of their family, or someone they think they trust. Traffickers can be any race, gender, or age.
Only girls are sex trafficked.	Youth of all genders are vulnerable to experiencing sex trafficking. This includes boys, transgender youth, non-binary, and non-conforming youth.
Youth experiencing human trafficking do not go to school.	Youth who attend school and are involved in community activities are still at-risk for being trafficked. Even during a trafficking experience, a victim may still attend school regularly and participate in their usual programs.
Traffickers target victims they do not know.	In many cases, traffickers target vulnerable people who they already know. Traffickers may target friends, family, or any mutual connections to victims in order to establish contact.
Only undocumented individuals are forced labor victims.	Anyone can be a victim of forced labor. Youth of every race, gender, and immigration status are vulnerable to being forced to work for little or no pay.
Forced labor doesn't occur in legal or legitimate business settings.	Forced labor takes place in all kinds of businesses and settings, both legal and illegal. A variety of industries, for example illicit massage businesses, domestic work, agriculture, factory work, door-to-door sales crews, bars and restaurants, construction, hospitality, and commercial cleaning services, have uncovered forced labor.

Indicators of Human Trafficking

Physical or Behavioral

- Have unexplained absences from school or display a sudden drop in school performance?
- Chronically run away from home?
- Show sudden or dramatic changes in behavior? For example, if a typically mild-mannered youth begins acting out or a typically outgoing youth becomes reclusive and disconnected from peers.
- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid?
- Suddenly have more (and/or more expensive) material possessions, like purses, clothing, and/or cell phones?
- Exhibit behaviors that would get them suspended (fighting, class disruptions)?
- Defer to another person to speak for him or her, especially during interactions with authority figures?
- Appear to be deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other necessities?
- Talk about or use language related to performing sex acts for money?
- Have tattoos or scars that may indicate branding from a trafficker?



Indicators of Human Trafficking

Social

- Have a “boyfriend,” “girlfriend,” or romantic partner who is noticeably older?
- Engage in sexual behavior that puts them at risk of harm or indicate they may be experiencing abuse from their partner?
- Stop attending the youth activities they normally attend?
- Traveling to other cities or towns frequently?
- Seem restricted from contacting family, friends, or his or her legal guardian?
- Seem to work excessively long hours or during school hours?
- Talk about getting paid very little or not at all for the work they do?
- Appear to not have the freedom to quit their job?

Risk Factors

- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Interaction with foster care or juvenile justice systems
- Lack of support networks, like strong relationships with friends, family, or other trusted adults
- Gang involvement, especially among youth who identify as female
- History of running away
- Low self-esteem
- Being bullied
- Experience discrimination due to their race, gender identity, sexuality, disability, or other personal characteristic
- Family history of sexual abuse or violence
- Community or familial history of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation
- Substance abuse or addictions
- Cognitive and physical disabilities
- Experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event
- Cultural historical trauma (particularly among minority communities)
- Being the sole or primary provider for their family



Protective Factors

- Talking about being taken advantage of and what that can look like.
- Building self-esteem by helping your child recognize their capability, potential, and interests.
- Encourage your child to build strong relationships with friends, family, peers, neighbors, and/or other community members.
- Fostering an environment of acceptance and support for youth who identify as LGBTQIA+.
- Encouraging other youth to seek help from a trusted adult or community resource if they are experiencing exploitation.
- Emphasizing to your child that you will advocate for them if they need help. They may feel shame or guilt and may fear how the rest of the family or law enforcement may view them.
- Building pride for their community and awareness of the cultural contributions made by their ancestors.
- Talking about characteristics of healthy relationships and red flags for abuse.
- Talking about safe internet use



Break out discussion: Is this Human Trafficking?

- Stacy Fitting In
- Carmen's Boyfriend
- New Kids on the Block



How young are
children
approached?



Talking to Youth about exploitation

Talking to Youth

DO	DON'T
<p>Talk about exploitation. Focus conversations on what it means to be taken advantage of, what that may look like, feel like, and even examples of exploitation – such as job offers that seem too good to be true or online romantic relationships that move too fast.</p>	<p>Use crime-specific language. The term “human trafficking” may not resonate with youth and they may even “tune out” from conversations using too much crime-specific language.</p>
<p>Talk about protective factors. Conversations should focus on how youth can protect themselves and look out for their friends and peers. Encourage youth to recognize what they are good at, their future goals, and the value they bring to their friends and family.</p>	<p>Talk about risk factors. Many times, youth may not have any control over the risk factors they are affected by. Focusing discussions on risk factors may make youth feel singled out, vulnerable, and unable to protect themselves.</p>
<p>Use empowering language. Use language that focuses on highlighting the strengths of the youth you work with and emphasizes they are in control of their own decisions, especially when presented with opportunities that may seem too good to be true.</p>	<p>Use victimizing language. Using language that invokes fear and highlights weaknesses may discourage youth from taking any protective action.</p>
<p>Use language that resonates with youth. By interacting with youth regularly, you likely are familiar with the types of language they use in their everyday conversations. Use casual language that you’re comfortable with and that youth will connect with to keep them engaged.</p>	<p>Use “textbook” language. Using formal or “textbook” language that youth do not relate to may make it harder for your message to catch their attention.</p>
<p>Express that you care and are concerned about their safety. If youth shares information with you about an exploitative situation they may be experiencing, start by listening to them and letting them know you care about what they are going through.</p>	<p>Focus on questioning their situation. Let professionals who are trained in trauma response ask specific questions about their situation. Asking too many questions initially may also inadvertently place some blame on them and make them less receptive to help.</p>

Healthy Relationships

Below are some misconceptions youth may hold as to what a relationship looks like:

- Being obsessed with one another is part of being in love.
- Having a controlling partner means that they care about you.
- It is normal to ask your partner for permission to go somewhere or buy something.
- Violence is an acceptable part of a relationship.
- Sex is an obligation in a relationship.



Healthy Relationships continued

These are some characteristics of healthy relationships that can be emphasized with youth:

OPEN COMMUNICATION

You should never be scared to talk to your partner about something.

RESPECT FOR PRIVACY

You do not need to be with your partner 24/7 and they should not have access to your personal belongings like your phone or money.

VIOLENCE IS NEVER OKAY

Your partner should never put their hands on you with the intent to physically harm you and you should not feel unsafe when being around them.

CONSENT

It is only okay to engage in any type of sexual behavior if both of you have agreed, are comfortable, and desire to do so. It is also okay to change your mind about wanting to have sex and a safe partner should respect that.



Job Promises

Indicators of a false job promise could include:

- The payment and the job description do not seem to match (for example, a high hourly salary for a typically low-paying job).
- The employer does not request any information about your previous work experience.
- The employer asks for a photo of you as part of the application process.
- The employer asks a lot of personal questions about you that are not relevant to the potential job.
- The employer requests a substantial fee to cover the costs of uniforms or other expenses.
- The employer tells you not to tell anyone about the job or asks you to lie about your age.





Online Safety

Below are several safety tips you can discuss with your child to protect themselves while they are online and using social media:

- Keep your personal information private (where you live, work, go to school, or details about your personal life).
- Set your profile to private so only your friends in real life can get access.
- Never accept a friend request from someone you do not know in real life.
- If you share a personal photo and someone uses it to threaten or blackmail you, you have options. Talk to a trusted adult about how to protect yourself or get help.

Online Safety

- Tell your children that if they plan to meet someone in person that you met online, it should be in a public setting, like a restaurant or coffee shop, and let you or a trusted friend know who, where, and when you are meeting.
- Tell your child to do their research on a job offer that seems too good to be true by reading reviews on company rating websites or reaching out to current and/or past employees to validate information about the job.
- If someone is not who they seem to be, or your child thinks they are being lured into a potentially exploitative situation, let the know that they can tell you or a trusted adult. Reporting the person could help stop them from potentially exploiting others.
- Tell your child to trust their instincts! If something feels wrong about a conversation they are having with someone online, stop the conversation and block the profile.



Reporting Human Trafficking & Resources

How to Report

Call **911** or **local law enforcement** if you or someone else is in immediate danger.

DO NOT at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert the youth to your suspicions. Your safety and that of the youth is important. Instead, please contact local child services or local law enforcement directly or call tip lines.

Call **1-866-347-2423** to report suspicious criminal activity to the **Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Highly trained specialists take reports from both the public and law enforcement agencies on more than 400 laws enforced by HSI, including those related to human trafficking. HSI agents responding to reports are specifically trained on a victim-centered approach to stabilize victims and connect them with support services, including providing immigration relief for qualifying victims. You can also **submit an anonymous tip online via the HSI Tip Form** at: ice.gov/webform/hsi-tip-form



How to Report

Call **1-888-373-7888** or text **HELP** or **INFO** to **BeFree (233733)**. The **National Human Trafficking Hotline** takes calls from victims and survivors of human trafficking and those who may know them. It can help connect victims with service providers in the area and assist in reporting their situation to trusted law enforcement contacts. The Trafficking Hotline is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in English, Spanish, and more than 200 other languages. The Trafficking Hotline is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a nongovernmental organization.

Call **1-800-THE-LOST** (1-800-843-5678) or go to **CyberTipline.org** to report suspected child sex trafficking, sextortion, online enticement, and sexual abuse material to the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)**. NCMEC is a non-profit organization, available 24/7 to work with families, victims, private industry, law enforcement, and the public to support the identification, location, and recovery of child sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation victims.



Resources

Statewide Human Trafficking Service Provider

Covenant House New Jersey

24/7 call center support, case management and case coordination for survivors of human trafficking of any age and any housing status in NJ.

24/7 Call Center Phone (All Ages): 862-240-2453

North Jersey, Call: 973-621-8705

South Jersey, Call: 609-348-4070

[Covenant House New Jersey \(https://www.covenanthousenj.org\)](https://www.covenanthousenj.org)

New Jersey Human Trafficking 24 HR Hotline:

855-END-NJ-HT (855-363-6548)



Resources

AVANZAR's (formerly the Atlantic County Women's Center) Dream Free program

Provide statewide services to youth survivors of human trafficking, ages 21 and under. The program works from a 4-P perspective: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution & Partnership.

24 Hr. Hotline: 1-800-286-4184

Phone: 609-646-6767

Web: <https://avanzarnow.org/programs-services/human-trafficking/>



Resources

For survivors or current targets of human trafficking there's a NJ database of resources to find the help by county

[Survivor Resources Landing Page - New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking \(safernj.org\)](https://safernj.org)

In January 2022 Division of Educational Services of the NJ Department of Education released 'Guidelines for Schools on the Prevention of Human Trafficking of Students'. The 44-page guide provides NJ statistics, information, and resources - [Guidelines for Schools on the Prevention of Human Trafficking of Students \(nj.gov\)](https://nj.gov)





Q & A

ATTENTION ESSEX COUNTY RESIDENTS
WANT TO RAISE RESILIENT YOUTH?

TEXT NJ4SFAM TO 27034
TO RECEIVE POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS



Thank you!

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Visit our website at: nj4s-essex.org

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