

Human Trafficking

Foundational Information for School Boards
and School Board Staff

Ministries of Education and Children,
Community and Social Services

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Disclaimer

Content Warning

- This presentation contains material about human trafficking that may be difficult for some individuals to reflect upon or discuss.
- It may cause a strong emotional and/or physiological response. If you need support please reach out to your administrator/supervisor or EAP program.
- **If needed, please contact the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010) for assistance.**

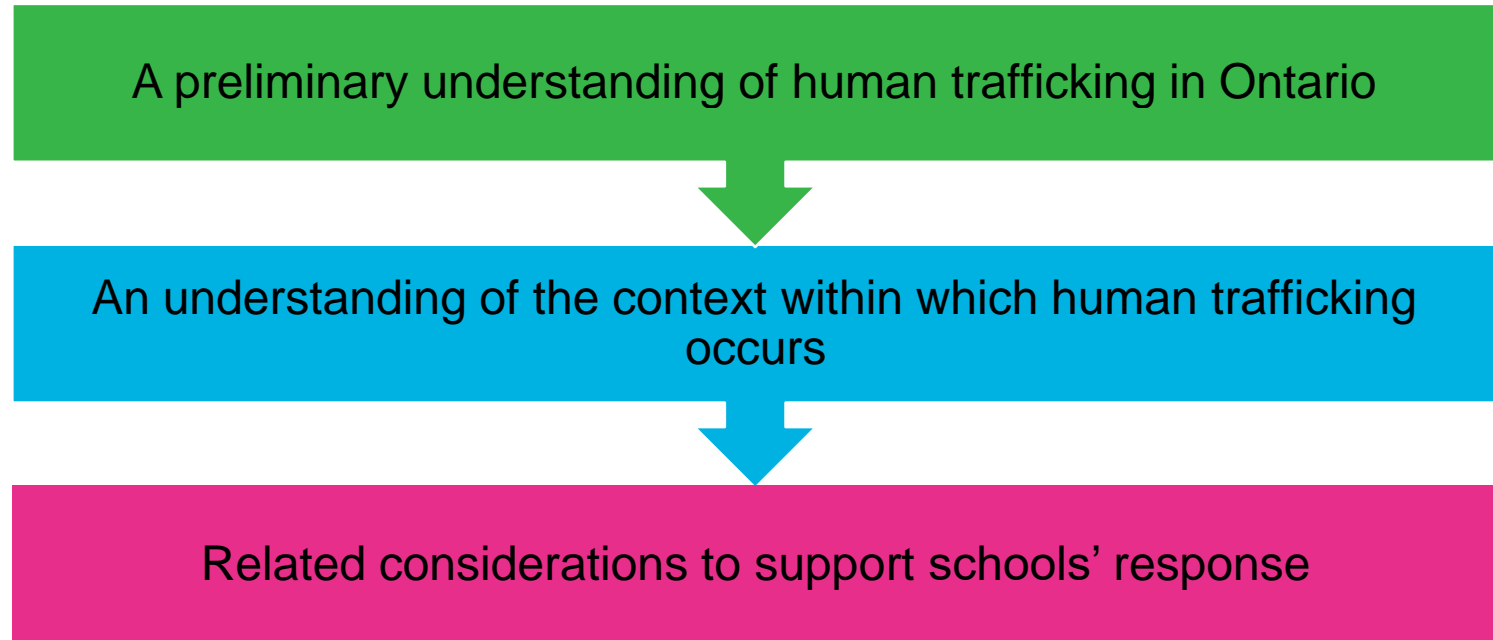
A Note on Language

- The term “**human trafficking**” or HT is used to refer to the control over and exploitation of an individual, most often in Ontario for sexual exploitation, also known as “sex trafficking” (though cases of labour exploitation are also known to occur).
- “**Victim**” is to refer to an individual who is in the process of being recruited or is being trafficked.
- “**Survivor**” is used to refer to an individual who has exited a trafficking situation.
- Note: This approach is used for clarity and not intended to label or define an individual’s experience. Individuals who have experienced trafficking may prefer one term over another in order to describe their experiences. School board employees should confirm how an individual impacted by trafficking prefers to be referenced. Some individuals will choose not to identify as having experienced “human trafficking”, and may use another term to describe their experiences (e.g. as a “victor” rather than a “victim”). It is important to mirror the language that someone uses (e.g.

calling their trafficker their “boyfriend”), and not imposing external perspectives on their lived experiences.

Objectives

This presentation provides an overview and foundational knowledge for schools and school board staff, to support:



This presentation is also meant to support school boards with their initial considerations to support their planning as they develop anti-sex trafficking policies.

What is Human Trafficking?

- Human trafficking is a **hidden crime** and involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in order to exploit that person, typically through sexual exploitation or forced labour (commonly referred to as sex or labour trafficking).
- There is no universal experience of human trafficking, and it is known to result in severe trauma for survivors, who may have non-linear healing journeys as they work to rebuild their lives.

Human Trafficking

Act (What)

- Recruitment
- Transfer
- Transportation
- Harbouring
- Receipt of Persons

Means (How)

- Threat or use of force
- Coercion
- Deception/fraud
- Abuse of power or vulnerability

Purpose (Why)

- Exploitation, including: sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage and forced organ removal.

Myths

“If a person isn’t kept locked up or in chains they can always just leave.”

- Traffickers use a range of tactics to coerce, control and exploit victims, such as manipulating an intimate relationship; psychological control; financial dependence; having poor credit or being in debt from their trafficker or abuser taking out loans/credit cards in their name; threatening personal safety or the safety of others; fear of criminalization; language barriers; reluctance to report to police; having nowhere else to go.

“Human trafficking is the same as human smuggling”

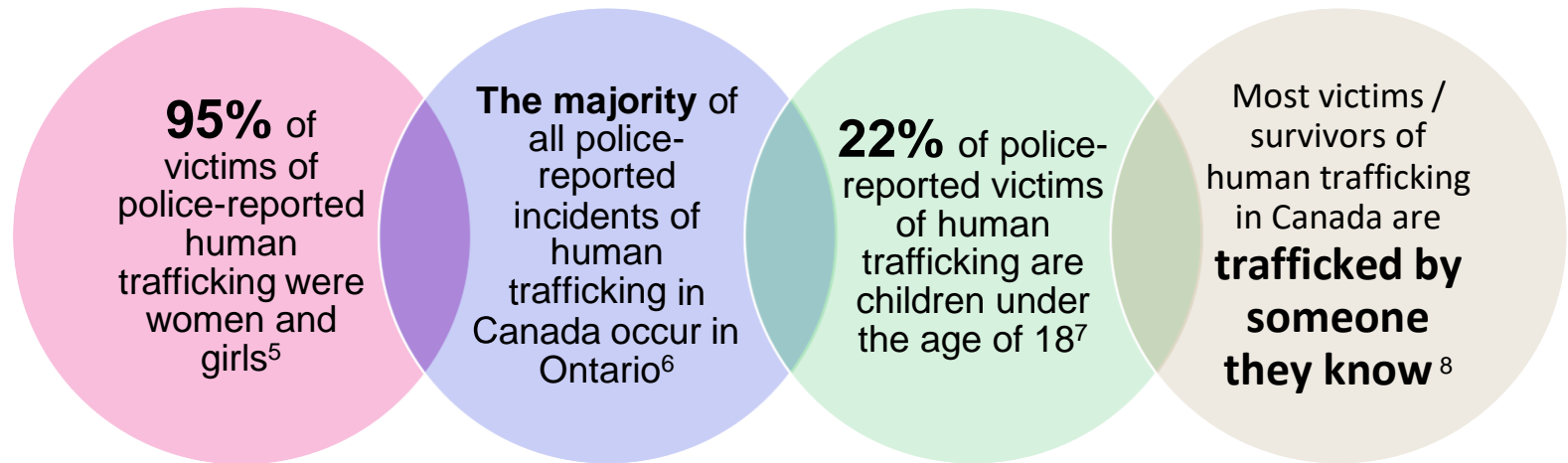
- Human trafficking is not the same as human smuggling, which involves transporting individuals across borders through non-traditional channels, typically with consent.
- In most reported cases of human trafficking in Ontario, the person trafficked is from Canada and is recruited within Canada.

“Some people choose to be involved in exploitative situations.”

- No one can consent to being trafficked, and no one under the age of 18 can consent to involvement in the commercial sex trade. Traffickers’ manipulation and control tactics that may lead victims to feel like they are “choosing to be in the sex trade”, which perpetuates further harm against victims as it can make victims feel that they are responsible for what has happened to them.

A Snapshot of Human Trafficking in Canada

- Human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes worldwide, and Ontario is a hub.
- In Ontario, the vast majority of police-reported cases involve sexual exploitation, but there are also cases of labour trafficking. ¹
- Human trafficking incidents are most often reported by police in urban centres, but traffickers are known to target individuals from and trafficking in northern or remote communities. ^{2,3}
- Indigenous women and girls comprise a disproportionate number of trafficked persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Canada. ⁴



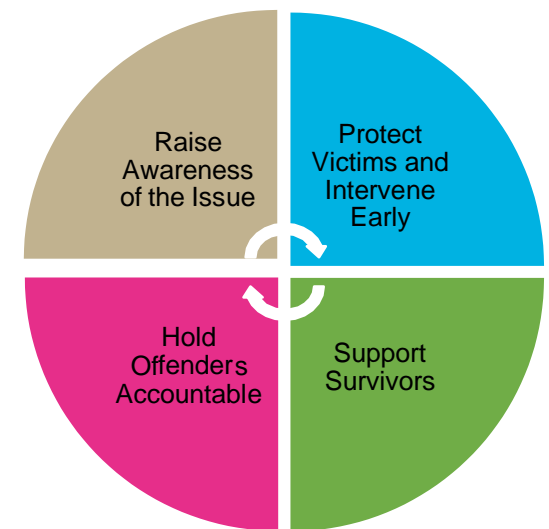
Information for School Boards

Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy 2020-2025

Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy builds on efforts to date and addresses key gaps to reinforce Ontario as a leader in combatting human trafficking in North America.

- On March 6th, 2020, the government announced Ontario's new Anti-Human Trafficking ("AHT") Strategy to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation, with **an investment of \$307 million over 5 years** in anti-human trafficking programs and initiatives across government.
 - The AHT Strategy prioritizes initiatives that are targeted to prevent at-risk children and youth from being trafficked, provide dedicated specialized services for child and youth victims of human trafficking, and supports for survivors of human trafficking (including survivor-led initiatives).
 - Indigenous-specific initiatives are imbedded throughout the AHT Strategy to ensure a holistic response.
- This new strategy reflects the valuable input heard from survivors of human trafficking, Indigenous communities and organizations, law enforcement and frontline service providers.

Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy's 4-Pillar Framework



Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM) no. 166: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols

- The education sector is a key partner in Ontario's multi-sector approach to combatting human trafficking for sexual exploitation
- The first of its kind in Canada, Ontario's **Anti-Sex Trafficking PPM** requires school boards to develop local protocols to combat sex trafficking of students. Local school board anti-sex trafficking protocols will include:
 - A statement of principles.
 - Strategies to raise awareness and increase understanding about the urgency and complexity of combating sex trafficking.
 - An emphasis on the importance of multi-sectoral partnership.
 - Direction on response and support procedures for students at risk of or being sexually abused through sex trafficking, including recruitment.
 - Expectations for training for school board employees.
 - Direction on approaches to accountability and evaluation.

22% of police-reported victims of human trafficking are children under the age of 18.⁹

Traffickers can target children and youth **online** or through **social media**.

Who Is At Risk for Sex Trafficking?

- Traffickers identify a person's vulnerabilities and then target those vulnerabilities to gain trust and form a bond. Since everyone has vulnerabilities, anyone can be at risk of being trafficked. However, there are some specific risk factors that may make an individual more vulnerable:

Females, especially young children/youth, 2SLGBTQQIA+

Indigenous and racialized women and children

Individuals with a history of physical or sexual abuse

Children and youth in care, or transitioning out of care

Homeless and marginalized youth

Individuals with low self esteem, who are isolated or lack a sense of belonging

Who Is At Risk for Sex Trafficking? *cont.*

- Many of the risks are a result of systemic barriers, racism, discrimination, oppression, and other factors that can put a student at greater risk to being lured by traffickers. For example:
 - The intergenerational effects of government policies, systemic racism, and discrimination, including residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, continue to contribute to the heightened vulnerability of Indigenous children and youth to being targeted by traffickers.
 - First Nation youth transitioning from remote Northern communities to schools in urban centres can also face increased safety risks.
 - Systemic racism and discrimination have also led to a disproportionate number of Indigenous and Black children and youth in care, in addition to other trauma that contributes to a heightened risk for trafficking.
 - Students with disabilities may experience bullying and isolation in addition to having difficulty understanding the intentions of others. They may not recognize the signs of being lured and groomed by traffickers.
 - Students who are 2SLGBTQIA experience high rates of bullying, assaults and sexual abuse. They may also face isolation or displacement if they experience rejection from family or community, which may increase their risks of being targeted.
 - Language barriers, isolation, economic disadvantage, or a lack of community and social supports may leave newcomer youth with increased vulnerability to trafficking.
 - Youth experiencing precarious housing, as well as children and youth in the care of Children's Aid Societies and/or Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies, lack consistent relationships with caring adults and peers in schools, in turn, limiting the ability to report and respond to suspected sex trafficking.

Signs To Look Out For

Possible signs that someone is being groomed for **sex trafficking** include changes such as:

Withdrawing from family and friends

Being secretive about their activities

Having a new boyfriend, girlfriend or friend who they won't introduce to friends and family

Suddenly spending time with an older person or people

Frequently missing

Absences from school or a decline in school performance

Wearing more sexualized clothing

Having new clothing, jewelry etc. that they can't afford to buy

Suddenly having a new or second cell phone with a secret number

Shows signs of physical abuse such as bruising, cigarette burns, fractures etc.

Please note this list is not exhaustive and represents only a selection of possible indicators. Each individual sign should be taken in context, should not be considered in isolation, and should not be taken as “proof” that human trafficking is occurring.

If you think you or someone you know might be at risk, you can call Canada's confidential Human Trafficking Hotline at 1 833 900-1010 for information and support.

Recruitment, Grooming, and Control

Traffickers control their victims through psychological and emotional manipulation. While each person is different, their experiences and feelings may look like:

Targeting Vulnerabilities and Luring

Techniques used to **target, recruit, lure and groom victims** and often rely on **deception and coercion**.

- Traffickers can spot and exploit almost any vulnerability, and can be strangers, acquaintances, or friends or family.
- Traffickers sometimes pay sudden attention to individuals, and lure them by becoming a friend or boyfriend.

“They really get me! This is the best relationship I’ve been in.”

Grooming and Control

First, traffickers may offer the person what they want or need. After that comes control and manipulation.

- Traffickers **learn** what an individual wants or needs (i.e., money, affection, attention, material goods, a place to live, drugs etc.), **build trust and reliance** by fulfilling these needs, and then **use this dependence** to manipulate the individual.
- Traffickers **control** victims in many ways, including psychological manipulation, emotional abuse, lies, addiction, threats, violence, isolation, and taking control of identity documents and money. Traffickers may force victims to recruit other victims.

“I don’t like how he’s changed. He keeps telling me that no one else will ever love me again once they learn what I’ve done.”

Exploitation and Challenges to Exiting

Individuals who are trafficked may not **believe or understand that they are a victim of a crime** and service providers may not recognize the signs of trafficking.

- Traffickers coerce victims into sex, often in exchange for money. This is different from sex work, where the person consents to engage in sex work (and can only do so if they are over 18 years of age).
- It can be very difficult for a survivor to leave a trafficking situation. It can take several attempts before they are able to seek assistance.

“No one understands what I’ve been through. The temptation to go back is high—at least there no one judges me.”

Manipulation, Control, and Consent

- Even if a victim of human trafficking did say yes at any point, that does not mean that they agreed to be trafficked.
- **Nobody can agree to be trafficked.** Traffickers earn victims' trust and pretend to care about them so they can manipulate and exploit them.
- Anyone **under the age of 18 cannot legally consent** to have sex in exchange for money, drugs, alcohol, shelter, transportation, food, or any other object or necessity.
- Regardless of the age of the person being exploited, the person(s) responsible for manipulating and exploiting someone is **committing a crime**.

It is known that traffickers often force victims to recruit others as a part of their experience of exploitation.

This is done for several reasons, including: to try to make victims feel complicit in their own exploitation, as well as in the exploitation of others; to prevent victims from coming forward or seeking help; to avoid detection; and to gain access to new groups of young people (e.g. younger siblings; peers in group care facilities, etc.).

It is important to be mindful that the persons, especially school aged children and youth, recruiting others may be victims themselves.

The Stages of Exploitation¹⁰

At Risk

- Traffickers identify and seek out individuals based on vulnerabilities that they can manipulate in order to make their victim dependent on them
- **What Could This Look Like:** Luring (often through social media), and grooming (e.g., showering individual with gifts/affection)

Transitioning In

- Trafficker begins to “test limits” of the individual they are targeting to determine how effectively they can control and manipulate behavior
- **What Could This Look Like:** disengagement from previously enjoyed activities (e.g., school, extracurriculars; friend groups); alcohol or substance usage; spending time with a new friend or boyfriend (who may be older)

Entrenchment


- Traffickers use psychological, physical, emotional manipulation to control and exploit the individual
- **What Could This Look Like:** going missing; using language of the sex trade (e.g., “the game”; “tricks”); moods more volatile; isolation from family/friends

Transitioning Away

- Individual begins to look at exiting the exploitative situation, though this may take several attempts
- **What Could This Look Like:** seeking specialized supports; re-engagement in activities previously enjoyed; involvement in friends/family

How to Support a Disclosure

Be sensitive to the unique experiences of children and youth victims of human trafficking is critical to being able to support this population.



Being observant of changes in behaviour in children and youth (e.g. sudden changes in appearance; sudden changes in friend groups; sudden changes in engagement in school/extracurriculars; appearance of a new friend or boyfriend about whom they are secretive; missing or skipping class; in possession of substances, alcohol, or material goods with no reasonable explanation for how they've obtained them).



Utilizing the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, where applicable at 1-833-900-1010. The hotline is for: victims seeking help; people with a tip to report a potential case; members of the public wanting to learn more about the subject.



School staff should connect with their board about their protocol/protocol development, reporting procedures, duty to report, and culturally safe and responsive support available for students and staff.



Participating in localized and community-based responses, including local anti-human trafficking coalitions. These coalitions comprise organizations across sectors working to provide localized responses to human trafficking in their community. For more information, including on if there is an anti-human trafficking coalition in your community, please contact antitraffickingoffice@Ontario.ca.

Services in Peel:

- Your school social worker is available for consultation
- The Female Mobile Support Service - operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society. Counsellors meet in the community with students who you suspect are being trafficked - (416) 312-6938
- Ncourage - The Anti-Human Sex Trafficking Integrated Service Hub - operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society, Catholic Family Services and Our Place Peel. This is the gateway to counselling, treatment, legal advice, safe house and transitional housing - (416) 625-8324
- Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline - a national line that provides confidential, multilingual, 24/7 support - 1(833)900-1010

What to do if you or someone you know needs help?

- If you or someone you know might be at risk, you can speak with an adult you trust, or call Canada's confidential Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-833-900-1010** for information and support, or visit canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca.
- If there is immediate danger or if you suspect a child under 18 is being trafficked, call 911 or your local police service.



Key Resources

Ontario supports a range of initiatives to help raise awareness and combat human trafficking in our province. Resources to help educate children and youth include:

“[The Trap](#)” a human trafficking digital education tool, and facilitated by an adult, teaches children and youth what human trafficking is and equip them with the skills to stay safe.

[Speak Out: Stop Sex Trafficking](#), an educational campaign focused on raising awareness about sexual exploitation among Indigenous women and youth

Educational [resources and lesson plans](#) for secondary school educators on child sexual exploitation.

For dedicated services in supports across Ontario that help victims, survivors and persons at risk of human trafficking, visit: www.ontario.ca/page/human-trafficking-services-and-supports.

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