

# 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](#) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/safeharbor/navigators.html>). 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](#) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/documents/shparenthandout.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.

## 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](#)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/safeharbor/navigators.html>).

Take care of yourself. Stop the conversation if it takes a direction you're uncomfortable with.

## 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 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.

Minnesota Department of Health  
Safe Harbor  
85 East 7<sup>th</sup> Place  
PO Box 64882  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882  
651-201-5400  
[health.safeharbor@state.mn.us](mailto:health.safeharbor@state.mn.us)  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

2/23/2024

*To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5400.*