

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## SEX TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### A TRAINING TOOL FOR

# CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES



ASU School of Social Work  
**Office of Sex Trafficking  
Intervention Research**



Human Trafficking and terms like “modern day slavery” usually conjure images of young girls being sold to sex tourists in faraway countries. Movies and documentaries feature scenes of tourists being kidnapped and forced into sexual servitude.

Despite media portrayal, human trafficking is a real and growing problem all over the world, including here in the United States. It defies stereotypes and experts continue to build new knowledge about the issue.

The sex trafficking market is driven by the laws of supply and demand. As long as there remains a demand for a commercial sex industry, there will remain a supply of individuals willing to profit from its sale. Consequently, those looking to profit will continue to recruit, abduct, and exploit young people for the purpose of supplying the demand (Harris, 2012).

Vulnerable youth can be lured into prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation using promises, psychological manipulations, provision of drugs and alcohol, and violence. They can be commercially sexually exploited through prostitution, pornography, stripping, erotic entertainment or other sex acts.

**IN A RECENT STUDY  
BY ARIZONA STATE  
UNIVERSITY, OF YOUTH IN  
DELINQUENCY PROGRAMS,  
78% OF DOMESTIC MINOR SEX  
TRAFFICKING VICTIMS WERE  
ALSO INVOLVED WITH CHILD  
PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

*(Roe Sepowitz et al 2014).*

The commercial aspect of the sexual exploitation is critical to separating the crime of trafficking from sexual assault, molestation or rape (Shared Hope, 2014).

Understanding the potential risks for sexual exploitation can help child welfare professionals recognize and address both risk and ongoing or past exploitation among the children and adolescents in the state’s care (NAS,2013).

Although there is limited data to quantify the exact number of human trafficking incidences, we know that the sex trafficking of minors happens and has devastating physical and mental health consequences on victimized youth.

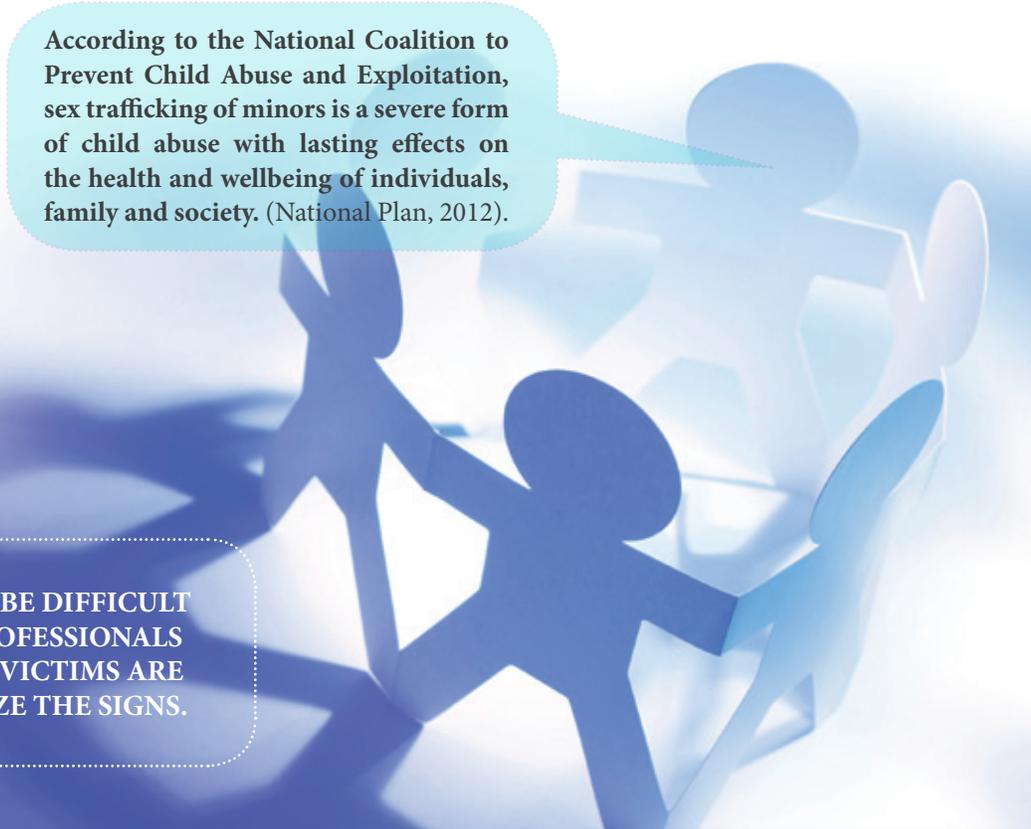
**SEX TRAFFICKING OF MINORS IS A SEVERE FORM OF CHILD ABUSE.**

Child Protective Services’ core philosophy maintains that every child has the right to adequate care and supervision and to be free from abuse, neglect and exploitation (DePanfilis & Salus, 2003).

Child abuse is a complex problem and child protection is a challenging responsibility for those professionals who work in that arena. CPS can take a lead role in developing and maintaining collaborative relationships with potential sex trafficking related referral sources, law enforcement officials, and other professionals who investigate the abuse of sex trafficking, and with professionals and agencies that provide physical and mental health evaluation and treatment (DePanfilis & Salus, 2003).

**According to the National Coalition to Prevent Child Abuse and Exploitation, sex trafficking of minors is a severe form of child abuse with lasting effects on the health and wellbeing of individuals, family and society. (National Plan, 2012).**

**SEX TRAFFICKING CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DETECT UNLESS PROFESSIONALS WHO INTERACT WITH VICTIMS ARE TRAINED TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS.**



# THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A WILLING CHILD PROSTITUTE

The Federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines the crime of trafficking as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.

The most important thing to understand from the federal definition is that anyone under the age of 18 who is induced to perform a commercial sex act is automatically a trafficking **victim**.

## DESPITE CHANCES FOR INTERVENTION, CPS WORKERS CAN EASILY FAIL TO IDENTIFY VICTIMIZED YOUTH.

With increased knowledge about the topic of sex trafficking, as well as new screening tools and intervention strategies, CPS workers can begin to ask the right questions and help their clients avoid further exploitation and abuse.

## WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

While there is no commonly accepted profile for victims of minor sex trafficking, certain populations are more vulnerable than others.

## HOMELESS, RUNAWAY, THROWAWAY AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE ARE THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATION OF YOUTH AT RISK FOR SEX TRAFFICKING (ECPAT USA, 2013).

Pimps/traffickers target runaway or “throwaway” teens or those who are having trouble at home. It is important to note that while youth who run away leave home without permission, throwaways are told or forced to leave and no parent or guardian looks for them once they are gone. Runaway and homeless youth are at increased risk for predators as they have few resources, may not be old enough to legally get a job, and are often running away from difficult situations.

**The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention estimates that 1.6 million youth run away in a year in the United States (OJJDP, 2012).**

It is common for adolescents who run away to trade sex to meet their basic survival needs of food, clothing or shelter. According to a recent survey of homeless youth in New York, of those engaged in commercial sex, most said they did it for shelter, because they needed someplace to stay (Bigelsen, 2013).

## HOW DO MINORS BECOME VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING?

- Running away and/or living on the streets and are forced to exchange sex for survival
- Recruitment by “Romeo/boyfriend” pimps who convince them that they love and care for them
- Kidnapped by “gorilla” pimp and forced into the life
- Gang related prostitution
- A parent or family member pimps/trafficks their child for drugs or money

### THE THREE T's (NCMEC, 2014)

**TARGETED**-Pimps shop for their victims online, in shopping malls, bus stops, at schools, at after school programs, foster homes and other places where teens gather.

**TRICKED**- Pimps invest a lot of time and effort in forming a bond with their victim. They often buy gifts, provide a place to stay, and give affection before revealing their true intent - to sexually exploit them.

Traffickers use a powerful technique pioneered by religious cults known as “love bombing” in which a girl is showered with affection as a means of manipulating her (Dorais & Corriveau, 2009).

**TRAUMATIZED** The pimp's use of psychological manipulation, physical violence and rape can make the victim feel trapped and powerless. The “trauma bond” is very difficult to break and may require intensive long term treatment and counseling

*“My mom and her boyfriend needed money. They said I only had to do it once to help pay the rent.”*

- Sara, a survivor

*“My sister was a prostitute. Her boyfriend showed me how to do it.”*

- Tristan, a survivor

# HOW PIMPS FILL A VOID AND MOTIVATE THEIR VICTIMS

Sex trafficked minors nearly always have a pimp - someone who they view as their protector but who in fact is managing and benefitting from their sexual exploitation (Shared Hope International, 2009).

The trafficker's main purpose is financial gain and will make every effort to establish trust and allegiance by wooing the victim in what feels like a loving and caring relationship. It is helpful to revisit Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) to understand human behavior and motivation, especially in the context of how a pimp has the ability to control their victims by fulfilling their basic physical and psychological needs (Hall, B April 2014).



**VICTIMS ARE OFTEN RELUCTANT TO COME FORWARD BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT BY THEIR VICTIMIZER THAT IF THEY ATTEMPT TO SEEK HELP, NO ONE WILL BELIEVE THEM, AND THEY WILL BE TREATED LIKE A CRIMINAL AND A PROSTITUTE (BIGELSEN, 2013).**

## **BASIC NEEDS:**

The pimp/trafficker may establish rapport and dependency by providing physiological needs such as food, shelter and clothing. This is often where a perpetrator will initiate the coercive phase of victimization, using sexual exploitation as a method of repayment for what has been provided to the victim.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY:**

The pimp/trafficker will provide a false sense of safety and security. As a protector and provider, the perpetrator further establishes him/herself as a person that is essential to the victim's ability to survive.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS:**

Calculated gestures of affection begin to fill a void in the victim's life. The pimp/trafficker grooms the victim by feigning genuine interest, providing material items and making the victim feel 'special'. Victims report that their trafficker offered a sense of family and nurture that had otherwise been missing in their lives.

## **SELF-ESTEEM:**

The pimp/trafficker utilizes a cyclical pattern of praise, indulgence, and degradation to psychologically damage the victim's self-image. The victim will often receive verbal praise about success in commercial sex work as a method of motivation that further entrenches the victim in the lifestyle. Upon failing to meet any demands or requirements, the subsequent verbal berating or physical abuse will compromise the victim's sense of self-worth, prompting him/her to try harder to please.

*"A lot of victims of trafficking do not identify themselves as being a victim. Some may feel that they got themselves in this situation and its their responsibility to get out."*

*- Jane, a survivor*

# COMMON MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT SEX TRAFFICKING CAN AFFECT JUDGMENT AND RESPONSE

Common myths include “that only happens abroad” or “it was consensual.” The more CPS workers know about this population, including the mindset of a victim, the better equipped they will be to identify victims and focus on prevention strategies.

## INTERVIEW TIP:

During your conversations with the victim, try to mirror the language of your client. For example, if she refers to her abuser as “boyfriend” then use this word instead of “pimp” or “abuser” or “trafficker.”

## SEX TRAFFICKING TERMINOLOGY:

**The Life/Game:** commercial sex industry  
**Daddy/Manager:** the trafficker or pimp  
**Bottom:** the traffickers head girl  
**Date/John/Trick:** purchaser of sex/client  
**Track:** street location for commercial sex  
**Square:** those who have never been in the life

## UNDERSTANDING the Mindset of a Victim

VICTIMS OFTEN DO NOT SEE THEMSELVES AS VICTIMS

VICTIMS MAY FEEL SHAME, SELF-BLAME AND FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS OF A BETTER LIFE

VICTIMS MAY BE COACHED TO LIE TO PROFESSIONALS AND OFTEN GIVE FABRICATED HISTORIES WITH SCRIPTED STORIES

VICTIMS ARE OFTEN FEARFUL AND DISTRUST LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES DUE TO FEAR OF ARREST

VICTIMS MAY HAVE FORMED A TRAUMA BOND WITH THEIR EXPLOITER AND MAY HAVE DEEP LOYALTIES AND POSITIVE FEELINGS FOR THEIR ABUSER

VICTIMS OFTEN FEAR FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF THEIR LOVED ONES DUE TO THREATS OF VIOLENCE

DRUGS OFTEN PLAY A ROLE IN SEX TRAFFICKING SITUATIONS- SOMETIMES AS A WAY TO COPE OR VICTIMS SOMETIMES ENTER “THE LIFE” TO SUPPORT A DRUG HABIT



“They are not out playing in the front yard or in school daydreaming about becoming a prostitute”

– Sarah, a survivor

“My childhood was not a childhood. In my family, men had sex with little girls. It was our normal.”

– Elisabeth, a survivor

“He seemed very nice at first. I actually thought he cared about me.”

– Cody, a survivor

“I was just trying to get a better life the fastest way I could”

– Monique, a survivor

Risk factors often reported in research include high rates of history of childhood sexual abuse, history of running away, involvement with the juvenile justice system, presence of an older boyfriend, incarcerated parent, signs of physical violence and presence of tattoos or branding marks. Knowing these risk factors can help service providers identify potential victims and offer critical interventions (Roe-Sepowitz et al 2014).

Sex trafficking victims have endured a high level of trauma and require services and interventions that do not inflict further trauma such as physical restraint, isolation or harsh verbal interrogation.

Traumatic experiences can be dehumanizing, shocking or terrifying and often include a loss of safety and the betrayal by a trusted person or institution (National Center for Trauma-Informed Care, 2013).

NOTICE THE WARNING SIGNS SO YOU CAN HELP VICTIMS RECEIVE THE SERVICES THEY NEED SO THEY ARE NOT FURTHER TRAUMATIZED.

Extreme anger  
Running away  
Guilt and low self-worth  
Self-harm and/or self-mutilation  
Multiple sexual partners  
Eating disorders  
Mood swings  
Difficulty forming relationships  
Flashbacks and/or nightmares  
Confusion  
Depression  
Withdrawal and isolation  
Somatic complaints  
Sleep disturbance  
Academic decline  
Suicidal thoughts  
Dramatic change in behavior  
Truancy or school avoidance  
Substance abuse  
Antisocial behavior

(National Institute of Mental Health)  
(The National Child Traumatic Stress Network 2013)

If you suspect your client could be a victim of sex trafficking, the first step is to get them alone in a confidential location for an interview.

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

“Can you come and go as you please?”

“Has anyone ever paid someone else to have sex with you (like a boyfriend, boss, manager, etc)”

“Tell me about that tattoo.”

“Do you have to work to contribute money to your ‘family’?”

“Do you have a boyfriend? If so, how old is he and what do you like to do together?” “Where did you meet?”

“Have you ever run away from home? If so, where did you stay and who did you stay with?”

“Have you ever had to do things in order to stay somewhere that you did not want to do?”

“Has anyone ever taken pictures of you and put them on the internet?”

“Have you been physically harmed in any way?”

“Where are you staying?”

“Are you or your boyfriend a member of a gang?”

(Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Human Trafficking Screening Tool, 2013)

## did you know

Between 244,000 and 325,000 American youth are considered at risk for sexual exploitation, and an estimated 199,000 incidents of sexual exploitation of minors occur each year in the United States (Estes & Weiner, 2001).

In 2013, multiple cases of human trafficking were reported all 50 states and Washington, D.C. (Polaris Project, 2013).

The average age at which girls first become exploited through prostitution is 12–14 years old (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2013).

Adolescent boys and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer youth (LGBTQ) can also be victims.

According to recently released study, boys make up almost half of the victim population (Bigelsen, 2013).

Along with a means to recruit victims, traffickers use technology to reach a wide client base for prostitution services. The perceived anonymity of online transactions has emboldened traffickers to openly recruit, buy and sell their victims via the internet (Boyd, 2012).

## RED FLAGS FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

- Homelessness \* Chronic runaway \* History of abuse
- Unusual tattoos or branding marks
- Use of street lingo with references to “the game” “the life”
- Dominating or controlling “boyfriend” refusing to leave during an interview
- Presence of a significantly older boyfriend
- Involvement with the juvenile justice system through truancy, curfew violations and other status offenses

# THE HELPING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CPS CASEWORKER AND THE MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIM

To achieve safety for children, CPS workers must work in partnership with the family to reduce the risk for further abuse. A caseworker's ability to communicate with empathy, respect and genuineness will strongly influence the quality of the relationship with the child and family (DePanfilis & Salus 2003).

## EMPATHY

The CPS worker needs to understand where the child has been and what they have lived through. Traumatic experiences can be dehumanizing, shocking or terrifying and often include a loss of safety and the betrayal by a trusted person or institution. Treat your client as a survivor of significant abuse and trauma.

The details of the victim's life are critical, as you cannot begin to frame your intervention without the full story.

### *Ask yourself:*

1. What do we know about the adults involved in this child's life?
2. Who is controlling her?
3. What tactics have been used to make her comply?
4. In these unique cases, it is essential that you pay attention to your language, both verbal and non-verbal.

## RESPECT:

True partnership is impossible without mutual respect. Sex trafficking victims should be approached in a manner that is non-judgmental or stigmatizing. Use everyday language. Give honest answers to questions. Don't ask questions to satisfy your curiosity that are not relevant to the case. Be willing to apologize if you make a mistake.

## GENUINENESS:

Be authentic with your clients, and aware of your own feelings. You may feel shock and horror at the reality and extent of a sex trafficking victim's abuse, but it is important to put your own personal beliefs aside.

### The Interview:

If possible, limit the amount of people who are present during your interview with the client. Applying your knowledge

your client to express feelings about a circumstance or person. Repeat what you hear back in paraphrased form so you confirm with your client that you heard them correctly.

Be authentic and honest in your interactions in order to develop trust and mutual respect in the relationship.

Be patient and know that sex trafficking victims are known to run and return to their victimizer multiple times before successful intervention.

Your client has had to adapt to his or her surroundings and may have developed some useful skills and strategies such as knowing how to read people, especially his/her caseworker.

When asked what advice one survivor would give to those who work with victims, she shared "Come from the purest part of yourself, because we can smell you from a mile away if you don't."



about pimps and traffickers, be aware that family members or legal guardians could be involved in the child's exploitation.

Consider the surroundings of the interview. Know that trafficked youth are very distrustful and are dealing with a significant amount of trauma.

Pay close attention to your interview style and possible modifications if you are met with hostility or difficulty engaging the youth.

Don't talk at your client, but listen. Engage in active listening.

Ask open ended questions that allow

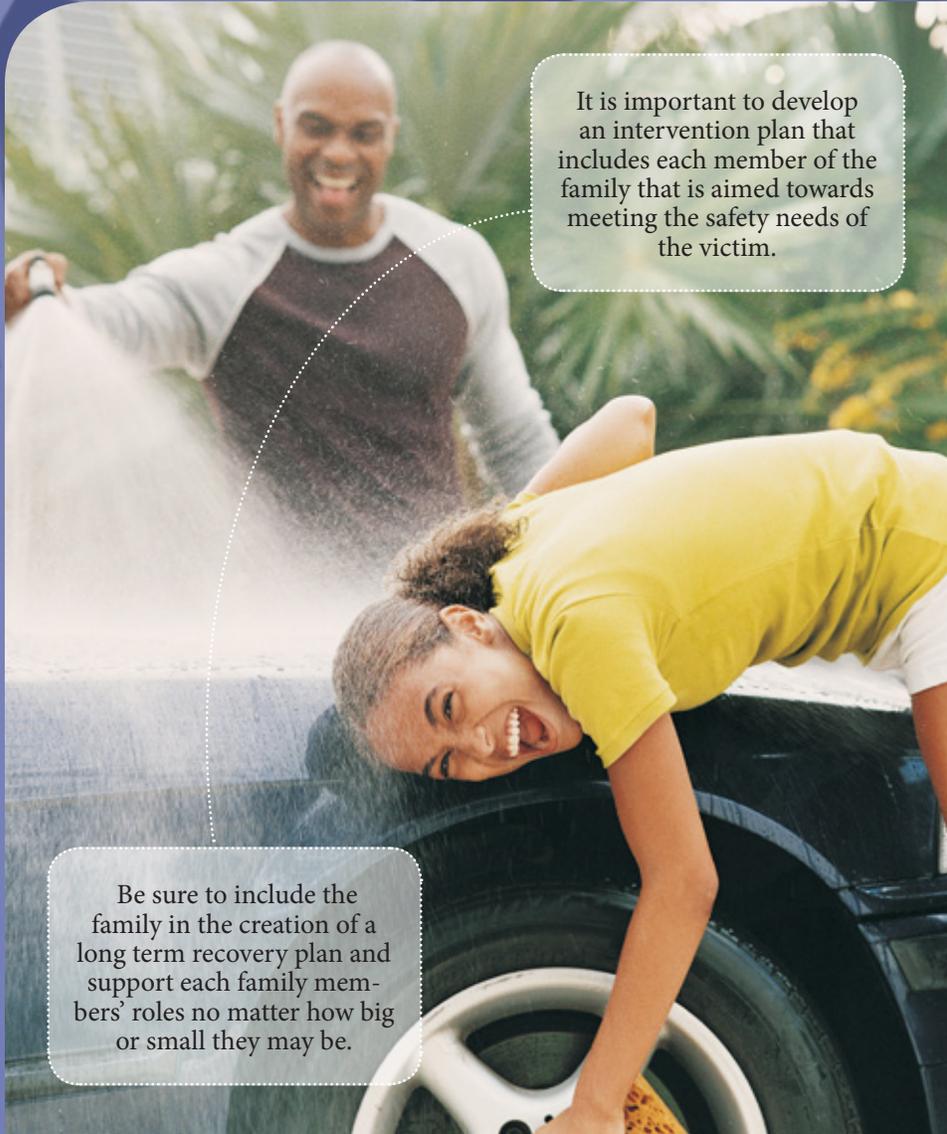
### Important Tip:

Understand that your client has not had control over his/her body. It is your job to give them back the control and power.

Your client needs to feel empowered and an active part of the solution.

# FAMILY MATTERS

PIMPS/TRAFFICKERS WILL USE THE VOID OF A FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP TO MANIPULATE AND COERCE VICTIMS.



It is important to develop an intervention plan that includes each member of the family that is aimed towards meeting the safety needs of the victim.

Be sure to include the family in the creation of a long term recovery plan and support each family members' roles no matter how big or small they may be.

## FAMILY MEMBERS CAN PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE RESCUE AND RECOVERY OF VICTIMS.

CPS workers should interview all members of the child's family, including those who may not live in the household where the child lives. Asking the right questions might result in information that is critical to case assessment and planning. You may unlock a potential resource for this youth that has not been explored and help repair a relationship that, by absence alone, created the space for the youth to be victimized.

When meeting with the family members, find out what each person knows about what the client has been going through. You can help shift perceptions within the family away from "she is just promiscuous or a difficult teen" to one of "she is a victim of abuse."

**Take time to explain what sex trafficking is and some of the warning signs or behaviors that family members might have witnessed in the home.**

Sex trafficking victims have endured a high level of trauma and require specialized services and interventions. Victims of trauma can experience extreme stress that impacts the person's ability to cope and function. CPS workers should encourage parents or guardians to seek trauma counseling and health care for the victim, including testing for possible infection of sexually transmitted disease.

CPS WORKERS HAVE A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP FATHERS BECOME PROTECTIVE AND ENGAGING ADVOCATES FOR THEIR CHILD (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006).

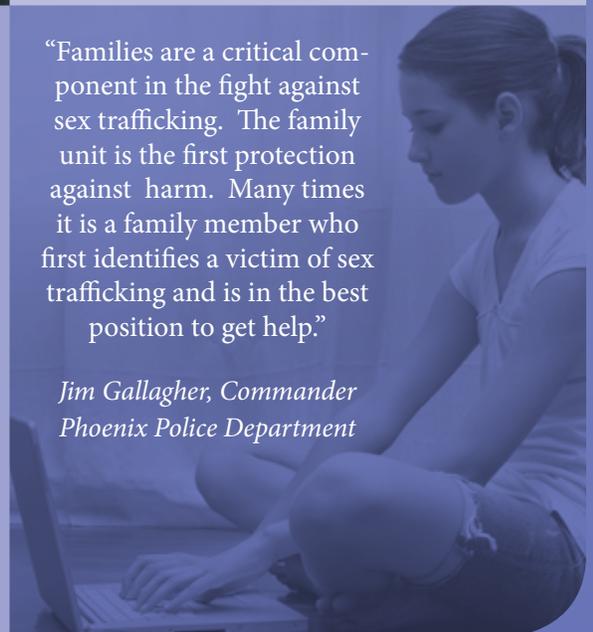
### **Possible barriers to engaging fathers:**

- **Pride:** Embarrassment of being accused of not being a good parent or provider.
- **Privacy:** Discomfort with other people knowing private family matters.
- **Lack of Experience:** Fathers may not "feel" qualified to be a parent due to his lack of involvement or a lack of parental role model in his childhood.
- **Hopelessness:** Fathers may feel that since they failed once, why try again. They may feel that "they just don't have what it takes to be a good parent."
- **Mistrust:** Fathers may have a negative history or negative view of child protective intervention.

To work successfully with fathers, caseworkers must be aware of their own biases and preconceptions about fathers and fatherhood. They must make sure these biases are not affecting their view of families with whom they work.

"Families are a critical component in the fight against sex trafficking. The family unit is the first protection against harm. Many times it is a family member who first identifies a victim of sex trafficking and is in the best position to get help."

*Jim Gallagher, Commander  
Phoenix Police Department*



# AFTER VICTIM IDENTIFICATION, WHAT DO I DO?

Because child abuse and neglect is complex and multidimensional, CPS is not alone in their efforts to prevent, investigate, identify and treat abuse and exploitation. CPS works in partnership with many community professionals such as law enforcement, health care providers, social workers and legal and court personnel to help victims of abuse.

**If you discover** sex trafficking during your interactions with a family, notify the police. If your client is in immediate danger, call 911.

**Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center to report the incident and ask for help. 1-888-3737-888**

**Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to report suspected sexual exploitation of a minor. 1-800-THE LOST (1-800-843-5678)**

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StreetLightUSA is the largest residential campus in the country specializing in holistic service for victims of child sex trafficking and sexual trauma who are 11-18 years old.

[streetlightusa.org](http://streetlightusa.org)

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