



international organization for adolescents

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# THREE LEVEL

## YOUTH SEX TRAFFICKING SCREENING TOOLKIT

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## Acknowledgements

The International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA) owes a debt of gratitude to IOFA partners, Tina Frundt and Courtney's House for their input and work on this screening tool. We would like to also give a special thanks to Savannah Sanders for modifying the tool to accommodate various users, and for sharing P.L.A.N for harm reduction and safety planning in this tool. We also appreciate Jody Haskin and Lisa Howard from IOFA, and Stephanie Mamonova for her design work. Thank you also to Kellie Greene, our dedicated Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Grant Program Specialist.

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## Disclaimer

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-TA-AX-K045, awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice.

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## Introduction

The following toolkit is designed to introduce OVW grantee agency staff to screening for sex trafficking among the youth they serve. This toolkit will provide agencies with a process for identifying youth who have experienced sex trafficking, and how to respond appropriately to get them the support and services they need.

Please bear in mind that identifying a sex trafficking situation may require significant time and rapport-building with youth. The needs of each individual should always be prioritized, and this assessment can and should be adapted in order to accommodate those needs.

### **Before utilizing this toolkit, please read the instructions for each tool carefully and consider the following:**

- The risk level of a youth for sex trafficking
- Whether a youth is or has been exploited by sex trafficking
- Whether further assessments should be conducted
- The immediate safety and security needs of the youth
- Referral needs of a youth experiencing sex trafficking
- The responsibilities of the individual staff member when working with youth
- The responsibilities of the organization to make services conducive to appropriate response to youth sex trafficking

IOFA and Courtney's House acknowledge there is no one-size-fits-all screening and response protocol for youth survivors of sex trafficking, as all individuals and organizations are different. Accordingly, this toolkit may not meet the needs of all youth, and may not conform to the structures of all organizations. Our hope is that all organizations and individuals are able to take away new information from this toolkit that they may adapt and apply to the care they already provide this population.

Thank you for your willingness to learn about and utilize these tools. It is our intent that this toolkit will help identify youth survivors being sex trafficked, and ensure that they are provided with the services they need.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this toolkit, please contact [info@iofa.org](mailto:info@iofa.org).

## **Ally organization responsibilities.**

IOFA is an ally organization within the anti-trafficking field. Organizations not founded by survivors should commit to treat survivor leaders as peers and colleagues regardless of the survivor's professional status in the anti-trafficking field. As an ally organization that supports and makes space for the voices and leadership of survivors, IOFA pledges to compensate survivors fairly for their input, participation, and subject matter expertise, and to treat their input with respect and validity.

## **A note about language.**

***When working with youth.*** The individuals you are working with have complex and layered experiences regarding their trauma history. Focusing on specific aspects of the individual's trauma history can create unnecessary labels and dynamics. The focus of youth healing should not be defined by the type of trauma they experienced, but by the services they need and want. Direct service providers should always avoid labeling youth and should not put a name on any trauma that the youth has not identified. The individuals who have lived experiences should have autonomy and power in the way they identify with their own experiences.

***When learning about sex trafficking.*** As this toolkit is designed for the use of adults who work with youth, we will be referring to the specific crime of sex trafficking and how it impacts young people. The appropriate terminology outside of legalese to describe a youth that is trafficked has evolved from using the term "victim" to "survivor." It is of even greater importance, however, that the agency or providers use person-first vocabulary in all references to any person's experiences. In person-first language, the person is always prioritized over their experiences. We know there are many healing-centered approaches to language. For the purposes of this screening toolkit, we honor the experts we partner with and will use inclusive phrasing of, "survivor of trafficking" and "youth who has/have experienced or been exploited by trafficking."

## What is youth sex trafficking?

Under United States federal law, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) states that “severe forms of trafficking in persons” include both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 USC §7102). According to the TVPA, children under the age of 18 who are induced to engage in a commercial sex act are automatically considered to be victims of sex trafficking. Commercial sex acts include prostitution, pornography, and “survival sex” (trading sex acts for anything of value such as food, shelter, or clothing).

***Myth: Youth just want to be rescued from their trafficking situation.***

***Reality:*** Youth who experienced trafficked rarely self-identify as victims of a crime. This can be due to factors such as fear, stigma, trauma, or normalization of the exploitation by the trafficker. The youth may also have a trauma bond or a survival bond to their trafficker, who may be a caregiver, guardian, or romantic interest. Youth who have experienced sex trafficking may not be identified until years after their exploitation has begun. To protect youth from prolonged abuse and violence, and to provide or to connect them to the services they deserve, exploitation must be identified and recognized as early as possible.

***Myth: Youth Sex Trafficking means moving youth across a border.***

***Reality:*** Human trafficking should not be confused with human smuggling. Human smuggling is the act of moving people across a border illegally. Sex trafficking is a crime against a person in which they are compelled to provide commercial sex acts. Despite being easily confused with smuggling, no movement is necessary in the crime of sex trafficking. In fact, youth may be trafficked within their own homes.

**OF HIGHEST IMPORTANCE:**

Ensure that any staff member who will be administering the tool understands that they are designed to be completed by trained staff only, NOT by the youth. The questions provided in the screening tools should never be asked of the youth, their guardians, family members, or friends. Rather, answers to the questions should be gathered from resources such as case histories, intake assessments, direct observation, or trauma-informed motivational interviewing, and most importantly, through building rapport with youth over time. Screening is not meant to force a disclosure. If a youth shows indications of trafficking, continue to provide support and care to the youth and address the youth's needs. The safety of the young person should always be the top priority while providing services and when implementing any screening methods.

Before utilizing this toolkit, please read the instructions for each tool carefully and consider the following:

- Who in your agency is qualified to conduct each tool?
- Does your agency have the capacity to administer the Intervention Level or Treatment Level tools?
- Does your agency have a safety plan in place for youth, staff/volunteers, and visitors?



## Who should use the toolkit, and when?

Screening for child and youth sex trafficking should be a standardized process for all agencies that have contact with youth. Youth often do not self-identify as having experienced sex trafficking. Youth who have experienced trafficking are often “hidden in plain sight,” and agencies may be unknowingly coming into contact with or providing services to youth survivors of sex trafficking. Until staff members understand what youth sex trafficking is and know how to identify red flags, survivors will remain unidentified and will not receive the services and support they require.

Agencies should conduct screening of all youth that they serve. Infants and toddlers as well as older children and youth have been trafficked for sex. This screening tool, however, is meant to be adapted for organizations who work with youth from age 11 to age 17. It is critical that all children and youth are screened so that no youth who has experienced trafficking falls through the cracks.

Since each agency's intake and assessment process is unique, your agency should determine how best to integrate the toolkit with other procedures. Agencies are encouraged to do so in a way that ensures that every youth is assessed at least once, if not quarterly, regardless of whether trafficking is suspected. Screening is not a one-time event, but should take place through rapport-building, safety planning and information-gathering over the course of the case relationship with the youth.

For help with integrating assessment tools into operating policies and procedures, please contact IOFA at [info@iofa.org](mailto:info@iofa.org).

***“I was trafficked from a youth homeless shelter. I didn't realize I was being targeted, and it took me a while until I could understand how I was being abused and manipulated.”***

***—J.S., youth sex trafficking survivor***

## Making Connections

As OVW grantees serving youth, your organization may work with young people who have been impacted by any of the four Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) crimes of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. These four specific VAWA crimes often overlap with the crime of sex trafficking. As a result, your organization may already be serving youth who are in, or at risk of being in a sex trafficking situation. Understanding sex trafficking identifiers and adapting screening into services will help agencies address youth sex trafficking. Power and control is at the crux of all of these crimes, and the VAWA crimes may themselves be tools traffickers use to not only maintain power and control of youth experiencing trafficking, but also while recruiting or grooming a youth into sex trafficking.

## Building Rapport

Rapport-building is critical. The screening tools provided in this toolkit can be useful in assessing for sex trafficking, but engaging youth in ongoing conversations that express genuine concern for their safety and well-being is the most effective way to understand their experiences fully. This may take time, patience, and a little creativity, but it will increase the likelihood of accurate identification and can greatly improve outcomes. The P.L.A.N. portion of the toolkit will help guide you and your organization in building effective rapport with youth.

## **Understanding your individual role.**

### **1. *Understand how mandatory reporting laws impact you and your work.***

Are you a mandated reporter? In your state, is youth sex trafficking considered a form of child abuse or a reportable crime? Who can you contact to be sure you're following protocol?

### **2. *Understand how your organization's policies impact your role/position.***

What internal policies does your organization have on referrals and safety? How do you fit into those processes? What disclosure or emergency protocols exist for your staff members to follow?

### **3. *Commit to supporting, not seeking disclosure.***

What internal policies does your organization have on referrals and safety? How do you fit into those processes? What disclosure or emergency protocols exist for your staff members to follow?

## **Understanding organizational responsibilities.**

### **1. *Identify a response protocol for your organization.***

As an organization, create an internal response plan that meets your organizational capabilities. Utilize the toolkit to identify your organization's type of response(s). This protocol should include leadership. This protocol should identify the role of staff members who will carry out a response protocol for a disclosure or emergency response.

### **2. *Create a response plan that incorporates local agencies and resources.***

When you respond or have reason to report, use the follow tips and response plan worksheet to identify the next you next steps (see Appendix).

### **3. *Practice confidentiality.***

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of effective advocacy. When making referrals to other agencies, agencies may not share personally identifying information about the youth without the written explicit, time-limited consent of the youth.

We all have different roles in responding to sex trafficking and potential sex trafficking situations. We hope the materials in the toolkit guide your decision making and give you confidence to respond to potential trafficking situations identified in the youth served by your organization. Before you start utilizing the toolkit in your organization, we ask that you read this section and create a response plan for when you identify a potential trafficking situation.

As a survivor, one of the most impactful parts of my experience besides what I went through, was the way people responded or reacted. It was so important for me during that time to feel seen and heard. Interventions and new skills were important, but I felt the most safe when able to connect. Every safe person that came into my life helped me to build resiliency and safety. These people didn't judge me, they listened and were interested in me as a person, they encouraged me and gave me a lot of choices and anatomy. A safe person was someone that I gained a sense of belonging from. Feeling seen, heard and understood even if they didn't have the same experiences as me. As you learn more about human trafficking and exploitation, give yourself grace in the prancing process and commit to standing with those who experienced exploitation.

## Responding during crisis or disclosure.

- Always begin by believing the youth when they share their experience. This is very important. Thank them for telling you and let them know you believe them and will support them.
- If there is an emergency or the youth is in immediate danger, call 911 and/or your local police department.
- If the youth tells you something, listen and let them speak. When emotions are high, they may feel shame or fear.
- If the youth is safe, offer them anything that will make them more comfortable in the moment (a tissue, water, a snack, a nap).
- Be aware of your response (words and physical/facial reaction) and check your biases. It is difficult to hear disclosure of trafficking and exploitation when you are working with children/youth you care about.
- It is important to realize that providing a healing-centered response to a disclosure of sex trafficking can take time and practice. If you make a mistake the most important thing is to apologize for the way you handled the situation and start again.
- If social services or police need to be involved, explain as much as you can to the youth in advance.

## Clear communication.

### *If the youth does not speak fluent English:*

- Contact an independent, trusted interpreter and follow the suggested safety guidelines: Get the youth's permission to use an interpreter from their community (i.e. Guatemalan survivor, Guatemalan interpreter). Often (but not always) traffickers and survivors come from the same community/nationality, and survivors may be less willing to share information if the interpreter represents that community.

## Communication and Accessibility for Youth with Disabilities.

- Ensure all office space is mobility device accessible including the parking lot, office, and all other common spaces.
- Ensure all areas and referrals to other spaces are also accessible for users of mobility devices.
- Ensure resources such as websites (include photos, text-to-speech features, Braille, American Sign Language interpreters).
- You do not need to diagnose a youth with a disability, but should assess communication accommodation needs through trauma-informed care.
- Please see <http://iofa.org/national-trafficking-disabilities-working-group/> for more communication tips with youth with disabilities.
- Use person-first language.
- Ask what accommodations the person needs, don't assume you know.
- Don't yell, slow your speech down unless asked.
- Don't be afraid to ask a person to repeat.
- If you can, sit at the person's level, don't hover above them.
- Check and double check understanding of words and concepts.
- Resist temptation to fill in the blanks.

## Interpreter and Translator Tips.

- To ensure the interpreter is not allied with the trafficker, do not use children, neighbors, friends, adults, or anyone present at the scene to interpret.
- Request the interpreter to provide verbatim (word for word) interpretation and refrain from having side conversations with the victim.
- Explain to the youth the interpreter's role and the confidentiality applied to the conversation.

Within this toolkit, there are 3 screening tools available to providers based on their role in the youth-serving organization.

The following descriptions explain how the role of the provider determines the ideal next steps the staff member should take if a youth discloses a sex trafficking situation or if there are strong indications the youth may be trafficked for sex.

The **SELF ASSESSMENT** section will indicate which tool is right for your role in working with youth.

The **AGENCY ASSESSMENT** section below will allow you to determine the capacity of your organization to provide various levels of services for youth survivors of sex trafficking, and indicate whether you may need to develop a referral plan for outside services.

## **There are three different screening tool levels based on your role in your organization:**

### **1. Awareness Level: Building Transformative Relationships**

Who should use it: All agency staff members may use the tool at the Awareness Level.

The Building Transformative Relationships Level is for all staff members. Ultimately, the goal for individuals who are not working directly in the anti-trafficking field or in trauma services is to develop transformative relationships with youth that create safety, support, and connection that allows youth's resiliency to emerge. This can be applied in any professional role. Being aware of trauma and its impacts while building rapport with youth is an important first step in screening for sex trafficking. If there is disclosure, or red flags, this tool will advise the staff in this role on next steps to take.

### **2. Intervention Level: Engaging in Safety and Building Rapport**

Who should use it: Only professional staff who work directly the youth and are trained in trauma-informed and healing-centered services should conduct the Intervention Level.

This intervention level continues to build on the Awareness Level and continues to focus on building rapport with youth. In addition, professionals in this role will determine a youth's safety and work with the youth to develop a comprehensive safety plan if it is determined a youth may be trafficked for sex or is engaging in risky behaviors.

### 3. *Treatment Level: Promoting a Healing-Centered Response*

Who should use it: The treatment level of the tool should be conducted by a professional who has received comprehensive training on the topic of sex trafficking, meets relevant trauma-informed and youth-centered professional criteria (see p. 14), and is prepared to provide ongoing trauma-response services and comprehensive case management and/or therapy to the youth.

This tool level should be used in addition to building rapport, assessing and creating a plan for safety. It may be used to assess whether a youth has experienced sex trafficking. This tool can be used to document the scope, nature, severity, and impact of suspected cases of trafficking; to assess the youth's safety; and to help develop appropriate plans of action for case management and legal purposes.

***NOTE: Not all agencies have staff members or case managers in-house who are qualified to work with potentially trafficked youth. If these resources are not available, your agency should work to facilitate an assessment by another agency.***

	PURPOSE	WHEN TO USE	WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT
<p><b>AWARENESS LEVEL: Building Transformative Relationships</b></p>	<p>To be aware and gain understanding of risk factors and red flags for the purpose of supporting a youth's safety needs through reporting to local child welfare or mandated reporter within the agency.</p>	<p>In regular or consistent interactions with youth, their families, and their communities.</p>	<p>Any agency staff member that works with youth and their family members. Staff should follow state mandated reporter laws and agency protocols.</p> <p><b>All staff at any level starts here.</b></p>
<p><b>INTERVENTION LEVEL: Engaging in Safety and Building Rapport</b></p>	<p>To assess the immediate safety of both the youth and agency staff members for planning and support.</p>	<p>Throughout interactions while providing direct services to youth and their families.</p>	<p>Only by a staff member who will provide ongoing trauma-informed and survivor-centered services and referrals to trafficking support service providers.</p> <p><b>Only for use by professionals at this level and treatment level.</b></p>
<p><b>TREATMENT LEVEL: Promoting a Healing-Centered Response</b></p>	<p>In conjunction with rapport building, to evaluate a youth's risk for sex trafficking.</p>	<p>After at least one positive indication of youth sex trafficking, provided there is no imminent danger.</p> <p>Over a longer period of time, as necessary to gain an understanding of the youth's resources, needs, strengths, and safety concerns.</p>	<p>Only by a social worker, case manager, or forensic interviewer who is trained in sex trafficking and/or providing therapy to youth.</p> <p>Only by a staff member who will provide ongoing trauma-informed and survivor-centered services and referrals to trafficking support service providers.</p> <p><b>Only for use by professionals at the treatment level.</b></p>



There are two steps to identify which tool is the right fit for yourself and your agency.

Each of the three tool levels is intended to be used by a specific group of providers. The following steps will help you identify which of the three tools explained on page 14 is the right one for you.

Then, assess your agency to determine if services can be provided in-house or should be referred to another agency. Only utilize the tools that are appropriate for you.

## STEP 1: Begin Self-Assessment

### 1. Staff Role: Awareness

**WHO:** Are you a staff member who is in regular interaction with youth, their families, and communities? You may work with youth in a supportive role and have the opportunity to get to know them or see them on a regular basis. Do you interact with youth:

- On a team
- In a classroom
- In a youth group
- In an after school program
- In another group setting

**PURPOSE:** Are you aware of risk factors and red flags? This tool can be used to determine if a youth is at risk for sex trafficking or may be a survivor of sex trafficking. Screening should be incorporated into the regular history-taking process and should be conducted for all youth regardless of whether sex trafficking is suspected. Youth that have already been identified as having experienced any type of trauma or abuse, or are facing hardships such as unstable housing or poverty, are automatically at risk of exploitation.

**TOOL:** The Awareness Level is right for you.

**ACTIONS:** You should follow the mandated reporting laws in your state and protocols within your agency. Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline if you have questions about potential red flags of youth sex trafficking.

## 2. Staff Role: Intervention

**WHO:** Are you a staff member who will provide ongoing trauma-informed and survivor-centered services and referrals to trafficking support service providers? Do you:

- Work with youth in high risk situations
- Work with youth in a group home setting
- Work with homeless or runaway youth
- Provide abuse or trauma services
- Provide psycho-social education

**PURPOSE:** Do you work with a youth who has experienced sex trafficking or is at risk for experiencing sex trafficking? If a youth is determined to have experienced sex trafficking or to be at risk for experiencing sex trafficking, it is also important to determine whether the youth is in imminent danger. You should use this tool throughout interactions while providing direct services to youth or their families to assess the immediate safety of both the youth and agency staff members for planning and support.

**TOOL:** If NO, do not move past the Awareness Level. If YES, the Intervention Level is right for you.

**ACTIONS:** This tool is designed to work in addition to the Awareness tool. Users will assess for risk of threats, violence, or abuse. If such a risk is identified, it is critical that a comprehensive safety plan is developed with appropriate referrals made and services provided.

## 3. Provider Role: Treatment

**WHO:** Are you a social worker, case manager, or forensic interviewer who is trained in sex trafficking and/or providing therapy to youth? Are you a staff member who will provide ongoing trauma-informed and survivor-centered services such as counseling or trauma-specific therapeutic interventions? Do you provide comprehensive evaluations or therapy tools such as:

- BioPsychoSocials
- EMDR
- Brainspotting
- Trauma therapies
- DBT

**PURPOSE:** Are you working with a youth who may be at risk for sex trafficking, or you need to determine whether a youth has experienced sex trafficking? This tool can be used to document the scope, nature, severity, and impact of suspected cases of trafficking and assess the youth's safety. This tool should be used in conjunction with rapport building, to evaluate a youth's risk for sex trafficking.

**TOOL:** If NO, do not move past the Intervention Level. If YES, the Treatment Level is right for you.

**ACTIONS:** This tool will help you develop appropriate plans of action for case management and appropriate referrals for comprehensive care.

## STEP 2: Perform Agency Assessment

### **PURPOSE:**

1. To help you comprehensively determine the role and capacity of your agency in screening youth for sex trafficking, and
2. To identify areas where an agency may benefit from technical assistance and/or training to improve the identification and referral practices it uses to assist potentially trafficked youth.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Depending on your responses to the questions on page 18, your agency will be placed into one of three categories: Building Transformative Relationships, Engaging in Safety and Building Rapport, or Promoting a Healing-Centered Response.

Each category corresponds with the Awareness, Intervention, or Treatment tools. Please use this initial assessment in conjunction with your personal assessment to determine which tool level you should use in your response to youth trafficking and exploitation.

AGENCY QUESTION	RESPONSE
Does your agency provide services to youth who are considered high risk for trafficking? (Homeless, LGBTQIA, Runaway, Foster Care, Trauma Experiences)	Yes No Not Sure
Is your client intake process trauma-informed?	Yes No Not Sure
Does your agency belong to any service provider networks focusing on youth sex trafficking?	Yes No Not Sure
Is your agency a member of your local child advocacy center team?	Yes No Not Sure
Does your agency work to build and maintain relationships with other trafficking-informed agencies?	Yes No Not Sure
Do staff members in your agency work one on one with youth as a mentor/advocate?	Yes No Not Sure
Does your agency screen for any form of abuse or trauma such as sexual abuse/DV/SA?	Yes No Not Sure
Has your agency made a referral to another agency for a survivor of sex trafficking?	Yes No Not Sure
Does your agency belong to any service provider networks focusing on youth sex trafficking?	Yes No Not Sure
Does your agency exchange referrals with your local child advocacy center?	Yes No Not Sure
Are the youth served by your agency referred to legal assistance (criminal, civil, and/or immigration)?	Yes No Not Sure
If you provide in-house legal assistance, are your staff attorneys trained in youth sex trafficking and related legal relief?	Yes No Not Sure

If you answered **NO** to the above questions, your agency has been identified as an agency that focuses on **Building Transformative Relationships**. Your organization may be an after-school program or a youth group. Your agency role may support, empower, and educate youth individually or in group settings such as a classroom or on a team. Your agency does not provide trauma-specific services, but is important to the community and the youth you serve.

Your agency’s main role in supporting anti-trafficking efforts in your area is to:

- Address immediate safety needs of youth, staff, and others at your agency
- Follow mandated reporting laws for your state
- Follow safety, reporting, and referral policies as dictated by your agency
- Identify community partners to which you would refer youth for intervention and treatment services

Additionally, you may call the National Human Trafficking Hotline for guidance on referrals to appropriate services in your area for youth.

If you answered **YES** to any of the above questions, your agency has been identified as an agency that focuses on **Engaging in Safety and Rapport-Building**. Your agency may work with youth in a direct service role. Your agency works with youth in high-risk situations such as in group homes, programs for homeless and runaway youth, or youth impacted by the VAWA crimes. Your agency has the capacity to provide case management, supporting the youth with safety planning, and providing psychoeducation that supports their personal growth and healing. Your agency may have services for youth and their families on prevention, intervention, and after-care services for various types of abuse or trauma. Your agency may have the most contact and interaction with the youth and possibly their families when providing services.

ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	RESPONSE
Is the role of your agency to directly address trauma by providing trauma services such as counseling or trauma-specific therapeutic interventions?	Yes    No    Not Sure
Does your agency provide shelter for youth who have experienced or are experiencing any form of trafficking?	Yes    No    Not Sure
Do members of your staff provide comprehensive evaluations such as BioPsychoSocials or therapy services such as EMDR, Brainspotting, or DBT?	Yes    No    Not Sure

If you answered **YES** to the above questions, your agency has been identified as an agency that focuses on ***Promoting a Healing-Centered Response and Treatment***.

Your agency may have programs to work with youth to address aspects of their trauma, offer therapy, and provide therapeutic services. These services are specific to uncovering and addressing trauma in a supportive and safe environment.

You may have the opportunity to provide direct services within your agency in addition to referring to community partners for comprehensive services.

It is essential to also consider the following within the assessment of your agency:

- Who in your agency is qualified to conduct each tool?
- Does your agency have the capacity to administer the Intervention Level or Treatment Level tools?
- Does your agency have a safety plan in place for youth, staff/volunteers, and visitors?

## Confidentiality and disclosure.

Privacy is a priority for many youth. Fear that the information they share with you may be passed on to law enforcement, child protective agencies, parents, or others may prevent them from seeking services. Before a youth begins their services with you, they should be aware of what privacy provisions surround their personal information. They should not be surprised to learn after they share information such as trafficking experiences with you, that you will provide identifying details to another agency or that anyone else has rights to access their information. Before working with youth at your agency, be sure to understand how mandatory reporting laws and Access to Information laws in your jurisdiction will impact you in your work with youth.

## Mandated reporting.

If you are a mandated reporter, follow state guidelines.

Generally, you will be required to provide the information that leads you to believe abuse or neglect has occurred to the appropriate authority such as Child Protective Services (CPS).

Before you begin services with the youth, be very clear and detailed about your obligations as a mandatory reporter. Check for understanding with the youth. The youth should not be surprised by your actions if the youth discloses trafficking or other abuses included in your jurisdiction's mandatory reporting laws.

- Tell the youth, "If you tell me anything about abuse, I need to report it."
- Be clear that you will have to report suspicions of abuse.
- Specify to whom you will have to report.
- Detail what you would need to report such as the youth's name and the name of the abuser. Not everything a survivor tells you must be reported.
- Tell the youth you understand they may prefer to talk with someone else for several reasons: because of your mandatory reporter status, because they do not feel comfortable with your personality, or because you are not the right fit for another reason. Always provide several reasons that the youth may wish to speak with someone else.<sup>1</sup>

**Are you a mandatory reporter?** If you do not know the answer to this question, use the Victims Rights Legal Center (VRLC) tool to find out ([link here](#)). Additionally, the VRLC Minors Privacy Toolkit will assist you in understanding the details of being a mandatory reporter such as identifying which youth, if any, in your jurisdiction may be emancipated and what the provisions regarding reporting may be for those youth.

- If the youth says they want to speak with someone else, know ahead of time if there is someone in your organization who is not mandated to report or if you have a protocol such as self referral in which the youth can access services without disclosure.
- If the youth does choose to speak with you and there is a choice between agencies to report to, involve the youth in that decision.

Even if you are a mandatory reporter, you do not need to report unless certain criteria have been met. Use the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Flow Chart (VRLC)<sup>2</sup> to make the determination.

Are you aware of your status of privilege and the laws regarding records and confidentiality? Depending on your training, status, and laws, your conversations with the youth may or may not be privileged.

- Inform the youth what you will do if a parent asks for information.
- Understand if your organization allows a parent's consent to waive their right to information, and if it is legally binding.
- Inform the youth of your status around privilege and precisely when you will and will not divulge their name and other identifying information before they disclose to you.
- Tell the youth if your agency practices minimal record keeping. Suggested practice is for notes to be kept at a minimum with only general details recorded.
- Keep separate files for each individual seen, even members of the same family.
- Explain your process if you are served with a subpoena: You should contact the youth and/or guardian and follow their wishes on asserting legal arguments that further the survivor's interest.
- If you are unaware of the laws around privilege and confidentiality, be sure to understand this fully before using this tool.
- When referring to other agencies for services, do not divulge the youth's identifying information without the youth's written, time-limited permission.

<sup>1</sup> In the case that you offer the youth the opportunity to speak to someone else in your agency because you are a mandated reporter, and you do not offer any other possible reasons the youth would want to speak to someone else, the youth's choice to speak to a person for the specific reason that they are not mandated to report might be enough for you to suspect abuse. You would need to report.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.victimrights.org/sites/default/files/Minors%27%20Privacy%20Toolkit%20-%20English.pdf>



## Consent

Understanding a youths' ability to legally consent to certain services is both important and complex. Before you provide services, do you have a procedure in place to assess whether parental consent is required?

To determine if a youth can consent to services and what a parent or guardian's role is, examine:

- Are there legal statutes, regulations, and case law in your jurisdiction that address the age a youth can legally consent to your specific services? If not, do other laws exist that address similar services that might apply to the services you provide?
- Is the youth emancipated? In some states, there are specific steps setting out an emancipation process for a minor to legally separate from their parent or guardian and be treated as an adult under the law. In other states, emancipation is treated by the courts on a case-by-case basis. Usually, an emancipated minor can make decisions about health, education, and welfare including legal services.
- Does your jurisdiction have "mature minor doctrine" or other statute that allows a provider to assist certain youth without parental involvement?

If you are working with a youth who has experienced trafficking and the parent or guardian has legal decision-making authority over the minor, consider whether the youth wants the parent or guardian present while they are receiving services. For some youth, having their parents present may be comforting, but for others it will inhibit what they are able to disclose. Know your policy around allowing parents and guardians in the room during consultations.

### **Engaging Youth.**

Always practice harm reduction, rapport-building, and safety planning to engage and promote healing in the youth you serve to ensure their needs are met. Offer non-judgmental and non-coercive services that prioritize safety and choice. Recognize the strengths and culture of the youth, and work to prevent re-traumatizing them as they are empowered to work collaboratively with you to navigate the system of care.

## **A Healing-centered approach.**

Youth should never feel like they should have to disclose or discuss their trauma history in order to receive services. Youth should be the agent of their own healing and well-being with supportive, nonjudgmental interactions that provide information and psychoeducation for the youth to make informed decisions for themselves.

Harm reduction refers to policies, programs, and practices that aim to minimize negative health, social, and legal impacts associated with various human behaviors.

Harm reduction within an agency is about meeting people where they are with no judgment, and providing education and information that supports autonomy and decision-making. An example would be working with a youth at high risk of running away to complete a safety plan that included phone numbers to remember, items they would want to take with them, and individuals that support them.

Safe people and places are always defined by the individual.

Individuals that a youth has identified as safe may not appear safe to you based on preconceived ideas of safety. Individuals who have lived on the streets or experienced trauma may have unique cultural experiences. A drug dealer or former buyer may be identified by the youth as a safe person.

## **Referrals.**

A referral is in the best interest of the youth when you identify needs that cannot be met through your agency or would be better met through a specialized service provider. Before making a referral, ensure that the service provider practices trauma-informed, culturally appropriate services. Discuss each referral with the youth, and consider a warm handoff, visiting the agency with the youth before arranging services. Do not share information about the youth with outside agencies without the explicit consent of the survivor.

Specific follow-up actions may include the following:

- Mandated reporting to authorities/child protective services (CPS)
- Notifying or consulting with a supervisor
- Following agency protocol for commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)
- Determining whether it is appropriate or indicated to alert caregivers or other staff
- Developing a safety plan (with youth, caregivers, or staff members)
- Continuing to monitor risk factors

- Recommendation of/referral to case management
- Recommendation of/referral to mental health services
- Recommendation of/referral to other services
- Recommendation of/referral for further assessment

More information on how to engage youth who may have been trafficked is available at <http://iofa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/IOFA-Engaging-Youth-Final.pdf>

More information on trauma-informed language is available at <http://iofa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Dos-and-Donts-of-Trauma-Informed-Language.pdf>

For additional information, please contact IOFA at [info@iofa.org](mailto:info@iofa.org), or Courtney's House at P.O. Box 48626 Washington, D.C. 20002

**AWARENESS LEVEL: Building Transformative Relationships**

INDICATOR LEVEL	ACTION
Disclosure and/or High Indicators	Assess for immediate safety; Provide support; Report; Refer to Treatment Level
High Indicators but no Disclosure (staff “has a hunch,” other youth have indicated their suspicions of trafficking; has previously been in a trafficking situation)	Assess for safety; Refer to Intervention or Treatment Level for safety plan and services; Report where required/ appropriate
Medium Indicators	Provide continued support; Refer to Intervention Level; Report where required/appropriate; Continue rapport-building
Consideration Indicators	Continue to build rapport; Be aware of sex trafficking indicators, especially if any changes in youth’s life or they have re-entered the program

**Staff Role: Awareness**

In the event that a youth discloses trafficking or there is an imminent threat to a youth:

Follow your agency’s policies for making a report. Assess the immediate safety of the youth and of your agency and follow agency protocol in the event of immediate danger. If your agency is an Engaging in Safety and Rapport Agency or Promoting a Healing-Centered Response Agency, speak to someone in your agency who can guide you through the process of ensuring youth safety, referral, and continued care.

Follow the tips on page 10 for responding during crisis or disclosure.

For additional guidance, call the 24-hour confidential National Human Trafficking Hotline which is not associated with law enforcement.

It is important to remain calm and validate that you believe what the youth is saying. Do not ask follow-up questions out of curiosity. Never ask or pressure a youth for disclosure.

***High/Disclosure Level: Safety, Support, Report***

If you suspect that a youth is experiencing trafficking, do not ever ask questions about trafficking out of curiosity. Doing so may cause additional trauma. If a youth does make a disclosure to you, understand that the youth may provide information that is graphic, violent, and/or sexual in nature. Be aware of your response so that you do not project shock or disgust.

Assess for immediate safety. Is the youth in a safe place? Is the trafficker with them? If in-person, also assess immediate safety for yourself, and other youth or staff in your space.

It is important to have a healing-centered approach when talking with youth who may have experienced trafficking. Do not ask youth to repeat their stories. Interactions should be supportive and non-judgmental: when you speak to youth, moderate your facial expressions and voice so that you do not express shock at what they say. Allow the youth to carry out the conversation in whichever way is most comfortable to them.

If there is someone in your agency who may be a provider level 2 or 3 such as someone who works with high-risk youth on a regular ongoing basis, or someone who is a social worker, consult with that person about next steps. If your agency only has providers at the level 1 Awareness Level, follow agency protocol in reporting to a supervisor and use your Response Plan (example in Appendix A) to identify appropriate agency to refer youth to. For additional community resources, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

***For Tips on the Referral Process, see page 25***

For additional information, please contact IOFA at [info@iofa.org](mailto:info@iofa.org), or Courtney's House at P.O. Box 48626 Washington, D.C. 20002

**INTERVENTION LEVEL: Engaging in Safety and Rapport**

<b>INDICATOR LEVEL</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
Reporting Level-Indicators or Disclosure	Assess for immediate safety; Provide support; Report; Refer to Treatment Level for ongoing services
High Indicators but no Disclosure (staff “has a hunch,” other youth have indicated their suspicions of trafficking; has previously been in a trafficking situation)	Assess for safety; Create safety plan with youth; Refer to Treatment Level for services; Report if appropriate
Medium Indicators	Provide continued support and rapport-building; Consider safety planning; Report if appropriate
Consideration Indicators	Continue to build rapport; Be aware of sex trafficking indicators, especially if any changes in youth’s life or they have re-entered the program

**Staff Role: Intervention**

In this role, follow the guidelines for reporting and safety as indicated in the Awareness Level in addition to the following:

In the event that a youth discloses trafficking or there is an imminent threat to a youth,

- Conduct a thorough assessment of the youth’s immediate needs and safety. Assess and provide for the youth what they need in the moment. These needs may be unique to the individual, so be attuned to the youth. **Follow the tips on page 10 for Responding during crisis or disclosure.**
- Follow your agency’s protocol for responding to sexual exploitation or other forms of child abuse. This may include a mandated report, creation of a safety plan, and referral to community agencies to develop a comprehensive service plan.
- Work with the youth to create a comprehensive safety plan. **See Appendix A for tips on Safety Planning.**

- When considering next steps, it is important to understand that calling 911 is not the safest option for all youth in all situations. Consider this as well as the fact that youth who have experienced the trauma of human trafficking often have histories of interactions with law enforcement. For some, these interactions have been negative and could be re-traumatizing.
- Collaborate with other professionals. Refer the youth to a provider who is able to develop a comprehensive immediate service plan to address the youth's current needs including safety, physical health, and mental health. **For tips on the referral process, see pages 24-25.**

Contact the International Organization for Adolescents (IOFA) at [info@iofa.org](mailto:info@iofa.org) if you need additional assistance or training on creating safety plans with youth.

More information on how to engage youth who may have been trafficked is available at <http://iofa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/IOFA-Engaging-Youth-Final.pdf>

More information on trauma-informed language is available at <http://iofa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Dos-and-Donts-of-Trauma-Informed-Language.pdf>

For additional information, please contact IOFA at [info@iofa.org](mailto:info@iofa.org), or Courtney's House at P.O. Box 48626 Washington, D.C. 20002

**TREATMENT LEVEL: Promoting a Healing-Centered Response**

***Treatment Level Staff Qualifications***

A treatment level assessment for a youth should be conducted by a staff member who meets the following criteria:

1. The staff member should be a licensed social worker, case manager, or forensic interviewer.
2. The staff member should have received comprehensive training (at least one full day) on the topic of youth sex trafficking including discussion of risk factors for trafficking, indicators and red flags of trafficking, federal laws and protections for youth, trauma and trauma-informed care and services, and appropriate service provision and referrals.
3. The staff member should be certified or trained in motivational interviewing and/or in providing developmentally appropriate, age-appropriate, and culturally appropriate therapy to youth.
4. The staff member should be prepared to provide ongoing trauma-informed and youth-centered services to the youth following the assessment.

<b>INDICATOR LEVEL</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
Reporting Level-Indicators or Disclosure	Assess for immediate safety; Provide support; Report; Provide safety planning and ongoing case management; Refer for additional service needs
High Indicators but no Disclosure (staff “has a hunch,” other youth have indicated their suspicions of trafficking; has previously been in a trafficking situation	Assess for immediate safety; Provide support; Provide safety planning and ongoing case management; Refer for additional service needs; Report if appropriate
Medium Indicators	Provide continued support; Continue rapport-building; Be aware of sex trafficking indicators, especially if any changes in youth’s life or they have re-entered the program
Consideration Indicators	Continue to build rapport; Be aware of sex trafficking indicators, especially if any changes in youth’s life or they have re-entered the program



### ***Provider Role: Treatment***

In this role, follow the guidelines for reporting and safety as indicated in both the Awareness and Intervention sections on Reporting and Safety Planning in addition to the treatment role as outlined below.

Work with the ongoing needs of the youth by providing therapy and therapeutic services. These services are specific to uncovering and addressing trauma in a supportive and safe environment.

If you become aware of any of red flags for trafficking, do not push for a disclosure. Assess for safety, assess for current needs, and continue building rapport and providing services.

### ***Considerations***

- Be aware that discussing sensitive topics with youth can be difficult.
- It is important to have a trauma-informed approach when asking for information.
- Consider possible past interactions with agencies or authorities.
- Children and youth who have experienced the trauma of human trafficking usually have histories of interactions with agencies or law enforcement. For some, these interactions have been negative and may be re-traumatizing.
- Remember that building rapport will be an ongoing process and that youth will need to learn to trust.
- Be sure that all services and communication are accessible.
- Check in with the youth throughout the screening.
- A youth may show obvious signs of distress as the conversation progresses such as agitation and changes to breathing or facial expression. Make time for breaks and allow the youth to calm themselves. Even if the youth is not showing obvious signs of distress, you should still periodically ask how they are feeling and offer breaks.
- Be empathetic but neutral.
- Youth may share distressing or upsetting information. It is important not to react emotionally, as this may make the youth feel alienated or ashamed.
- As the conversation comes to an end, let the youth know that the conversation can be continued in the future if they would like.
- Remind the youth that their story is important and that they are being heard. It may also be wise to ask if the youth would feel more comfortable continuing the conversation with a different staff member.
- In addition to helping build rapport, addressing basic needs such as food, water, sleep, and hygiene before beginning the screening process is essential. It is difficult for a youth to provide personal information when they are sleep deprived/hungry.

- Do not expect a youth to divulge all relevant information in one discussion.
- The screening process will most likely require multiple discussions. It may take time for the youth to trust the provider enough to reveal personal information.

***Do not use close-ended questions. The questions below may be used as a guide.***

### ***Conversation Starters***

- Are you in a relationship with someone, or do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend/significant other/partner?
- How old are they?
- How did you meet?
- What do you do for fun? Where do you go?
- Every couple has its problems. What are some things about your relationship that you don't like?
- What are some things that person does to show they care for you?
- Tell me about the people in your life you'd like to be around more?
- Are there people in your life that make you feel unsafe/you'd rather avoid? What can we do to make you feel safer?

Asking a question where the only possible responses are “yes,” “no,” or “I don't know” does not allow the youth to tell their story in their own words or to use their own explanations. Try to avoid asking “why” questions as well, since such questions can be seen as questioning the youth's judgment. Instead, try opening dialogue with phrases like “Tell me about...”

Be honest.

The youth should be introduced to service providers and the organization, and should be informed about mandated reporting standards. Be realistic about what your organization can do. Do not make promises you may not be able to keep. It may not be realistic to say, “Everything will be okay.”

Thank the youth for their time and effort. Let the youth know that their time is valued.

### *Topics to Consider to Better Understand the Youth*

Since it may not ever be appropriate to directly ask youth the questions found on the Treatment Level Tool, less invasive questions may be useful in conversations with youth. The following list of questions, from the Courtney's House Trafficking Assessment tool, may help staff members assess for sex trafficking or have conversations about sex trafficking without directly asking youth if they have exchanged sex for money, goods, or fulfillment of basic needs.

The appropriateness of these questions may vary depending on staff members' lived and professional experiences, and/or the youth's demographics (age, gender, identity, etc). Please use your best judgment.

These are potential initial topics to consider that could be discussed over time as rapport with youth is established. They are not questions to be asked in an interview format or in a way that would make a youth feel that they are being judged.

- Have you ever been in foster care?
- Are you currently in foster care?
- How long have you been in foster care?
- What things got tough when you were in foster care?
- What part of you personality helped you cope the best?
- Have you ever left home?
- What made you leave home?
- How many times have you left home?
- What were some of the ways you took care of yourself while you were away from home?
- Did you ever do any traveling while you were away from home?
- Where did you go?
- Who did you go with?
- How long were you gone?
- While you were away from home, did anyone keep you from going back?
- Have you ever been arrested? How many times?
- What were you arrested for?
- Which states were you arrested in?
- Were you ever put in an adult jail while you were under 18?
- Do you have any tattoos?
- If so, what are they of? Did someone ask you to get a tattoo to prove your love or loyalty to them?

**IMPORTANT.** Be aware of intersectionalities. When completing the Treatment Level Assessment, staff members should be alert to vulnerabilities such as chronic homelessness, multiple runaway episodes, identifying as LGBTQIA+, immigration status issues, disabilities or developmental delays, and/or a history of sex abuse. Such vulnerabilities may not only increase the risk of sex trafficking but also may impact the response protocol.

Please Note: All youth should be provided with basic needs whether or not they are trafficked. There is no “one size fits all” approach when providing services to youth survivors of sex trafficking. It is recommended that service providers engage the youth in service planning as much as possible to find the services that are the right fit for each individual.

**TEAMWORK** could also enhance this assessment. If several members of your staff are qualified to conduct a Treatment Level Assessment, these professionals can work together to combine the information they gather through various interactions with the youth. For example, a caseworker may receive different information from a youth than a therapist, who may receive more open disclosures. Some youth may feel more comfortable disclosing information to particular staff members due to personal relationships. Working together to combine relevant information can be an effective way to complete a comprehensive assessment.

The indicators are grouped into the following categories: “Disclosure/Reporting,” “High-Risk Indicators,” and “Medium-Risk Indicators.” If there is a “Yes” response in the “Disclosure/Reporting” section, the youth must be documented as a survivor of sex trafficking, and the appropriate response protocol should be followed. However, unless there is a direct disclosure by the youth or direct proof of trafficking or commercial sex acts, meeting this definition does not automatically mean that a youth is a survivor of sex trafficking.

Any youth who exhibits medium- or high-risk indicators should be monitored closely and should receive comprehensive services based on their individual needs. Youth with more or higher-level indicators are more likely to have been trafficked or to engage in behaviors that may increase the risk of being trafficked. Indicator levels should inform any safety plan, case management plan, or referral for services.

DISCLOSURE/REPORTING INDICATORS	RESPONSE		
Has the youth engaged in commercial sex or been prostituted or trafficked for sex?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has the youth engaged in a sex act in exchange for a place to stay, food, drugs, or anything else of value?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has the youth been involved in the sex industry (worked in strip clubs, at private sex parties, as an escort, etc.)?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has the youth witnessed someone engaging in a commercial sex act?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Are there photos or videos of the youth being sexually victimized or being advertised for sexual purposes?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has the youth disclosed, or has it been reported that they were moved around for sexual activity?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has the youth stayed with someone believed to be sexually exploiting youth?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Has the youth recruited peers into exploitation?	Yes	No	Not Sure

## High-Risk Indicators

The second section of this tool identifies high-risk indicators of human trafficking. If any response to the questions in this section is “Yes,” the youth should receive a safety plan and be provided with case management to address potential current or future risk of sex trafficking. Instances of abuse should be handled in accordance with agency protocol and state-mandated reporting laws. Further information from a youth on these topics may indicate sex trafficking or another form of exploitation and may be a crime that should be reported/addressed itself.

HIGH RISK INDICATORS	RESPONSE
Has the youth frequented or visited exploitation hotspots or other locations known for prostitution and trafficking or recruiting?	Yes No Not Sure
Has the youth associated with adults or other youth known to be involved with commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth have money or goods they wouldn't normally have the resources for? Has another person supplied such items to the youth? These may include mobile phones, drugs and alcohol, new clothes and/or shoes, expensive hair styles (dyed hair or weaves)	Yes No Not Sure
Are there any indicators of sexual abuse?	Yes No Not Sure
Is there cause to suspect that the youth, or a parent/guardian of the youth received or was promised anything in return for the opportunity to abuse the youth?	Yes No Not Sure
Has the youth disclosed, or has it been reported that they were moved around for sexual activity?	Yes No Not Sure
Has the youth had multiple sexually transmitted infections or abortions?	Yes No Not Sure

**Medium-Risk Indicators**

The third section of this tool identifies medium-risk indicators of youth sex trafficking. If any response to the questions in this section is “Yes,” the youth should be provided with case management to address current issues and assess safety and risks. Instances of abuse should be handled in accordance with agency protocol and state-mandated reporting laws.

<b>MEDIUM RISK INDICATORS</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
Does the youth have an older boyfriend/girlfriend/partner, especially one who appears controlling or whom the youth appears fearful of?	Yes No Not Sure
Do several youth tell exactly the same story?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth have a family member who appears controlling or whom the youth appears fearful of?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth get into cars with unknown adults?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth have a history of prior sexual abuse or sexually aggressive behavior?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth not attend school or exhibit high levels of truancy?	Yes No Not Sure
Has the youth left home or left child welfare placements on multiple occasions?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth display patterns of street homelessness?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth exhibit inappropriately provocative dress, especially if this is out of the ordinary for the youth?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth uses street slang for sex work?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth display signs of trauma when recounting their story (inconsistencies, a non-linear timeline, etc.)?	Yes No Not Sure

MEDIUM RISK INDICATORS	RESPONSE
Is anyone threatening the youth or someone they care about?	Yes No Not Sure
Is anyone blackmailing the youth?	Yes No Not Sure
Is there suspicion of a domestic violence relationship?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth lie about their age?	Yes No Not Sure
Does the youth have indications or reports of intimate partner violence?	Yes No Not Sure
Is the youth disconnected from social supports?	Yes No Not Sure



## Appendix A: Response Plan

### Key information for you to have.

1. Support people within your agency:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2. Emergency Resources:

**Local Police Department Number** \_\_\_\_\_

Call this number to make a report of abuse that happened to a youth.

**Local Child Abuse Hotline** \_\_\_\_\_

Call this number to report abuse you have witnessed or heard about involving other youth.

**National Human Trafficking Hotline** Call 1 (888)373-7888 or Text "HELP" or "INFO" to 233733 (BeFree)

You can call or text this number to ask questions about trafficking, get resources or advice on services in your area, or report human trafficking.

**Local agencies that handle Human Trafficking services:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

3. Websites and Helpful Resources:

**[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)**

**[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)**

**[www.nationalcac.org](http://www.nationalcac.org)**

**[www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org)**

## Appendix B: The PLAN Tool<sup>1</sup>

### *Harm Reduction*

In working with young people who may be at risk of sex trafficking, harm-reduction relies on communication, information, education, and safety planning. In these cases, harm reduction includes working with an individual in unsafe situations to develop safety and response plans and the skills for a variety of prevention techniques.

Harm reduction and safety planning can be used in a variety of situations to build rapport with youth, and to develop a safe and transformational relationship, new skills, and support as they navigate all sorts of challenging situations. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Online interactions
- Relationships both platonic and romantic
- Sexual activity
- Exposure to pornography
- Running away from home or programs
- Meeting new people
- Having new experiences such as school or shelter services
- Attending a new group
- Returning home
- Interacting with people they have identified as unsafe

The PLAN acronym will help you remember four key steps in creating a healing-centered approach based in harm reduction when interacting with youth. This process can be utilized by anyone and provides simple trauma responsive plan to support individuals where they are in their own journey, while building supportive relationships and open communication.

Reminder: In every situation, no matter the age of the youth, it is important that the youth leads in defining the details of the plan. See second page of Appendix B for details.

<sup>1</sup> The P.L.A.N. model has been adapted for this toolkit from Savannah Sanders, Inc.'s curriculum on youth sex trafficking

## Appendix B: The PLAN Tool<sup>1</sup>



**Prepare.** What is the situation or topic you are creating a plan for? Name it and define it. What resources and information can you provide? The more nonjudgmental, realistic information the better. Avoid fear tactics. Have open dialogue about a variety of scenarios. Work with the youth to identify people and places that they believe are safe. Remember, safe people and place to them may not be the same for you.



**Lists.** With the youth, create and write down a list of ways the youth has determined that they would like to respond or react in various scenarios. Who will they call or reach out to? What will they need to have with them beforehand? What can they do if they don't have those items? The lists should have as much detail as possible. These should include phone numbers, names, addresses and checklists.



**Ask.** Ask the youth how they might respond to scenarios based on their list. Run through the plan and practice it together. Is there anything that needs to be changed or added? Are there any memorizing tricks to use to remember places or numbers in case they are without their belongings?



**Navigate.** Be a sounding board as the youth navigates these situations and utilize what they have decided on. Re-evaluate what worked and what didn't. Is there more information you can suggest through the process? Remember, this plan should be youth-led. The provider role is to help to navigate the plan and to provide them with new tools and education as needed. These plans are designed to provide information, let the youth guide the plan, and practice with you before they navigate through difficult or new situations.