

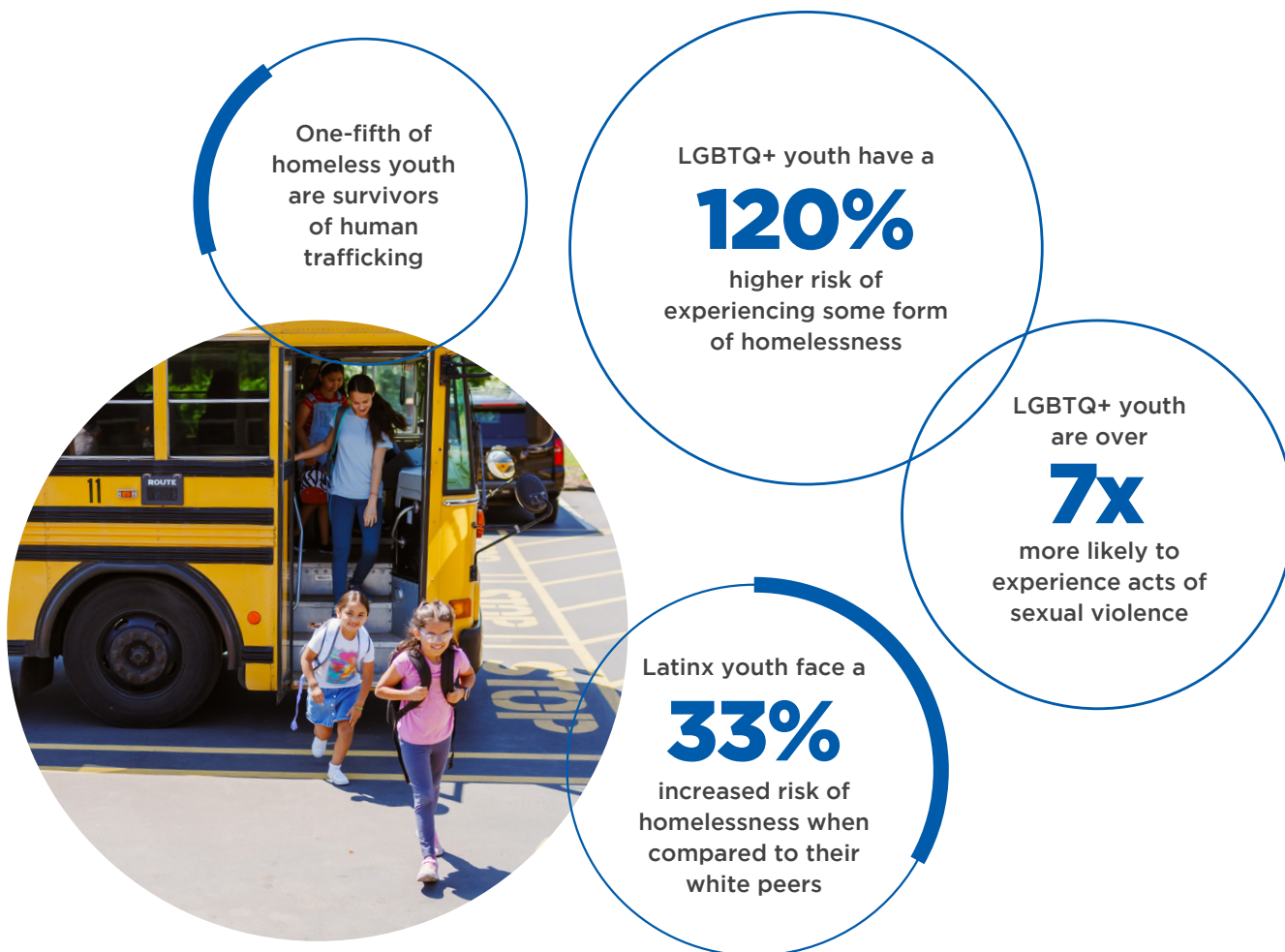
# Human trafficking quick facts, identification, and response tips **for educators**

**pcar**



CENTER FOR SCHOOLS  
AND COMMUNITIES





According to the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice, & Research at the University of Pennsylvania, one-fifth of homeless youth are survivors of human trafficking.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, research has shown that LGBTQ+ youth have a 120% higher risk of experiencing some form of homelessness<sup>2</sup> and are over 7x more likely to experience acts of sexual violence.<sup>3</sup> BIPOC youth face an 83% increased risk, and Latinx youth face a 33% increased risk of homelessness when compared to their white peers.

**Due to systemic inequities and injustice, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and system-involved youth face increased risks of experiencing homelessness and human trafficking.<sup>4</sup>**

Knowing and understanding the signs of human trafficking is imperative when working with communities at risk of experiencing abuse and exploitation. This fact sheet was created to assist school personnel and support staff in recognizing indicators of human trafficking and knowing how to respond to a potential survivor.

1 *One-fifth of homeless youth are victims of human trafficking.* (n.d.). Penn Today. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/one-fifth-homeless-youth-are-victims-human-trafficking>

2 Kovalick, C. (2022). *LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness.* National Network for Youth. <https://nn4youth.org/lgbtq-homeless-youth>

3 *Sex trafficking and LGBTQ youth.* Polaris. (n.d.). <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LGBTQ-Sex-Trafficking.pdf>

4 Bardine, D. (2022, November 16). *The Intersection of Child Sex Trafficking and Youth Homelessness.* National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. <https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2022/the-intersection-of-child-sex-trafficking-and-youth-homelessness>

# What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is a crime where people profit from the exploitation of children, adolescents, and adults through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Labor trafficking includes the use of force, fraud, or coercion to induce an individual to work or provide service.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, sex trafficking occurs when one person manipulates another person into sex acts in exchange for something of value, such as money, food, shelter, or drugs. In cases of sex trafficking involving adults aged 18 and older, Pennsylvania law requires evidence that the victim was forced, coerced, or defrauded. However, in cases involving people under the age of 18, sexual exploitation is always illegal, regardless of whether there is evidence of force, fraud, or coercion.<sup>6</sup>



## Reporting human trafficking

In an emergency, **call 911.**

If you are unsure if a student is experiencing a potential situation of trafficking, exploitation, or abuse, please follow internal reporting protocols and **connect with a school-based mental health professional, social worker, nurse, [McKinney-Vento homeless liaison](#), or counselor** to arrange for **human trafficking screening**.

If you suspect human trafficking, please follow your **mandated reporting requirements**.

- **Call ChildLine** (1-800-932-0313) or file an electronic report through the [Child Welfare Information Solution \(CWIS\) System](#).
- After completing a mandated report, you may also contact the **Pennsylvania State Police Human Trafficking Hotline** (1-888-292-1919) to report suspected trafficking.

For additional resources and information, please contact the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline** by calling or texting 233733 (befree) or 1-888-373-7888.

To find your local rape crisis center, visit [www.pcar.org/help-in-pa](https://www.pcar.org/help-in-pa)

<sup>5</sup> *Recognizing Human Trafficking*. (2015, October 13). Polaris. <https://polarisproject.org/labor-trafficking>

<sup>6</sup> *What is Human Trafficking?* | Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR). (n.d.). Pcar.org. <https://pcar.org/human-trafficking>

# Glossary

## Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) refers to a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person.

Examples include:

- Child sex trafficking
- Commercial production of Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM)
  - The term “Child Sexual Abuse Material” is used instead of “Child Pornography” because the term pornography implies consent on behalf of the youth, which is not possible, and may cause a youth survivor to feel as though they are to blame for their victimization.
- Online transmission of live video of a child engaged in sexual activity in exchange for anything of value.
- Situations where a child engages in sexual activity in exchange for non-monetary things such as food, shelter, drugs, or protection from any person.<sup>7</sup>

## Online sexual exploitation

Online Sexual Exploitation and abuse is when one person manipulates another person through online platforms into doing something sexual, such as forcing or blackmailing someone into sending sexual photos/videos through social media, texts, chat forums, gaming platforms, or performing sexual acts over webcam or live video chat. Online Sexual Exploitation can lead to Image-Based Sexual Assault (IBSA), including Sextortion.

- Sextortion: A form of online blackmail using nude images.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (n.d.). *Sexual Exploitation of Children*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <https://ojdp.ojp.gov/programs/sexual-exploitation-children>

<sup>8</sup> National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (n.d.). *Sextortion* [Review of *Sextortion*]. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Retrieved December 6, 2024, from <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/sextortion>

## Child labor trafficking

Labor trafficking affects children in industries ranging from domestic work to forced criminality, entertainment, and agriculture.<sup>9</sup> Child labor trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a child under 18 to provide involuntary labor or services.<sup>10</sup>

## Commercial sex act

A commercial sex act is any act in which sexual activity is exchanged for anything of value by any person. In Pennsylvania, any youth found to be engaging in commercial sex acts are considered victims of human trafficking regardless of if force, fraud, or coercion is proven.<sup>11</sup>

## Recruitment

Recruitment involves the proactive targeting of vulnerabilities and grooming behaviors for the purpose of inducing an individual into involuntary servitude, debt bondage, and commercial sex acts.<sup>12</sup>

## Smuggling vs trafficking

Human smuggling is the illicit act of transporting a person or people across an international border. Although illegal, smuggling is often a consensual arrangement in which the parties go their separate ways after the smuggling has occurred. In contrast, human trafficking involves the exploitation of people through force, fraud, or coercion. What may begin as a smuggling agreement may become a trafficking situation if vulnerable people are exploited.<sup>13</sup>

## Trauma bond

A trauma bond is the powerful emotional connection that can develop between a victim and their trafficker. Traffickers often utilize a combination of rewards and punishments within cycles of abuse to cultivate feelings of trust and attachment in the victim.<sup>14</sup>

9 Communications, N. W. (2024, April 18). *Child Labor Trafficking Is Ensnaing Both US- and Foreign-Born, Study Finds*. [www.nyu.edu. https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2024/april/child-labor-trafficking-is-ensnaring-both-us--and-foreign-born--0.html](https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2024/april/child-labor-trafficking-is-ensnaring-both-us--and-foreign-born--0.html)

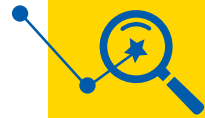
10 National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. (2000) *Child Labor Trafficking | Safe Supportive Learning*. Ed.gov. <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/human-trafficking-americas-schools/child-labor-trafficking>

11 Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation. (2016). *Sex Trafficking 101: Act 105: PA's Comprehensive Anti-Human Trafficking Law*. Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation. <http://cseinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Human-Trafficking-Resource.pdf>

12 Office on Trafficking in Persons. (n.d.). *Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking*. Wwww.acf.hhs.gov. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

13 Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. (June, 2017). *HUMAN TRAFFICKING & MIGRANT SMUGGLING: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE*. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/272325.pdf>

14 TRAUMA BONDING IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING. (2020). [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TIP\\_Factsheet-Trauma-Bonding-in-Human-Trafficking-508.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TIP_Factsheet-Trauma-Bonding-in-Human-Trafficking-508.pdf)



# Human trafficking indicators

Remember, not all indicators are present in every trafficking situation. Survivors may not exhibit typical symptoms of trauma or common indicators of trafficking. Additionally, indicators do not prove or disprove that a trafficking situation is taking place.<sup>15</sup> For example, while chronic absenteeism may signify potential trafficking, there may be other factors contributing to a student's attendance issues, including housing instability, transportation difficulties, bullying, family challenges, or mental health concerns.

\*Anyone under 18 found to be engaging in commercial sex acts is considered a trafficking victim regardless of if force, fraud, or coercion is proven.<sup>16</sup>

While human trafficking survivors can be of any age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, or socio-economic status, underrepresented and disinvested communities, such as BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth, face higher risks of trafficking and exploitation.

## **Signs that youth may have been sexually exploited, labor trafficked, or are at risk of human trafficking include:**

- History of homelessness or housing instability
- History of running away from home
- History of abuse within the home
- Having experienced physical and/or sexual abuse in the past
- Youth experiencing poverty
- Signs of neglect or malnutrition
- Living in foster care
- System-involved youth (juvenile justice, child welfare, behavioral health systems)
- Youth with intellectual disabilities or mental health conditions
- Youth with substance use disorders
- Changes in behaviors or school participation

## **Sex trafficking indicators**

- Fearful or nervous behavior (trouble with eye contact, constantly checking phone, surroundings, etc.)
- Scripted or rehearsed answers
- Inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Branding/Tattoos
- Unable to communicate freely
- Involved in a relationship with an older adult (may receive frequent gifts, be picked up from school by the adult, etc.)
- Knowledge of language used in the commercial sex industry ("The Life," "The Game," "Track," or "Stroll," "Johns," or "Tricks.")

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2008). *HUMAN TRAFFICKING INDICATORS*. [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/HT\\_indicators\\_E\\_LOWRES.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/HT_indicators_E_LOWRES.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation. (2016). *Sex Trafficking 101: Act 105: PA's Comprehensive Anti-Human Trafficking Law*. Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation. <http://cseinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Human-Trafficking-Resource.pdf>





# Recommended resources for continued learning

## Webinar resources — National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

- [Human Trafficking Webinar Series - How to Talk with Youth about Human Trafficking & Exploitation](#) (1.5 hrs.)
- [Human Trafficking Webinar Series - Understanding Child Labor Exploitation in the U.S. and How Schools Can Help Address It](#) (1.5 hrs.)
- [Human Trafficking Webinar Series - Part 1: Supporting Students Who Have Experienced Familial Human Trafficking](#) (1.5 hrs.)
- [Human Trafficking Webinar Series - Part 2: Supporting Students and Schools Through a Human Trafficking Report](#) (1.5 hrs.)

## Survivor support services in Pennsylvania

- [Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect](#)
- [Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)
- [PA 211 Contact Helpline](#)

## Additional Resources

- [Safety Planning with Foreign National Children & Youth Survivors of Trafficking](#)
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [SOAR Guiding Principles | Trauma-Informed Approach](#)
- [OVC: Shifting Current Practices in the Anti-Trafficking Field](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline | Myths & Facts](#)
- [United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime](#)  
(List of human trafficking indicators)
- [PEARR \(Privacy, Education, Ask, Respect, & Respond\) Tool](#)  
(This tool includes a fill-in referral sheet with local services and support options, national hotlines)
- [The Life Story | Sharing the Voices of Survivors of Sexual Exploitation](#)

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