



Stop Trafficking!

Awareness Advocacy Action

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FOCUS: This issue of the Stop Trafficking Newsletter focuses on Human Trafficking on College Campuses.

Human trafficking occurs everywhere, and traffickers always prey on the vulnerabilities of their potential victims. In this newsletter we explore human trafficking on college campuses and how college students are vulnerable but also taking steps, along with their schools, to combat trafficking through education and awareness.

Vulnerabilities of College Students

Traffickers always prey on the vulnerabilities of people, and college students are particularly vulnerable to this crime for a variety of reasons. The trafficker finds out what you need and then offers to fill that need for you. It is essential for the entire higher education community, including administrators, faculty, staff, and students, to recognize the potential risks of human trafficking, some of which are listed below.

- Students may not know what human trafficking is nor have the knowledge to know when they are getting into a potentially dangerous situation.
- For many students, this is their first time living away from home. The first six weeks of the new school year are very vulnerable times for incoming first-year students and new students to the school.
- Students are trying to fit in with their new surroundings without a reliable support network for the first time. They need to build new social and community connections. The lack of these connections could make them vulnerable to traffickers who may offer emotional support to gain their trust.
- For many students, this may be their first time using alcohol or other substances commonly found on college campuses. Traffickers may use alcohol and drugs to lure potential victims.
- Many college students experience challenging financial difficulties that traffickers could exploit by offering financial support or false promises of jobs. Traffickers may get victims to open credit card or bank accounts and then open new bank accounts under different names, using the stolen identities of their victims. When the student finds themselves in debt, the trafficker offers ways to pay the debt off by sex or labor.
- Students in an unstable relationship may be vulnerable to human trafficking.
- College students who have recently transferred can also be at higher risk because they are new to the area.
- Homeless students are especially vulnerable.
- Low self-esteem, mental health problems, and a history of abusive relationships all increase risk.

Please visit the [Safe Supporting Learning](#) and [Blue Campaign](#) websites for more information.

NCOSE Takes on College Hockey Team Abuse Case

Women on a college field hockey team were filmed, allegedly by the intramural/summer conference director of a college in South Carolina, who placed a hidden “spy camera” in a locker room and secretly filmed the women in all stages of undress and then uploaded the video footage to XHamster and Pornhub. Nine of those women have sued XHamster and Pornhub for this crime, and the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) has joined as co-counsel in this lawsuit.

Both XHamster and Pornhub have profited from the image-based sexual abuse of these women. The National Center on Sexual Exploitation Law Center offers survivors a way to seek justice. More information can be found [here](#).



Awareness

How Traffickers Engage with Potential Victims

Traffickers can be any gender, age, or race and can be anyone a student meets or knows. Although traffickers increasingly use the internet to identify and groom victims, they still utilize physical meeting spaces on or near campuses, such as student unions, bars, and off-campus parties, to recruit students.

The following list of how traffickers may reach and groom students is from the [Blue Campaign](#).

Social Media and Gaming Apps

Again, the internet remains the most frequently used means of recruitment for human trafficking. Traffickers use social media to recruit victims, proliferate their trafficking operations, and control victims by restricting their social media access, impersonating the victim, or spreading lies and rumors online. Gaming apps are also used to groom victims, with the trafficker often on the same “team” as the potential victim.

Dating apps

Victims are also recruited through [dating apps](#). The highest-ranking dating app, Tinder, finds matches in your area. Users set their distance preference, sexual orientation, and gender to find matches. Nearly 85% of college students who use dating apps choose Tinder, meaning undergrads are almost guaranteed a match. Other dating apps used by college students include Bumble, Hinge, and OkCupid.

Students could be lured into sex trafficking through websites like Seeking Arrangement, now called Seeking, that promise financial rewards in exchange for dating a wealthy individual. This is known as “sugaring.”

The number of college students using these apps has decreased in the past few years with student preferring to meet potential partners in person.

In Person

Students must always be vigilant of any suspicious activities they may see at their school, including those from both students and faculty. Traffickers can also hang around places where large numbers of students may congregate regularly.

In some cases, human traffickers attend campus parties, take photos of young women in compromising situations, and then threaten to expose them to force them into prostitution.

Grooming by Peers

Because campuses have many young people in one place, there are more opportunities for traffickers to use their victims for peer-to-peer recruitment. This is when traffickers coerce or force their victims or other students into recruiting their peers with potential promises of payment or reward, a finder’s fee, better status, less abuse, and better treatment. Victims who recruit other victims are sometimes referred to as “bottoms.”

Offers of Employment

Taking advantage of the economic instability of many college students, traffickers often offer jobs such as waitressing, modeling, or other jobs that may turn out to be sex or labor trafficking.

Offering Credit

Traffickers may exploit students by coercing them into opening lines of credit and then running up their debt. Traffickers may then tell their victims the only way to pay off this debt is to engage in sexual acts for money.

Potential Recruitment in Public Places

An increased awareness of how potential victims are recruited can help keep you safe in public spaces, such as parties. False promises of love or help often groom victims. Some tips offered by [Oklahoma State 1 is 2 many campaign](#):

Be Wary of Instant Love

“Romeo Pimps” are traffickers who shower potential victims with attention, affection, and gifts on their first meeting. They seek to establish an emotional attachment immediately and will ask probing questions to determine if you are alone and willing to hook up. They offer “love” to those who appear vulnerable and do not have a close family or friends. Many times, the trafficker and victim appear to be in a loving relationship, but instead, the victim is being coerced and deceived.

Keep an Eye on Your Drink

Traffickers look for chances to impair your judgment. This can take the form of buying drinks that may be laced with drugs or adding drugs to your drink while you are not paying attention. These drugs may interfere with your ability to take care of yourself and make sensible decisions.

You may also suffer drug-induced memory loss. During a drugged state, photos or videos may be taken of you that are then used to coerce you to engage in commercial sex acts. If you lose track of your drink, dump it out.

Have a Safety Plan

Tell friends and family where you are going and when you expect to return. Follow your instincts.



Title IX

Title IX is the landmark federal civil rights law in the United States that was enacted as part of the Education Amendments of 1972. It prohibits sex-based discrimination in any school or any other education program that receives funding from the federal government. The U.S. Department of Education Title IX Final Rule Overview Guiding Principles may be accessed by clicking [here](#). The Department’s Title IX regulations recognize that sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, is unlawful sex discrimination.

Title IX should be discussed with students at the beginning of each school year. Student leadership should also be involved with planning preventative measures and the education around behavior considered a violation of school policy or a crime related to Title IX. Both incoming and returning students must know they will be listened to and all complaints will be taken seriously. If students have been dismissed in the past, for example, in high school, and this was not handled properly, they will hesitate to report in college.

Indicators of Human Trafficking on Campus

While there is no single indicator of human trafficking, and the list below from the [Blue Campaign](#) is noncomprehensive, knowing the signs of human trafficking can help students, student leaders, professors, and campus law enforcement identify potential victims of this crime on campus.

The victim may show some of the following physical signs:

- Appear to be deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other necessities.
- Have tattoos or scars that would indicate branding by a trafficker.
- Have bruises or other signs of physical trauma.

The victim may exhibit some of the following behavioral signs:

- Show sudden or dramatic changes in behavior. For example, if a typically outgoing youth becomes reclusive and disconnected from peers.
- Have unexplained absences from class or display a sudden drop in academic performance.
- Defer to another person to speak for them, especially during interactions with campus authority figures.
- Suddenly have more (and more expensive) material possessions, like purses, clothing, and/or cell phones.
- Have on-campus housing but rarely stay in their dorm or apartment.
- Have a romantic partner who is noticeably older.
- Engage in unhealthy sexual behavior or indicate they may be experiencing abuse from their partner.
- Engage in unhealthy coping behaviors such as an increase in use of drugs or alcohol, etc.
- Appear to lack control of their own money.
- Lack control over a personal schedule and identification or travel documents.
- Seem employed and have a work permit but is working outside the usual hours for students.
- Live with an employer or have an employer listed as their caregiver or emergency contact.
- Transported to and from work.
- Multiple pregnancies or abortions.
- Multiple sexually transmitted infections.
- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, paranoid, or disassociated.
- Reference someone in their life being their “sugar daddy/sugar momma,” or refer to themselves as a “sugar baby”.
- Seem to engage in high-risk behaviors even at the apparent expense of safety and/or consequences.
- Stop attending or showing interest in activities or extracurriculars they usually attend.
- Stop showing interest in their future.
- Talk about getting paid very little or not for the work they do.



U.S. Students Studying Abroad

Studying abroad has become an increasingly popular option for undergraduate students in the United States.

[The Open Doors 2023 Report](#) states that during the 2021/2022 academic year, U.S. study abroad rebounded to more than half of pre-pandemic levels, with 188,753 students, or about 6 percent of all United States' undergraduates, pursuing opportunities abroad for academic credit.

Transparency in safety measures is not just a requirement, but a crucial aspect to protect American students overseas. Students and their parents should be fully aware of the university's pre-travel information, including the geographical risks of their preferred destination and location-specific resources. This knowledge is essential, especially when considering that Europe, a popular destination for American study abroad programs, is also a hot spot for human trafficking.

The proposed bill, Senate Bill 2274, introduced in July 2023, carries significant potential to enhance the safety of study abroad programs. It includes "demonstrating that the study abroad programs have established health, safety, and security guidelines and procedures, informed by Department of State travel advisories and other appropriate Federal agencies and resources, including the Overseas Security Advisory Council and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention." While it's yet to be passed as of this writing, its potential impact on student safety is promising.

International Students

International students may be at even greater risk of exploitation because they are in a new country, further away from home, and may not know their rights. Traffickers could also potentially use their temporary residency to manipulate them and build fear if they try to seek help. Human trafficking may also look very different in their home countries, so they may not know the signs to look for and how to protect themselves.

Traffickers take advantage of factors such as lack of legal status, the need to generate additional income to support themselves in costly countries like Canada or the United States, lack of knowledge of the language or limited command, and staying alone far from family and support networks.

According to [Polaris'](#) analysis of 2021 data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, recent migration or relocation was the most frequently reported risk factor or vulnerability identified. A little over half (54%) of trafficking victims were new to the country.

The [Blue Campaign](#) is a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking and how to respond to possible cases appropriately. The Blue Campaign works closely with the Department of Homeland Security Components to create general awareness training and materials for law enforcement and others to increase the detection of human trafficking and to identify victims.

The Blue Campaign has put out a [safety guide for campus law enforcement or public safety officials](#), who are in a unique position to reach students who may be vulnerable to human trafficking.

The guide's purpose is to inform campus law enforcement and public safety officials about human trafficking and its indicators so that they can better recognize a potential victim at the college or university campus where they serve. It also includes information about taking a victim-centered approach and how trauma can affect victim behavior.

Exploitation of International Students

International students are being exploited in many areas of the world, as shown below.

Australia

Both the 2020 and 2021 Trafficking in Persons report noted human traffickers have exploited international students in forced labor, mainly when based in remote regions with limited access to support. According to the [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report](#), some victims of human trafficking in Australia have been identified as foreign citizens on student visas who pay significant placement and academic fees.

Cyprus

According to the [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report](#), foreign university students in Cyprus, many of whom were recruited with false promises of scholarships, free housing, and employment, are vulnerable to both sex and labor trafficking. Female students are forced into sex trafficking, while male students are coerced to transport or sell illegal drugs.

United Kingdom

In July 2022, [the Guardian published a story](#) on how human traffickers brought students from India, the Philippines, and countries in Africa to Great Britain on student visas only to have them labor in care homes while living in crowded and fetid conditions and working up to 80 hours per week. Without proper training and background checks, this also left the elderly and disabled patients at risk for abuse and inadequate care.

After a student arrives in the United Kingdom to attend university, the school is required to monitor their attendance. At times, other people log in to lectures to give the impression that they are still attending school.

The University of Nottingham Rights Lab, the world's largest group of researchers of human trafficking, has described international student recruitment as an area of high risk at British universities and warned that student visas could be used to facilitate human trafficking. This has led to calls for increased monitoring of student visas and warnings for universities to be on alert.

International students are a key source of income for universities, with the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimating that fees from international students make up about 17% of the sector's total income.

Canada

Canada is a popular destination for students worldwide, and the country continues to attract a substantial number of students, especially from India, China, and Latin America. The number of international students has surged since the pandemic, with estimates of about one in 40 people in the country on a foreign-study visa. This has caused prices for rental housing close to campuses to soar. Financial constraints and limited social support are among the vulnerabilities that make many of these students, especially women and those who identify as LGBTQ, susceptible to trafficking. Click [here](#) to learn more.

In 2020, fifty-seven international students from Brazil and Chile arrived at a state technical college in Sioux City, Iowa. The students, who were brought to Sioux City as part of a cultural exchange on J1 Visas to study culinary arts for two years, were promised free tuition, housing, food, job training, and placement.

They were charged with hidden recruitment fees, their 2-year program was changed to one year, and their job training was mandatory, full-time jobs for low pay at giant food manufacturers. After some international students began filing complaints and the program's legality was questioned, the school canceled all 57 internships and demanded repayment of education and housing expenses.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

The Best Universities Addressing Human Trafficking

[The Best Universities Fighting Human Trafficking](#) lists the best universities in the United States that are leading the charge in academic pursuits to understand and combat human trafficking domestically and abroad. These universities and colleges are making significant strides in studying and combating human trafficking in various vital ways. They offer academic programs, resources, and initiatives that are instrumental in understanding, tracking, and fighting human trafficking locally, federally, and internationally, instilling hope and inspiration in the fight against this global issue.

Related degree programs include:

- Human Rights Studies
- Criminal Justice
- Homeland Security
- Law School (including International Law)
- Forensic Science (including Digital Forensics and Forensic Psychology)
- Public Health
- Public Administration
- Social Work
- Social Justice

However, the colleges and universities are fighting human trafficking directly. The first five universities in this list, which are listed below, offer various degrees in Human Trafficking in particular.

- The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
- University of Denver, Denver, Colorado
- Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, Monterey, CA
- Columbia Southern University, Orange Beach, AL
- Wilmington University, New Castle, DE

To access the full list, please click [here](#).

University Chapters to End Human Trafficking

A study conducted in a Texas school system showed students who received education on human trafficking were more likely to become actively involved in awareness and prevention, therefore improving the potential to protect vulnerable populations from becoming victims of trafficking.

University Chapters of the Trafficking in America Task Force have been created on various campuses with the following goals:

- To educate both the student population of universities and the surrounding community on the proliferation and magnitude of human trafficking on social media, online gaming, the Internet, and in the real world.
- Create an on-campus forum for the discussion of human trafficking and offer survivor and expert-led seminars on the recognition and prevention of human trafficking.
- Create a “call to action” campaign that publishes online and printed resources and gives students and the local community ways to recognize and become more involved in fighting human trafficking.
- Aid local, state, and congressional lawmakers in creating legislation that aids in the recovery and healing of victims of human trafficking while also helping to develop and implement harsher penalties for human traffickers.
- In collaboration with university Law Schools, lay the groundwork for creating a pro-bono law clinic for victims of human trafficking in the state of the chapter. Lay the groundwork to create a written guide for victims and survivors of human trafficking on navigating the legal system as it applies to human trafficking in the state of the chapter.
- Organize campus events, including fundraisers, to achieve the goals mentioned above.

Please click [here](#) to learn more about the University Chapters of Trafficking in America Task Force.

Human Trafficking on College Campuses: Resources for Police and Students

Maraya Lasinsky, chief advisor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, discusses human trafficking on college campuses and available resources for both campus police and students. Lasinsky also touches on different types of human trafficking, who perpetrators often are in relation to victims, what makes college students more vulnerable, common indicators of human trafficking, and how students can avoid situations that can sometimes lead to human trafficking. Please click [here](#) to access this YouTube video.

Please click [here](#) to listen to the podcast from *Campus Safety Voices on Human Trafficking on College Campuses: What It Looks Like and Resources for Police and Students*.

Resources

If you or a loved one are seeking support, below is a list of local and national human trafficking resources:

National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call: 1 (888) 373-7888

Text: BEFREE to 2337333

Learn more [here](#).

Other important resources:

Domestic Violence 24/7 Hotline:

Call: 1(800) 799-SAFE (7233)

Sexual Abuse 24/7 Hotline

Call: 1(800) 656-4673

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) Suicide Hotline

Call: 1(800) 273-TALK (8255)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Text: 988

National Dating Abuse Hotline

Call: 1 (866) 331-9474

Blue Campaign

Please click [here](#) to access a toolkit on how to address human trafficking on campus from the Blue Campaign.

Please click [here](#) to assess the Blue Campaign guide on human trafficking on college campuses for student leaders.

Please click [here](#) to view a video by the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign to learn to recognize and appropriately respond to suspected human trafficking in a campus environment.



One Voice. One Mission. End Human Trafficking.®

What to do if you suspect human trafficking

Do not at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert a victim to your suspicions.

- Call 911 for emergency situations – threats of violence, physical assault, emergency medical needs, etc.
- Notify campus security.
- Call 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423) to report suspicious criminal activity to federal law enforcement. Highly trained specialists take reports from both the public and law enforcement agencies.
- If you are a victim and need help or if you want to find support for a victim, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Call 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733).

Human Trafficking and College Campuses

For some, attending college is a pivotal time that involves meeting new people and testing the waters of independence. It can also be a time of increased vulnerability. In addition to the disproportionately higher rates of sexual assaults occurring on college campuses, there is also the risk of sex trafficking. In some instances, it is also a time when some learn about human trafficking in their classes and decide to become anti-trafficking advocates. This presentation focuses on human trafficking with particular attention to what is happening on college campuses across the U.S.

Colleges and universities are critical actors in the fight against human trafficking and locations where trafficking may occur. Three long-time advocates and scholars discuss how they and their students are working to serve victims and survivors and disrupt human trafficking across the U.S.

Please click [here](#) to view this webinar by the Alliance to End Human Trafficking.

U of M Working to End Human Trafficking

The University of Michigan Human Trafficking Collaborative is a partnership between the University of Michigan Law School Human Trafficking Clinic and the University of Michigan School of Nursing to educate the public, including healthcare providers and advocates, about human trafficking. To read more, please click [here](#).

Human Trafficking of College Students

Few studies have examined the prevalence of human trafficking on college/university campuses in the U.S. The study presented surveyed college students, ages 18 and over, on over 12 campuses across San Diego County and Imperial Valley, including private, public, 4-year and community colleges. Please click [here](#) to view the recording of *Human Trafficking of College Students in San Diego County and Imperial Valley: Results from the 2022-2023 Survey*.



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