



Guidelines for Schools on the Prevention of Human Trafficking of Students

(N.J.S.A. 18A:6-131.2-131.3)

Background

Human trafficking (HT) is a heinous crime that is occurring in every state in the United States and affecting those of all genders, ages, races, nationalities, and socioeconomic statuses. No one is immune and HT includes both sex trafficking and forced labor of adults and children.

As defined in New Jersey’s Human Trafficking Legislation, N.J.S.A. 2C: 13-8:

- The crime of Human Trafficking is committed if an individual knowingly holds, recruits, lures, entices, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains another, **by any means**, to engage in commercial sexual activity **or** to provide labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.
- The crime of Sex Trafficking of a Minor is committed if an individual knowingly holds, recruits, lures, entices, harbors, transports, provides or obtains, **by any means**, a child under 18 years of age, to engage in commercial sexual activity, whether or not the actor mistakenly believed that the child was 18 years of age or older, and even if that mistaken belief was reasonable. **The use of force, fraud, or coercion does not have to be proven** and is a first-degree offense.

Polaris Project’s 2020 report continues to show that a significant portion of all survivors that had accessed the hotline that year reported being a minor when first exploited (27.6%), rising to 76% when unknown calls are removed.¹ The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) also shares that in 2021 alone, they received more than 17,000 reports of possible child sex trafficking.²

These statistics highlight the importance of awareness and prevention education within the K-12 school system. It also brings focus to the key role school staff can play in identifying potential victims and reporting suspected instances of human trafficking, as well as connecting students to needed supports. **The purpose of this [guidelines document](#) is to provide direction for schools regarding how to create awareness of and an informed response to the trafficking of students, as well as how best to prevent it.**

Points of Highlight

- **No one is immune** to finding themselves in a trafficking situation. However, there are certain student populations who may be more likely to be targeted by traffickers such as: youth identifying as LGBTQ, migrant

¹ Polaris, *Analysis of 2020 Data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline*, <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Polaris-Analysis-of-2020-Data-from-the-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline.pdf>.

² The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, *The Issues: Child Sex Trafficking*, <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking#bythenumbers>, Accessed on May 12, 2022.

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youth, students with disabilities, students with mental or behavioral health issues, homeless youth, transfer students, and those involved in the child welfare system.

- **Recruitment** can happen anywhere youth commonly gather such as: shopping malls, restaurants, parks, schools, group homes, businesses, public transportation systems, and online platforms.
- A **trafficker** can be employed in any profession; residing anywhere; any age, gender, or race; peers, family members, or intimate partners; strangers; criminal operations or gangs; and small or large businesses.

Indicators of Possible Student Victims

(For additional indicators, see pg. 12 of the guidelines)

- Lying, inconsistent stories, or being secretive
- Fearful for their own safety or concern for the safety of loved ones
- Withdrawn or isolated
- Physical signs of abuse
- Noticeably older or controlling partners
- Suspensions, expulsions, or truancy
- Sudden possession of expensive things or multiple phones
- Sudden change in appearance or attention to personal hygiene
- Branding marks and/or tattoos (e.g., “Daddy” or barcode image)
- Missing from home or care and/or reluctance to return
- Hypersexualized behavior
- Recruiting peers
- Self-advertising on websites or social media
- Working unusually long hours
- Not in control of their money or ability to quit a job
- Deferring personal or educational decisions to a boss
- Living with a non-parental employer or the employer is listed as the student’s caregiver

Recommendations

- Districts and schools should offer **professional development opportunities** to school staff (ideally prior to student education so the adults are equipped to respond to possible student disclosures).
- **Evidence-based and age-appropriate human trafficking prevention education** should be provided to students from grades K-12. This can include areas known to bolster student protective factors such as social emotional skill development and digital citizenship/online safety.
- When possible, student programming should also be student-centered, dynamic and interactive, and include **opportunities for action and student empowerment**.
- As a best practice, parent and caregiver programming on HT 101 should also be provided.
- Districts and schools should develop policies and procedures regarding the **identification and reporting of suspected student victims of trafficking** as well as responding to possible disclosures using a victim-centered approach. (See pg. 23 of the guidelines for additional information).

Additional Resources

For further resources, please visit the [NJDOE Human Trafficking](#) website, or pg. 27 within the [guidelines document](#).

For additional information or if you have any questions regarding this guidance, please contact the Office of Student Support Services at SafeSupportiveSchools@doe.nj.gov.