# Identifying and Responding to Commercial Sexual Exploitation

## Classroom Practice and Student Supports

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<th><strong>Student Supports</strong></th>
<th><strong>Classroom Practice</strong></th>
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<td>Check-in one-on-one in a private and spacious setting, away from other students and authority figures.</td>
<td>Create and foster a safe space by understanding the implications and outcomes of commercial sexual exploitation.</td>
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<td>Clearly define commercial sexual exploitation and be transparent about your role as a mandated reporter.</td>
<td>Ensure all students feel empowered to disclose their exploitation by using inclusive language of all gender identities and sexual orientations.</td>
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<td>Use trauma informed approaches to ask judgment-free questions and avoid re-traumatization of students.</td>
<td>Always employ empathy and remind students that their safety and wellbeing are priority.</td>
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<td>For example: “Have you ever traded sex or sexual activity for money or anything of value?”</td>
<td>Avoid harmful, judgmental, or victim-blaming language that stigmatizes or reinforces stereotypes about exploitation.</td>
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<td>Remind students that exploitation is not their fault and express concern.</td>
<td>Identify red flags including but not limited to frequent truancy; changes in appearance and unexplainable expensive items (e.g., provocative clothing, garish make-up, phones); suddenly has a lot of money or continually discusses making money; has much older “boyfriends,” “friends,” or sexual partners; discusses frequent travel to places like Las Vegas; seen at locations known for soliciting commercial sex; appears to be excessively tired; maintains a sense of secrecy about activities outside of school; expresses fear for their safety and wellbeing, and finds it difficult to think about the future.</td>
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### Teacher Support

- If a trafficker is involved, then the student may still be under their control. Elicit their perception of their immediate safety.
- Avoid involving parents or caregivers until it is confirmed that they are not complicit in the commercial sexual exploitation.
- Give the student agency to be present and autonomy to be active in the reporting process to the child protection hotline.
- Honor the student’s resilience and survival skills by using person-centered language.
- Remind student’s that abuse and exploitation might be their experiences, but it is not their identity.
- Empower students by providing psychoeducation on healthy boundaries, relationships, and connecting them with information and services that can guide healthy decision-making.
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Tips for Teachers

• Students may be reluctant to disclose their exploitation.
  • Do not assume that well-intended intervention strategies will be viewed as such.
  • Do not take it personally if your help is rejected.
  • Stay consistent and continue to offer support.
  • Consult with experts in the anti-trafficking field.
  • Check your biases and dismantle harmful beliefs related to sex, rape culture, and victim-blaming.
  • Monitor your tone, facial expressions, and body language. Note, students will not disclose more than they think you can handle.
  • Exploitation impacts individuals differently. Assume that their exploitation and histories of trauma are unique.
  • Take care of your own physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing and access support as needed.

Common Missteps or Misconceptions

• Boys and youth in the LBGTQ community are susceptible to exploitation but remain under-identified.
• Avoid accusations or re-traumatizing questions, such as inquiring about their number of sexual partners, sexually transmitted infections, or other sensitive details that are not salient for the purpose of reporting.
• Youth can and do experience exploitation within their own home.
• Sexual abuse becomes commercial sexual exploitation when something of value is exchanged, even when the exchange involves items of minimal or non-monetary value (e.g., grades, status, food).

Glossary

• Commercial sexual exploitation of children: Any minor less than age 18 engaging in commercial sexual activity that is exchanged for anything of value, such as money or basic needs.
  • Commercial sexual activity may include transactional sex, erotic dancing, or pornography.
  • The use of force, fraud, coercion, or travel do not need to be present or proven.
  • Example: “You are a person experiencing commercial sexual exploitation.”

Resources for Continued Learning

National Human Trafficking Hotline: Telephone: 1 (888) 373-7888
  SMS: 233733 (Text “HELP” or “INFO”)
  Website: traffickingresourcecenter.org
National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: Telephone: 1 (800) THE-LOST
  Website: missingkids.com
Los Angeles County Child Protection Hotline
  Telephone: 1 (800) 540-4000

For more information visit wellbeing4la.org/schools