



## **Keeping Students Safe**

# **Grand Erie District School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol**

*May 25<sup>h</sup> 2022 last edited*

In accordance with [Policy and Procedure Memorandum 166 Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols](#), Grand Erie District School Board has developed this Protocol.

The Grand Erie District School Board (the “Board”) is fundamentally opposed to, and has a zero-tolerance policy on, sex trafficking of persons in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion.

The board will educate staff and students with a view to preventing individuals from becoming victims, as well as ensure a pathway to care for any individuals impacted by human sex trafficking. The board will show compassion and ensure availability of resources to assist any students who may have been victimized by or are survivors of human sex trafficking.

### **SCOPE**

This protocol applies to in-person and online learning. The protocol includes all school and school board activities, including field trips, overnight excursions, board-sponsored sporting events and board-operated before- and after-school programs.

### **SEX TRAFFICKING**

Sex trafficking is a form of sexual exploitation and is a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada. It can include recruiting, harbouring, transporting, obtaining, or providing a person for the purpose of sex. It involves the use of force, physical or psychological coercion or deception. Most individuals who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation are women, girls and gender-diverse individuals, but any person could be targeted.

Indigenous and racialized individuals are especially vulnerable to experiencing sex trafficking. The intersections of colonization, intergenerational trauma, systemic discrimination and barriers to accessing service compound, which increases the vulnerability of being targeted by traffickers for Indigenous women and girls – who comprise a disproportionate number of trafficked persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation, in Canada.

### **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE**

The Board’s mission is to build together a culture of learning, well-being and belonging to inspire each learner. This protocol is imperative to the success of the Board in fulfilling this mission.

The board operates on the traditional territories of many indigenous peoples. The Board has many students and families who are of indigenous descent and is situated between two reservations. The Board recognizes we as community leaders are well positioned to support our community, students, families and staff to identify, engage, and support those who are impacted by sex trafficking.

## **A ROLE FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS**

Parents and caregivers are key partners in preventing and identifying sex trafficking. Parent, and caregiver voices are imperative to the review and development of this protocol and implementation of education and awareness activities.

Parents and caregivers are key partners in preventing children and youth from becoming vulnerable to sex trafficking and will also help inform development, implementation and review of anti-sex trafficking protocols.

The Board acknowledges that care must be given when reaching out to parents, families and caregivers to ensure they are safe adults prior to engaging with them on matters regarding students. Outreach to Indigenous parents and guardians, as well as outreach to Black and racialized parents and guardians, will be trauma-informed and culturally appropriate, recognizing historic and systemic barriers that may impact their participation. Every effort will also be made to reduce cultural and/or linguistic barriers when reaching out to parents, guardians, and caregivers about this protocol. In addition, Grand Erie will ensure that information, support and communications are available to non-English speaking caregivers.

## **FOSTER STUDENT VOICES**

Students are the focus of this protocol and have been and will continue to be involved in efforts to develop actions against sex trafficking. The board will continue to invite student groups to participate and inform the design, development, delivery, and implementation of anti-sex trafficking protocols and awareness activities.

The Board recognizes that students with lived experience are experts and, if willing and appropriately supported through trauma-informed approaches, could share their stories and insights as part of efforts to build awareness and empower students.

## **BUILD MULTI-SECTORAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

Ongoing consultation and engagement with community groups/agencies that support members of the school community are essential to supporting anti-sex trafficking approaches that are responsive to diverse students and the needs of local school communities. The Board will remain a member of the Partners Against Human Trafficking (PATH) Committee to continue to foster cross-sectoral relationships across Brantford, Haldimand, Norfolk, Six Nations and Mississaugas of the Credit.

The Board values the input and expertise of the community agencies doing anti-trafficking work. Agencies who reviewed, provided input and will hopefully continue to support this protocol are:

- **Victim Services of Brant**
- **OPP**
- **Nova Vita**
- **Canadian Mental Health Association of Brant**
- **Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board**
- **Brantford Police Services**
- **Brant O.P.P., Norfolk O.P.P., Haldimand O.P.P.**
- **Child and Family Services of Grand Erie**
- **Haldimand Norfolk Reach**
- **Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services**
- **Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services**
- **Sexual Assault Centre of Brant**

Ongoing partnerships with local police services, child welfare and other community agencies are in place to support the Board's goal to create safe, inclusive, and welcoming learning environments that protect students from being trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and ensure timely and coordinated responses to students who are impacted or may be at risk.

**INTERVENTIONS MUST BE SAFE**

Caring adults and students within schools can promote a sense of student belonging, increase protective factors, help to reduce risk factors associated with sex trafficking, and support early intervention through identification and appropriate response, including connecting impacted persons to supportive services.

The dignity, health, safety, and well-being of students shall be given the highest priority. Every attempt will be made to respect student privacy and self-esteem. All who assist in this process must maintain confidentiality. Interventions will seek to respond to immediate dangers, lower identified risk factors and avoid any actions that will make an individual's situation more unsafe.

Responding to students at risk of, or victims of, human sex trafficking will be trauma informed, non-judgmental, and culturally responsive, and will respect confidentiality, privacy and informed consent.

Board employees require comprehensive anti-sex trafficking training, so they are equipped to identify the signs of sex trafficking, safely respond to disclosures, be culturally relevant and responsive to diverse student populations, and support the immediate physical and emotional safety needs of students. Training must emphasize how to respond to immediate dangers and the need to avoid actions that will make an individual's situation worse or more unsafe.

The board will educate staff and students with a view to preventing individuals from becoming victims, as well as ensure a pathway to care for any individuals impacted by human sex trafficking. The board will show compassion and ensure availability of resources to assist any students who may have been victimized by or are survivors of human sex trafficking.

**BUILD UP SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION**

The development of this protocol will complement existing prevention efforts in schools, including the teaching of consent, healthy relationships, and healthy sexuality. It is important for school staff to understand the historical and social contexts of sex trafficking and implement prevention strategies that are responsive to the needs of students and members of the local school community.

All members of the school community - trustees, administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents/guardians, volunteers, and bus drivers - will work collaboratively and diligently to help protect all students from predators who engage in sex trafficking or grooming activities, and ensure interventions are safe.

Ongoing staff development and training will take place at a system and school level regarding sex trafficking awareness, including signs of sex trafficking, reporting protocols of expected or confirmed sex trafficking activities, and pathways to care for students identified.

**RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY AND INFORMED CONSENT**

The development of procedures must respect confidentiality and ensure that the student fully understands how their information may be used and with whom it may be shared. It is key to develop referral relationships with community service organizations while adhering to applicable legal requirements, including those under the [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#); the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#); the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#); the [Education Act](#); and the [Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017](#).

**PROMOTE EQUITABLE AND CULTURALLY SAFE RESPONSES**

This protocol will demonstrate a human rights-based, non-judgmental, culturally responsive, survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach to raising awareness, preventing, identifying and responding to sex trafficking. These protocols and interventions must be rooted in upholding student/human rights. This protocol will prioritize the safety, autonomy and choice

of any student impacted by trafficking. Academic, social, and emotional supports will be provided in a timely and collaborative way for any students who are victims of, and have been traumatized because of, sex trafficking.

### **RAISING AWARENESS OF SEX TRAFFICKING FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS**

In collaboration with all stakeholder groups, the board will further develop awareness activities related to cyber-safety, signs of sex trafficking, cultural impacts, school procedures, and where to get help. Awareness strategies may include but are not limited to:

- Online resources for parents and caregivers that include cyber-safety, signs of trafficking and luring, how to get help, how to access the protocol, and how and where to report;
- Posting on the Board website this protocol and attached appendices and related procedures, such as Duty to Report, Police Protocol, and the Mental Health and Well Being Strategy;
- Sharing information on social media platforms;
- Distributing emails with links to community partners, information on signs and stages of trafficking, and the link to the protocol, information on how to report, and what to do if your child has experienced grooming, luring or trafficking;
- Promoting events hosted by community partners;
- Recognizing Human Trafficking awareness day (February 22nd) on social media platforms;
- Presentations to Parent Councils;
- Ensuring that parents have access to information in their preferred language;
- Awareness activities that emphasize how to respond to immediate dangers and the need to avoid actions that may make an individual's situation worse or more unsafe;
- Providing resources that go home to all families.

### **RAISING AWARENESS FOR STUDENTS**

The Board is committed to supporting students and the school community's safety and wellness. Prevention and education efforts are already taking place to reduce the risk of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. These can be found in the Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy. Some key partnerships and initiatives include:

- Healthy relationship presentations by Nova Vita;
- Classroom presentations and lessons by Grand Erie Child and Youth Workers;
- In collaboration with stakeholders, the board will further develop awareness activities to increase knowledge related to cyber-safety, human trafficking signs, stages and impacts, as well as the school procedures and where to get help. These activities include but are not limited to:
  - Updated Health Curriculum;
  - Presentations facilitated by Student Support Services and Safe and Inclusive Schools Staff;
  - Student-led initiatives;
  - Information available online, in the student handbook and through student groups on signs and stages of trafficking, how to report concerns related to trafficking, including how to report anonymously to the board;
  - Signs and posters at schools on the signs of sex trafficking and where to get help;
  - Text messages delivered by the school;
  - Individual conversations between youth and support staff.

**What to do if you or someone you know needs help?**

*You can speak with an adult you trust, or call Canada’s confidential Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-833-900-1010**.*

*For information and support, visit [canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca](http://canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca).*

*If indigenous, call, chat or text **1-855-554-4325**.*

*If there is immediate danger or if you suspect a child under 18 is being trafficked, call **911** or the OPP.*

**TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES, THE BOARD WILL POST INFORMATION ABOUT ANONYMOUS REPORTING TO THE BOARD. PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND CONCERNED COMMUNITY MEMBERS MAY REPORT ANONYMOUSLY BY CALLING THE BOARD FROM A BLOCKED NUMBER AND/OR CALLING CRIME STOPPERS AT 1-800-222- TIPS (8477).**

**IN ADDITION TO THE OPTIONS ABOVE, A STUDENT MAY REPORT ANONYMOUSLY USING THE TALKING LOCKER FOUND ON THE BOARD AND SCHOOL WEBSITES.**

**RESPONSE PROCEDURES SECTION I**

The board response procedures have been developed in collaboration with community partners, students, survivors, and the broader school community. These procedures address when a student or a school community member has been impacted by, or engaged in, luring or trafficking.

School staff includes all Board employees. It is imperative that school personnel understand trauma-informed practices and how to apply them in situations where students who are victims of human sex trafficking may be struggling with fear, shame, and embarrassment. Suspending judgment and remaining open-minded are critical to creating a trusting relationship in which vulnerable students feel safe to confide and seek support. In this context, school counsellors or other trained specialists may need to meet with a student several times before the student feels comfortable sharing information.

In most cases, classroom educators or other school staff who are concerned about a student should not question the student directly. Instead, they should take their suspicions first to their school administrator, who should take the concern immediately to their school Student Support Services staff (Social Worker or Attendance Counsellor). The Student Support Services staff will then notify the Safe and Inclusive Schools Team Lead for matters regarding human trafficking.

DUTY TO REPORT SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASES OF SEX-TRAFFICKING OF YOUTH CAN BE FOUND HERE

[https://granderie.ca/download\\_file/view/10713/2375](https://granderie.ca/download_file/view/10713/2375)

**STUDENT DISCLOSES TO STAFF THEY HAVE BEEN/ARE BEING SEX TRAFFICKED OR LURED OR ARE LURING OTHERS**

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| <p>Understand that making a disclosure/declaration is a very vulnerable time for students and can be difficult as well as dangerous.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not disclose to ANYONE who does not need to be involved (doing so could increase safety concerns of student and/or put others safety at risk).</li> <li>• Ensure all people who are aware and need to be involved are not breaching confidentiality of the student (e.g., discussing the situation in hallways, classrooms, lunchrooms, etc.)</li> <li>• Listen without judgment to the student.</li> </ul> |
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|                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the disclosure happens in an online space, please notify the Administrator.</li> </ul>  |
| Keep everyone safe.               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine the immediate safety needs of all involved; if an imminent safety risk is determined, call 911.</li> <li>Explain your duty to report to police, child protection services and the administrator.</li> <li>Do not leave the student alone.</li> <li>Does the student have any individual/cultural needs to consider or practical needs that will help the student feel more comfortable?</li> </ul> |
| Explain how you can help.         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain to the student that you are able to help them by ensuring they are safe.</li> <li>Connect them with people who can help, such as school or community supports.</li> <li>Connect with the administrator to get access to resources and support.</li> </ul>  |
| Contact the school administrator. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on your observations of or interactions with the student over time, if you believe indicators of sexual exploitation are present, contact the school administrator and share your concern.</li> </ul>  |

**ADMINISTRATOR BECOMES AWARE A STUDENT HAS BEEN/ARE BEING SEX TRAFFICKED OR LURED**

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| Keep the student and staff safe.       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all safety protocols have been followed. If there is an immediate threat to safety, call 911.</li> <li>Ensure the student has not been left alone if disclosure is made during school hours.</li> <li>Do not ask the student to repeat their story, to avoid re-traumatization.</li> <li>Ensure any duty to report has been completed.</li> </ul> |
| Consult with the school Social Worker. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school administrator will share their suspicions with the school Social Worker.</li> <li>If required, an in-school meeting will be called.</li> <li>The administrator/Social Worker will inform the Safe and Inclusive Schools (SIS) Lead.</li> <li>The Social Worker will meet with the student.</li> </ul>   |
| Communicate what you can.              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate next steps with the student, including who will be in contact.</li> </ul>  |

**SOCIAL WORKER RECEIVES A DISCLOSURE THAT A STUDENT HAS BEEN/IS BEING SEX TRAFFICKED OR LURED**

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| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depending on the information gathered, the Risk Screening Tool may be warranted to determine level of risk.</li> </ul>   |
| Reporting  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting processes will be followed.</li> <li>The Social Worker or SIS Lead may contact child welfare services and/ or law enforcement for background information.</li> <li>Where safe to do so, the guardian must be notified.</li> <li>Notification will also be shared with the Family of Schools Superintendent.</li> </ul> |
| Supporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Social Worker, the administrator and school team develop a supportive response for the student involved.</li> </ul>  |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Safe and Inclusive Schools Lead assists with potential district impact, such as involvement of other students as victims or perpetrators.</li> <li>• Initiate the Violence Threat Risk Assessment protocol, where deemed necessary.</li> </ul>  |
| Wrap Around   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Social Worker or support staff will offer the student (and family members where appropriate) a supported referral to local service providers.</li> <li>• A community team referral is initiated to ensure community response, as required, specializing in sexual exploitation where available and/or linkages with domestic violence, sexual assault, child welfare, housing addictions, or mental health agencies.</li> </ul>                   |
| Accommodations  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Safe and Inclusive Schools Lead, and the Social Worker engage in education planning with the survivor and provide on-going trauma-informed support if the student wishes to return to school.</li> <li>• School staff assess and allow learning accommodations deemed necessary.</li> <li>• The Safe and Inclusive Schools Team will provide academic and counselling support for the student, if deemed the most appropriate program.</li> </ul> |
| Luring others<br>Many youth who recruit/traffic other youth were initially trafficked themselves and lure others as a response to their trauma or a direction from their trafficker (Bird,K. 2021). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If student is luring others, Safe and inclusive Schools team will provide intervention and consider progressive discipline as deemed necessary</li> </ul>   |

**RESPONSE PROCEDURES SECTION II**

**PROCEDURE FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER AN EXTENDED TIME AWAY DUE TO SEX TRAFFICKING**

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| Remember that sex trafficking is extremely traumatic and impacts all parts of the self. Students may struggle with a variety of symptoms and the road to healing can be long. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the student to lead the return-to-school plan as much as possible.</li> <li>• Prioritize the safety of all.</li> <li>• Support the student’s long-term success through ongoing conversation about barriers.</li> <li>• Families may also require referrals and support for this transition.</li> </ul>   |
| Initial meeting   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with all resources necessary to reacclimatize the student to a school/learning environment, including but not limited to the school Social Worker or Child and Youth Worker, community mental health workers, Sexual Assault Centre, Victim Services, Women’s Services, Child Welfare Agencies, Youth Justice agencies or other appropriate agencies, and supports identified by the student.</li> <li>• Involve representatives, identified by the student, from Indigenous, Black, racialized and/or newcomer groups to provide support.</li> <li>• An initial meeting organized by the school social worker or Safe and Inclusive Schools Lead will be</li> </ul> |

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|                | <p>held with the victim and other identified contacts to discuss student learning needs and successes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the risk to the student and others. A crisis/safety plan for return will be created for the student.</li> </ul>   |
| Accommodations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School staff will provide learning accommodations as deemed necessary.</li> <li>• The Social Worker will check in as agreed upon with student and supports.</li> <li>• Academic staff will provide appropriate programming, including Supervised Alternate Program (SAL), Alternative Education, Virtual School and/or part- or full-time return to brick-and-mortar school.</li> </ul> |

**TRAINING FOR SCHOOL BOARD EMPLOYEES**

The Board is committed to the ongoing training of all staff. We recognize that training will assist staff in the identification and intervention of sex trafficking.

The Board will also provide virtual modules for the Health and Safety training provided to all staff. This virtual information will include:

- Key Definitions and myths about sex trafficking;
- Tactics used by traffickers and signs and stages of sex trafficking;
- Information supporting prevention and protective factors, access to resources within the board and elsewhere;
- Signs that a student may be luring or grooming another student;
- Applying an equity lens to combatting sex trafficking;
- Culturally safe supports and interventions;
- Resources;
- Online Safety;
- Response procedures;
- Duty to report;
- Police reporting procedures;
- Roles of the school board employees;
- Training on this protocol;
- How staff can care for themselves after receiving disclosures of sex trafficking.

More intensive training will be offered to administrators and other identified staff who will be most likely to come into contact with a trafficked student. All training will be tracked and reported.

**MEASURING SUCCESS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION**

This protocol is multi-faceted and, as such, should be reviewed at minimum each year. The protocol, training plan and response procedures will be reviewed and may further evolve as more is learned about human trafficking in the Board

The Board will work collaboratively with the Ministry of Education to develop a performance measurement framework. This framework will monitor the effectiveness of training (for example, whether staff feel they are more aware and more able to safely identify and intervene in situations where a student is suspected of being trafficked or trafficking) and whether the protocols respond to the needs of students.

**REFERENCES**

- *PPM 119 - Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools*
- *PPM 128 - The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Contact*
- *PPM 166 - Keeping Students Safe – Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking*



*Protocols*

- *Bill 157 - Keeping our Kids Safe at School Act*
- *Bill 212 - Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety), 2007*
- *O. Reg. 265 - Duties of a Principal*
- *O. Reg. 474/00 - Access to School Premises*
- *Government of Canada/Public Safety Canada*
- *Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy 2020-2025*
- *Children, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*
- *Ontario College of Teachers – Duty to Report*

**APPENDICES:**

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Appendix B: Sex Trafficking in Ontario Facts

## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**2SLGBTQQA:** Refers to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual.

**Anti-racism:** Is a process, a systematic method of analysis, and a proactive course of action rooted in the recognition of the existence of racism, including systemic racism. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities.

**Cultural responsiveness:** “Extends beyond language to include a much larger set of professional attitudes, knowledge, behaviours and practices, and organizational policies, standards and performance management mechanisms to ensure responsiveness to the diversity of [students] who walk through [schools] doors<sup>1</sup>.”

**Cultural safety:** Refers to “an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together<sup>2</sup>.”

**Equity lens:** Involves “strategically, intentionally and holistically examining the impact of an issue, policy or proposed solution on underserved and historically marginalized communities and population subgroups, with the goal of leveraging research findings to inform policy<sup>3</sup>.”

**Human rights-based approach:** Refers to a “conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress<sup>4</sup>.”

**Survivor:** Refers to an individual who has escaped a trafficking situation, whereas *victim* is used to refer to an individual who is in the process of being recruited or is being trafficked. The term survivor may also be used to refer to an adult with lived experience of being trafficked. This approach is used for clarity and not intended to label or define an individual's experience. Individuals who have experienced sex trafficking may prefer one term over another in order to describe their experiences. School board employees should confirm how an individual impacted by trafficking prefers to be referenced.

**Tactics:** Refers to a range of trafficking tactics used to target, recruit, manipulate and coerce victims. This can often involve a process of targeting an individual's vulnerabilities then luring, grooming, isolating, manipulating, controlling and exploiting the victim to then conduct sexual acts (for example, forcing a victim to have sex, to take images of child sexual abuse). Often, a victim may not be aware that exploitation is happening, and victims may be forced to recruit other victims.

**Trauma-informed approaches:** Refer to “policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes and behaviours. These approaches increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence and/or have a history of experiencing violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Indigenous Primary Health Care Council. (2018, June). [Cultural Competency Guideline for Ontario Public Health Units to Engage Successfully with Aboriginal Communities](#).

<sup>2</sup> Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety—what does it mean for our work practice?. Australian and New Zealand journal of public health, 23(2), 213-214.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas, M. D., Willock, R. J., Respress, E., Rollins, L., Tabor, D., Heiman, H. J., & Holden, K. B. (2019). Applying a health equity lens to evaluate and inform policy. Ethnicity & disease, 29 (Supplement 2), 329

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF. (2016, January 23). [A Human Rights-based Approach to Programming: What is HRBAP?](#)

## Appendix B: Human Sex Trafficking in Ontario Facts

Sex trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes worldwide. In Ontario, most reported cases involve sexual exploitation, which may also be referred to as sex trafficking. Young women and girls are particularly at risk, though boys, men and people who identify as 2SLGBTQQIA are also targeted. The average age of recruitment into sex trafficking is 13 years old. Over 70% of human sex trafficking victims identified by police are under the age of 25. (Source: Ministry of Education, 2021)

Indigenous women and girls comprise a disproportionate number of trafficked persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Canada. Two-thirds of police-reported sex-trafficking cases in Canada occur in Ontario. Sex-trafficking incidents are most often reported by police in urban centres, but traffickers are known to target individuals from, and traffic in, northern or remote communities. (Source: Ministry of Education, 2021)

### **Who is Most at Risk of Human Sex Trafficking?**

While any student can be sex trafficked, some groups are at increased risk of being trafficked:

- Systemic racism and discrimination have led to a disproportionate number of Indigenous and Black children and youth in care, which can lead to a lack of consistent relationships with caring adults and peers in schools.
- Indigenous students are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking due to historic and ongoing systemic discrimination, including intergenerational trauma resulting from residential schools and the “Sixties Scoop”.
- First Nation students transitioning from remote Northern communities to schools in urban centres can also face increased safety risks.
- Language barriers, isolation, economic disadvantage or a lack of community and social supports may leave newcomer students with increased vulnerability to sex trafficking.
- Students with disabilities may experience bullying and isolation in addition to having difficulty understanding the intentions of others.
- Students who are 2SLGBTQQIA experience high rates of bullying, assaults, and sexual abuse, and they may face isolation or displacement if they experience rejection from their family or the community.

### **Identifying the Physical, Social and/or Behavioural Indicators of Sex Trafficking**

If school administrators or staff begin to witness, or suspect, sudden changes to a student's physical, social, and/or behavioural interactions that is not consistent with their usual base-line appearance or conduct, further assessment may be necessary to identify a potential sex-trafficking situation or other worrisome situational matters.

The indicators in this list are not exhaustive and represent only a selection of possible indicators. These indicators may not be present in all sex trafficking cases and are not cumulative.

- Changes in behaviour, academic achievement (i.e., severely below expected) or school participation (e.g., a spike in truancy);
- Secretiveness about their activities;
- New boyfriend, girlfriend, or friend who they will not introduce to friends and family;
- Signs of frequent migration, running away from home, periodic homelessness, disorientation, uncertainty of surroundings;
- New or second cell phone with a secret number;
- Signs of abusive or inattentive caregivers, such as untreated illness or injury, bruises, or scars;
- Sexual behaviour that is high-risk and/or inappropriate for their age;

- Explicitly sexual online profile via internet community or social networking sites;
- Relationship with an older man/person, receiving frequent gifts, being picked up from school by controller;
- Provocative and/or expensive clothing, jewelry and more make-up;
- Sexual activity in exchange for money or anything of value (e.g., clothing, food, shelter, other valuable goods, and resources). In order to identify sex trafficking when a student is under 18, it is not necessary to prove there was force, fraud, or coercion.
- Knowledge of the commercial sex industry. Use of lingo such as “The Life,” “The Game,” “Daddy” (for boyfriend or controller), “Track” or “Stroll”;
- Reference to dates as “Johns” or “Tricks.”

### **The Stages of Exploitation**

#### **At Risk**

- Traffickers identify and seek out individuals based on vulnerabilities that they can manipulate to make their victim dependent on them.

**What Could This Look Like:** Luring (often through social media), and grooming (e.g., showering individual with gifts/affection)

#### **Transitioning In**

- The trafficker begins to “test limits” of the individual they are targeting to determine how effectively they can control and manipulate behaviour.

**What This Could Look Like:** disengagement from previously enjoyed activities (e.g., school, extracurriculars, friend groups); alcohol or substance usage; spending time with a new friend or boyfriend (who may be older).

#### **Entrenchment**

- Traffickers use psychological, physical, emotional manipulation to control and exploit the individual.

**What This Could Look Like:** going missing; using language of the sex trade (e.g., “the game”; “tricks”); more volatile moods; isolation from family/friends.

#### **Transitioning Away**

- Individuals begin to look at exiting exploitative situations, though this may take several attempts.

**What This Could Look Like:** seeking specialized support; re-engagement in activities previously enjoyed; involvement with friends/family.

### **What do I need to do if you suspect, or it has been confirmed/disclosed, a child is a victim of Sex Trafficking?**

- If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 to access emergency services.
- Follow the board protocol on how to report suspected or confirmed sex-trafficking activities.
- Contact Canada’s confidential Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-833-900-1010 for information and support or visit [canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca](http://canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca).

**What should I do after I have reported my suspicion of Sex Trafficking?**

- School/Board personnel do not have the authority to conduct internal investigations. DO NOT attempt to conduct your own investigation as this can lead to a dangerous situation for both you and the victim.
- Remain calm and continue to support the suspected victim while refraining from questioning the child.
- Never confront the suspected trafficker. Confronting a trafficker may put you and the student's life in immediate danger.

**Supports & Services for Victims of Human Sex Trafficking and Key Resources**

Ontario supports a range of initiatives to help raise awareness and combat sex trafficking in our province. Resources to help educate children and youth include:

- "[The Trap](#)" a human trafficking digital education tool, teaches children and youth what human trafficking is and equip them with the skills to stay safe.
- [Speak Out: Stop Sex Trafficking](#), an educational campaign focused on raising awareness about sexual exploitation among Indigenous women and youth.
- Educational [resources and lesson plans](#) for secondary school educators on child sexual exploitation.
- Canadian Centre for Child Protection has resources on healthy relationships and online safety <https://www.protectchildren.ca/en/>