

What law enforcement officers need to know about sex and labor trafficking of children

Child sex and labor trafficking are child abuse. As a mandatory reporter of child abuse and neglect, you are legally required to share your concerns about possible child trafficking. You can do that by calling the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect hotline at 844-CO-4-Kids.

Know what to look for: Signs of child trafficking

Children rarely self-identify as trafficking victims, so it's important that law enforcement officers know what to look for and the signs of possible child trafficking, including:

- Anyone under 18 engaged in the commercial sex industry or in transactional sex is a victim of sex trafficking. They are victims of sex trafficking even if they say they are willing.
- A child's movement and activities appear to be closely controlled or monitored by someone other than their guardian
- Scripted or rehearsed responses in social interactions
- Has little to no idea where they are geographically located
- Reports that they are forced to work or that they are working to pay someone back
- Does not have access to their identification documents (they are being held for them)
- Cannot or will not identify where they are living
- Reports engaging in transactional sex, or non-consensual sex

Child trafficking victims can be anyone – male, female, or transgender, of any ethnic group, foreign and U.S. born citizens, any age or income level. However, vulnerable children – like runaway and homeless children, children living in poverty, and children with substance abuse problems – are more susceptible to trafficking. It's true that it can be anyone AND it's true that some children are more represented than others.

Traffickers exploit children for financial gain. They can be strangers but more frequently are known to the victim: family members, friends, employers and romantic partners. Recruitment occurs in places where children gather, including parks and shopping plazas, bus stops and train stations, schools and online. Trafficking can also occur in private homes or living spaces.

How do caseworkers and law enforcement work together to address child trafficking?

Child trafficking is considered child abuse because the young people involved have been exploited and victimized for profit. They need safety, stability and treatment to address their complex trauma. Child welfare caseworkers can provide that safety and care and work in tandem with law enforcement's criminal investigation. Caseworkers and law enforcement can keep children safe by fighting trafficking together.

Learning Opportunities

For more information on child trafficking visit CO4Kids.org/child-trafficking

Learn more about human trafficking and meet your POST training requirements by taking Human Trafficking Investigations: An Introductory Course available from the Colorado Human Trafficking Council: sites.google.com/state.co.us/human-trafficking-council/training

You don't need to be sure.
Share any concerns about
child trafficking by calling
844-CO-4-Kids

**IF NOT YOU,
THEN WHO?**