



WALKING ALONGSIDE YOUNG PEOPLE

Acknowledging and Honoring their Individual Journeys

Sexual Exploitation and Outreach to Youth

StreetWorks, Training 2

SUMMARY

Listed below are various forms of exploitation, common recruitment methods, and a few warning signs, but what do we do once we have identified a sexually exploited or trafficked youth? It is important to keep the youth and ourselves safe as we address their needs. We need safe outreach partners, safe environments, safe language and realistic expectations in order to engage in harm reduction and ultimately in a successful transition out of “the life.”

KEY POINTS

- **Safe outreach partners** will have had specialized training and will be reliable and consistent.
- **Safe Environments**
 - If youth is interacting with a pimp or a buyer, it could be dangerous, wait for another time to approach them.
 - When approaching someone new, it is often better to offer resources without mentioning trafficking.
 - Build up relationships with site owners before attempting outreach in their facilities.
Be sure to ask if you can check in: *“Is it safe or okay to call or text you?”*
 - Boundaries: know your role, research, discuss, and respect the role of other systems partners. Outreach workers are not meant to rescue, judge or investigate.
 - Mandated reports are required for underage sex trafficking cases. Let the youth know exactly what is going to happen next, and if possible, allow them to be with you when you make the call.
- **Safe Language**
 - Youth do not need to disclose all or any of their story in order to help them.
 - Remember to remain non-judgmental. Exploited youth are hypervigilant and great people readers, they know if you are genuine or not. This includes body language!
 - Youth may still be connected and love and respect their trafficker. Talking negatively about their trafficker could cause the youth to shut down.
 - Talk with youth gently—not frantically or fearfully.
 - Do not talk to the youth as if they are children. They have lived a life with many adult elements to it. Remember, even adults may not always know what is best for a youth under their present circumstances.
 - Become familiar with Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques. MI elicits change from within.

Exploitation through commercial sexual activity occurs when anything of value or a promise of anything of value (e.g., money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, or higher status in a gang or group) is given to a person by any means in exchange for any type of sexual activity. A third party may or may not be involved.

Common Recruitment Methods

- Online friendships
- Flirtation and/or special attention
- Peer recruitment
- Isolation from family
- Promises of a better life
- Promises of taking care of victim with housing, gifts, protection
- Inducing/enabling chemical addiction
- Rape/gang rape (sometimes recorded and used as blackmail)
- Forming trauma bonds with trafficker
- Threats to family or friends
- Threats of physical violence and death

Warning Signs:

- Presence of dominating boyfriend or friend
- Tattoos or other branding marks
- Signs of physical violence
- Homelessness/chronic runaway
- Unexplained money or “gifts”
- Appears to be coached on what to say
- Disconnected from family and friends
- Constant traveling or moving

- **Realistic Expectations**
 - Understand that victims of sexual exploitation necessarily go through the Stages of Change Model.
 - Patience and consistency are key. Harm reduction may be all that can be done at any given moment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Safe Outreach Partners

1. What are some things that make a street outreach partner safe?
2. In what ways should an outreach partner be consistent?
3. What different type of outreach partners are there? (i.e. Regional Navigators, systems professionals)
4. The panel gave some tips on things that make a good outreach partner, which ones stood out to you?

Safe Environments

1. Safe environments include a safe physical location but it is also creating a safe situation for harm reduction or for taking action to leave. What are some ways you may inadvertently cause a dangerous situation for youth?
2. Being self-aware is extremely important when dealing with this population. What are some biases or assumptions you may have that could create barriers to a youth obtaining help?
3. Things as simple as keeping a door open or shut can have an impact on how comfortable a youth is in a given situation. What are ways that you can make youth feel more comfortable and safe in your physical location?
4. What are some ways you can build a feeling of trust and mutual respect with a youth?

Safe Language

1. Often times youth do not recognize they are victims who are being exploited. How can we “meet a youth where they are at” when it comes to the words we use?
2. Respecting a youth’s experiences and not overly reacting to what they are telling us important. What kind of reactions, including words and body language, may cause a youth to shut down?
3. Motivational Interviewing techniques are extremely helpful when working with this population. What is the main premise of motivational interviewing?
4. According to this training, what are the fundamentals of motivational interviewing?
5. A motivational interaction technique has the acronym OARS. What does that stand for?

Realistic Expectations

1. What are the steps in the Stages of Change Model?
2. In initially meeting someone in the life, which stages of change are they most likely to be in?
3. What are some techniques you can use to help them get to the next stage?
4. If someone relapses, we need to recognize that it doesn’t mean that they do not want to change. What are some reasons people may relapse and go back into the life?
5. Can you think of a change in your own life where you have followed the Stages of Change?
6. Who can you contact if you could use support working with a youth?

FURTHER RESOURCES

- **Article:** *The Illusions and Juxtapositions of Commercial Sexual Exploitation among Youth: Identifying Effective Street-Outreach Strategies.* By Beth Holger-Ambrose, Cheree Langmade, Laurel D. Edinburgh, and Elizabeth Saewyc.
- **Book:** *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change, 3rd Edition.* By William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick.
- **Referral Map Showing Safe Harbor Grantees:** for services, housing and navigators. Webpage for PDF: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/injury/topic/safeharbor/navigators.html>

