

Preventing Child Sex Trafficking in BC

Buying and selling children for sex is one of the fastest growing crimes in Canada, and it is happening in communities across BC.

Globalization, unregulated technology, lack of law enforcement and inadequate prevention education is allowing this crime to grow globally.

Human sex trafficking (HT) involves the recruitment, transportation or harbouring of people for the purpose of exploitation through the use of force, coercion, fraud, deception or threats against the victim or person known to them. It is known as modern day slavery. According to the US State department's annual global report on trafficking in persons (TIP), Canada is a source, transit and destination for sex trafficking. (<https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/>)

Child sex trafficking is a lucrative crime. It has low costs and huge profits; a trafficker can make \$280,000 per victim, per year. The average age of entry into prostitution in Canada is 12-14 years of age, although traffickers are known to target younger children. Traffickers seek young victims both to service the demand for sex with those who look young, and because these victims are easier to manipulate and control.

The biggest problem in Canada is that people do not know there is a problem; therefore, child sex trafficking is expanding in the dark. Every child can be a target and a potential victim, but learning about this issue is the first step.

Five things that parents can do to help prevent their children from being lured into sex trafficking:

1. Set a high standard of love within your home

The way you define and express love shapes your children's self-image, confidence and opinions of future relationships. Treat them the way you want their future partners to treat them. Help them to distinguish between real love and empty promises or cheap gifts.

2. Talk to your children about sexual abuse

According to the US Department of Justice, someone in the US is sexually assaulted every two minutes, of which 29% are between the ages of 12-17. Let your children know that if anyone has or ever does hurt them, they can talk to you. This is the most important thing you can say. Don't assume they have not been hurt by sexual violence before. Leave the door open for your child to talk about past circumstances that they haven't shared with you.

3. Talk to your children about sex trafficking

Discuss ways children and teens are targeted for sex trafficking. Let them know that traffickers specifically try to woo young girls and boys with promises of a better life – whether it's promises of love and attention, or promises of nice things and trips. Traffickers can be male or female, even classmates. Traffickers may even use kids to recruit other kids.

4. Talk to your children about the dangers of social media

It is important to provide practical safety tips, such as: don't share personal information on the internet; don't accept Facebook requests from unknown people; NEVER share naked photos of yourself with anyone; and tell a parent or a trusted adult if you feel threatened or uncomfortable online. Children also need help defining friendships. Teach them that a friend is not someone you met yesterday and that a "friend" on Facebook is not the same thing as a friendship.

5. Pay attention to your children

Monitor your children's social media accounts. Look for ways to meet their friends, their friends' parents and those they hang out with. Be alert to boyfriends who are much older, or friendships that tend to isolate your child from other friends or family. Notice if your child has new clothing items, makeup products, cell phone or other items and ask how they acquired them.

Resources and Links:

- Covenant House (crises program for ages 16-24): info@covenanthousebc.org, 604-685-7474
- Internet Safety Tips: www.Cybertip.ca
- Fraser Health Forensic Nurse Service
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons (OCTIP): 1-888-712-7974 (24/7 interpretation available), 604-660-5199, octip@gov.bc.ca
- Plea Community Services Society (assisting youth 24/7): onyx@plea.bc.ca, 604-708-2647
- Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter (24/7): 604-872-8212, info@rapereliefshelter.bc.ca
- RCMP: Victims of Human Trafficking National Headquarters (24 hours): 1-866-677-7267
- Trafficking Resource Centre (USA): www.traffickingresourcecenter.org
- VictimLinkBC (24/7): 1-800-563-0808 Ministry of Public Safety, BC
- Youth Against Violence (24/7): info@youthagainstviolenceline.com, 1-800-680-4264

Authorities Contacts:

- RCMP: www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca; 1-855-850-4640 OR 1-800-771-5401
- Ministry of Child Protection Services: 1-800-663-9122 or 604-660-4927 (24 hours) or 310-1234 if a child is in danger to reach Ministry of Child and Family Development
- Crime Stoppers : 1-800-222-TIPS (8477)

National Human Trafficking Crisis Hotline Number: 1-866-528-7109

About the Author:

Cathy Peters raises awareness of Child Sex Trafficking to all three levels of government in British Columbia, police agencies and the public. She is a former inner city high school teacher and has volunteered for two Members of Parliament (John Weston/BC, Joy Smith/Manitoba). She has made hundreds of presentations, including to City Councils, School Boards, Police Boards, high schools, universities and law enforcement agencies.

For information about her prevention education presentations, please contact Cathy Peters at ca.peters@telus.net

Additional Resources:

Children of the Street Society (Coquitlam) provides prevention education in BC schools; 25,000 students last school year Grades 3-12. They have an excellent website with tools/resources listed for every community in BC:

<https://www.childrenofthestreet.com/>

Joy Smith Foundation (Manitoba) provides prevention education, resources and an overview of human sex trafficking Canada: <http://www.joysmithfoundation.com/>

Shared Hope International (Washington State) sponsors The JuST (Juvenile Sex Trafficking) Conference in the USA; an event that spotlights the most pressing issues in the anti-trafficking field. Visit: www.justconference.org for more information.

A MODERN EQUAL SOCIETY DOES NOT BUY AND SELL WOMEN AND CHILDREN.