



# TRAFFICKING SIGNS STUDY GUIDE

YOUR HANDBOOK TO KEEPING  
A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER SAFE

## CONTENT WARNING

The following content  
contains information that  
may be triggering, harmful  
or traumatizing to some  
audiences.





**WITHIN 1 KM OF YOU, SOMEONE IS BEING LURED INTO SEX TRAFFICKING.**

This isn't someone else's problem —  
it's your friends, family and neighbours.

# SEX TRAFFICKING IS A GROWING PROBLEM IN CITIES AND TOWNS ACROSS CANADA.

EDUCATION IS OUR GREATEST WEAPON IN PREVENTION.

Every day, our unaware youth are lured and manipulated by skilled human traffickers into the sex trafficking world. What starts as a seemingly innocent conversation online or in real life can quickly turn into something sinister that affects lives forever.

Predators shouldn't be the only ones who recognize who is most vulnerable. When each of us know the signs to watch for, we can all take steps to keep it from happening. Educate yourself about the issue, how to recognize who's at risk and how to effectively intervene when you suspect something isn't right.



01 / 09

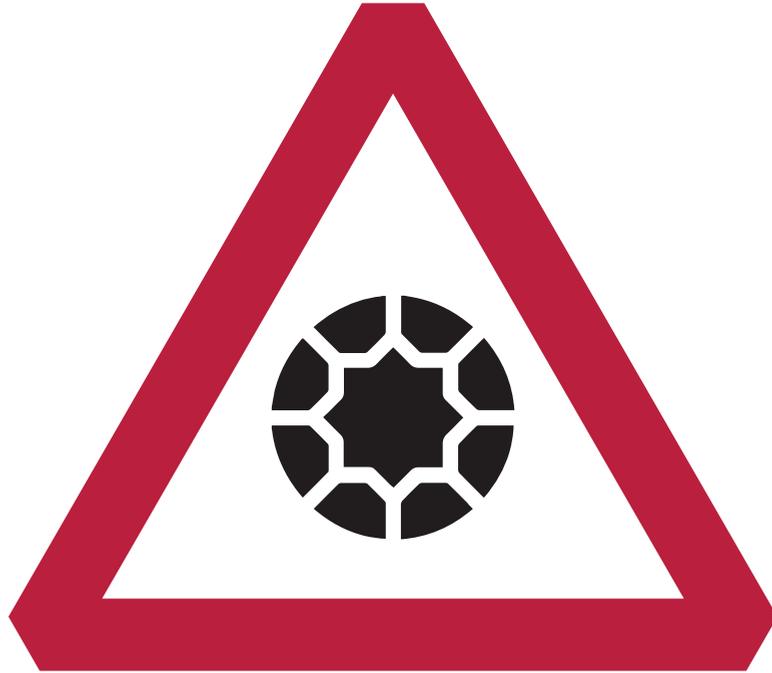
## SUDDEN INTEREST IN A MAN SEVERAL YEARS OLDER

Every day, youth are lured and manipulated by skilled human traffickers into the sex trade. What starts as a seemingly innocent conversation online or in real life can quickly turn into something more sinister. It most often starts with an emotional relationship with an older male. But it could be a friend, girlfriend or boyfriend. Today, grooming commonly begins with a relationship through social media.

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*“He was so nice to me. I thought he was around my age.  
When I met him, he was in his 20’s.  
He was cruel and sold me for sex.”*

Jewel, 15-year-old survivor



02 / 09

## NEW CLOTHING, JEWELLERY, OR GIFTS WITHOUT HAVING MONEY

Predators often buy victims nice, expensive gifts such as designer watches, jewellery and name-brand clothing. And it often includes giving drugs and alcohol. They may also take targets on extravagant dates such as to fancy restaurants or sports games.

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*“He bought me things that I never had before and that I couldn’t afford. That all changed when I left my home and ran away with him. He sold me for sex and didn’t give me any of the money.”*

Nancy, 17-year-old survivor



03 / 09

## FREQUENT SLEEPOVERS AT A FRIEND'S HOUSE

As part of being groomed, young girls and boys are encouraged to keep their activities secret. They often lie to cover up what they are doing and who they are seeing—often pushed to do it by the trafficker whom they believe to be their friend, boyfriend or girlfriend.

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*"I used to lie to my parents about where I was going ... one night, when my parents thought I was sleeping over at my friend's house, I went to a party with my boyfriend. He told me I had to have sex with his friends. I was so confused, I didn't want to. It was the first time he hit me. I was so scared of him, so I did."*

Jessica, 14-year-old survivor



04 / 09

## SUDDEN CHANGE IN STYLE OF DRESS OR MAKEUP

Those being groomed by traffickers often change the way they dress along with their makeup to please the person manipulating them. It's the suddenness of the change that is a sign that someone is having a powerful influence on them.

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*"I couldn't believe the change in my daughter. She never used to wear makeup. She even got her ears pierced. I had no idea that traffickers were grooming her until after she disappeared."*

Mother of a 16 year old



05 / 09

## NEW CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND ISOLATION FROM THEIR OLD GROUP

Traffickers will try to separate youth from their support network like friends and family. This can be both emotionally, such as making a girl or boy believe the trafficker is the only one who truly loves them and cares, or physically, such as asking the young person to take a trip with them, or even move in with them.

The trafficker will also try to introduce the vulnerable girl or boy into their circle of friends who are usually other traffickers working together to gain trust.

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*“We would talk to each other and tell each other how to get a girl. We knew how to do it. It was easy. I’m ashamed now. We destroyed many young lives.”*

Former trafficker



06 / 09

## CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL, ACTIVITIES, FRIENDS

As someone falls under the influence of a trafficker, they change their attitudes and behaviours towards things like school, favourite activities and old friends. Traffickers lure children even when they are regularly going to school and living at home.

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*“I had one of the most talented young women on my soccer team. She suddenly dropped out of everything. I learned later that a trafficker had gotten a hold of her.”*

Soccer coach for 17U



07 / 09

## GRADES ARE DROPPING

When a girl or boy is being groomed, their attention can easily and suddenly turn away from other things that might have been important to them, like school and grades.

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*“I couldn’t believe the change in two of my students. They completely dropped their friends, and their marks went from A’s to failing. I eventually found out that they were in a gang and selling themselves for sex.”*

High school teacher



08 / 09

## UNEXPLAINED CUTS OR BRUISES

Traffickers frequently turn to physical violence to manipulate and maintain control. The telltale sign is frequent cuts and bruises without an explanation. On top of physical violence, traffickers use ongoing threats of violence against the victim and their family to get the victims to do what they want.

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*“My daughter used to come home with bruises on her arms and neck. She would explain it by saying that she fell or something else happened in gym class. When she left home, I found out that those bruises came from her trafficker. We got her back, but she has never been the same.”*

Mother of a 17 year old



09 / 09

## USING TWO CELL PHONES

As part of being groomed, youth sometimes receive a separate cell phone to use just with the person manipulating them. This fosters a secret and intimate connection between them. It's also a way to hide from law enforcement and the victim's family and friends.

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*"In my classes this year, a couple girls had two cell phones. I wondered why. I found out later that they were being trafficked while they lived at home. I wish that I had asked more questions."*

Grade 8 teacher



The Joy Smith Foundation is Canada's leading authority on human trafficking prevention, intervention, and support for survivors of this horrific crime. It's a responsibility we take seriously.

Over the years, the Joy Smith Foundation has helped over 7,000 human trafficking survivors and their families restore their lives by reuniting, healing, and integrating back into their communities.

#### WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

Contact us if you have questions or need help. There is hope! Survivors can heal. Families can be reunited. Justice can be served.

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