



# YWCA NIAGARA REGION HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION GUIDE



YWCA NIAGARA REGION

Hope for Homeless Women and their Families since 1927

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# What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring, and/or exercising control, direction, or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploitation. It is considered modern-day slavery that takes place right here in Canada.

## Different types of human trafficking include...

- Sexual exploitation
- Labour exploitation
- Forced marriages
- Domestic servitude
- Organ harvesting

## How do Trafficker's lure their Victims?

Love & Affection



Food & Shelter



Drugs & Alcohol



Security & Acceptance



Money & Gifts



## Know the Facts

The average age range of a sex trafficking victim in Canada is **12-14 years old.**

**1/3** victims are lured by someone they consider to be their boyfriend or partner.

**25%** of victims are lured by female friends who are already being exploited by a trafficker.

**75%** of human trafficking victims in Ontario have passed through the Golden Horseshoe.

**73%** of all victims of police-reported human trafficking in Canada are **24 years old or younger.**

# What is Luring vs. Grooming?

## Grooming

The act of gaining the trust of a potential victim by making false promises, pretending to love their victims, and giving them gifts.

## Luring

The stage in the grooming process where a trafficker collects lots of information about the person they are interested in exploiting.

# How do traffickers lure their victims?

- Pretending to be a potential boyfriend or friend
- Contacting them via social media
- Posting ads for jobs and opportunities
- Making false promises about money, new clothes, employment, or education
- Threatening or kidnapping them

*Social media is a commonly used tool that traffickers exploit to message and recruit victims. Traffickers are highly skilled at "blending in" online to appear harmless.*



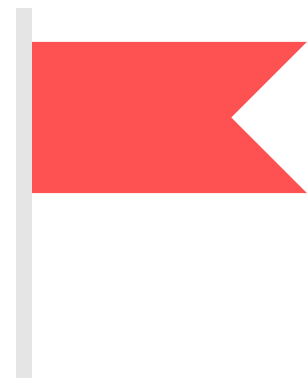
# Red Flags that Someone Might be getting Groomed/Lured into Human Trafficking

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- Receive lots of gifts like purses, clothes, jewelry or manicures
- Have a lot of "unexplained" cash
- Withdraw from family and friends
- Be involved in an all-consuming relationship with a new friend or boyfriend
- Skip school and miss curfew
- Show increased interest in their appearance
- Do things out of character like drinking or drugs
- Act secretive about activities, new friends, or a boyfriend
- Have a new or unusual tattoo (particularly a name or initials)

# Red Flags that Someone Might be Trafficked

- Appear unusually fearful, anxious, or irritable
- Be evasive about where they're going and whom they're going with
- Have sexualized content on their social media profiles
- Avoid eye contact
- Not be allowed or able to speak for themselves
- Have few or no personal possessions
- Lack of money or ID
- Possess a second cell phone
- Show signs of exhaustion and/or addiction
- Seem disoriented and unaware of time and place
- Show signs of physical or sexual abuse
- Always accompanied by someone who appears to be exercising control over them/speaks for them.



# How to Talk to your Child about Human Trafficking

## *1. Educate your child about human trafficking*

The more your child knows about human trafficking, the better they can protect themselves from traffickers. Remember, this conversation doesn't have to happen all at once.

## *2. Describe the warning signs*

If they see someone exhibiting the warning signs above, or if they experience those things themselves, they should tell a trusted adult. Someone might be untrustworthy if they:

- Isolates you from family and friends
- Buys you lots of expensive things
- Influences you on how to look, what to wear, and how to speak
- Encourages you to skip school, miss curfew, and try drinking or drugs
- Promises you a better life
- Encourages you to be secretive about them and your whereabouts
- Strangers messaging via social media, offering opportunities such as modeling

## *3. Teach them to trust their gut*

Children can tell when something is off. Even when they can't identify why something doesn't feel right, encourage them to listen to the voice in their head that tells them "This isn't right" or "I shouldn't do this".

## *4. Explain healthy relationship and consent*

Healthy relationships are built on important pillars such as respect, honesty, communication, and trust. A real friend should never force you to do something, physically hurt you, intentionally humiliate you or hurt your feelings. If your child experiences some of these negative elements in a friendship/relationship, they should tell someone they trust.

Consent should always be freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic, and specific to what your child is agreeing to do.

### *5. Create a safety plan*

Your child should never be made to feel unsafe. Work with your child to develop a safety plan that your child can use if they feel uncomfortable. Use our helpful checklist below to build a plan that works for you and your child.

### *6. Encourage them to reach out (even if they broke a rule)*

If your child finds themselves in an unsafe or uncomfortable situation, it's important that they're able to tell you without fear of 'being in trouble'. Let your child know they can reach out to you in any circumstance, even if they broke a rule or feel like they should have known better. Remember, when your child discloses information, responding calmly will help instill trust between you and your child.

### *7. Teach them how to express themselves when feeling unsafe*

Your child can tell when something doesn't feel quite right, but they don't always know how to communicate that. Equip your child with language they can use to tell you when something doesn't feel right or if they experienced something negative. Helpful phrases in the list below can help your child start a conversation with you:

"I feel pressured to do something/by someone"

"I feel like I don't have control"

"Something doesn't feel right about..."



# Your Child's Safety Plan Checklist

Having a safety plan in place can help your child make informed decisions in any situation that feels dangerous or uncertain. Be sure to sit down with your child and decide on a plan that you're both comfortable with.

## Identify safe adults

Discuss with your child who is in your trusted circle that your child can go to if they need help. Individuals in the trusted circle might include people at home, at school, or in the neighbourhood. Remember, even adults in your trusted circle have the ability to make your child feel unsafe - always trust and believe your child if they come to you with concerns about a 'safe adult'.

## Create a directory for safe contacts

If your child finds themselves in an unsafe or uncomfortable situation, they need to know whom to call for help. Create a list of people they should call and how to get in contact with them. Tip: Inform the people in your directory that they are on your child's list of who can help them.

Make this list readily available to your child in their phone contacts, or in a written list placed in their backpack, wallet, or purse.

## Establish code words

Code words can be for texting if they can't speak on the phone, or if they don't want the people around them to know they feel unsafe. Also establish what that code word means: should they be calling the police, do they need to be picked up or need you to meet them at a predetermined location?

## Know their location

Ask your child ahead of time where they plan to be after school or when they go to spend time with friends. Decide on a plan for your child to communicate when they arrived safely.

## Determine transportation

Your child should never get into a vehicle when they do not know the driver. If they travel via public transit or with friends, ask them to let you know when they reach their destination. If they travel via rideshare, such as Uber, teach your child to match the driver's car, picture, and license plate to the vehicle picking them up.

A lot of rideshare services now let you share your trip with friends and family. This might be a good feature for you and your child to take advantage of.

## Identify unknown locations

If they're being taken somewhere new, teach your child to look for landmarks, street signs, and other neighbourhood features that can help them describe or identify their location.

## Develop exit scripts

Work with your child to develop a series of phrases that they can use to exit uncomfortable situations or avoid situations where they might feel unsafe. Some examples include:

"I need to go now. My parent/person of authority is expecting me."

"I can't go with you. My parent will be concerned if I don't get home on time."

"I don't want to talk to you/hang out with you anymore. You're making me uncomfortable."

If your child is being made to feel uncomfortable in a public place (ie. on the sidewalk, in a park), encourage them to say their exit phrases loud enough to draw attention to the potential trafficker.

## Carry emergency cash

A small amount of emergency cash can ensure your child has the resources they need to access public transit or a cab ride if they need to leave an uncomfortable situation. Make it clear that this money is only for emergencies such as circumstances that pertain to their safety.



# Think someone is being trafficked?

If there is immediate danger or if you suspect someone is being trafficked, call 911 or your local police service.

Call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline toll-free hotline at 1-833-900-1010. Hotline Response Advocates are available 24/7/365 to receive tips on potential human trafficking.

## About the YWCA Niagara Region

The YWCA Niagara Region is a local organization that stands for gender equity and gives a voice to those who are marginalized in our community.

2020 marked the opening of our safe house: “Home, to New Beginnings”, a home where up to 6 survivors of human trafficking can access secure housing and trauma-informed resources in a healing environment. This safe house fills a void of support for survivors of human trafficking that otherwise did not exist in Niagara and is the first of its kind in Ontario. “Home, to New Beginnings” supports survivors beyond the need for physical shelter, but also addresses the unique emotional needs of those who have experienced unthinkable trauma.

## How to Help

- 🕒 Become a monthly donor to support survivors of human trafficking at [www.ywcaniagararegion.ca](http://www.ywcaniagararegion.ca)
- 🕒 Be an advocate for educating others to protect themselves and loved ones against luring and human trafficking.
- 🕒 Share this guide with family members and other parents so that they too educate and protect others.