



# HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND INTERNET SAFETY



Traffickers frequently use the internet and social media to find, groom, and exploit their victims. As education systems utilize online learning platforms and as children and youth practice social distancing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are frequently online. It is important for caregivers to be equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to protect children and youth from internet abuse, threats, and potential traffickers. Please see the safety and reporting recommendations below for guidance on educating children and youth on this topic.

## SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Monitor active social media accounts and online activity.
- Make sure all online accounts are in private mode.
- Teach young people not to share any personal information online, such as phone numbers and addresses.
- Discuss the importance of avoiding online conversations with strangers, as traffickers often use messaging apps to build rapport with their victims.
- Teach young people to only add or friend individuals on social media that they know and trust.
- Help children and youth understand the permanence of the content they may post on the internet.
- Establish a rule that young people will not meet up in person with anyone they meet online.
- Inform children and youth that they can always report online abuse or threats to a trusted adult or law enforcement. This includes reporting photos that were shared without consent or requests to engage in sexually explicit activity.
- Continuously review and discuss these safety tips in an age-appropriate manner.

## HOW TO REPORT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Anyone under the age of 18 cannot consent to providing commercial sex acts in exchange for anything of value. Under state and federal law, a minor engaging in these acts is a victim of human trafficking.

- ✔ To report a tip or seek help, **call the National Human Trafficking Hotline** at 1-888-373-7888 or **text "BEFREE"** to 233733
- ✔ To report online exploitation of children, **call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline** at 1-800-THE-LOST
- ✔ In case of emergency, **call 911**

