

# Sex Trafficking and Technology

## Ages 11-14 Year Olds



### *Teach Ways to Reduce Vulnerabilities to Online Exploiters*

All children are vulnerable to human trafficking, especially those ages 11-14, due to their increased access to technology and increased desire for love, acceptance, and approval from their peers. Traffickers often take the time to learn a victim's wants, needs, interests, family dynamic, and community in order to be able to exploit their individual vulnerabilities.

There are at least 4.8 million people in forced sexual exploitation in the world today (International Labor Organization 2017). For children ages 11-14, one tactic that traffickers use is to develop a seemingly romantic relationship with a victim in order to eventually lure them into a situation of exploitation. Traffickers will often befriend children online, gather personal information, and eventually request to meet up with the child in-person. As the relationship develops, the child is unknowingly groomed by the trafficker with gifts, encouraged to runaway from home, and told to keep the relationship secret.

Ultimately, the child will be coerced into having sex for money, which they are forced to give to the trafficker, who will gradually increase control over the child victim through threats, drugs, and physical, mental, and emotional abuse. They will often strip away the victim's identity by taking away their identification documents and making them use an alias, and will force dependency by compromising the victims' basic human rights and needs. It is important to note that oftentimes, victims can be so manipulated by a trafficker that they do not even see themselves as victims of sex trafficking.

**There are many “red flags” that a child is being groomed or is a victim of sex trafficking, including:**

- Spending excessive amounts of money on new clothing or personal care
- Presence of an overly-controlling partner, have monitored movement
- Avoids making eye contact and exhibits tense, anxious, or fearful behavior
- They have two cell phones, and shows extreme anxiety when separated from their phone
- Exhibit signs of physical abuse or malnourishment, have unexplained injuries, have few to no personal possessions
- Have a graphic online profile

## Example Case: Sex Trafficking through an Online Chat Room

"I was 14-years old and I was bullied in school. I was constantly dealing with loneliness and neglect, and turned to an online dating site to make a friend. I met a guy who ended up being from my hometown. I started to like him; he showed me the attention and affection I never had from my parents. He offered to take me out to get a bite to eat after school one day. It was then I learned he was 15 years older than me. But I didn't care. I loved getting attention from an older guy and because of him, I no longer felt lonely.

After a couple of years of happily dating, he asked me to sleep with his friend, 'just one time to make a little money.' But it was not just one time. Not long after, he began to teach me how to post myself online. He forced me to sell myself for sex to hundreds more men. He kept telling me, 'You are making money for our future together.' He continued to say this for four years. On my 18th birthday, he said he wanted to take me to Las Vegas to get married.

My bags were packed. I was ready for my new life to begin with him. It was then when the FBI knocked on my door. 'Your boyfriend has been arrested in a large trafficking sting,' the FBI said. 'You were about to be sold into a large human trafficking ring in Vegas.'"



### Classroom Exercise

Below is a sample of one of the types of exercises used in the PROTECT curriculum. Often, students ages 11-14 do not recognize certain how online behaviors and comments can make them vulnerable to trafficking. Pre-teens and teens usually do not recognize the warning signs when a trafficker asks them questions to gather personal information, insert themselves into the young person's life, and ultimately manipulate, coerce, and exploit them.

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage students to be discerning, vigilant, and consider motives. This exercise is meant to foster discussion about how students can set personal boundaries for privacy and safety - both when meeting people online and in-person. Learning to discern when a situation feels uncomfortable and establish personal boundaries can help students avoid situations of exploitation.

**Part 1:** The 6 skit scenarios provide an opportunity for students to get involved in understanding how to set personal boundaries with people, both in-person and online. Select two students to act out each scenario. Cut out the boxes with each scenario, and give each part to the pair of students acting out that scenario. Tell students to pick which part they want to play and to rehearse how they will act it out. Call on each pair to act out each scenario, and after the students have finished acting out the scenarios, ask the class to decide if they situation was "safe" or "unsafe."

**Scenario 1:**

*A teenager is playing an online video game with someone he has never met before in different a location.*

**Player 1:** "I totally crushed you today! HA! You didn't play as good as you usually do. Are you ok?"

**Player 2:** "Yeah. I had a bad day. My math teacher is such a jerk"

**Player 1:** "Mine too! Wouldn't it be funny if we had the same math teacher? Where do you go to school?"

**Scenario 3:**

*Two students are having a conversation in the hallway at their school.*

**Student 1:** "I can't wait for soccer to start!"

**Student 2:** "Me too. It's my favorite sport. What team are you on? I'm on Lightning"

**Student 1:** "Oh my friend is on that team. I'm on Eclipse. I think we play each other."

**Scenario 5:**

*Student 1 receives a friend request and a Facebook message from Student 2 who he hasn't met but knows he is on the soccer team at the rival high school.*

**Student 2:** "Your soccer tricks are awesome! I want to be as good as you! Where did you practice? When do you go?"

**Student 1:** "Thanks! I practice at McCullom Park everyday after school. I'm trying to make varsity."

**Scenario 2:**

*Two customers at a mall are looking at the same rack of clothes.*

**Customer 1:** "Oh my gosh, that's such a cute shirt. It would look great on you!"

**Customer 2:** "Oh thanks. I was thinking it would look great on you!"

**Customer 1:** "We have similar tastes! It would be fun to hang out and shop together some time. Wanna exchange numbers and meet here tomorrow?"

**Scenario 4:**

*A Student is replying to a post on his YouTube channel*

**Comment 1:** "Your skateboard tricks are awesome! What skateboard park do you go to?"

**Comment 2:** "I know right! I like the skate park by my house. It's the best. I go there all the time."

**Scenario 6:**

*A teenager posts a picture of herself on Instagram and is responding to a comment.*

**Comment 1:** "I love your outfit in this picture! You have such a cool style."

**Comment 2:** "Thanks so much"

**Comment 1:** "I'm involved in a fashion industry. Are you interested in becoming an ambassador for our brand? Wanna meet up to learn more?"

**Part 2:** After each skit is completed, for the situations that the class decides are "unsafe," ask your students what about the situation made them feel uncomfortable. For the situations that the class thought were "safe," have them discuss what the student did well in that situation to establish boundaries by not disclosing personal information.

Discuss with your students that one of the most important, but maybe least obvious, places to establish personal boundaries is online. Being on the internet should feel like walking across a dark parking lot – students should have the same level of awareness of their safety and their surroundings.

*Advise your students that they should:*

1. Screen potential social media followers and online friends. People may not be truthful online about their actual identity, and might communicate with children online to groom them into a situation of exploitation. It is good to only accept friend or follow requests from people they've actually met in person.
2. Be mindful of tagging their location on social media or posting photos where their location is visible. It is important to keep personal details private and not post anything online that they wouldn't feel comfortable telling a stranger.





PROTECT prevention education curriculum for ages 11-14 includes two 45-minute lessons, and introduces them to the fact that every child is a unique masterpiece that does not deserve to be abused or exploited. It also introduces them to the topic of human trafficking, educates them on risk factors and recruiting tactics of traffickers, and unpacks how culture and mass media influence and desensitize people to exploitation. The curriculum equips students with tools to set personal and online boundaries and identify who are trusted adults they can talk to when a situation feels uncomfortable.

In the event you suspect a child is being trafficked or is at-risk of exploitation, report your suspicions to a school administrator and law enforcement immediately.

**Note:** This document is intended to be a general guideline only and should not be considered a comprehensive reference or method to educate students about human trafficking and their vulnerability to exploitation. Please note that the exercises above is just a sample from the PROTECT curriculum for ages 11-14 year olds and is most effective when paired with the rest of the curriculum.



**“Education is protection.  
Education is essential to  
preventing exploitation.”**

## Request PROTECT

PROTECT provides teachers with online human trafficking prevention training and ready-to-go, downloadable curriculum materials for teachers to use in their classroom in order to reduce the vulnerability of their students to exploitation. PROTECT also builds community and school response protocols in the event a student is identified as a victim of human trafficking.

Interested in accessing the full PROTECT curriculum and bringing the program to your school? Follow the steps below!

1. Familiarize yourself with the PROTECT program at **[www.protectnow.org](http://www.protectnow.org)**.
2. Tell your school district administrator about PROTECT by downloading this **letter template**.
3. Email **[info@protectnow.org](mailto:info@protectnow.org)** to let us know that you are interested in beginning the process to implement PROTECT in your area.
4. Request a demo account to PROTECT's online learning management system to preview the PROTECT training videos by emailing us at **[info@protectnow.org](mailto:info@protectnow.org)**.