

TOP 10 WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM BECOMING A SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIM:

- 1. LISTEN AND BE PROACTIVE:** Talk to your teenager and ask questions about how they feel about their peers and the people around them. Teens sometimes struggle with peer pressure, bullying, and other social pressures like drinking or using drugs. All of these issues will increase their vulnerability.
- 2. ENCOURAGE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND HOBBIES:** Athletics, arts, and organized volunteer activities can all serve to help a child build their self-esteem, self-worth and to develop empathy.
- 3. TEACH MEDIA LITERACY:** Teach your teen how to identify, analyze and evaluate media messages in TV shows, movies, song lyrics, magazine articles and photos, apps, commercials, slogans or social media posts. Teens should be able to understand that many images they see have been edited, and do not represent a "real" or healthy body.
- 4. KNOW WHO IS REACHING OUT TO YOUR CHILD:** Knowing who your teen is talking to regularly or spending time with will help protect them and allow you to give them guidance about someone who may be a negative influence. Traffickers have contacted their victims online through social media or in locations where teens gather.
- 5. KNOW ITS OKAY TO SAY "NO":** Teach your teen that it is always ok to say "no" and there is no situation that is so terrible that you would not be there to help. Have a contact plan that includes a way for them to ask for your help to get out of a bad situation, without getting in trouble.

6. TEACH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEX By reinforcing and supplementing what your teen learns in school, you can help your teen develop important attitudes and information about healthy sexuality. Teens are naturally curious and are likely to search for information about sex online, and

be exposed to sexually explicit pornography either as a search result or by accident. Also teach your child that it is okay to say "no" to sex and that it is not okay to have sex out of feelings of obligation or fear.

- 7. SPEND TIME WITH YOUR TEEN:** Teens require quality time with their parents (without distractions) so they can talk about what is going on in their daily lives and so you can assure your child that you are there to help them resolve problems. Time driving in the car is a good place to talk, or so is going for a walk without cell phones. Volunteering together is another way to spend quality time and teach about empathy and perspective about other people's circumstances and suffering.
- 8. KNOW WHERE AND HOW YOUR TEEN GETS NEW THINGS:** Sex traffickers will use the things that your teen wants to lure them. Take a regular inventory of your teen's belongings and ask questions if you see expensive electronics, clothing, purses, makeup, hairstyles, nails or items that you did not pay for or that you know your teen cannot afford.

9. TEACH ABOUT THE WORLD: Traffickers will use seeing the world or getting out of town as a lure with teens. Expose your child to other places, cultures, and languages so they don't feel isolated or ignorant about the world around them. Many teens do not know their parents phone numbers, and rely on electronic contacts. Make sure your teen knows how to ask for help or contact you if taken to another location or separated from their cell phone.

10. GET COUNSELING IF ITS NEEDED. If your child's symptoms of depression or anger are disrupting school or home life, get professional help. Ignoring your child's signals for help will only drive them further away and possibly lead to them seeking comfort from a stranger.

Source: Adapted from "Tips for Parents to Protect Children from Predators" from the book "Walking Prey" written by survivor Holly Austin Smith



Teens who hang out with their friends unsupervised for long stretches are more vulnerable than those who have somewhere to go or something to do.

According to Common Sense Media, on average teens spend nearly nine hours every day consuming media. That is more time than teens typically spend sleeping or going to school.

Know where your teen is - you have a right to know where they are at all times, and can easily track their cell phone with a simple "find my phone" app.

If your daughter has an "older boyfriend" who is not from her school or social sphere, you should question where and how she met him.