

Human Trafficking & Commercial Sex Exploitation

mecasa
MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT

Human trafficking and commercial sex exploitation are a violation of human rights and a form of sexual violence.

Human trafficking & commercial sex exploitation

Human trafficking and commercial sex exploitation can happen to US Citizens and non-Citizens and people of any gender, class, age, culture or race. Human trafficking is the act of compelling someone into labor (including commercial sex work) through force, fraud or coercion, for economic gain of a trafficker. Any minor in commercial sex work is a victim of human trafficking.

Commercial sex exploitation is the abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust to profit monetarily or socially from the commercial sex of another. Human trafficking is an easily sensationalized topic so the fact it is rooted in basic vulnerabilities like poverty, lack of economic opportunity, unstable housing, non-permanent status, previous trauma or child sexual abuse and other forms of oppression (like sexism and racism) can be overlooked.¹

Sexual violence & human trafficking

Human trafficking and sexual assault are both traumatic crimes, premised upon the power, control, abuse, and exploitation of another human being. There is a common misconception that sexual violence occurs only in sex trafficking, however, sexual violence occurs in almost every type of trafficking situation, including cases of forced labor. Traffickers use sexual violence as both a physical and psychological means to compel labor. Recognizing sexual violence as such can help

increase victim identification and the provision of appropriate services.²

Although not all people who work in the commercial sex industry are trafficked, anyone trading sex for something of valuable is vulnerable to sexual assault, violence and exploitation, and because commercial sex is so stigmatized this violence goes underreported and tends to be minimized.³

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Statistics

- Prevalence of sex trafficking in Maine ranges between 200 and 300 cases annually.⁵
- The National Human Trafficking Hotline has reported over 311 calls from Maine since 2007 with 53 cases of trafficking identified.⁶
- Sexual assault support centers from every area of Maine report serving victims of sex trafficking and commercial sex exploitation.⁷
- Between 70-90% of commercially sexually exploited youth are survivors of childhood sexual abuse.⁸

Prevention is possible

Sex trafficking and exploitation prevention efforts overlap with sexual violence prevention work. Specifically, the prevention of child sexual abuse and a cultural shift towards healthy sexuality and teaching consent are key components of trafficking prevention.

Many factors make an individual vulnerable to trafficking, such as child sexual abuse, family trauma, and poverty. Programming that alleviates these vulnerabilities, such as child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence prevention, as well as programming supporting at-risk youth, are preventative in nature. Additionally, providing targeted, education-based intervention with at-risk youth by trained clinicians, advocates and survivors is an effective means of prevention. Statewide and local resources are available to provide more information. Child sexual abuse and sexual and domestic violence prevention programs are also part of effective anti-trafficking efforts.

Learn More

[Maine Sex Trafficking & Exploitation Network](#)

The Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network provides training, technical assistance, and resources to direct service providers engaged in anti-trafficking efforts in Maine, as well as community awareness and public policy support. The effort is supported by a statewide Sex Trafficking Provider Council. Maine STEN engages in many human trafficking programmatic efforts, such as managing a victim's support fund, developing a volunteer bank, a bi-weekly news and resource roundup, and a human trafficking-specific media guide for Maine journalists.

[National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

1.888.373.7888

The NHTH is a national, toll-free hotline, available

to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. NHTH receives calls from a wide range of callers including, but not limited to: potential trafficking victims, community members, law enforcement, service providers, hospitals, churches, businesses, and others.

If you believe you or someone you know may be the victim of human trafficking, or if you'd simply like more information on red flags and referrals, please call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. In the case of an emergency or for local service referrals, you will be connected with the Maine-based project.

Sources

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