

HEALTH EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

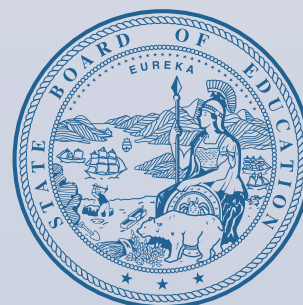


FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

Appendix B **Sex Trafficking**

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Sex Trafficking

APPENDIX

B

Introduction

The purpose of this appendix is to provide information regarding sex trafficking as it relates to schools and the community. The appendix is meant to be a tool for educators, school staff, administrators, district staff, parents, and community members. For instructional information regarding sex trafficking, please refer to the grade level chapters.

There are many California students who are or have been a victim of sex trafficking. Traffickers may target youth on school grounds, and some students may remain in school while being trafficked. Schools have a unique opportunity to identify warning signs and victims of trafficking, provide prevention education, and promote a safe campus and supportive environment. California *Education Code (EC)* Section 51934(a)(10), also known as the California Healthy Youth Act, requires schools to provide education on human trafficking, which includes sex trafficking, at least once in middle school and once in high school.

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, whether for commercial sex or forced labor. Human trafficking is not limited to any specific community, geographic location, socioeconomic status, or demographic. Sex trafficking is a form of human trafficking in which an individual is forced, tricked, or coerced into performing commercial sex acts. Commercial sex acts can be defined as sex acts exchanged for anything of value, including money, drugs, shelter, or basic needs.

Anyone under the age of eighteen engaged in commercial sex is considered a victim of sex trafficking—there does not have to be elements of force, fraud, or coercion, or a third-party exploiter involved. There is no such thing as a child or teen prostitute, as minors cannot legally or developmentally consent to participate in commercial sex acts. Sex trafficking that includes children under the age of eighteen is sometimes referred to as Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. Victims of trafficking who are under the age of eighteen are often referred to as Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. Using appropriate language is important to reframe the issue as a form of child abuse and a crime against children rather than treating youth as criminals or delinquents.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline receives more calls from California than any other state in the nation (National Human Trafficking Hotline 2018). It is impossible to know the full scope of the problem due to the hidden nature of the crime. However, the Global Slavery Index estimates that 40.3 million people are enslaved or trafficked worldwide, of which women are the primary victims (2018).

Importance of Prevention and Early Education

Because traffickers often target vulnerable youth on school grounds, it is important for educators, staff, and administrators to be aware of the signs and indicators. It is equally important for youth to be provided with prevention education that includes awareness of trafficker tactics, risk factors, behaviors that promote health and healthy relationships, and protective factors. It is critical that age-appropriate instruction and learning begin in the earliest grade levels through face-to-face instruction.

Note: The framework primarily uses the term “victim” to describe the student or individual who is the victim of trafficking. “Survivor” is used to refer to victims who have been identified and are no longer being trafficked. It is important to note that victims and survivors of sex trafficking (and other forms of abuse) may prefer to self-identify as one or the other, or another term of their choosing. This preference may be influenced by a number of different factors, including the individual’s healing process. The language the individual chooses should be honored.

Throughout the framework, this goal of age-appropriate instruction and learning is met through guidance on teaching boundaries in kindergarten to more in-depth, advanced teaching specific to sex trafficking in high school. Students who are equipped with the life skills to self-protect may be able to recognize and avoid risky situations that could put them in danger and negatively impact their health. Instruction throughout the grade levels is also meant to acknowledge factors outside the students' control and emphasize compassion and empathy from peers and staff to support students who have experienced trafficking.

Schools provide a unique setting that allows teachers and staff to protect and empower students through prevention education, recognition of potential harm, response and reporting, and offering support and resources. Trained school resource officers, nurses, social workers, and counselors may also be a good resource and support for students. School staff should be familiar with possible sex trafficking indicators to recognize and respond appropriately.

Trafficking Indicators

- Language and terms associated with trafficking (“the life/game,” “daddy,” “trick,” “stroll/track/blade,” “hotel parties,” “trap houses,” “skip parties”)
- Decreased participation and performance in academics or extracurricular activities
- Sudden change in dress or appearance
- Problem behaviors, such as aggression or otherwise acting out
- Withdrawal from friends or usual activities
- Absences from school
- Depressed mood or anxiety
- Eating or sleeping disturbances
- Self-harm
- Signs of physical or sexual abuse
- Suspicious tattoos/branding
- Multiple cell phones
- Refers to much older boyfriend, girlfriend, or partner
- Controlling or dominating relationships

- Monitored movement or communication
- Pressure to keep relationship a secret
- Sexualized behavior
- Sudden change in dress or appearance, including dressing inappropriately for age and/or weather
- Unexplained money or gifts
- Unexplained sexually transmitted infections or pregnancies
- Substance abuse or signs of addiction
- Loss of self-esteem

Note: Some of the potential indicators may also be indicators of mental health concerns and substance use disorders, adverse childhood experiences, and other issues among vulnerable youth who are not being sex trafficked.

Impact

While all students are potentially at some level of risk, some may be more vulnerable and have higher risk factors. This includes youth who have experienced prior abuse, neglect, or dating violence; youth involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice system; youth with a history of substance abuse; LGBTQ+ youth; unaccompanied minors; and runaway or homeless youth. Other vulnerabilities include gang involvement, isolation, learning and developmental disabilities, and feelings of rejection and marginalization. While certain factors increase vulnerability, some youth may be at risk simply because of social needs and normal maturation. These additional factors include risk-taking, feeling misunderstood by guardians and other adults, feeling a need for love and belonging, and seeking romantic relationships (Clawson et al. 2009).

Just as anyone can be a victim of trafficking, it is important to note that exploiters or traffickers also do not fit a singular description. Youth are often exploited by family members, intimate partners, and even peers. Traffickers maintain control of their victims often through a combination of fear, threats, emotional manipulation, material necessity, and abuse.

Sex trafficking has a lasting impact on multiple levels—physical and psychological trauma and serious health consequences. A student who is the victim of commercial

sexual exploitation has experienced an incredible amount of trauma that is often both chronic and complex. Victims of sex trafficking are also victims of repeated sexual assault and rape. Part of their victimization may include psychological manipulation, which often causes youth to distrust even safe adults and form a bond with their trafficker. As a result, it is not uncommon for victims to return to their perpetrator. For youth who have been trafficked by an intimate partner or family member, there is a complicated link between love, sexual activity, and abuse. This is further complicated by the youth's need for basic necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing, which are often provided by the trafficker or exploiter.

Examples of Trauma and Psychological Impact

| Physical and Emotional Trauma | Psychological Impact |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexual assault ▪ Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) ▪ Physical and emotional abuse ▪ Branding ▪ Scarring/disfigurement ▪ Unwanted pregnancy ▪ Reproductive coercion, including forced abortion/forced birth ▪ Neglect ▪ Psychological manipulation and control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depression ▪ Anxiety ▪ Paranoia ▪ Helplessness ▪ Disassociation ▪ Suicidal ideation ▪ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or PTSD symptoms ▪ Fear ▪ Anger ▪ Trauma bonding |

Source: WEAVE (2019).

The trauma that students experience can have a severe negative impact on learning, and ongoing trafficking may result in long-term absences from school. Understanding victim impact and trauma can help teachers and other supportive adults modify their possibly adverse responses when students display trauma symptoms that may be mistaken for problem behaviors. For example, truancy, poor academic performance, and acting out may be signs of abuse or exploitation. While state laws have changed to protect youth who have been exploited, they are often still treated as delinquents.

The nature of this crime against children is highly stigmatized and is often confused with or compared to adult sex work or voluntary engagement in illegal activities. Victim blaming and lack of knowledge around the complexity of sex trafficking are two of the factors that make rehabilitation and reintegration challenging for students. It is important for schools to treat sexually exploited youth with compassion and empathy and to recognize their experience as abuse. Treating these youth as delinquents is not appropriate—they are victims of trauma and need as much support as possible.

Intervention

Schools should be safe places for students to learn, grow, and prepare for healthy adulthood, but sometimes they are not safe for every student. Youth may be exploited by other students, gang members, family members, or partners. Traffickers may also recruit students to act as enforcers who make sure the trafficking victim stays under the trafficker's control and avoids seeking or receiving help.

School and district personnel must act collaboratively to understand the magnitude of the issue, the impact on campus, and the impact within the community. Districts and individual schools should adopt policies that promote the safety of students and violence-free campuses and include protocols for identification and response to victims of sex trafficking. Because sex trafficking intersects with child abuse and sexual assault, similar response and support should be available for students who have been sexually exploited.

Training teachers, other educators, administrators, and school support staff is critical, and school resource officers can also play an important role in monitoring campus activities and promoting safety for all students. Students and staff can work collaboratively to create campus maps that identify zones on campus where recruiting may take place. Teachers, administrators, and school resource officers can monitor these areas more closely, which provides adult supervision and promotes a safe school campus. For example, schools may identify hallways as an unsafe zone where recruitment or enforcement (e.g. violence, bullying, and harassment) may take place. To combat this activity, schools may consider a practice in which teachers stand outside their classrooms during passing periods to promote positive relationships between teachers and students and to provide a safe adult presence with supervision. In addition to identifying areas on school campuses, online recruitment and internet safety should also be addressed.

Students and staff can continue to work collaboratively to identify unsafe social media apps and websites to increase safety and awareness.

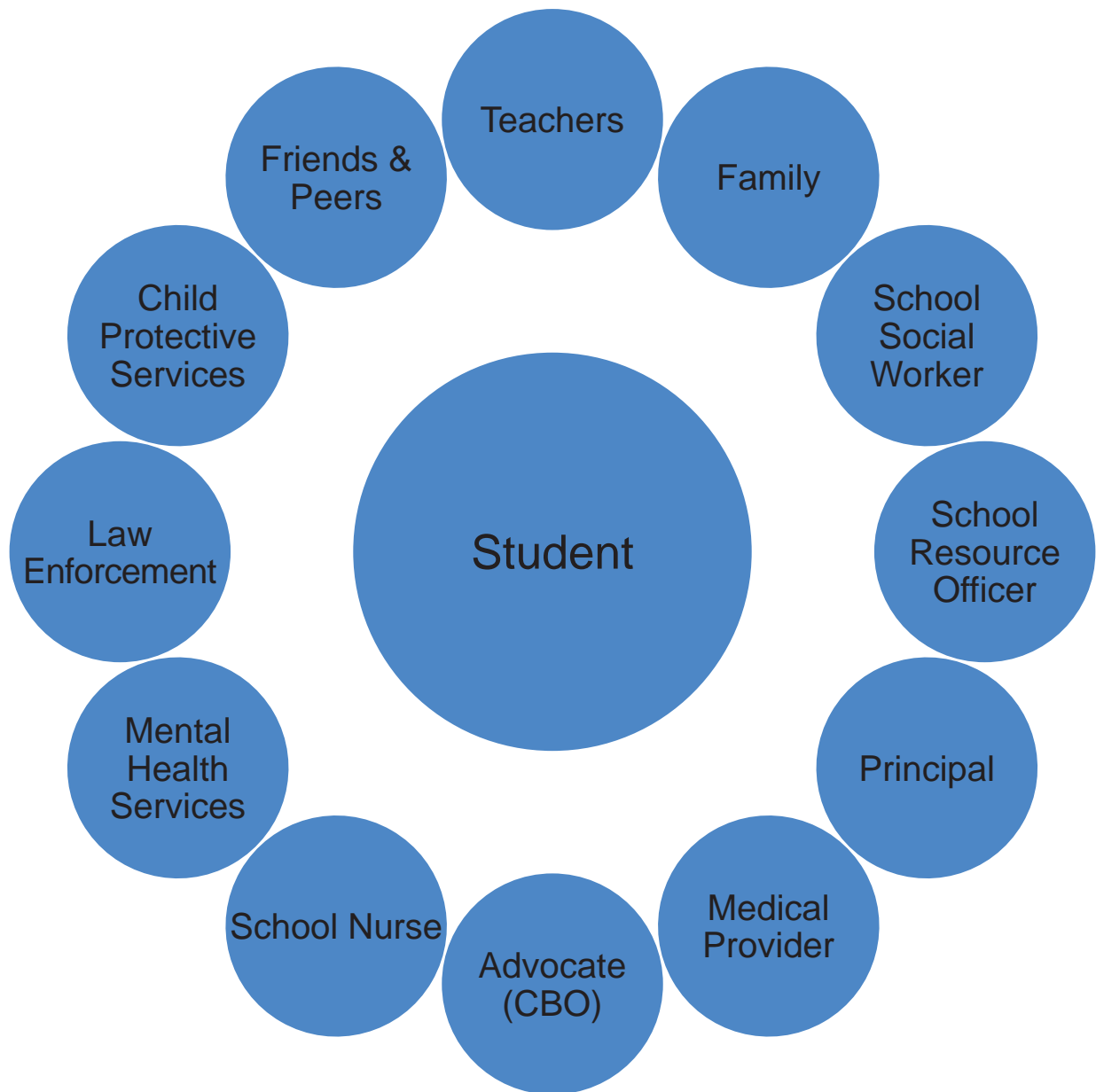
Partnering with the community and families is an important step in taking action from a multifaceted approach. Educating the community and families can also create a safer place where trafficking can be recognized and reported and victims can receive services. Schools can offer a number of different workshops to help promote a safe and supportive environment for students who have been commercially sexually exploited. This includes workshops for students on how to be supportive friends of peers who have experienced trauma and sex trafficking awareness workshops for students, parents, guardians, and caretakers, and community members. Local vetted community-based organizations (CBOs) with expertise in this area may be able to assist.

Trained teachers and staff are better equipped to identify and respond to students who are being trafficked or those that may be at a high risk. Identification can sometimes be challenging, as students who are trafficked often do not disclose the abuse due to fear and shame and sometimes do not recognize their experience as abuse or self-identify as someone who is being trafficked. Some may also rely on their trafficker for basic needs such as shelter, food, and clothing. Because sex trafficking of minors is considered a form of child abuse, suspicions of such exploitation must be reported in accordance with state law. All school personnel are mandated reporters and must receive annual training on and follow mandated reporting laws. In addition, all school personnel should know and follow the district and school policies (refer to the [Mandated Reporting](#) section in the “Introduction” chapter for additional information).

Teachers and school staff often develop rapport with students and must nurture those positive relationships to respond appropriately and offer support. While there may be challenges engaging and supporting students due to the inherent distrust that is formed as a result of their victimization, it is important to have an empathetic and compassionate response. Students may need additional support from school social workers or counselors. Community organizations may also have support services and resources for youth who have been trafficked. Schools and districts should identify organizations in their communities and make available information regarding the services the organizations provide, their locations, and contact information to all school staff. Polaris and the National Human Trafficking Hotline maintain a resource guide for local service providers in California and across the nation.

Youth who have been sexually exploited need a multidisciplinary approach with collaboration between internal and external supports. Maintaining confidentiality is critical in supporting positive reentry experiences for students returning to school. Confidentiality is especially important to emphasize considering the number of people who may be involved in the response and support of the survivor.

Example of a Survivor Support System



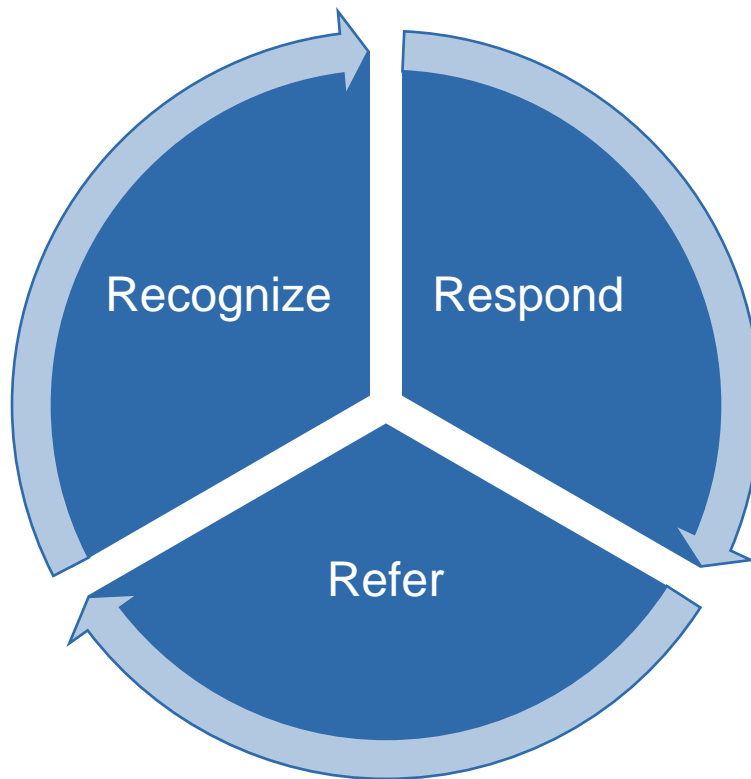
Long Description of Example of a Survivor Support System is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/he/cf/appendixsextraffick.asp#appendixsextraffickinglink1>.

Developing School Protocol

Protocol outlining response to sex trafficking may be included as an addendum to current child abuse school protocols. Schools, districts, and county offices of education can adopt a “Recognize, Respond, Refer” approach to trafficking. Policies should require school- and district-wide training for all staff and personnel to be aware of the issue and be able to *Recognize* signs of sex trafficking. This includes office and security staff, hall monitors, teacher assistants, teachers, administrators, school nurses, school resource officers, and other support staff. Protocols must be in place to clearly outline how individuals must *Respond* when sex trafficking is suspected. Per mandated reporting laws, suspicions of trafficking must be reported immediately to Child Protective Services and law enforcement. It may be school policy to notify the student’s parents, guardians, or caretakers of suspected trafficking. However, if a parent, guardian, or caretaker is the suspected trafficker, they must not be contacted. Contacting the suspected trafficker may put the student in danger. The school policy should similarly address other situations in which contacting students’ parents, guardians, or caretakers is not appropriate.

School support should be in place and trained school counselors and school social workers must be available to assist as part of the response. Schools should implement measures (which may include an Individualized Education Program, 504 plan, or a school transfer) to assist the student in successfully continuing their education in a safe and supportive environment. Response to Instruction and Intervention and Multi-Tiered System of Supports teams may be able to offer both universal and targeted support to survivors and students at risk. The response protocol should also address interventions and support for students who are recruiters or enforcers. Schools should also have a resource list of identified agencies that can provide additional support, as responding to trafficking takes a community effort. Having a resource list readily available will help school personnel *Refer* students to appropriate services. Resources and other information can be provided to all school personnel as part of the annual training on child abuse detection and mandated reporting obligations required under *EC* Section 44691.

Recognize, Respond, Refer



Long Description for Recognize, Respond, Refer is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/he/cf/appendixsextraffick.asp#appendixsextraffickinglink2>.

The Recognize, Respond, and Refer Approach

| Recognize | Respond | Refer |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide training for all school staff. ■ Partner with organizations, such as law enforcement and the local rape crisis center, with expertise regarding sex trafficking and sexual trauma for guidance on awareness training and identification strategies. ■ Develop a quick reference guide for warning signs, indicators, and risk factors. The reference guide should also include a response protocol. ■ Provide staff with in-service and professional development opportunities to stay current on the latest trafficking trends and indicators. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Never attempt to intervene by confronting the trafficker or rescuing the victim. Doing so may put the victims, yourself, or others in danger. ■ If a student self-discloses, respond with compassion and empathy. Be nonjudgmental and provide safety planning. If the student is in immediate danger, contact 9-1-1. ■ If trafficking is suspected or disclosed, report immediately and follow mandated reporting law and response protocol. ■ Maintain student's confidentiality and do not share information with staff or students. ■ Provide internal support from a trained school social worker or counselor. ■ Provide necessary measures to address needs and support continued education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify local agencies that provide services to victims of trafficking. ■ Identify and partner with local expert organizations for information and referrals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rape crisis center ➤ Domestic violence agency ➤ Youth organizations ➤ Advocacy organizations ➤ Mental health service providers ➤ Medical providers with expertise in adolescent health care and reproductive health services ➤ Substance abuse treatment programs ➤ Academic support services ■ Create a resource list for school staff and to be made available for students at the campus student support or resource center. |

It is not the role of the mandated reporter to investigate possible sex trafficking or abuse. Any suspicion of such activity must be reported immediately in accordance with mandated reporting laws. However, the school may conduct a separate investigation to determine campus impact and safety while maintaining the confidentiality of possible victims. The five-step school protocol below can be used as a starting point for developing a district- or school-level response to sex trafficking.

Sample School or District Protocol

| Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| Report suspected abuse to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement. | Involve School Resource Officer for possible investigation. | Investigate possible campus impacts and safety (recruitment, harassment, involvement of other students). | Offer possible victim and parent, guardian, or caretaker referrals to support and social services. | Maintain contact for potential victim to check in regarding status. |

Source: Adapted from US Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students (2015, 10).

For other ideas, the Grossmont Unified High School District in San Diego and the Sacramento City Unified School District have established protocols and programs in place to address trafficking on campus and in the community. Additional resources can be found on the California Department of Education Child Abuse Prevention web page.

The following example illustrates how a school could intervene and support students and their families. It also illustrates the importance of teacher training and education, the role of the school social worker, and school protocols and policies related to social issues that directly impact their students.

VIGNETTE**School Intervention Example**
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A high school teacher has observed marked differences in a student from the beginning of the school year. Marci, a sixteen-year-old sophomore, was engaged and communicative at the start of the school year. Lately, she has been increasingly tardy and absent. The teacher notices she is often distracted while in class and is checking her cell phone constantly. The teacher is concerned and asks to speak with Marci for a few minutes after class.

The teacher asks Marci, "Is everything OK? I have noticed some changes since the beginning of the year, and I wanted to check in with you." Marci starts to get tearful and tells the teacher she has a new boyfriend. She seems distressed and nervous, and the two of them decide together to walk to the school social worker's office. The school social worker is available and Marci agrees to meet with her. The teacher thanks Marci for sharing with her and leaves Marci with the social worker. The teacher was aware that the student was exhibiting concerning behaviors. Not knowing the full extent of the issue, the teacher referred Marci to the appropriate school personnel.

Marci and the social worker start to talk, and the social worker notices bruises on Marci's arm. The social worker explains her role as a mandated reporter, which includes an explanation of confidentiality and the limits of that confidentiality. She asks about the bruises, and Marci discloses that her boyfriend got mad and grabbed her arm. She seems hesitant to tell the social worker, but eventually discloses that her boyfriend sometimes makes her help earn money to pay some of the bills. The social worker asks what kind of bills, and Marci shares that her boyfriend is older and has an apartment. She says that he is looking for a job, but is having trouble and says that Marci needs to contribute. He used to pay her cell phone bill since her parents will not let her have one, so she feels like she needs to help out now.

The social worker asks Marci how she helps earn money to pay some of the bills. Marci begins to cry and looks down. The social worker has noticed several red flags and possible indicators for sex trafficking. The social worker asks, "Do you ever have to do things you are uncomfortable with?" Marci nods her head while in tears. "Can you give me an example?" Marci puts her hands over her face and continues crying. She then shares that she sometimes has sex with her boyfriend's friends to help pay the bills. The social worker explains to Marci that what is happening to her is wrong and that it is not her fault. The

social worker shares that she needs to follow up with her responsibilities as a mandated reporter because she is worried about Marci's safety and well-being.

The social worker contacts Child Protective Services and communicates that she is making this report with her school principal, which is the school's protocol. The principal and social worker contact Marci's parents to provide information and support. The social worker again tells Marci that this is not her fault.

The social worker works with Marci to develop a safety plan that includes identifying safe places and trusted adults and creates strategies for reducing and responding to threats of harm. The social worker also talks about sex trafficking and dating violence and how the school can support her. The social worker shares with Marci and her parents that many students find themselves in this situation and she is not alone. The social worker gives Marci and her parents referrals for free counseling services in the community and to local law enforcement agencies. The social worker collaborates with Marci's teachers, Marci, and her parents on a plan for Marci to complete some past due assignments. Marci meets with the social worker weekly to check in and receive ongoing support.

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