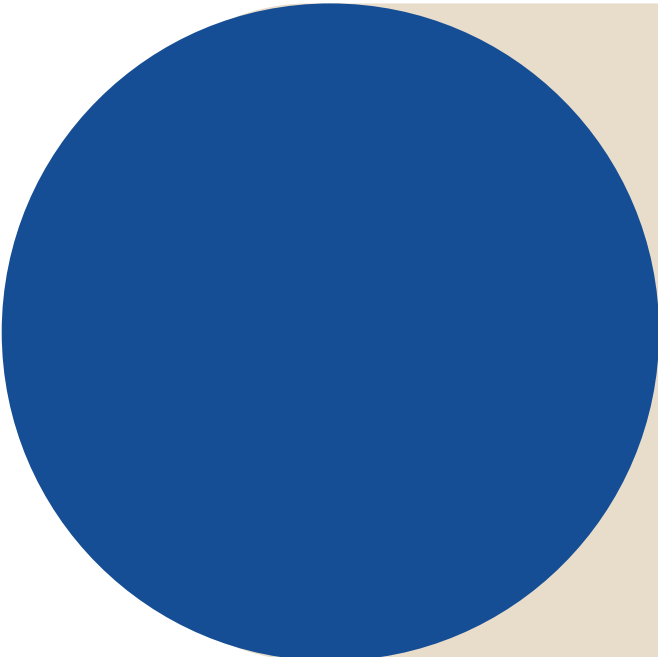


ProtectEd

Education is Prevention — Knowledge That Protects.



Imagine someone your age is promised an opportunity to be an influencer online. They are excited about the opportunity because it is coming from a celebrity or someone they follow. All they have to do (or have already done) is to send a picture and a little personal information... ***What would you do?***

What is Sex Trafficking? (Legal Definition)

- Sex trafficking is when someone makes another person trade sex or sexual images (this is called a commercial sex act) with force, fraud, or coercion (we'll explain better in depth later).
- This could be for money, gifts, food, or even a place to stay.

Commercial Sex Act:

- A commercial sex act is when anything sexual is done in exchange for something of value—like money, food, clothes, rides, shelter, drugs, or even phone data.
- If someone gives you a vape, a new outfit, or a ride home in exchange for nudes or sexual stuff, that's a commercial sex act.

The Law Protects Minors:

- No need to prove force, fraud, or coercion — any commercial sex act involving a minor is automatically considered sex trafficking under federal law.
- If you're under 18, you cannot legally agree to trade sex or sexual images—even if you said yes-it's still trafficking. You're never to blame.
- If someone sets that up, they are breaking the law. That makes you a victim, not a criminal.

What is Coercion?

Coercion is when someone pressures, threatens, or scares you into doing something you don't want to do.

It can sound like:

- “If you don't do this, I'll tell everyone your secret.”
- “I'll stop helping you if you don't send that pic.”
- “You owe me, so do this for me.”

What is Fraud?

Fraud is when someone lies or tricks you to get you to do something.

It can sound like:

- “I can get you a modeling job—just send me pics first.”
- “This is just for fun, no one will ever find out.”
- “You’ll make so much money if you just do this one thing.”

Who is at Risk?

Anyone can be at risk, but traffickers often target people who:

- Want to feel loved, seen, or supported
- Spend a lot of time online alone
- Are going through a hard time at home or school
- Need money, food, or a place to stay
- Feel lonely, insecure, or depressed
- Have run away or don't feel safe at home

Remember: There's no "type" of person traffickers go after—it can happen to anyone.



How Do Traffickers Recruit?

Traffickers don't usually grab people off the street. They use tricks, lies, and fake relationships to build trust first.

How Do Traffickers Recruit?

Ways they recruit:

- Flirting online or in person to start a “relationship”
- Sending money, gifts, food, or rides
- Pretending to be a boyfriend/girlfriend, manager, or talent scout

Saying things like:

- “You’re different. You’re special.”
- “You can make easy money.”
- “I’ll take care of you.”

This can happen on social media, in real life, or both.

Warning Signs:

Behavioral Signs- A friend may be in trouble if they:

- Start talking or dressing in ways that seem very different
- Have money or things they can't explain
- Seem scared, secretive, or withdrawn
- Lose interest in school, friends, or activities they liked before
- Always check in with someone older before making any move

Warning Signs:

Relational Signs- Warning Signs in a Relationship:

- The person is much older or controlling
- They demand nudes or sexual favors in return for gifts or love
- You feel like you owe them or can't say no
- You're hiding the relationship from friends or adults

They say things like:

- “If you love me, prove it.”
- “Don't tell anyone about us.”

Online Exploitation and Grooming:

Grooming is when someone builds trust with a young person online in order to manipulate or exploit them later—often for sexual reasons.

It usually happens slowly and might look like:

- Giving compliments: “You’re so mature for your age.”
- Offering gifts or money
- Asking you to keep secrets
- Starting out with innocent talk, then pushing for pics or videos

Online Exploitation and Grooming:

Grooming is when someone builds trust with a young person online in order to manipulate or exploit them later—often for sexual reasons.

Saying things like:

- “This is just between us.”
- “You can trust me more than your parents.”

Grooming is how many traffickers and predators start the process of abuse or exploitation.

High-Risk Platforms for Grooming and Exploitation:

These apps and games are often used by predators and traffickers to connect with teens because of private messaging, photo sharing, or anonymous chatting:

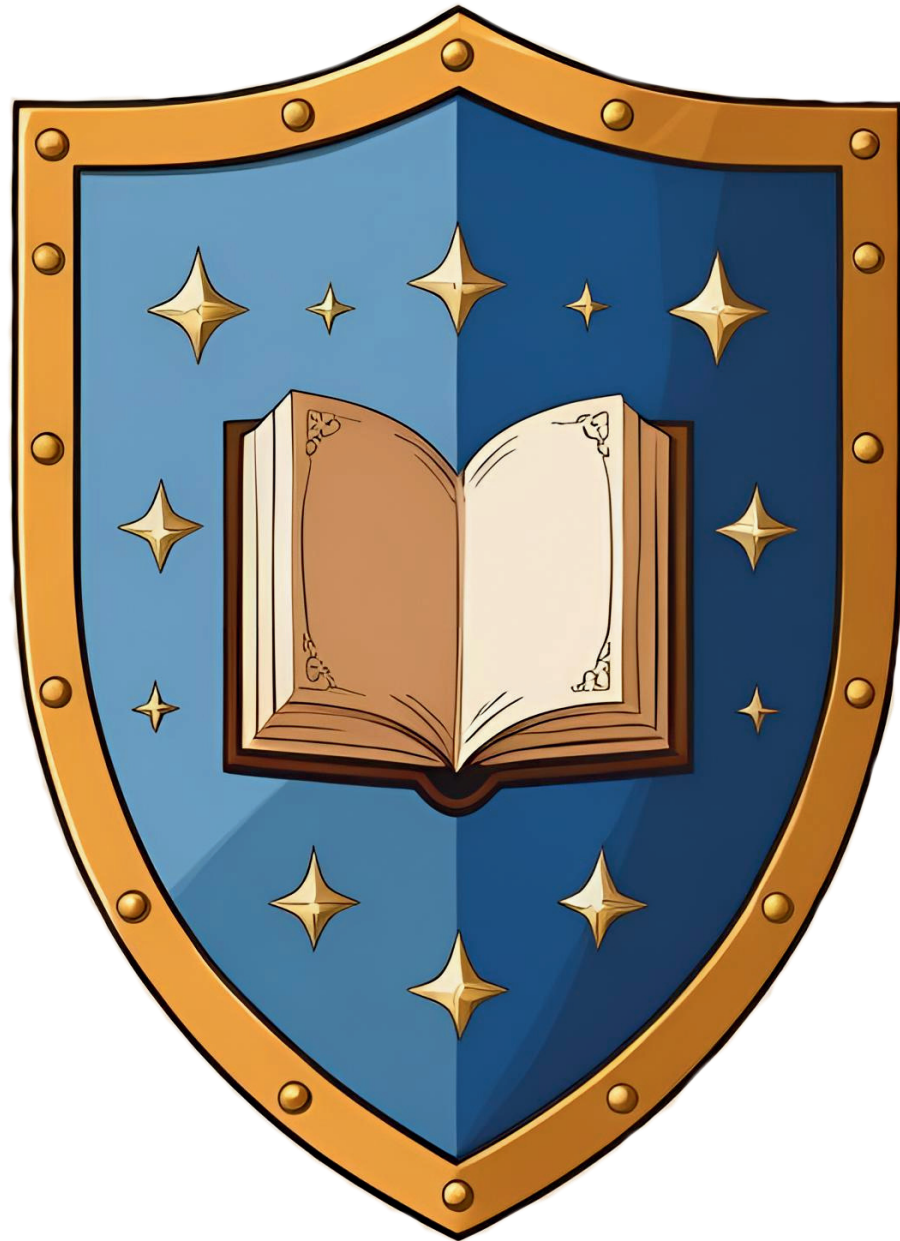
- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Instagram | 6. Roblox |
| 2. Snapchat | 7. Discord |
| 3. TikTok | 8. Fortnite |
| 4. Facebook/FB Messenger | 9. Minecraft (with 3 rd party servers) |
| 5. Reddit | 10. Omegle |

These platforms aren't "bad"—but traffickers use them to start conversations, *especially when no one is watching.*

What Grooming Looks Like in Real Life:

Grooming often doesn't look scary at first—it looks like friendship, flirting, or fun. Here's how it might show up:

- Someone you met on Snapchat keeps messaging, even if you stop replying
- A person online asks for a pic “just for them” and says, “I won't show anyone”
- A gamer offers you game credits or skins if you send a video or talk dirty
- Someone starts off as a “friend,” but gets controlling or sexual over time
- They ask you to hide the relationship from your parents or friends
- They flip—they're super nice, then suddenly threaten or guilt you



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