



# The Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

## A Brief Overview for Front Line Workers and Guardians

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## What is sexual exploitation?

- Anyone under 18 years of age who is exchanging a sexual act for anything in return
- Any romantic relationship of someone under 18 years of age with someone in a position of trust or authority

## What are some forms of sexual exploitation?

- Exploitive relationships during grooming
- Pressures to send naked images
- Experiencing sextortion
- Sugar daddy relationships or escorting
- Gang involvement
- Peer exploitation in parties
- Online sexual solicitation by predators
- Forced prostitution

## Facts on sexual exploitation:

- 70% of global trafficking is sexual exploitation [United Nations]
- Most common form of human trafficking in Canada [Stat Canada]
- Average age groomed is 13-14 years old [National Sex Trafficking Task Force]
- Average age of trafficker is 18-34 years old [Stat Canada]
- Over 90% of sexual exploitation is facilitated online (ICE Unit, RCMP)

## The predators of sexual exploitation

### 1) Pimps (Traffickers)

*(groom youth into exchanging sexual acts typically for money, shelter, or drugs)*

### 2) Sexual Predators

*(seek illegal sexual activity with minors. Can be a trusted adult in the child's life)*

### 3) Trusted Relations/ Peers

*(1/3 of sexual offences against youth are committed by another youth)*

## Some signs that a youth or child is being sexually exploited:

- They have an older boyfriend or friend (typically around 2-5 years older and/or in their 20's)
- Their older boyfriend or friend provides them with things they can not afford themselves
- They start to hang with an older crowd and party more often
- Display anxiety to answer/check phone constantly or they are not using a phone at all
- Focused on their boyfriend/friends' behavior and watching them in responding to questions
- Does not have hold of their own ID or....
- Maintains level of secrecy and disappears often
- Skipping school or grades dropping
- Frequents hotels or unusual locations to meet friends
- Has been isolated emotionally or physically from family, friends, or home
- Has a boyfriend/friend who is inviting them to visit outside their community
- Has multiple profiles on sugar daddy platforms

## Social Media and the reasons behind online vulnerability

- Have a need for belonging, self esteem, or fame
- Don't have an understanding of healthy boundaries and how they apply online
- Apps encourage approval from other users (likes and comments) and sharing of personal information on their platforms
- False sense of security behind a screen

## Sexting and Sextortion

Any image of someone under the age of 18, or portrayed to be under the age of 18:

If created= creation of child pornography

If shared= distribution of child pornography

If kept= possession of child pornography

\*However this law exists for protection of children and youth, not to criminalize them

Sextortion involves an exploiter using a child/youth's intimate image or video against them by threatening to share it unless they receive more content or money

*Did you know (Cybertip):*

- *In the last decade, child pornography (under 18) incidences increased by 233%*
- *In 2017, there was an 89% increase in reports of Canadian boys being victims of sextortion over the past 2 years.*

## How to support a child or youth who is at risk or being exploited?

- Use a human rights approach: promote the ability for youth to make informed decisions
- Ensure the safety of victims through privacy and confidentiality
- Ensure services embody the whole person, including ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation, gender identity, and cultural sensitivity
- Recognize that the process of helping a victim requires patience, autonomy, and trauma informed care
- Ensure that all parts of the victims life is being restored and all basic needs are being provided through healthy means
- Deglamourize the victims situation as unique by sharing similar stories of exploitation or the grooming process
- Discuss warning signs of grooming and why they create power imbalance in labelling predatory behaviour

## Handling Disclosures

- Allow autonomy for child/youth to tell the story in their own order and at their own pace
- Only ask necessary questions for providing assistance, not out of curiosity as they may miss details retelling the story to law enforcement
- Allow for the disclosure to be told in any format- it does not need to be face to face!
- Ask the child/youth what they believe their immediate needs are and address the immediate barriers that entrenched them into exploitation
- Ask youth if they want to disclose to law enforcement, the benefits, the realities of what to expect, and whether they would like your company and support for the process

# Resources

*For further information on the topic, resource documents, and youth tools,  
visit [sexualexploitationeducation.com](http://sexualexploitationeducation.com)*

## Reporting and Adult Resources:

VictimLink BC 1-800-563-0808

Crimestoppers 1-800-222-8477

Cybertip.ca

MCFD

Canada's HT Hotline 1-833-900-1010

Canadian Centre for Child Exploitation- [protectchildren.ca](http://protectchildren.ca)

## Peer Exploitation and Youth Resources:

Needhelpnow.ca

Youthinbc.com

Youthspace.ca

[Sexualexploitationeducation.com/youth](http://Sexualexploitationeducation.com/youth)