

Stopping the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth



Preventing Crime. Building Safe Communities.

Stopping the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

Victim Services and Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is committed to developing and disseminating practical information to prevent and address the sexual exploitation of children and youth in B.C.

This booklet is designed to assist service providers, parents/guardians, teachers, and others who are working to help prevent children and youth from being sexually exploited or to help them leave situations that are exploitative in nature.

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What is sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation of children and youth under the age of 18 years is any type of sexual activity with children and youth in exchange for money, drugs, food, shelter or any other considerations. This is the case whether or not children or youth consider themselves to be consenting. Sexual exploitation of children and youth is never considered prostitution or consensual.

It is sexual exploitation when children and youth:

- Are sexually abused by adults
- Provide sex for a place to sleep, a meal or a ride
- Trade sexual activities in exchange for money, drugs, alcohol, gifts, services, or other items
- Are sexually trafficked
- Are seduced, manipulated or coerced to take sexual pictures/videos of themselves (i.e., child pornography) that can be sent over the internet

Some youth feel they are not being exploited, and that they have chosen to exchange sexual acts for resources. But sexual exploitation is not employment or a chosen occupation; it is a form of sexual abuse.

Sexual exploitation of children and youth is never considered prostitution or consensual.

Age of consent – *In Canada, under the Criminal Code, it is a crime for an adult to engage in sexual activity with a person under the age of 16, whether or not the young person appears willing to participate.*

Distribution of Child Pornography – *In the Criminal Code, sec 163.1, every person who transmits, makes available, distributes, sells, advertises, imports, exports or possesses for the purpose of transmission, making available, distribution, sale, advertising or exportation any child pornography is guilty of distributing child pornography. This offense can include teens under the age of 18 sending sexual, nude or semi-nude photos of themselves through text messaging programs, also known as “sexting.”*



Who is vulnerable?

Victims of sexual exploitation include children and youth of different ages, genders, abilities, sexual orientations, and cultural and economic backgrounds in both rural and urban areas.

According to the May 2008 report, *It's Not What Youth Think: Sexually Exploited Youth in British Columbia*:

- The average age when youth are first exploited (male or female) is 13 to 15 years old.
- Lesbian, gay and bi-sexual youth are at higher risk of sexual exploitation than other youth.
- Youth are at an increased risk of sexual exploitation if they have been kicked-out or have run away from home.
- Young males are just as likely to be sexually exploited as young females.
- 1 in 4 exploited youth admit to being sexually abused by a relative or caregiver.
- A third to over a half of all sexually exploited youth are Aboriginal.

Which risk factors make children and youth vulnerable to sexual exploitation?

Factors associated with an increased risk of sexual exploitation include:

- Sexual, physical or emotional abuse, or neglect
- Alcohol or drug abuse or exposure to parental substance abuse
- Poverty or unemployment



- Low self-esteem and insecurity
- Lack of sense of belonging
- Mental health, learning or cognitive disabilities
- Systemic factors, such as racism and the impact of the destruction of Aboriginal identity and culture
- Running away or being forced to leave home at an early age
- Unsupervised and uninformed Internet usage
- Sexual orientation

Who are the perpetrators of sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation is not just a big city issue; perpetrators are active in smaller communities as well. Perpetrators use power, coercion, manipulation, intimidation, seduction, enticement, and grooming to get children and youth to participate in sexual acts. You may be surprised that:

- Perpetrators can include the victim's parents/guardians, extended family, or circle of friends.
- In the sex trade, "johns" (i.e., customers) abuse children and youth through buying sex.
- Recruiters who lure children and youth into the sex trade are often about the same age as their potential recruits. Female recruiters are often "owned" by pimps; males can receive money or other rewards for recruiting.
- Recruiting and pimping also takes place within youth gangs, street gangs, and organized criminal groups.
- Youth can exploit their peers, by trading sexual acts for drugs or alcohol, or by pressuring them into sexual activities either in groups or in front of one another.

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- Youth can exploit their friends (e.g., by circulating nude photos of them on the Internet).
- Perpetrators can make, access, possess, or distribute “child porn” (i.e., images of child sexual abuse).
- Perpetrators can lure children and youth into sexual activity via the Internet, acting alone or as part of a group.

What are the different forms of sexual exploitation?

In Relationships of Trust, Authority or Dependency

Sexual exploitation includes the abuse of children and youth by those:

- Who are in positions of trust and authority, or
- Upon whom the young person depends.

This can take the form of a sexual relationship with a teacher, coach, police officer, or guardian.

Youth can also be exploited by adult “friends” who may not be in a position of trust or authority, but who are from the youth’s own community. For example, a “friend” can lure a youth from a remote community to the city and exploit the youth while acting as their sole support.

These types of relationships can also emerge out of childhood abuse or incest, or an intergenerational cycle of victimization. In the case of Aboriginal children and youth who are exploited, a family member’s experience in a residential school may contribute to an intergenerational cycle of child abuse.

Sexual exploitation includes the abuse of children and youth by those who are in positions of trust or authority, or upon whom the young person depends.



Through the Sex Trade

Young people can be targeted for recruitment into the sex trade anywhere they hang out, including recreation centres, malls and at school.

Youth can be manipulated into providing sex on the street, in hotels, massage parlours, cars, or through escort services. Particularly in non-urban areas, sexual exploitation can be hidden. It can take place in private homes, schools, malls, video arcades or other areas where youth congregate.

The sex trade can be highly organized, and can involve recruiters, pimps, gangs, or traffickers. Or it can be informal, with youth getting involved through friends or family members. All youth involved in the sex trade are at an increased risk of violence due to their vulnerable situation.

Youth can become involved in the organized sex trade in the following ways:

- Pimps often groom female youth for sexual exploitation. Posing as a boyfriend, the pimp gains trust with promises, bribes and other forms of manipulation. The youth is then forced to work on the streets or indoors.
- Less commonly, pimps will use overt violence, including kidnapping, to force young people into the sex trade.
- Female recruiters can operate like new “best friends.” The recruiter gains the youth’s trust and introduces her to the sex trade. The pimp then takes control.
- Male youth tend to operate independently. They can begin by trading sexual acts for necessities and progress to exchanging sex for money.





Through Control of Survival Needs

Youth can exchange sexual acts for drugs or alcohol at parties, or for a ride, shelter, food or other necessities. These hidden forms of sexual exploitation often go unidentified and can be seen as “normal” by both the victim and the offender.

On the Internet

Sexual exploitation online can take several forms:

- Youth can make and distribute sexual images of themselves, their peers or their sexual partners that are then distributed online.
- Youth can be encouraged to post explicit photos or videos of themselves by adults who use the images for sexual purposes or to further manipulate youth.
- Young people can be lured into sexually exploitative situations by people they meet in online settings. These situations include chat rooms and social networking sites such as Facebook, Nexopia, and Myspace, and through online games.
- Youth can use online settings (e.g., Craigslist) to seek out adults willing to provide them with shelter, food or money in exchange for sex acts.

Through Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a criminal offence in Canada with serious penalties. It involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, receiving, holding or hiding a person or exercising control, direction or influence over a person’s movements for the purpose of exploiting or helping to exploit that person. Exploiting means coercing a person to provide labour or services through fear for their



safety or the safety of someone they know. Exploitation also includes using force, threats of force, deception or coercion to remove a body organ or tissue from a person.

According to the RCMP report Project Seclusion: Human Trafficking in Canada, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is mostly associated with organized prostitution occurring discreetly behind fronts, such as escort agencies and residential brothels. To date, the majority of domestically trafficked women and girls are initially trafficked between the ages of 14 and 25, and most are recruited through the Internet or by an acquaintance. Most are economically vulnerable women and girls who are at-risk, or teenage runaways.

Canada's human trafficking laws address trafficking in all its forms, regardless of the type of exploitation, the age of the trafficked person, or whether the crime is domestic or international human trafficking. A mandatory minimum sentence can be imposed for child trafficking offences.

In Gangs

Sexual exploitation and trafficking are common activities for many highly organized crime groups. Young victims are forced or deceived into performing acts that exploit them. Females associated with gang members can be forced into the sex trade or used as sexual objects by multiple gang members. As well, youth who have been sexually exploited can later be used by gangs to recruit other youth into sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Young people who have been exploited through the sex trade can appear older than their years, confident, and defiant. This can mask the isolation, pain and fear they endure.

What are the impacts of sexual exploitation?

Young people who have been sexually exploited can be stigmatized by carrying the label of “exploited youth.” They may feel shame or regret, and may blame themselves for being victimized.

Young people who have been exploited through the sex trade can appear older than their years, confident and defiant. This can mask the isolation, pain and fear they endure.

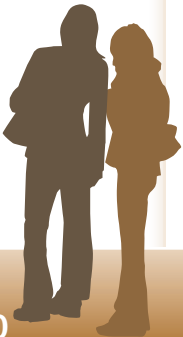


Youth who are sexually exploited can also experience:

- Physical, sexual violence and injury, from pimps, johns and others
- HIV infection, STDs and other illnesses
- Addiction and abuse of alcohol and drugs
- Emotional and mental health problems
- Loss of personal privacy (e.g., if sexual images of youth have been circulated online, people can recognize them from their online images)
- Robbery and theft of property

How you can help...

- Contact police if a child or youth has run away, is missing, or if you suspect they are being exploited.
- Let the police know if you have heard about or seen a pimp or recruiter operating in your community.
- If you know a child or youth who wants to leave an exploitative situation, or if you believe a young



person is in need of protection, contact the Ministry for Children and Family Development by calling the Helpline for Children at 310-1234 (no area code required).

- If you know an adult who is involved in an exploitative relationship with a young person, do not remain silent. Call the police and report the offence.
- Call the Youth Against Violence Line toll-free at 1-800-680-4264 to report sexual exploitation and obtain information on available services in your community. Encourage a child or youth victim to call the line for support and referral to services.
- If you are a parent trying to get your child out of a sexually exploitative situation, don't try to do it alone. Seek support and information from the appropriate authorities and community agencies.
- Report any sexually explicit images of youth to www.cybertip.ca
- Build positive, open, trusting relationships with the youth in your life. Speak to them about healthy relationships and sexual exploitation, and tell them you are available to talk if they have questions or need support.
- If a child or youth seems disconnected or in trouble, reach out to him or her. Try to engage the young person in an open and non-judgmental discussion.
- Get involved and educate yourself. Find out more about sexual exploitation issues and how to help vulnerable children and youth. Support education on sexual exploitation and related issues for children and youth.





- Get involved in the annual Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth Awareness Week. For more information visit: www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community_programs/exploitation/index.htm
- Support prevention, intervention and exiting programs in your community.

What resources are available?

Parents, teachers, school counsellors, youth workers, elders, youth and other community members play a vital role in helping child and youth victims of sexual exploitation. Services are available for you to call upon.

VictimLink BC

VictimLink BC is a toll-free, multilingual, confidential telephone service available across B.C. and Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week that provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.

- Contact VictimLink BC at 1-800-563-0808 (toll-free in B.C. and Yukon). Call TTY at 604 875-0885; to call collect, please call Telus Relay Service at 711.
- Text to 604 836-6381. Email VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca
- www.victimlinkbc.ca

Police

Police can help young people who are in immediate danger by applying for a protective order to keep a person away from a child or youth; investigating crimes and arresting perpetrators; and providing information about



other agencies. However, they cannot apprehend youth who are resistant to getting help.

- See your phone book for local contact information.

Child Protection

Child protection social workers respond to reports of children in need of protection. This can include taking immediate action with other service providers to ensure a young person's safety; engaging a child's family in a plan to keep the child safe and build family strengths; working with a youth to keep the youth safe and develop his or her capacity to live at home or independently; starting a child protection investigation; and seeking a court order (i.e., protective order or restraining order) to keep another person away from a child or youth.

- Report child protection matters through the Helpline for Children: 310-1234 (no area code required)
- TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf): toll free 1-866-660-0505
- After regular office hours: 1-800-663-9122

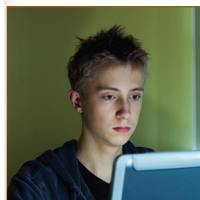
Cybertip

Cybertip is a national tip line for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children and youth. Cybertip is part of the National Centre for Child Protection, which also provides prevention and education resources.

- Website: www.cybertip.ca

National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre

This organization was created in response to the recognition that the Internet is being used more frequently to facilitate sexual exploitation crimes against children,



including the exchange of child sexual abuse images and child luring.

- Website: www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ncecc-cncc/index-accueil-eng.htm

Canadian Centre for Child Protection

This organization aims to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services through public awareness activities, a personal safety education program (i.e., Kids in the Know), a national tip-line to report online sexual abuse of children (i.e., Cybertip.ca), and a program to help organizations prevent child sexual abuse (i.e., Commit to Kids).

- Website: www.protectchildren.ca/app/en/

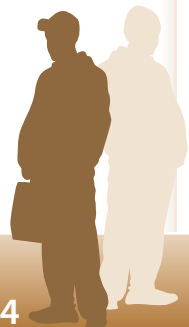
Children of the Street Society

This organization provides resources and support to parents or caregivers where children and youth are at risk of sexual exploitation or are being sexually exploited, works with families to develop an action plan or directs them to resources, and provides prevention education in schools and the community.

- Phone: 604 777-7510 or toll free 1-877-551-6611
- Website: www.childrenofthestreet.com

Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons

The Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons (OCTIP) is part of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and is responsible for the overall coordination of British Columbia's strategy to address human trafficking. OCTIP is focused on the protection of trafficked persons, the prevention of human trafficking and the coordination



of services for trafficked persons. OCTIP responds to international and domestic trafficking situations identified as sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and/or domestic servitude involving women, men, children or youth.

- Phone: toll-free 24/7 in B.C. 1-888-712-7974
- Email: octip@gov.bc.ca
- Website: www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/octip

Safe OnLine Outreach Society (SOLOS)

SOLOS provides education and information for professionals, parents and youth about online sexual exploitation and the use of new technologies in child sexual abuse. The website includes resources designed for youth, as well as for parents and service providers.

- Website: www.safeonlineoutreach.com

Online Sexual Exploitation Toolkit

For more information on sexual exploitation, including provincial organizations, research and publications, and ideas for community action, please visit the online toolkit.

- Website: www.jibc.ca/seytoolkit

Provincial Integrated Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit

The Provincial Integrated Child Exploitation Unit provides operational support and assistance to 131 RCMP Detachments and 11 Municipal Police agencies. The Unit educates police and RCMP officers on the use of the Internet in child exploitation offences.

- Phone: 604 598-4569 (general line)
- Email: ICE_BC@rcmp-grc.gc.ca

Should you wish to report a crime, please contact Cybertip (www.cybertip.ca) or your local police department.





Victim Service Programs

Victim service workers, located across B.C. in community agencies or police stations, provide emotional support, justice system information, safety planning, referrals to counselling and other services, help in accessing financial assistance for victims of crime and support for victims going to court.

- Phone: VictimLink BC at 1-800-563-0808
- TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf): 604 875-0885 (collect calls accepted)
- Website: www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victim_services/

Victim Services and Crime Prevention, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Victim Services and Crime Prevention can help you:

- Identify ways to assist community efforts and provide support for communities preventing and addressing sexual exploitation of youth.
- Phone: toll free in B.C. at 1 800-663-7867, or in the Lower Mainland at 604 660-5199
- Email: CrimePrevention@gov.bc.ca
- Website: www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/crimeprevention

Community Action Teams (CAT)

Communities across BC are taking action against sexual exploitation. Refer to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General's website on information regarding a CAT in your area:

- Website: <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/crimeprevention/exploitation/index.htm>



PLEA Community Services of BC - Onyx

Onyx provides support services to youth who are or have been sexually exploited. This is a voluntary program that assists male, female, or trans-gendered clients that are 18 years of age and under. Referrals come from the community; privacy and confidentiality standards are upheld. Service plans are put into place during initial intake and consultation with the client. Coordination of services range from formal (counselling, detox, school, one-to-one support) to informal (recreation, clothing, bus pass).

- Phone: 1-877-411-PLEA (7532)
- Email: onyx@plea.bc.ca

Crime Stoppers

BC Crime Stoppers allows members of the public to provide information about a crime or potential crime without having to identify themselves. Tips on sexual exploitation of youth are welcome at:

- Phone: toll free in B.C. at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or text your tip to CRIMES (274237)
- Website: <http://www.bccrimestoppers.com/links.php>

Youth Against Violence Line

The Youth Against Violence Line is a service that young people or adults can call to seek help, report incidents of youth violence or crime, and obtain information on available services.

- Phone: toll free in BC at 1-800-680-4264
- TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf): 604 875-0885 (collect calls accepted) or text 604 836-6381





Other Services

Contact VictimLink BC (1-800-563-0808) or Youth Against Violence Line (1-800-680-4264) for referrals to other services including:

- health clinics and hospitals, including Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE)
- mental health services to address addiction, sexual exploitation, or other issues
- anti-violence services including Stop the Violence counsellors, shelters and safe houses
- youth services and other services geared towards specific groups such as girls and young women, boys and young men, GLBTQ youth (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning), youth with disabilities, and various cultural groups
- Aboriginal family and youth services. For details, see Aboriginal Organizations and Services in British Columbia online at www.gov.bc.ca/arr/services/guide.html

Please note:

This document provides general information only. It is not intended to provide legal information or advice.



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