

**2021**

# Human Trafficking Community Awareness Toolkit

**End Human Trafficking  
in Ventura County**



**Ventura County  
Coalition Against  
Human Trafficking  
(VCCAHT)**



**Ventura County  
Human Trafficking  
Task Force  
(VCHTTF)**

# Toolkit Contents

*This toolkit was created to provide trauma-informed awareness, messaging and resources to engage community members on human trafficking issues in Ventura County.*

*\*Being trauma-informed is a strengths-based approach that is responsive to the impact of trauma on a person's life. (1)*

**Who We Are**

**03**

**California Definition of Human Trafficking  
Human Trafficking in Ventura County**

**04**

**Labor Trafficking Venues  
Red Flags & Indicators**

**05**

**Sex Trafficking Venues  
Red Flags & Indicators**

**06**

**Pornography & Escort Services**

**07**

**Familial Trafficking**

**08**

**Trafficking of Children**

**09**

**Myths & Facts**

**10**

**Ways to Engage - Action Steps**

**11**

**Reporting Protocol for  
Suspected Human Trafficking**

**13**

**Recommended Resources**

**14**

**References  
Toolkit Contributing Agencies**

**15**



**Did you know?**

Human trafficking exists in every country, including the United States. It exists nationwide—in cities, suburbs, and rural towns—and right here in Ventura County. (2)

# Who We Are



In January 2015, the **Ventura County Coalition Against Human Trafficking**, also known as VCCAHT, was formed to address the growing issues of human trafficking in our county. VCCAHT is not an entity of its own, it is a collaboration of agencies in the county.

Our Mission is to combat human trafficking in Ventura County by partnering to prevent, prosecute, properly identify victims, and provide victim services; with a vision to end human trafficking in Ventura County.

Our Steering Committee (Core Team) is comprised of key law enforcement, social service providers, faith-based and community nonprofit agencies which directly interact with victims, and who are collaborating to address both sex trafficking and labor trafficking for adult and minor victims.

### Founding Steering Committee Members

California Highway Patrol • Federal Bureau of Investigation • Forever Found • Homeland Security Investigations • Interface Children and Family Services • Oxnard Police Department • Ventura County Behavioral Health • Ventura County Children and Family Services • Ventura County District Attorney's Office • Ventura County Probation Agency • Ventura County Sheriff's Office • Ventura Police Department • Women of Substance & Men of Honor • Youth With A Mission

Formed in October 2019, the **Ventura County Human Trafficking Task Force** is made up of members from the Ventura County Sheriff's Office, Ventura County District Attorney's Office, Ventura Police Department, Santa Paula Police Department, Simi Valley Police Department, Oxnard Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Homeland Security Investigations, California Department of Justice, and several victim service providers. The primary mission of the task force is fighting against sex and/or labor trafficking of humans within Ventura County. The task force works closely with surrounding cities and counties to fulfill our mission.





# California Definition of Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex.

## California Penal Code 236.1 - Human Trafficking (summarized):

- A person who deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services (including commercial sex).
- A person who causes, induces, or persuades (or attempts to cause, induce or persuade) a person who is a minor (under 18 years of age) to engage in commercial sex is guilty of human trafficking. (3)

## Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC):

- The sexual trafficking of a child, under the age of 18, or
- The provision of something of value, such as food, shelter or clothing, to a child under the age of 18, in exchange for the performance of a sexual act.



Polaris Video – Introduction of Sex and Labor Trafficking: <https://youtu.be/iqJ-zuVay08>

## Human Trafficking in Ventura County

In 1990, Ventura County saw its first case with the federal government filing an indictment against a Somis farmer for extortion and slavery of over 300 farmworkers lured from rural Mexico. At the time, the Ventura County case was the largest such prosecution in the United States history (Los Angeles Times, 1990).

Since 2011, Ventura County has seen an increase in human trafficking cases; not necessarily due to an increase in trafficking, but with the increase of education, training, outreach, and investigations through the collaborative efforts of VCCAHT members and now the Ventura County Human Trafficking Task Force, human trafficking is being better properly identified.

Ongoing training is being provided to Healthcare Providers, Transportation Industry, Hospitality Industry, Law Enforcement, Probation, Juvenile Facilities, County Agencies, community members.

(For a breakdown of our anti-human trafficking efforts or to request training, email [vccaht@gmail.com](mailto:vccaht@gmail.com)).



### 101 Corridor

The 101 Freeway, which runs partly from Los Angeles to San Francisco, serves as a corridor for traffickers. People are bought and sold in hotels, home brothels, massage parlors, and other locations lining the 101 Freeway.

# Labor Trafficking Venues & Red Flags

The crime of human trafficking is a tragic reality in Ventura County. In order to fully grasp the scope of trafficking that occurs locally, it is essential to understand the types of trafficking, as well as the venues where trafficking can take place.

Often times those being manipulated and exploited are unaware that they are victims of human trafficking. Knowing the indicators and red flags can help identify possible victims.

## Labor Trafficking Venues



## Labor Trafficking Red Flags & Indicators

- Feels pressure from their employer to stay in a job or situation they want to leave.
- Owes money to an employer or recruiter or is not being paid what they were promised.
- Does not have control of their passport or other identity documents.
- Is living and working in isolated conditions, largely cut off from interaction with others or support systems; often in dangerous, overcrowded or inhumane conditions provided by employer or on job site.
- Appears to be monitored by another person when talking or interacting with others.
- Is being threatened by their boss with deportation or other harm.
- Is rarely or never allowed to leave the home, or only allowed out/seen in the company of the employer. (4)

*\* Traffickers often keep victims isolated as a key method of control. (4)*

*The vulnerabilities with labor trafficking can be compounded by the fact that many are immigrants who may not know their rights in this country.*

# Sex Trafficking Venues & Indicators

## Sex Trafficking Venues

Escort Services

Massage Parlors

Personal Sexual Servitude

Pornography

Outdoor Solicitations

Online Interactive Sex Acts

Residential Brothels & Residential Massage Parlors

Strip Clubs or Night Clubs

## Sex Trafficking Red Flags and Indicators

- Want to stop participating in selling or trading sex but feel scared or unable to leave; discloses someone pressured them into engaging in selling sex.
- Have a “pimp” or “manager” in the commercial sex industry.
- Live where they work or are transported by guards between home and workplace.
- Work in an industry where it may be common to be pressured into performing sex acts for money, such as a strip club, illicit cantina, go-go bar, or illicit massage business.
- Have an older or controlling parent, guardian, romantic partner or “sponsor” who will not allow you to meet or speak with the person alone or monitors their movements, spending and/or communications. (4)



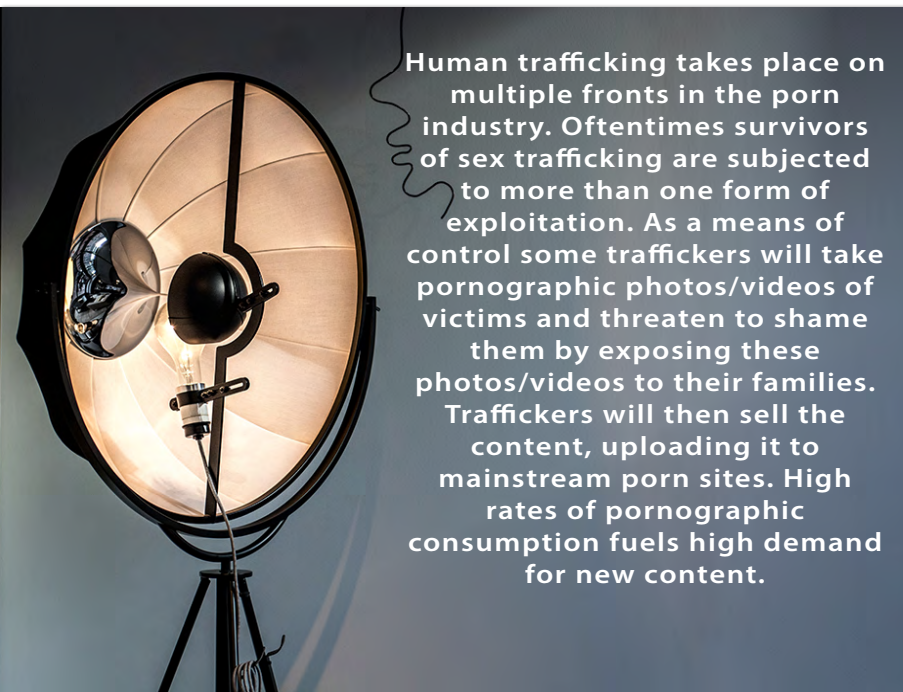
One study estimates that as many as half of sex trafficking victims and survivors are male. Advocates believe that percentage may be even higher but that male victims are far less likely to be identified. LGBTQ boys and young men are seen as particularly vulnerable to trafficking. (2)

**Did you know?**

# Pornography & Escort Services

Learn More ...

## Trafficking in Pornography

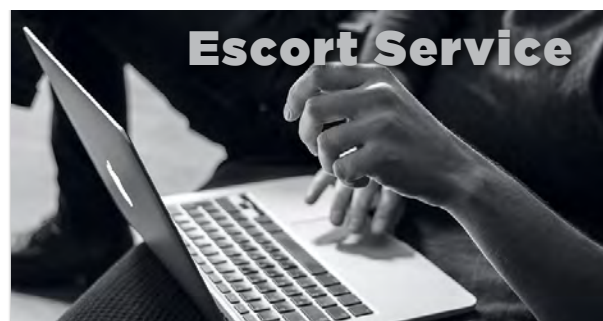


Human trafficking takes place on multiple fronts in the porn industry. Oftentimes survivors of sex trafficking are subjected to more than one form of exploitation. As a means of control some traffickers will take pornographic photos/videos of victims and threaten to shame them by exposing these photos/videos to their families. Traffickers will then sell the content, uploading it to mainstream porn sites. High rates of pornographic consumption fuels high demand for new content.

<https://blog.theexodusroad.com/porn-and-human-trafficking-the-facts-you-need-to-know>.

Many people are affected by pornography. Learn about "7 Ways Porn Fuels Trafficking" at <https://www.iamatreasure.com/blog/7-ways-porn-fuels-trafficking>.

Most people are trapped in the sex industry through force, fraud, or coercion. Abstain from pornography, prostitution, strip clubs, and all commercialized sex to reduce the demand that contributes to human trafficking. Learn more at [www.fightthenewdrug.org](http://www.fightthenewdrug.org).



**An escort service is an organization operating chiefly via cell phone and the internet - sending a victim to a buyer's location or arranging for the buyer to come to a hotel or residence.**

## Additional Red Flags and Indicators to Be Aware of

- Young person made up and/or dressed to look much older; clothing inappropriate for age or weather.
- Minor traveling with someone who is not a relative or guardian.
- Individual appears to be with a significant older "boyfriend."
- Appears fearful, timid, anxious, and/or traumatized.
- Avoids eye contact and interaction with others; submissive behavior.
- Unaware of his/her location, the current date, or time.
- Evidence of verbal threats, emotional abuse, or treated in a demeaning way.
- Individuals with the same tattoo – maybe a bar-code or other identifying marking. Traffickers often "brand" their victims to show "ownership." (4)

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to get another person to provide labor or commercial sex. Worldwide, experts believe there are more situations of labor trafficking than of sex trafficking. However, there is much wider awareness of sex trafficking in the United States than of labor trafficking. (2)

Did you know?



# Familial Trafficking

Educators, social services professionals, and after school programs may be in a good position to learn about trafficking situations and help connect victims to local services. Victims are sold for sex or forced to work in family businesses. Familial trafficking often goes undetected. While familial trafficking can and does happen in families that appear entirely “functional” or “normal” to an outsider, there may be signs of other kinds of child abuse or neglect – which may, in fact, include trafficking. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers information about recognizing child abuse more generally. (4)



## Ways to Keep Children and Youth Safe on the Internet

- **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children**, “Personal Safety Lessons for Educators, Parents and Kids”: <https://www.kidsmartz.org>; <https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/home>
- **ScreenStrong**, “Keeping the benefits of screen technology for kids while empowering parents to delay screen use that can be harmful and toxic.” <https://screenstrong.com>
- **Shared Hope**, “Your Kids and Technology –A Parent’s Safety Guide”: [www.sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Designed-Internet-Safety-e-book.pdf](http://www.sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Designed-Internet-Safety-e-book.pdf)

The vast majority of recruitment is online via social media or gaming. The relationship and seduction between a trafficker and their victim begins there.(2)


Children and youth who are sex trafficked or exploited, virtually always know their traffickers and are lured into sex trafficking by people they trust. (2)

Many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, and by family members, including parents. (2)

**Did you know?**



# Trafficking of Children



The sex trafficking and exploitation of children occurs every day in our own communities in the United States by average people. It is not a conspiracy theory related to billionaires and powerful, elite people. (2)

Under U.S. federal law, any minor under the age of 18 who is induced to perform commercial sex acts is a victim of human trafficking, regardless of whether he or she is forced or coerced. (2)

Preliminary studies indicate that children and youth are more likely to be both sex trafficked and labor trafficked, concurrently. (2)

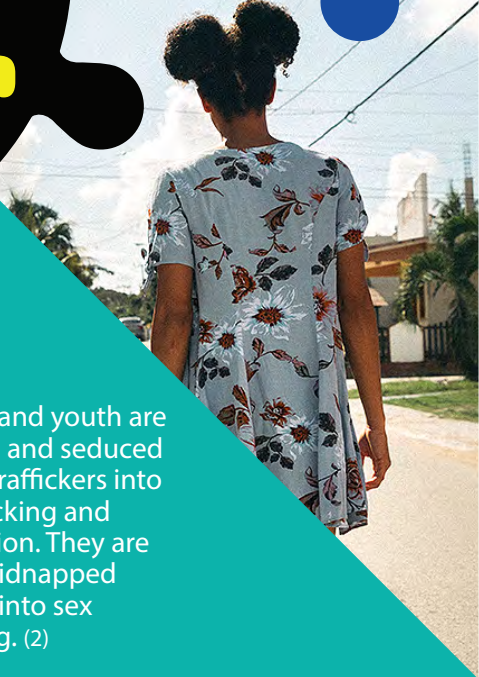
Victims of human trafficking can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. They can come from any socioeconomic group. They are not only foreign born or those who are poor. (2)



**Did you know?**

Employment of a child becomes trafficking when the employer uses force, fraud, and/or coercion to maintain control over the child and to cause the child to believe that he or she has no other choice but to continue with the work. (2)

Children and youth are groomed and seduced by their traffickers into sex trafficking and exploitation. They are seldom kidnapped and sold into sex trafficking. (2)



## Information:

Children and youth are trafficked for purposes of labor in the United States in such industries as door-to-door sales, domestic help / housekeeping, restaurants, agriculture and other industries, including illegal industries; such as drug sales and shoplifting. It is a myth that child labor trafficking “only” occurs in foreign countries. (2)

Human trafficking is often confused with human smuggling, which involves illegal border crossings. In fact, the crime of human trafficking does not require any movement whatsoever. Survivors can be recruited and trafficked in their own hometowns, even their own homes. (2)

# Myths & Facts

**Human Trafficking is always or usually a violent crime.**

**Fact:** By far the most pervasive myth about human trafficking is that it always - or often - involves kidnapping or otherwise physically forcing someone into a situation. In reality, most human traffickers use psychological means such as tricking, defrauding, manipulating or threatening victims into providing commercial sex or exploitative labor. (2)

**Human trafficking only happens in illegal or underground industries.**

**Fact:** Human trafficking cases have been reported and prosecuted in industries including restaurants, cleaning services, construction, factories and more. (2)

**If the trafficked person consented to be in their initial situation, then it cannot be human trafficking or against their will because they "knew better".**

**Fact:** Initial consent to commercial sex or a labor setting prior to acts of force, fraud, or coercion (or if the victim is a minor in a sex trafficking situation) is not relevant to the crime, nor is payment. (2)

**Human trafficking victims will attempt to seek help when in public.**

**Fact:** Human trafficking is often a hidden crime. Victims may be afraid to come forward and get help; they may be forced or coerced through threats or violence; they may fear retribution from traffickers, including danger to their families; and they may not be in possession of or have control of their identification documents. (2)

**Labor trafficking is only or primarily a problem in developing countries.**

**Fact:** Labor trafficking occurs in the United States and in other developed countries but is reported at lower rates than sex trafficking, due to lack of awareness. (2)

**All commercial sex is human trafficking.**

**Fact:** All commercial sex involving a minor is legally considered human trafficking. Commercial sex involving an adult is human trafficking ONLY if the person providing commercial sex is doing so against his or her will as a result of force, fraud or coercion. (2)

**Human trafficking is only sex trafficking.**

**Fact:** Sex trafficking exists, but it is not the only type of human trafficking. Forced labor is another type of human trafficking; both involve exploitation of people. Victims are found in legitimate and illegitimate labor industries, including sweatshops, massage parlors, agriculture, restaurants, hotels, and domestic service. (2)

**People being trafficked are physically unable to leave their situations/locked in/held against their will.**

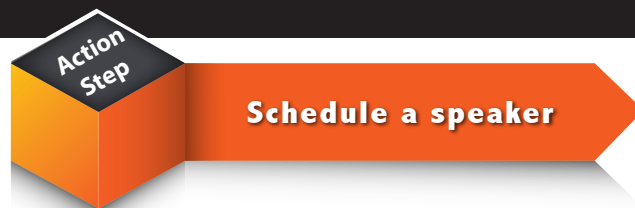
**Fact:** That is sometimes the case. More often, however, people in trafficking situations stay for reasons that are more complicated. Some lack the basic necessities to physically get out - such as transportation or a safe place to live. Some are afraid for their safety. Some have been so effectively manipulated that they do not identify at that point as being under the control of another person. (2)

# Ways to Engage - Action Steps



Make sure you understand the issue and learn as much as possible about what life is really like for human trafficking victims. Educate yourself by attending an awareness training or event, read some books or articles. Then educate others.

Become aware of the anti-human trafficking efforts that already exist in your community; volunteer or become a partner and help support those efforts.



If you are interested in having a speaker at your event contact us here: [vccaht@gmail.com](mailto:vccaht@gmail.com)



Reach out to management or the Human Resources teams to urge implementation of trauma-informed business practices; contact VCCAHT to help with trauma-informed training.



Most children are sexually abused by someone they know, NOT by a stranger. Teach your kids healthy boundaries, e.g. "I am the boss of my body." Learn more about keeping your children safe from sexual abuse at [www.parentingsafechildren.com](http://www.parentingsafechildren.com).



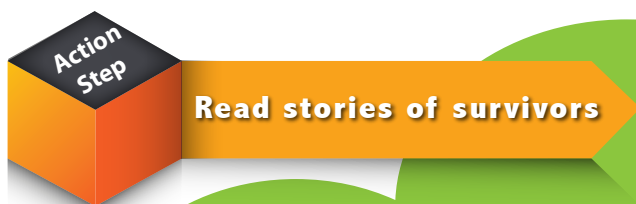
Learning life skills and building a legitimate employment history are very difficult challenges for survivors, who often suffer from PTSD and low self-worth. If you own a business and/or teach life skills (aka accounting, cooking, child care, computers, etc.), consider supporting a survivor.



Become a mentor to a young person or someone in need. Traffickers often target people who are going through a difficult time or who lack strong support systems. As a mentor, you can be involved in new and positive experiences in that person's life during a formative time.



The California Child Welfare Council and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children report that children in the child welfare system and runaways make up the majority of child trafficking victims. Families offering unconditional love are essential to both prevention and restoration of child trafficking victims.



Reading about those who have experienced human trafficking allows us to practice empathy. Their voices should be heard, and we can be the ones that listen.



Look for opportunities to serve in homeless shelters, soup kitchens, etc. These kinds of places serve trafficking victims sometimes without realizing it.



# Ways to Engage - Action Steps



Examine the anti-trafficking laws in your own county and state. Find out from local anti-trafficking organizations what needs to be changed, and present that to your representative in a clear, concise, compelling way. Visit [www.sharedhope.org/policy](http://www.sharedhope.org/policy) for state and federal legislation aimed at addressing the issue of human trafficking, child sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, labor trafficking, and similar issues.



Visit [www.slaveryfootprint.org](http://www.slaveryfootprint.org) to find out where your purchases are making the biggest impact. Put the power of your money towards ethical products, and ask retailers to carry more fair and direct trade products.



Home goods and fashion items from To The Market, jewelry from NightLight, and body care products from Thistle Farms are just a few examples of social enterprises that employ survivors, giving them a viable and sustainable income stream. (Relevant Magazine)



Organizations that assist victims and prevent abuse have little funding available to them. Any generous donation will go a long way in efforts to provide services like housing, food and basic needs, or buying a van to reach individuals in crisis who call for help. Some traffickers engage in the horrific practice of tattooing their victims, "branding" them like property. Raising funds for tattoo removal is also a way to bring healing.



You can use the following hashtags: #endtrafficking, #freedomfirst.

## If you are a ...

**Parent or Caregiver:** Learn how human traffickers often target and recruit youth and who to turn to for help in potentially dangerous situations.

**Faith-Based Community:** Host awareness events and community forums with anti-trafficking leaders or collectively support a local victim service provider.

**Business:** Provide jobs, internships, skills training, and other opportunities to trafficking survivors.

**College Student:** Take action on your campus. Join or establish a university club to raise awareness about human trafficking. Consider doing one of your research papers on a topic concerning human trafficking.

**Health Care Provider:** Learn how to identify the indicators of human trafficking and assist victims. With assistance from local anti-trafficking organizations, extend low-cost or free services to human trafficking victims.

**Attorney:** Offer human trafficking victims legal services, including support for those seeking benefits, restitution or special immigration status. Resources are available for attorneys representing victims of human trafficking.

**Journalist:** The media plays an enormous role in shaping perceptions and guiding the public conversation about human trafficking. Seek out some media best practices on how to effectively and responsibly report stories on human trafficking. Avoid sensationalism in your reports or imagery.

# Reporting Protocol for Suspected Human Trafficking



**DON'T STAY SILENT!**  
**If you SEE something SAY something**

## For Emergency and Non-Emergency, call:

- Law Enforcement: 9-1-1  
Tell the 9-1-1 operator that you *"suspect human trafficking."*

## If you suspect a victim of human trafficking and need victim services, call:

- Services for Minors: (805) 261-1212 (call or text) – 24/7 help for high-risk or trafficked youth
- Services for Adults: (800) 636-6738 – 24/7 help or information
- Child/Adult Abuse Hotline (Ventura County): (805) 654-3200

## Additional Numbers:

- National Human Trafficking Hotline: (888) 373-7888 or Text 233733 with *"BeFree"*
- National Center of Missing and Exploited Children's Child Pornography and Sexual Exploitation Tip-line: (800) 843-5678



# Recommended Resources



## REPUTABLE WEBSITES TO VISIT:

[www.vccaht.org](http://www.vccaht.org)  
[www.foreverfound.org](http://www.foreverfound.org)  
[www.readytostop.org](http://www.readytostop.org)  
[www.icfs.org](http://www.icfs.org)  
[www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)  
[www.humantraffickinghotline.org](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org)  
[www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/videos](http://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/videos)  
[www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)  
[www.castla.org](http://www.castla.org)  
[www.missingkids.org](http://www.missingkids.org)  
[www.exoduscry.com](http://www.exoduscry.com)  
[www.gems-girls.org](http://www.gems-girls.org)  
[www.vcfjc.org](http://www.vcfjc.org)



## BOOKS TO READ:

**Scars and Stilettos**, by Harmony Dust  
**Runaway Girl**, by Carissa Phelps  
**In Pursuit of Love**, by Rebecca Bender  
**Renting Lacey**, by Linda Smith & Cindy Coloma  
**Girls Like Us**, by Rachel Lloyd



## SURVIVORS & THRIVERS TO FOLLOW:

**Harmony Dust**, Treasures @TreasuresLA, [www.lamatreasure.com](http://www.lamatreasure.com)  
**Rebecca Bender**, @imrebeccabender, [www.rebeccabender.org](http://www.rebeccabender.org)  
**Carissa Phelps**, author, attorney, and advocate for sexually exploited runaway children and homeless youth  
**Christine Cesa**, Survivor Advocate, follow Facebook and Instagram



# References

- (1) Trauma Informed Care: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/283795.pdf>
- (2) Myths and Facts ("Did you know?"): <https://polarisproject.org>; <https://www.castla.org>;  
<https://freedomnetworkusa.org>; <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>; <https://www.missingkids.org>
- (3) California Definition of Human Trafficking: <https://oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking/what-is>
- (4) Red Flags and Indicators: <https://polarisproject.org/recognizing-human-trafficking>;  
<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/human-trafficking/recognizing-signs>;  
<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/indicators-human-trafficking>
- (5) Action Steps - some taken from Shared Hope:  
<https://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/10-Ways-to-Take-Action-1.pdf>



This toolkit was made possible through a generous time donation to Youth With A Mission

## Toolkit Contributing Agencies



**Youth With A Mission**



**VENTURA COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**FOREVER  FOUND**



**COUNTY of VENTURA**  
Human Services Agency



**PROBATION**  
VENTURA COUNTY