

Missing and Exploited Children in Kentucky

This issue of The Safety Net was planned and produced with a sense of urgency since protecting the well-being of all Kentucky's children is a top priority for educators. A missing child can be a family's worst nightmare realized, and the efforts of collaborating state agencies play an integral role in locating the child and reuniting a family.

In 2015, the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) assisted law enforcement and families with more than 13,700 cases of missing children.

In this newsletter, we plan to review the laws related to missing children and review what needs to be done at a district and school level when a child is reported missing. The process for tracking these cases is complicated and one error in the process can seriously hinder an investigation.

Also, we want to share information about human trafficking with you because it is a rapidly growing crime – a crime

which often victimizes children who are missing. Rescue and Restore KY, a Catholic Charities of Louisville program with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, reports that as of June 2015, 332 victims of human trafficking have been identified in Kentucky since 2008.

NCMEC reports that 86 percent (about 11,880) of the cases they worked with in 2015 were endangered runaways. One in six of these children were likely victims of sexual trafficking. These facts make it critical that we work as a team in order to protect our children.

Please feel free to share this information with interested parties in your district, particularly principals, since much of the effort in tracking a missing child falls on their shoulders. As always, we hope you find this information useful and appreciate any feedback you can provide.

Be Our Guest!

We would like to invite you to attend our Safe Schools Coordinators Meeting to be held on June 14 from noon to 3:00 p.m. in Lexington. This meeting will begin with a general information session that will be followed by a presentation on school security and crisis management led by Don Martin from the Kentucky Center for School Safety. There is no cost to attend this meeting. To sign up for this meeting, click [here](#).

This event will precede the Persistence to Graduation Summit, which will begin the evening of June 14 with registration opening at 4:00 p.m., a poverty simulation from 4:30-6:00 p.m., and a reception from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Breakout sessions will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on June 15.

Both the Safe Schools Coordinators Meeting and the Summit will be held at the Lexington Convention Center located at 430 West Vine Street in Lexington, KY. If you are interested in attending the summit a limited number of scholarships are available to waive the cost of registration. You can apply for a scholarship [here](#). You will be sent a confirmation if your scholarship is approved. If you receive confirmation that your scholarship is approved there is no need to register for the Summit separately, as you will be registered automatically. We look forward to seeing you!

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Your Safe Schools Team:

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Have You Seen Me? *The Role of Educators in Locating Missing Children*

Kentucky schools, in collaboration with the [Kentucky State Police \(KSP\)](#) and the [Kentucky Department of Education \(KDE\)](#), play an integral role in facilitating the return of missing children to their homes. Unfortunately, a review of the data reveals that the correct process is not always being followed at a school level. This critical process should be reviewed and reinforced with all district personnel to ensure that we protect the most vulnerable children enrolled in our schools.

When a child is reported missing, a report is entered into the [National Crime Information Center Database \(NCIC\) by a law enforcement officer](#), and a record is sent to KDE via our web app. This system then emails a computer-generated notification to the principal of the child's school and the Director of Pupil Personnel of the district. A KDE representative reviews all these emails within a few days, checking to make sure that the notifications were routed to the correct principal and school based on the most current information in Infinite Campus. Any incorrectly routed notifications are then sent to the correct school according to the latest enrollment information in Infinite Campus.

Two laws, [KRS 156.495](#) and [KRS 158.032](#), specify what KDE and Kentucky schools MUST do when a child is reported as missing. Principals, in particular, play a critical role in this process. The email sent to the principal and DPP also details what needs to be done.

Is your district in compliance with the laws? When a principal receives a notification of a missing child, s/he should:

- Flag that student's record in Infinite Campus to ensure that all school and district personnel are aware of the situation. KDE provides guidance on how to flag the student record, and you can find that information [here](#).
- IMMEDIATELY contact Paige Craig at paigea.craig@ky.gov or Shayla Overturf at shayla.overturf@ky.gov or call (502) 564-1020 with any information regarding the student's whereabouts if any of the following occurs:
 - Someone in the school or district knows of the student's whereabouts;

Missing Children Hotline

[The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to help locate missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization. Founded in 1984, this organization has provided support and information to families, victims, law enforcement, and the public on issues related to missing and exploited children.

You can search for a missing child on their website as well as browse a wide range of informational articles related



24hr Hotline - 1.800.843.5678

- The identified student is currently present at the school or in the district; or
- An individual or another school requests the student's records.
- IMMEDIATELY contact Victoria Fields at victoria.fields@education.ky.gov if your school is not the student's last known school of enrollment to ensure that the correct school/principal can be notified.

When the student is located, KDE will notify the principal and DPP with a Notification of Cancellation and the flag should be removed from the student's record by the principal or DPP.

Please note that the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. However, FERPA is not intended to be an obstacle in addressing emergencies and protecting the safety of students. Missing children and runaways should be considered as an emergency situation, and school officials should contact law enforcement **immediately** if any of the above situations occur. For more guidance on FERPA and the disclosure of student information in an emergency or disaster, click [here](#).

Additional resources and guidance can be found on KDE's Missing Children [webpage](#). Protecting these children is a team effort with schools being on the front line and able to provide the most useful information needed to locate the missing. Missing children and sexually exploited children are distinct groups, but unfortunately these groups sometimes overlap.

As with all processes, sometimes there are glitches in the notification process. For example, if a law enforcement officer updates a child's file, another Missing Child Notification is sent out, so you might receive two in a row. If a child is reported as missing and then found on the same day, you may only receive a Notification of Cancellation. We are diligently working with KSP in order to clear up these irregularities. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us.

to child safety and child victimization. NCMEC's national toll-free hotline, 1-800-843-5678, operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Their [Cyber Tipline](#) allows the public to report any instances of online enticement of children for sexual acts, extra-familial child sexual molestation, child pornography, child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child, misleading domain names, and misleading words or digital images on the Internet.

PREV

HOME

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Human Trafficking in Kentucky: Are You Aware?

Human trafficking is increasing in Kentucky and across the nation. The National Human Trafficking hotline has recorded a steady increase in the number [documented cases](#) in Kentucky each year since 2012. Kentucky's location and major interstates make it an excellent location for the crime. Children are not exempt from this crime so we, as educators, have a unique opportunity to learn the warning signs in order to report potential trafficking victims.

What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is the exploitation of another individual for labor and/or commercial sex through the use of fraud, force, or coercion. Trafficking takes away a person's choices and freedoms. Human trafficking is modern day slavery.

There are two forms of human trafficking:

1. Sex trafficking is when someone is induced to engage in commercial sex through fraud, force or coercion.
2. Labor trafficking is when labor or services are compelled by means of force, fraud or coercion.

Scope of Trafficking in Kentucky:

Because of the nature of this crime, an exact number of victims can't be projected but some agencies have started reporting statistics. [The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) reported that one in six of the 18,500 runaways reported to them in 2016 were likely sex trafficking victims. Given that human trafficking is often overlooked and underreported because the crime is occurring on the margins of society and behind closed doors, the numbers are assumed to be substantially higher.

[Rescue and Restore KY](#), a Catholic Charities of Louisville program, reported that 332 trafficking victims have been identified since 2008. A startling 60 percent of these victims were children. In a [report](#) to the Legislative Research Commission, the Department of Community Based Services reported a steady increase in the number of child victims reported from 40 reports in 2013 to 169 in 2016. A recent University of Louisville study, [Youth Experience Survey \(YES\): Exploring the Scope and Complexity of Sex Trafficking in a Sample of Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Kentuckiana](#), found that 40 percent of homeless youth surveyed identified with being a victim of sex trafficking. [The National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) keeps an up-to-date count of the number of tips reported in Kentucky with 89 trafficking cases reported so far this year.

Who are the victims?

Anyone can be a victim of trafficking, but the young are particularly vulnerable. The following young people are at higher risk:

1. Runaways and homeless
2. Youth in foster care
3. Those with a history of being abused
4. Those with a history of substance abuse
5. Those with disabilities
6. Youth in the juvenile justice system
7. LGBTQ+
8. Refugees and immigrants

What can we do?

Kentucky stepped up its anti-trafficking efforts in 2013 when the state legislature passed [the Human Trafficking Victims Rights Act \(HTVRA\)](#). The "safe

harbor" component is aimed at protecting the youngest victims from prosecution and by mandating services for their recovery. As educators we need to be aware that trafficking does exist in Kentucky. We need to learn to recognize the signs of human trafficking, and then we need to know how to report the victimization. [The National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) (1-888-373-7888) is an anonymous reporting tool that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

KDE just launched a new [webpage](#) about human trafficking. You can review Kentucky statutes related to the issue and find links to a variety of sources to learn more about the crime and how to recognize when a child might be a victim.

Another good resource on the human trafficking of children is the guide, [Human Trafficking in America's Schools](#), published by The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE).

This excellent two-page flyer from Homeland Security is something that could be easily shared with schools in your district to increase awareness.

Human Trafficking 101 for School Administrators and Staff provides concise information regarding human trafficking as well as how to recognize victims and report the suspicion.

