

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOLS



Staff in school play a critical role in recognizing human trafficking victims. Schools typically provide a safe place where victims can interact with caring adults without their trafficker or abuser present. It is crucial for staff in schools to be aware that trafficking does exist in Kentucky, where youth are often forced or coerced into trafficking situations by people they know and trust, including family, friends, partners and employers. All adults in schools who have reasonable cause to believe that a youth is a victim of human trafficking or abuse are required to report their concerns ([KRS 620.030](#)). This resource is designed to help adults in schools recognize the warning signs of human trafficking and respond.

WARNING SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students report, [Human Trafficking in America's Schools](#), identifies the following red flags for ALL school staff to be aware of:

- An inability to attend school on a regular basis and/or unexplained absences
- Frequently running away or changing schools
- References made to frequent travel to other cities
- Bruises or other signs of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, anxiety or fear
- Hunger, malnourishment or inappropriate dress (based on weather conditions or surroundings)
- Signs of drug addiction
- Coached or rehearsed responses to questions
- A sudden change in attire, behavior, relationships or material possessions (e.g., expensive items)
- Uncharacteristic promiscuity and/or references to sexual situations or terminology beyond age-specific norms
- A “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older and/or controlling
- An attempt to conceal scars, tattoos or bruises
- A sudden change in attention to personal hygiene
- Tattoos (a form of branding) displaying the name or moniker of a trafficker
- Being unpaid, paid very little or paid only through tips for work
- Symptoms of anger, panic, phobia, irritability, hyperactivity, frequent crying, temper tantrums, regressive behavior and/or clinging behavior
- Symptoms of daydreaming, inability to bond with others, inattention, forgetfulness and/or shyness

ACTION STEPS IF YOU SUSPECT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- If the youth is in **immediate danger**, call **911** to access emergency services.
- Pursuant to [KRS 620.030](#), Kentucky is a **mandated reporter** state meaning that suspected trafficking of a minor must be immediately reported by calling the **Child Protection Hotline (1-877-KYSAFE1 or 1-877-597-2331)** or use the Kentucky Child/Adult Protective Services Reporting System website (<https://prd.webapps.chfs.ky.gov/reportabuse/>). When reporting, document the date, time, intake identification number and the name of the individual who took the report.
- Contact the 24-hour [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) **by phone (1-888-373-7888), text (233733) or online report.**
- Follow your district or school policy for notifying administrators or other school personnel about your suspicions.
- Ensure the student receives support services. Refer to the [Handle With Care](#) section of the Kentucky Department of Education's [Trauma-Informed Toolkit](#) for resources and practices.
- Don't attempt to conduct your own investigation as this can lead to a dangerous situation for both you and the victim.
- Remain calm and continue to support the suspected victim while refraining from questioning the child. Never confront the suspected trafficker. Confronting a trafficker may put you and the student's life in immediate danger.