

Human Trafficking From a Survivor's Perspective





MECP supports state and local law enforcement officers, child protection personnel, prosecutors, medical providers, child advocacy center professionals, and other criminal justice practitioners in developing and strengthening their responses to child victimization.

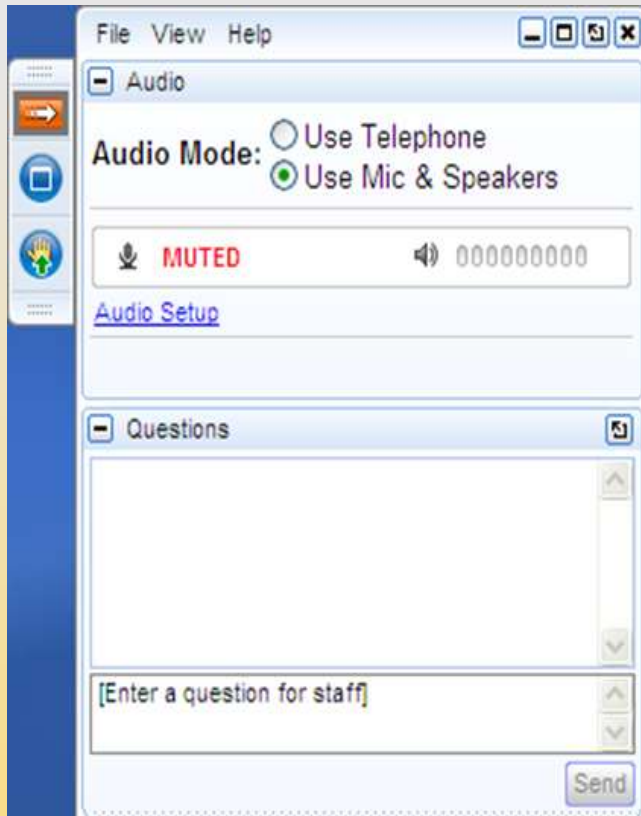
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The mission of the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program is to safely recover missing, endangered, or abducted children through the coordinated efforts of law enforcement, media, transportation, and other partners by using training and technology to enhance response capacities and capabilities and increase public participation.

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My Story

Commonly Asked Questions

- Please hold any questions until the end of the presentation

How Were You Groomed?

- Sexually abused from age 6-10 by my mother's drug dealer
 - 80 to 90 percent of victims are sexually abused
- I was a runaway
 - Traffickers give runaways sense of security of a stable home life
- My pimp told me that I should take control of my sex life since men have already violated me

Were There Opportunities For You To Leave?

- Yes. Everyday
 - But victims are taught that they live outside of the boundaries of society
- There are two worlds – “square world” which is a world free of trafficking and the life which is full of victims, pimps johns and lookups
- Traffickers make victims believe that “squares” will not understand their lifestyle.
 - It is important that you make sure that the victim understands that while you may not have been in the life that you understand what they are saying

Who Or What Made You Stay?

- No stable place to live
- Fear of retribution from people still involved in the life
- Entered so young - no transferrable skills
- After being beaten so much, I believed that my pimp cared so much about my safety that he beat me whenever I did something wrong
- Lack of family support

What Helped You Stay Out Of The Life After You Exited?

- Strong support system of women including a survivor advocate
- Therapy
- FBI relocated me out of state to keep me safe and help me stay out of the life
- Stayed away from people and things that that reminded me of the life
- Found a legitimate job to keep me busy
- I was influenced to focus on my career

Chances Of Reentering “The Life”

- Victims often reenter the life and may exit of a short period of time
- Victims are likely to return to the life on an average of seven times
- Being a victim of trafficking is similar to being a drug addict. There is always that chance that you might get trapped back in “the life”
- Even if victim returns to the life and it angers you, continue to work with the victim. Even though they may not be ready to leave when you want them to they will always remember that you were there for them no matter what

First Interaction With Victim

Make the victim feel comfortable with you

- Meet their basic needs before trying to interview them
- Remember it is difficult for victims to come forward because they see themselves as just doing what is needed to get by
- Always use a victim-centered approach

What Goes Through A Victims Mind When They Run Into Law Enforcement

- “Cops are evil and want to put me in jail”
- If they are involved with the child welfare system they may be afraid of going back home or the place they previously resided at
- “I am not a victim. I am a hustler and a provider for my family” (pimps and wife-in-laws)
- “What is the story daddy told me to say if I ever get arrested? I don't want to get daddy in trouble”
- The victim may not tell a complete story, or will use rehearsed responses
- Identify with the trafficker

Building A Stable Relationship With Victim Is Crucial In The Initial Stages Of Any Investigation Is Crucial

- This can be done in several ways
 - Make sure the victim is fed. But make sure they choose what and where they eat. It may be a simple decision for the everyday person but for a trafficking victim their trafficker may control every aspect of their life.
 - If they are dressed inappropriately, offer them a change of clothes. In my D.C. office, we had racks of clothes for victims to wear.
 - I suggest asking female coworkers to have a clothing drive so that the victims can change out of street clothes

Building A Stable Relationship With Victim Is Crucial In The Initial Stages Of Any Investigation Is Crucial (cont.).

- Treat victim with respect and talk to them as if they were a victim of any other crime
- Always bring in a victim specialist in the room so you can make sure that the victim feels secure. The victim specialist also will connect victim to resources needed like housing, food, a job as well as prepare them for the interview
- Do not get angry if the victim refuses to give you all the information that you need right up front. It takes time to build trust
- Conducting interviews in a neutral location only after their needs have been assessed and any urgent needs have been met
- Being patient and giving the victim time to stabilize and begin their recovery process

Health Characteristics of a Trafficked Person

- Malnutrition, dehydration or poor personal hygiene
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Signs of rape or sexual abuse
- Bruising, broken bones, or other signs of untreated medical problems
- Critical illnesses including diabetes, cancer or heart disease
- Post-traumatic stress or psychological disorders

Other Important Signs

- Does not hold his/her own identity or travel documents
- Suffers from verbal or psychological abuse designed to intimidate, degrade and frighten the individual
- Has a trafficker or pimp who controls all the money, victim will have very little or no pocket money
- Large sums of money that the victim cant explain where it came from
- Large amounts of condoms in purse
- New clothes or electronics that cant be explained

What You Can Do

- Get to know the task force in your area. Human Trafficking Task Forces comprise federal, state, local, county, and tribal law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as NGOs providing victim services
- Learn from a survivor
- Learn more about T and U visas
- Educate coworkers and anyone that may come in contact with victims

Questions?