
FIGHTING HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
BY EDUCATING FAMILIES





Warning: This guide exposes the dark, violent reality of human trafficking.

“Debbie”¹ was 15 years old and a straight-A student in Phoenix when her life was stolen from her.

Her family was close and supported by a tight-knit Air Force community. No one would have believed Debbie would fall victim to a human trafficker. But she did.

Debbie had struck up a relationship with someone on social media, and that relationship quickly progressed through instant messaging. She had no way of knowing this new “friend” who called herself Bianca was actually working for a human trafficker — who was looking for a new victim.

Bianca offered to come by to see Debbie. Dressed in her Sponge Bob pajamas, Debbie waited on her driveway until Bianca arrived with two older men. After a few minutes of talking together, Bianca told Debbie they had to leave and pushed Debbie into the car.

One of the men in the car forced Bianca to tie Debbie’s hands and to put tape over Debbie’s mouth and eyes. He threatened both Bianca and Debbie with a gun. Debbie’s mother was at home as the car sped off — totally unaware of what had happened.

Debbie was driven around Phoenix for hours before being taken 25 miles away, where she was drugged and then gang-raped by five men. And this was just the beginning of her nightmare.

For 40 days, Debbie was physically and emotionally abused, raped repeatedly, and forced into prostitution. When not being used, she was kept in a small dog crate. During that time, her captives continually threatened her family’s safety and even swore to throw acid into her 19-month-old niece’s face if Debbie tried to escape.²

¹ Not her real name.

² “Teen Girls Tell Their Stories of Sex Trafficking and Exploitation in U.S.,” ABC News; available online at <https://wunrn.com/2006/02/teen-girls-tell-their-stories-of-sex-trafficking-and-exploitation-in-u-s/>.

Debbie was eventually found by police and restored to her family. Few children ever escape their captors. Many die young from the abuse they're forced to endure. In fact, a person's average lifespan, after becoming a human trafficking victim, is seven years. Death most often comes from attack, abuse, HIV and STDs, malnutrition, drug overdose or suicide.³

Stories like Debbie's have become most parents' greatest fear. Helping parents learn how to best protect their children, and helping children and teenagers be aware of how to protect themselves, has become a national need.

Could your church fight for families against the threat of human trafficking? Keep reading to see how you can help the families, teenagers, and children in your community stay safe from this threat.

³ "Child Trafficking Statistics: U.S. & International"; available online at <https://arkofhopeforchildren.org/child-trafficking/child-trafficking-statistics>.



Discover the Needs in your Community

Before you begin any new ministry, it is important to first take time to discover and understand the unique needs within your community. Explore the physical community, listen to and learn from people living and working in the area and seek God's guidance by prayer-driving and prayer-walking the neighborhood.

Keep reading! We have practical steps to help you provide education for families, teenagers and children about the threat of human trafficking, and for creating a prayer ministry through your church that can help open doors to share the gospel, as well as provide hope and healing to victims.

To learn more about how to identify needs in your community, download [*How Can You Serve? An In-Depth Guide to Discovering Community Needs.*](#)

If not, [check out some of our other ministry guides](#) for opportunities that fit for your church's gifting and community's needs.



TRAFFICKING VICTIMS IN AMERICA

“The FBI estimates that well over 100,000 children and young women are trafficked in America today. They range in age from 9 to 19, with the average age being 11.”⁴ Victims no longer are just runaways or abandoned kids, but can come from “good families” who have provided for and loved their children.

There are two main forms of trafficking.

1. **Labor trafficking** is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform labor or services through the use of force, fraud or coercion.
2. **Sex trafficking** is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform commercial sex through the use of force, fraud or coercion. Minors under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex are considered to be victims of human trafficking, regardless of the use of force, fraud or coercion.

Experts say our children and teenagers are “lured or coerced by very clever predators....These predators are particularly adept at reading children, at reading kids and knowing what their vulnerabilities are.”⁵

Human traffickers know where our kids are hanging out—shopping malls, beaches and pools, ski slopes. Once they target a kid, “predators...are going to do everything in their power to try to convince young girls, young boys, to come with them and enter this particular lifestyle.”⁶

Human traffickers target those who are most vulnerable. *Children often are targeted because they are viewed as easier to control than adults would be.*⁷ Traffickers have found that they can make more money off younger girls and boys, especially virgins, through sexual exploitation. The younger the children are when they become victims, the greater their earning potential for traffickers.⁸

Other children and teenagers are targeted because of low self-confidence and little self-esteem. When an FBI agent interviewed a pimp on how he located his girls, he said he looked for a girl who’s alone at a shopping mall. He then would tell her she had really pretty eyes. If the girl looked at him to say thanks, the pimp moved on. But if the girl looked down and responded that she didn’t have pretty eyes, the pimp said he knew he had her.⁹

Teenagers are especially vulnerable as they struggle to develop individual freedom and identity. Human traffickers target those vulnerabilities as well. Brianna was a 17-year-old high school student, a cheerleader, employed part-time in a restaurant, and already working on college-level courses toward a degree in nursing.

Brianna “had no idea that friendly conversations she had with a regular customer could end with a trafficking ring planning to transport her to Arizona, likely to be sold.”¹⁰

One might wonder—why do victims not escape if they have an opportunity? Human traffickers have become adept at keeping their victims under their control. They will not hesitate to use “physical and

4 “Teen Girls Tell Their Stories . . . “

5 “Teen Girls Tell Their Stories . . . “

6 “Teen Girls Tell Their Stories . . . “

7 “Child Trafficking Statistics,” p. 5.

8 “Child Trafficking Statistics,” p. 5.

9 Melissa Withers, “How U.S. Citizens Become Human Trafficking Victims,” p. 3; available at www.psychologytoday.com.

10 “Why Her? What You Need to Know about How Pimps Choose,” April 10, 2013; available at www.sharedhope.org.

emotional abuse, sexual assault, confiscation of identification and money, isolation from friends and family, and even renaming victims” as control techniques.¹¹ Traffickers also use “victims’ vulnerabilities to create dependency...[and] impose control. Victims become trapped and fear leaving for myriad reasons, including psychological trauma, shame, emotional attachment, or physical threats.”¹²

The bottom line is this: Children and teenagers in your community, and even in your church, are at risk. You and your church can make a difference by helping the families, teenagers, and children in your community stay safe from this threat through education, prevention programs, and prayer.

The Need for Educating Families, Teens and Children

Traffickers lure children and adults into the web of human trafficking with false promises such as a job, education, or a loving relationship. They also are “strategic master manipulators, and they look for individuals who are naive or otherwise vulnerable. Exploiters who focus on sex trafficking, in particular, often use social media to prey on victims.”¹³

The internet has become the primary place traffickers connect with customers willing to pay for sex with women and children in the United States. In fact, almost three-fourths of all “sex traffic survivors were advertised online on sites like Backpage and Craigslist.”¹⁴

The internet has created another area of danger for children: the availability of pornography.

Because internet access is readily available in most homes, schools and businesses, the availability of internet porn has expanded, and its number of viewers, including children, has increased exponentially.

Shockingly, “Children 10 years old and younger account for 22% of all online obscene-content consumption in the 18-years-old-and-under category.”¹⁵ On the other hand, a Canadian study found that children younger than 12 were featured on 78.3% of all pornographic images and videos online. Of that 78.3 percent, 63.4% were under 8 years old. Much of the internet pornography was created using trafficked victims.¹⁶

The issues of internet safety have grown steadily, placing it now fourth on the list of health concerns for U.S. children.¹⁷ Our children are at risk. Even if they never face a human trafficker, our children will grow up in a society that treats sexual exploitation of young people as a joke or a new trend and accepts viewing pornography as a personal preference.

Education is desperately needed in the areas of human trafficking, internet safety and the prevention of sexual exploitation. Your church is uniquely positioned to be able to bring this kind of education to your congregation and your community.

¹¹ “The Victims & Traffickers,” p. 2; available at www.polarisproject.org.

¹² “The Victims & Traffickers.”

¹³ “6 Ways Your Church Can Engage in Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts”; available online at <https://www.ncm.org/blog/6waysyourchurchcanengage>.

¹⁴ “An Online Epidemic: The Inseparable Link between Porn & Trafficking”; available online at <https://fightthenewdrug.org/the-internet-can-be-a-very-unsexy-place-we/>.

¹⁵ “Exploitation/Child Pornography”; available online at https://enough.org/stats_exploitation.

¹⁶ “How Porn Fuels Sex Trafficking,” Fight the New Drug; available online at <https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-fuels-sex-trafficking/#c18>.

¹⁷ “Exploitation/Child Pornography.”

Consider how your congregation could help protect families from human trafficking and other areas of sexual exploitation:

- How could your congregation provide programs to educate parents, children and teens about the methods used by human traffickers?
- How could your congregation provide needed resources for educating teenagers, teachers and business owners about human trafficking methods and internet safety dangers?
- How could your congregation become a voice for strengthening families?
- How could your congregation provide prayer support for those working to help trafficking victims in your area?

God has placed this need before you. What will you and your congregation do with this opportunity?

Educational Ways to Fight Human Trafficking

Programs to educate families about how to fight the threat of human trafficking and sexual exploitation should cover four major areas:

1. Developing education awareness programs about human trafficking.
2. Developing education awareness programs about internet safety measures.
3. Developing prevention programs against human trafficking in your community.
4. Developing an anti-trafficking prayer ministry.

Review the suggested actions listed below each area as you consider which area(s) your church could implement to protect families and your community.

1. Developing Educational Awareness Programs (Human-Trafficking)

Human traffickers are looking for children and teens. The younger they are, the more attractive they are to traffickers. Traffickers have become adept at figuring out teenagers' desires and children's insecurities. These predators will approach children and teens and promise anything that will get them a face-to-face meeting.

Parents must know how to keep their families safe and how to teach their children and teenagers to protect themselves as well. Consider how the following actions can create an environment in which families, congregations and communities can fight to keep children and teenagers safe from human traffickers:

- Provide age-appropriate training for parents, teenagers, children, teachers and business people about the warning signs for human trafficking.
- Participate in [Freedom Sunday](#) to bring human trafficking issues to the attention of the congregation and the community.

- Teach how to become responsible consumers by reducing the number of products used that have been produced with slave labor. Encourage members to log on to slaveryfootprint.org to see how many products they use that are made with slave labor.
- Train members of the congregation to identify human trafficking victims and how to avoid human traffickers. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (1-888-373-7888) is the main source for resources, training, and service providers in your area.
- Distribute the [human trafficking hotline](#) phone number to be used when a human trafficking victim is identified or suspected.
- Encourage business travelers in the congregation to download the TraffickCam app. This app allows them to share photos of their hotel rooms, which can be used to identify the location of human trafficking victims being sold on the internet.
- Encourage members who work in the trucking industry to investigate how they can make a difference in the human trafficking fight through [Truckers Against Trafficking](#).

See age-level resources below for educating parents, teens, and children to the dangers of human trafficking predators.

2. Developing Education Awareness Programs (internet safety measures)

Children and teenagers are at tremendous risk when they are able to communicate online with people they do not know personally. Predators use social media as a way to find and contact potential victims. Once in contact, human traffickers or sexual deviants will do everything they can to get children and teens to meet them face-to-face. These predators have become adept at interpreting children and teens' information on social media to learn their likes, dislikes, desires and vulnerabilities.

Parents must know who their children/teens are talking to, where they are going and who they are meeting. Consider how the following actions can create an environment in which families can fight to keep children and teenagers safe from internet predators:

- Learn the warning signs that indicate your child may be talking with an online predator.
- Help parents set clear guidelines for using the internet, such as:
 - No electronic screens (phones, tablets, computers) used in bedrooms.
 - Turn off wi-fi at 9 p.m. each night
 - Require shared log-in information, so parents can read text messages and check computer history. *Note: This is not an invasion of privacy but a necessary security measure.*
- Help parents know how to monitor their kids' email, instant messaging, social networking sites, and chat rooms—and help them recognize warning signs from those who contact them.
- Teach parents how to keep up with new chat sites that target teenagers and children.
- Teach children how their privacy settings can prevent strangers accessing their posts or personal information.
- Teach children to be cautious about any friend requests from people they don't know personally.
- Teach children to be extremely careful about personal information they post online.

- Teach parents and teenagers how to disable location services on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, especially when posting current pictures.
- Encourage teenagers to report any stranger who contacts them online, asking to meet them in person or send them provocative photos.
- Read [4 Dangers of Pornography](#) to become aware of pornography’s impact on families and children, and how pornography supports human-trafficking.

See age-level resources below for educating parents, teens and children about internet safety measures and the danger of online pornography.

3. Developing prevention programs

No matter how hard we work to keep our children safe, the evil of human trafficking and sexual exploitation will not go away without all of us working together to end human slavery. Learning how to prevent human trafficking in our communities is essential.

Consider how the following actions can create an environment in which families, congregations and communities can fight human traffickers:

- Develop a mentoring programming for at-risk children and teens, such as the [Arise2Read program](#) the [Sports Camp/After-school Program](#) and the [Community Garden Ministry](#)
- Train members of the congregation to identify human trafficking victims and how to avoid human traffickers. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (1-888-373-7888) is the main source for resources, training, and service providers in your area.
- Distribute the [human trafficking hotline](#) phone number to be used when a human trafficking victim is identified or suspected.
- Encourage business travelers in the congregation to download the TraffickCam app. This app allows them to share photos of their hotel rooms, which can be used to identify the location of human trafficking victims being sold on the internet.
- Encourage members who work in the trucking industry to investigate how they can make a difference in the human trafficking fight through [Truckers Against Trafficking](#).
- Develop a relationship with local schools to make sure they know how to watch for human traffickers and human trafficking victims.
- Develop an educational program for parents, children, teens and teachers on how to watch for human traffickers in order to keep children and teens safe.
- Encourage members of the congregation to activate “Amber Alert” on their phones and to look for those missing children as they drive and shop.
- Become aware of the resources provided through the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#). Encourage members of the congregation to save the phone number on their phones to use in an emergency (1-800-843-5678).
- Encourage members of the congregation to create reading groups to discuss one of the following books:
 - *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today* by Kevin Bales

- *Rescuing Hope: A Story of Sex Trafficking in America* by Susan Norris
- Start a coalition of churches to work together to fight human trafficking.
- Reach out to your local media (TV, radio and newspapers) about focusing attention on human trafficking issues.
- Host a fundraiser that brings attention to the plight of human trafficking victims and raises funds to support local shelters or provide victims with legal counsel.
- Create a resource manual to keep in the church office for referrals and include numbers for these often-requested services for trafficking survivors:
 - Medical assistance
 - Mental health services and counseling
 - Shelter
 - Legal/immigration services
 - Transportation
 - Child care
 - Education and employment services
 - Interpreter services

4. Develop an anti-trafficking prayer ministry

Prayer is at the very core of who the church is and what it stands for. Prayer is essential to undergird the work the church is doing, as well as what others are doing throughout the world, to eradicate human trafficking, sexual predators, and pornography. Three options to consider for starting an anti-trafficking prayer ministry are:

- A small group prayer time that meets regularly and consistently.
- A 24-hour prayer emphasis, in which members of the congregation sign up for 30-minute segments for prayer.
- A church-wide or community-wide event to create awareness of the need for prayer against human trafficking, sexual predators and pornography.

Areas of prayer emphasis could include:

- Praying for parents, who have the responsibility to keep their children safe.
- Praying for teenagers and children, who are vulnerable to sexual predators.
- Praying for the more than 20 million people worldwide already enslaved by human traffickers.
- Praying for the survivors of human trafficking—for their safety, for their needs to be met, and for those who will minister to them.
- Praying for those who battle against human trafficking through legislative changes.
- Praying for the church to show the love of Christ to a world in which evil has become acceptable or dismissed.

See resources below for prayer guides that can be used in this ministry.

Strategically Considering Ministry Opportunities

Take the next step by enlisting a small group of people within the congregation to assess ministry opportunities within your community by working through the following questions:

- **What partnerships in your community could you connect with to meet this need and use this resource?** These could include government officials, school officials and teachers, other community churches and leaders, local shelters, or other pre-established programs, to create an environment in which families, congregations, and communities can fight to keep children and teenagers safe from human traffickers
- **Who in your church is passionate and equipped to lead or participate in this ministry?** Consider children's workers, parents or families, teenagers or your youth group, Sunday School classes, senior adults—anyone with a desire to provide education programs to help train parents, teens, and children in the dangers of trafficking, internet safety and pornography.
- **What resources and relationships has God given your church to support this ministry?** Consider financial resources such as missions offerings, as well as relationships church members have in the community.

The questions above can lead your enlisted volunteers to determine whether or not:

1. There is a passion within the congregation to provide educational programming for families, teenagers, and children in the areas of human trafficking and internet safety.
2. There is a desire within the congregation to prayer for human trafficking to be eradicated from the United States and throughout the world.
3. God is leading the congregation to help families know how to protect their children from human traffickers and sexual predators.

Where To Start

God may be moving you to help educate families and members of the congregation about the threat of human trafficking. If so, where do you start? We've provided six steps that can lead you to successfully engaging this much-needed ministry:

1. **Pray.** Spend time in prayer. Enlist prayer warriors to join you in asking God for guidance and wisdom. Move forward only when you have a clear understanding that God is calling you to this work.
2. **Learn everything you can about human trafficking in America and the world.** Research the needs and issues online. Two sites to begin with are the [Alliance for Freedom, Restoration, and Justice](#) and the [Polaris Project](#).
3. **Learn the indicators of human trafficking.** Search for available awareness training for individuals and groups such as first responders, law enforcement, and educators.
4. **Meet with local organizations that provide training about human trafficking.** Find out what is being done locally and what help is needed.
5. **Enlist volunteers to lead the church's efforts.** You'll need volunteers who are passionate about the plight of modern slavery in America and have a desire to help families know how to protect their children from human traffickers and sexual predators.
6. **Based on your findings, lead the team of volunteers to draft a plan for creating programming and a budget for making this happen.** The work in human trafficking ministry can include any or all of the three areas already discussed:
 1. Developing education awareness programs about human trafficking.
 2. Developing education awareness programs about internet safety measures.
 3. Developing prevention programs against human trafficking in your community.
 4. Developing a prayer ministry for those who work against human trafficking and those who are victims of human trafficking.

WHAT NEXT?

Churches already are making a difference in the fight against human trafficking. There is much work to be done, however, especially in helping protect families and their children.

Education that teaches the warning signs of a child or teenager who is being approached online, at shopping malls, or anywhere else children and teenagers hang out, is essential to keeping them safe. Education that teaches how to protect identities online is necessary for their futures. Education that convicts families of the danger pornography brings into their homes—including the porn many parents possess—is vital for their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

You have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of families with information that can protect and strengthen them. Is God calling you to begin this work in your church?

AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

Many organizations fighting human trafficking already have developed resources you can use or adapt to help educate parents, teens, and children about human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and pornography.

Resources for Educational Awareness Programs

For parents:

- [Human Trafficking Awareness Program](#) (for small groups and large audiences over the age of 13)
- [The Interfaith Toolkit on Human Trafficking](#) (variety of resources available in it)
- [“Advice to Parents: How to Talk to Your Kids About Internet Predators”](#)
- [“Youth Risky Behavior—A Closer Look: Who Is at Risk?”](#)
- [“Talking to Youth about Sex Trafficking: How to Talk about Human Trafficking with Children and Adolescents”](#)
- [“Your Kids and Technology: A Parent’s Safety Guide”](#) (PDF)
- Internet Safety for children of all ages from [WeTheParents.org](#)
- [“What is the Profile of a Predator”](#)
- [Shared Hope International](#)

For teenagers:

- [Bodies Are Not Commodities](#) (A high school curriculum about the reality of human trafficking)
- [Change Agents Bible study](#) (for kids 8-13)
- [Human Trafficking Awareness Program](#) (for small groups and large audiences over the age of 13)
- [Shine Hope](#) (small group curriculum for young girls)
- [“Youth Risky Behavior—A Closer Look: Who Is at Risk?”](#)

For children:

- [Change Agents Bible study from Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking](#) (for kids 8-13)
- Resources for Prayer Guides Focused on Human Trafficking
 - [Salvation Army’s prayer guide](#)
 - [Faith Alliance Against Human Trafficking “Awareness to Freedom” prayer guide](#)
 - [“A Heart for Justice” prayer guide](#)



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