

TERMINOLOGY & DYNAMICS OF SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking is the recruitment or selling of individuals for sex. Victims of sex trafficking can be any age, race, nationality, gender, or sexuality. Sex trafficking (also called commercial sexual exploitation and/or prostitution) is not limited to cases with crossed borders, international victims, or physical abuse and restraint.

Cases of sex trafficking can be challenging to identify. It is critical to understand the real dynamics of trafficking and how you may hear it presented to you. You may hear from victims, traffickers, commercial sex abusers, or bystanders in incidents that do not immediately sound like sexual exploitation. By learning to recognize terminology used in sex trafficking, you can accurately identify what's happening and appropriately intervene.

WHO IS DOING THE TRAFFICKING?

The real dynamics:

Traffickers are called “pimps” in popular culture and use a variety of means to manipulate, control, and sell women and children for sex.

How you will hear it:

- **Pimp, Papi, Man, Boo:** Slang for trafficker. **Gorilla pimp:** A very violent pimp who savagely beats victims. **Casanova/Romeo pimp:** A pimp who woos women romantically, then convinces them to prostitute as a condition for his love. Pimps commonly woo women in the grooming stage and then turn to violence to gain compliance.
- **Daddy, boyfriend, husband, business manager:** Terms a victim may use to refer to her trafficker. Victims are manipulated into believing their trafficker loves them and often use what seem like terms of endearment to describe their trafficker or to cover up for him. These terms acknowledge the trafficker's control over the victim's life.
- **Bottom bitch, bitch, ho, home girl, girlfriend:** Refers to a woman used by a trafficker with multiple victims to help supervise the others. May involve setting up calls and enforcing/inflicting punishment.

WHO IS BEING TRAFFICKED?

The real dynamics:

Women and children under the control of traffickers are victims, not offenders, who typically have one or more layers of vulnerability that traffickers exploit for personal gain (e.g. unstable home, personal insecurities, mental/emotional disabilities, drug use, or history of physical/sexual abuse).

How you will hear it:

- **Prostitute, whore, ho, street walker, stroll ho, worker, call girl, escort, dancer, entertainer, companion:** Terms used to objectify trafficked women. Never use them to refer to victims.
- **Fresh meat, crash-test dummy, wet behind the ears, vic in training:** Refers to a new recruit.
- **Stable, family:** A group of women and girls under the control of the same trafficker.
- **Wifey, Wife-in-law:** Relationship between two women who are controlled by the same trafficker.

WHO SUPPORTS THE TRAFFICKING INDUSTRY?

The real dynamics:

There would be no trafficking without demand. Commercial sex abusers provide money, shelter, food, and drugs to women in exchange for sex. They perpetuate the brutal behavior of traffickers and the victimization of women and girls.

How you will hear it:

- **John, buyer, purchaser, patron, client, trick, vic:** An individual who buys sex.
- **Regular, friend, sugar daddy, money man, financial broker, financier:** A frequent and seasoned purchaser of sex.

HOW DOES TRAFFICKING TAKE PLACE?

The real dynamics:

Traffickers exert extensive control over victims' lives. They recognize vulnerability and have honed their abilities to recruit and retain victims. A trafficker controls all the arrangements for women and children to make money for him.

How you will hear it:

- **Grooming, recruiting, breaking in, training:** The process a trafficker uses to manipulate a victim into prostituting for him, commonly includes romantic gestures and promises. (See Casanova/Romeo above)
- **Call, date, job, trick, lick, working:** An event involving consideration (money, food, shelter, drugs) for sex. These are usually arranged by the trafficker on the internet, by phone, or in-person.
- **Incall:** When a buyer comes to a residence/hotel room for sex.
- **Outcall:** When the victim goes to the residence/hotel room of a buyer for sex.
- **Hitting licks, hitting a lick:** Going on a call and tricking the buyer by taking his/her money and leaving without performing any sex acts.
- **Backpage.com:** A classified ad website frequently used by traffickers to post advertisements for sex. Backpage has replaced Craigslist as the dominant online venue for trafficking. A Backpage ad costs only around \$7 and can be used to generate dozens of responses almost immediately.
- **Special:** An arranged deal for sex, usually seen online. Example: "\$80 special," "2 girl special."
- **Seasoned, vet:** An experienced victim.
- **Turned out:** An underage victim who has been trafficked recently and for the first time.
- **Choosing up:** A trafficker claiming a new victim as his own among other traffickers.
- **The life, the game, the lifestyle, the business:** The subculture of trafficking/prostitution.
- **Quota:** Amount of money a victim is supposed to make in a night. If s/he does not, there are consequences from the trafficker.
- **Out of pocket:** Violating a trafficker's rules. May involve communicating with another trafficker, staying longer than usual on a call, or keeping more money than allowed.
- **Reckless eyeballing:** A victim making contact with another trafficker, which is strictly prohibited.
- **Breaking bad, burned up:** When a victim is so strung out, s/he can't go on a date.
- **Work the red carpet:** Refers to being trafficked in hotels, considered too good for the streets.

SOURCES: Breaking Free's Sisters of Survival, <http://www.breakingfree.net/>, Denver Westword. "Glossary of Prostitution Terms." <http://blogs.westword.com/latest-word/2007/11/terms.php>, Polaris Project. "Domestic Sex Trafficking: The Criminal Operations of the American Pimp." http://www.dcs.virginia.gov/victims/humantrafficking/vs/documents/Domestic_Sex_Trafficking_Guide.pdf, Shared Hope International. "Glossary of Sex Trafficking Terms." <http://sharedhope.org/learn/traffickingterms/>, Washington City Paper. "The Secret Prostitution Code, and What it Says About Johns." <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/sexist/2009/10/27/the-secret-prostitution-code-of-johns/>.

This material was prepared by The Advocates for Human Rights to support the implementation of Safe Harbors in Minnesota. Funding was provided by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the Women's Endowment Fund, a designated fund of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation's Jewish Community Foundation.