



The Hidden Reality of Familial Sex Trafficking

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Sex trafficking of a minor is a horrific enough reality; it is too gruesome to think about for too long. Yet, the reality gets even more horrifying when you become aware of the overwhelming percent of familial trafficking that plagues so many children. Due to the nature of the offense, it is nearly impossible to comprehend the magnitude.

Familial trafficking is not only hard to detect but often is misidentified as child abuse or rape. According to statistics, one in four girls and one in six boys in the U.S. will be sexually abused before turning 18 years old, but unfortunately, only 12% of child abuse gets reported. There is, however, a clear difference between familial sexual abuse and familial sex trafficking. Familial sex trafficking occurs when a family member offers their underage family member up for sexual access in exchange for money, drugs, or anything with commercial value. The Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) reports that 90% of victims know their trafficker, and nearly 50% began with family member involvement. The average age of familial trafficking victims in the U.S. is only five years old, and some as early as infancy.

So, what does a familial sex trafficker look like? Unfortunately, they look like your child's soccer coach or your friendly neighbor, the veterinarian. According to reports, the average buyer of child sex trafficking is a 40-year-old, married father of two who makes around \$80,000 a year. A far reality from the strung-out, sinister photographs you see pop up on Dateline.

As grim as discussing familial sex trafficking is, the more awareness put out into the world, the better chance we all have to prevent and protect every child's innocent lives. To help thwart the evil of familial sex trafficking, follow these critical actions:

- First and foremost, **trust your gut**. If something does not seem right, report it to authorities instead of confronting the situation on your own, as this may be extremely dangerous to yourself and the victim.
- **Recognize the signs** of familial sex trafficking. These signs range from unexplained school absences, an abrupt change in behavior, chronic running away, physical abuse signs, and sudden, expensive possessions.
- **Educate your children** on the dangers around them. Have candid, age-appropriate conversations with your children on what sex trafficking is, how it is prevented, and what makes them vulnerable.



- **Investigate** where your children are going and who they are involved with. In some cases, family members unintentionally place their children in harmful situations like distant education and training opportunities that are fronts for sex trafficking operations.
- **Be a safe place for** children in your family and community. Be kind and consistent with your children, and reassure children and young adults that there is always help and authority in their community if they need it.

Join Rejuvenating Women in the continued effort to recognize and stop familial sex trafficking in our communities. Go to <https://www.rejuvenatingwomen.com/get-involved/> to learn how you can help prevent this frightening actuality.

Sourcing:

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