



# Warning Signs

## When a Child Is at Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

### What Are the Red Flags that Indicate a Child May Be Exploited?

- ◆ *Chronic truant / runaway / homeless youth*
- ◆ Excess cash
- ◆ Hotel room keys
- ◆ *Multiple cell phones*
- ◆ Signs of branding (tattoos, jewelry)
- ◆ *Having expensive items with no known source of income (especially hair, manicures, cell phone, clothes)*
- ◆ Lying about age / false identification/inconsistencies in information being reported
- ◆ Dramatic personality change; evasive behavior especially around a "new boyfriend." talk about being "taken care of," disengagement from school, sports, community
- ◆ Lack of knowledge of a given community or whereabouts
- ◆ Provocative clothing, sex toys, multiple condoms, lube or other sexual devices

### What Are the Guiding Principles for Engaging with a Child Who May Be Exploited?

- ◆ **Maintain a compassionate and non-judgmental attitude at all times.**
- ◆ Be consistent: follow through on everything and do not make promises that cannot be kept.
- ◆ Trust and relationship-building: this is a slow process and relationship testing is to be expected.
- ◆ Cultural Competency: be sensitive to the unique cultural needs and experiences of each person. Be aware of your own beliefs, biases, and cultural worldview.
- ◆ Safety: focus on safe housing, harm reduction and creating safety strategies for youth.
- ◆ Self-determination and empowerment: youth should have information relevant to their situation and be encouraged to make informed decisions whenever possible.

### What Questions Do I Ask?

- ◆ What kind of support do you need?
- ◆ What happened to you?
- ◆ Sometimes people trade sex for money or because they have to survive, has that happened to you?
- ◆ I'm concerned about your safety, are there places that are dangerous for you to go? Are there people that are dangerous for you to be around right now?
- ◆ I'm concerned you are in the life. I will not judge you or anything you tell me. I'm here to listen if you ever want to talk or want support getting out.

### How Do I Identify At-Risk Youth?

- ◆ Ask specific questions to screen for risk factors or CSE involvement
- ◆ Increase attempts to find youth who chronically run away or are truant
- ◆ Learn about specific gang activity from local law enforcement (or from youth **if** it is safe for them to discuss)
- ◆ Ask about STI/STDs, pregnancy, and unexplained injuries
- ◆ Observe communication patterns; who talks to whom, who doesn't talk, who is in control

### How Do I Help?

Call the CSEC Hotline @ 1 (855) 400- CSEC / 1 (855) 400 - 2732 or Email [CommunityAdvocate@YouthCare.org](mailto:CommunityAdvocate@YouthCare.org)