



## REMEMBER

- Social media opens up an entirely new world for exploitation where some young people exploit themselves in exchange for attention.
- Educating vulnerable teens to understand how exploitation can happen and that it doesn't need to, is an important form of prevention.
- Teens initially see the 'love' and relationship offered as real, and anyone speaking against their new relationship is seen as trying to keep them from what they have been longing for. For teens who feel insignificant, being pursued in this way is exciting and fulfilling.
- Creating places of belonging for teens is a powerful protective force; connecting them to the God who pursues them and values them unconditionally is a strong defence.



## RECOGNIZE

- Sexual exploitation is a crime where someone solicits sexual activity from or with a person 18 years of age or younger in exchange for something - clothing, a ride home, money, drugs, food, a place to stay, or anything else the youth values.
- Teens who deeply long to be known and belong can be identified and targeted by "groomers" who befriend and establish an emotional connection with the teen. Sometimes groomers are well-liked, articulate and flashy adults; sometimes they are peers who are also victims; sometimes family members. Strong connection to someone who is exerting unusual control/decision making influence in the teen's life along with systematic isolation through imposed secrecy

### So who is at risk?

- 80% of teens exploited have been in government care; the majority are females with the average age for recruitment being 13/14 years old; up to 60% of all Indigenous kids become exploited in some way.
  - Lonely teens with low-self esteem or who question their sense of security or belonging, especially if they are new to a school or community
  - Teens who have been the victim of sexual, physical or emotional abuse or trauma in the past or have engaged in or been exposed to drug or alcohol abuse at a young age
  - Teens with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, dyslexia and attention deficit disorder
  - LGBTQ2+ youth if they are isolated, or feel unsupported by family & community
- Watch For:**
- Sudden change in typical behavior, dress, demeanor, sexual language
  - Unexplained "gifts" or possessions leading to a sense of being indebted and without alternatives
  - Becoming withdrawn, secretive, flippant or reckless about safety
  - Strong connection to someone who is exerting unusual control/decision making influence in the teens life



## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

lifeteams  
resources



## RESPOND

- **Notice** what is happening in teens' lives and ask questions about the things that don't feel right (eg. 23 year old man "dating" a 13 year old girl; teen acquiring new clothes/cell phone from "nowhere").
- **Ask** clarifying questions rather than telling them what to do. Help them see their current life situation through different eyes (eg. "I'm confused. Does it seem odd that an adult is choosing to date someone who is in middle school rather than another adult?" Or "If this was happening to your best friend, would you have some questions for her?").
- **Draw attention** to the fact that teens being exploited will be pushed to cut themselves off from healthy relationships. Tell them that you care about them and will be available to them no matter what.
- **Build into** teens' self-esteem, speaking of the value you see in them based who God has created them to be and how he feels about them, not what they have to offer.
- **Call the police** with your suspicions. Offer whatever information you have including description of groomer/exploiter, car driven, or anything else you can find out.
- **Find help** through the resources below. Teens who are deeply enmeshed may not feel that leaving is an option.



## RESOURCES

<https://goo.gl/dD6Sab> - Online training course with info on how to recognize, protect, and assist a person who may have been trafficked in Canada.

[www.needhelpnow.ca](http://www.needhelpnow.ca) - Info on how to remove and report images from online platforms and apps while also learning how to respond to exploited teens.

[www.defenddignity.ca](http://www.defenddignity.ca) - A youth-focused training curriculum for teens and youth workers