



Familial Trafficking

Risk Factors & Red Flags

CONSTELLATION OF WARNING SIGNS

Familial trafficking is one of the most severe forms of child victimization known to our country. These crimes have a pervasive impact on the child, altering their development and life trajectory. There is a need for multiple red flags in order to fully understand that a person and their situation are indicative of familial trafficking. Can you think of individuals who might be vulnerable to being taken advantage of by a family member?

COGNITIVE & COMMUNICATION

- ❖ Memory deficits, attention deficits, learning disabilities, developmental delays, autism spectrum disorder
- ❖ Difficulty recounting personal narrative
- ❖ Difficulty identifying preferences
- ❖ Difficulty making decisions
- ❖ Difficulty communicating needs & asking for help
- ❖ Intermittent difficulty recalling daily-life experiences

EMOTIONAL

- ❖ Angry outbursts
- ❖ Self-harm (cutting, burning, head banging, nail biting, hair pulling, skin picking)
- ❖ Difficulty coping with change & rigid thinking
- ❖ Sleep disturbances (over sleeping, difficulty falling/staying asleep, nightmares)
- ❖ Anxiety & phobias (separation, general, specific)
- ❖ Fear of specific time of day; day of the week or month; time of year or holiday
- ❖ Suicidality
- ❖ Eating disorder (under or over eating; purging; pica)
- ❖ Generalized sense of unsafety & impending doom
- ❖ Seemingly underreaction or flat affect when under stress
- ❖ Seemingly overreaction to non-stressful events
- ❖ Inability to name complex emotional states
- ❖ Hypervigilance/preoccupation with safety or seemingly unaware of danger

- ❖ Depend on others for validation and to reflect self-confidence
- ❖ Perfectionism
- ❖ Obsessive Thinking / Ruminating

SOCIAL

- ❖ Isolation
- ❖ Loss of pets (pass away, given away)
- ❖ Frequent travel, including being transported from the home late at night
- ❖ Virtual learning and homeschooling
- ❖ School & district hopping
- ❖ Irregular school attendance and/or frequent tardiness
- ❖ Lack of community involvement (extra curricular activities)
- ❖ Difficulty forming and keeping friends
- ❖ Aversion to being photographed
- ❖ Bullied or bullying
- ❖ Aversion (or lack of enthusiasm) to parent, family member, or guardian
- ❖ Aversion to using bathroom or being in small spaces with a closed door
- ❖ Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, behavior, or language
- ❖ Casual discussion or play surrounding severe violence
- ❖ Rule oriented

PHYSICAL

- ❖ Overly sensitive gag reflex
- ❖ Heightened startle response
- ❖ Lack of emergency care & delayed presentation to medical staff; overall health care avoidance, particularly mental health
- ❖ Hygiene neglect (typical with parent drug abuse)
- ❖ Habitual intake of cold and allergy medication (over use & inappropriate use); off label use of psychoactive medications
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Rocking & stomach complaints particularly when toileting
- ❖ Somatization & vague physical complaints including fatigue, stomach and throat pain
- ❖ Frequent throat infections, mouth ulcers, and other STIs
- ❖ Pregnancy & abortion
- ❖ Chronic constipation & UTIs
- ❖ Blood in underwear and/or painful urination without a UTI
- ❖ Signs of physical trauma or injury

PARENTAL CONTEXT

- ❖ Religious enmeshment
- ❖ Authoritarian parenting, status and obedience oriented
- ❖ Strict disciplinarian, corporal punishment, discipline without explanation
- ❖ Morality champion, rule-oriented
- ❖ Substance dependence and/or substance trafficking
- ❖ Frequent travel & overnight stays
- ❖ Frequent guests in home
- ❖ Access to technology (photo, video, printing, file sharing capabilities) & knowledge of internet security, P2P forums
- ❖ Financially controlling
- ❖ Disinterest & disengagement in child's education & overall welfare
- ❖ "Weird" (breaks social norms, lack of boundaries)
- ❖ Controlling / helicopter / hovering parent
- ❖ Domestic abuse in home (mental, emotional, verbal)
- ❖ Pathological liar
- ❖ Manipulative
- ❖ Lack of empathy
- ❖ Personal history with childhood sexual, physical abuse, and exposure to domestic violence
- ❖ Strict disciplinarian & corporal punishment
- ❖ Supervises medical & psychological evaluations, assessments, and examines
- ❖ Accepts frequent gifts or donations of value
- ❖ Parents describe child as overly emotional, dramatic, mentally ill
- ❖ Aliases & nicknames
- ❖ "Small business" owner (can be anything from a flea market table to ministry to mechanic)
- ❖ History of criminal behavior, misuse of resources & poor business practices
- ❖ History of involvement with the sex trade
- ❖ Involvement with a fundamental religious group or other extremist group

ASK: How do you sleep at night? Do you have nightmares? Do you take medication that makes you sleepy? Do you like being alone with Dad? How about mom?

DO: Always screen for dissociation in conjunction with ADHD & learning disabilities.

REMEMBER: Trafficking can happen in any kind of family in any place anywhere in the USA.

"We believe in truth. We believe in light. We believe that all children should feel SAFE at home."

