

# Warning Signs a Child is at Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

## What are the red flags?

- 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

## \*\*\* Guiding Principles for Engagement \*\*\*

- 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.

## How do I identify an 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

## 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 help?

- **Call the CSEC Hotline @ (855) 400- CSEC / (855) 400 - 2732**