



*Li taan paasii. Li taan ki vyayn.  
From our past. For our future*

Child Youth & Family

Fall Online Education & Awareness Series

2024

# Keeping Children and Youth Safe Series-Agenda

November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2:00pm–3:30pm (Part#1)

**Staying Safe Series: This three-part series is based keeping children and youth safe from online predators, includes what is youth sexual exploitation and child luring and how to keep our children safe.**

- Introductions-What is Staying Safe Series
- The Law
- Statistics- Globally and Locally
- Definition of Sexual Exploitation
- Who is Vulnerable?
- Who are the Perpetrators?
- Recruiters- Who are they?
- Four Stages of Recruitment

## What the Law States:

“Sexual exploitation encompasses the touching ‘directly or indirectly’ of a person between 16–17 years of age for a sexual purpose. It is covered under *s. 153(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada (the ‘Code’)*. Technological advances in the last 15–20 years have led to an increase in sexual exploitation charges”.

“The Criminal Code includes the use of telecommunications in its definition of luring a child, and agreement or arrangement (sexual offence against a child). In addition to these two types of offences, police-reported data show that child pornography and non-consensual distribution of intimate images (involving child victims) are often committed online. In total, between 2014/2015 and 2019/2020, criminal courts in Canada processed 27,522 charges related to these child sexual offences which were likely committed online. More than eight in ten (85%) were processed in adult courts”.

# What the Law States: All Children have the Right to Protection

***“Every child has a right to protection, as a fundamental human right”.*** Children (under age 18) also have specific rights, recognized in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, given their vulnerability and dependence. In 1991, Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, pledging to protect children from all forms of exploitation and abuse, among other forms of harm and endangerment. The provision and protection of children’s Convention rights is the primary responsibility of governments at all levels (UNICEF Canada 2022).

Canada has also signed on to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2022). As the use of technology among Canadians has increased in recent years, so too have Canada’s efforts to protect children from online predators.

## What the Law States:

- In 2004, the National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet was developed to combat this crime in Canada. Since then, the National Strategy has been renewed and expanded, and in 2019, a renewed commitment was made with the Government of Canada allocating funds to support efforts to raise awareness, reduce the stigma associated with reporting, increase Canada's ability to pursue and prosecute offenders and work together with the digital industry to find new ways to combat the sexual exploitation of children online.
- Most recently, budget 2021 proposed to provide \$20.7 million over five years, starting in 2021-22, for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enhance its ability to pursue online child sexual exploitation investigations, identify victims and remove them from abusive situations, and bring offenders to justice—including those who offend abroad (Public Safety Canada 2022).

# Statistics: Globally

## **The sexual exploitation of children globally:**

- As of 2014, at least 120 million girls under the age of 20 — about one in ten have been forced to engage in sex or perform other sexual acts -*UN News, 2018*
- Human trafficking is the second-largest organized crime in the world behind drug trafficking -*New Philosopher: Human Trafficking, 2019*
- Every two minutes a child is being prepared for sexual exploitation -*UNICEF, 2016*
- In Canada over 90% of sex trafficking victims come from Canada.
- 90% of victims are female, but young men are targeted as well.
- The average age of victims is 17, but they can be as young as 13, and as young as 8 for Indigenous girls. (*Covenant House, Ontario*)

## Statistics Continued:

- The majority of children are recruited into sexual exploitation by a family member or friend -*International Organization on Migration, 2017*
- Studies indicate that sexually exploited children serve between two and thirty clients per week, leading to an estimated base of anywhere between 100 to 1500 clients per year, per child -*Department of Justice, 2008*
- The average trafficked victim is 11–13 years old -*International Academy of Trial Lawyers, 2018*
- The global economic impacts and costs resulting from the consequences of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children could be as high as 7 trillion dollars -*UN News, 2018*

# Statistics in Canada- 2014-2020: Highlights

## **Online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Canada: A statistical profile of police reported incidents and court charges, 2014 to 2020.**

- Between 2014 and 2020, police reported 10,739 incidents of online sexual offences against children (where the victim had been identified by police) and 29,028 incidents of online child pornography (where the victim had not been identified).
- The overall rate of police-reported incidents of online child sexual exploitation and abuse has been on an upward trend, increasing from 50 incidents per 100,000 population in 2014, when cybercrime data were first collected nationally, to 131 per 100,000 in 2020.
- Can you imagine how children and youth do not report? Why do you think this might be the case?



# Highlights...

- Luring a child accounted for the large majority (77%) of online sexual offences against children.
- In addition, 11% were non-consensual distribution of intimate images, 8% were invitation to sexual touching and 5% were other online sexual offences against children.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of child pornography incidents involved making or distributing child pornography and about one-third (32%) were possessing or accessing child pornography.
- Seven in ten (73%) victims identified in online sexual offences against children were girls aged 12 to 17 and 13% were girls under age 12.
- Boys aged 12 to 17 accounted for 11% of victims and the remaining 3% were boys under age 12.

# Highlights...

- About two out of three (65%) victims of online child sexual offences were victimized by a stranger (39%) or a casual acquaintance (25%), and nearly one in four (23%) were victimized by a friend (8%), a family member (7%) or an intimate partner (7%).
- More than one in four (27%) online sexual offences against children involved a secondary violation, usually child pornography (17% of all online sexual offences against children).
- More than four in ten (44%) police-reported incidents of online sexual offences against children were cleared (or solved). Charges were laid or recommended in 74% of all sexual offences against children where an accused had been identified in relation to the incident. In contrast, the large majority (85%) of child pornography incidents were not cleared. Among child pornography incidents where an accused had been identified, 64% were cleared by charge.

## Canadian Stats and Highlights ...

- The vast majority (91%) of people accused of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (including sexual violations against children and child pornography) were men and boys—and they were generally much older than victims.
- The median age of men and boys accused of online sexual offences against children was 24 years, and men and boys accused of child pornography had a median age of 29 years.
- Non-consensual distribution of intimate images online involved victims and accused persons with a median age of 15.

## Highlights...

- Charges related to child sexual offences likely committed online were more likely to result in a guilty decision than charges involving other (likely offline) sexual violations against children
- More than one in three (36%) court charges of child sexual offences likely committed online resulted in the accused being found guilty, compared with 29% of offline charges. Charges related to non consensual distribution of intimate images were most likely to result in a guilty decision (45%).

# Stats on Court Cases and Convictions:

- About six in ten (61%) court cases involving at least one charge related to a child sexual offence likely committed online involved a guilty decision as the most serious decision rendered for any of those charges. This compared to 41% of cases with at least one charge of child sexual offences likely committed offline.
- Eight in ten (80%) adults convicted of a child sexual offence likely committed online were sentenced to custody, a proportion slightly lower than the proportion of adults sentenced to custody after a guilty finding for child sexual offences likely committed offline (83%).

## Definition of Child & Youth Sexual Exploitation:

“Child sexual exploitation refers to situations where youth (under the age of 18) are forced or incited (1) to exchange sexual acts or images for material items such as food, shelter, drugs, clothing and/or non-material items such as protection, love, and belonging through the use of power, control and manipulation”.

# Who is Vulnerable?

The main risk factors that increase a youth's likelihood of being sexually exploited are:

- Being the victim of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or trauma
- Lack of security and sense of belonging
- Isolated and disconnected from social support structures
- Lack of family and social bonds, dysfunctional family (violence, neglect, substance misuse)
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- FASD/FAE or learning disorders

# Who is Vulnerable?

- Dropping out of school
- Low self-esteem
- Living in rural and remote communities
- Poverty (and increasing feminization of poverty)
- Socioeconomic marginalization
- Youth unemployment/homelessness
- Leaving home at an early age
- LGBTQQ2S
- Indigenous, immigrant, refugee youth



# Who are the perpetrators of Sexual Exploitation?

- Pimps-Pimps are usually male who target females and may pose as their boyfriend.
- They are manipulative, unemployed with limited education (although have material success), often associated with other criminal activities.
- They may also have one or more “girlfriends” and exert total control over their lives.
- They live off the earnings of a person working in the sex trade and control what she does and earns.

# Recruiters- Who are they?

- Recruiters-Recruiters can be male or female and are typically a similar age to their potential victim, offering them “friendship”.
- They seek out and try to convince others to work in the sex trade on behalf of a pimp.
- They watch for youth who have a desire to party and use drugs, and looking for attention and a way to fit it with the “cool” kids.
- They seek out youth that are vulnerable due to low self-esteem, poor family life, and a lack of belonging.

What do recruiters look like? Any ideas?

# Stage One of Recruitment- Targeting Stage:

This is when an exploiter targets a young person who is vulnerable, reducing their chances of getting caught. Exploiters pick their targets based on things like your age, strength or situation.

- **Signs of this stage include an exploiter:**

- Observing a young person
- Finding out a young person's vulnerabilities, needs and wants.
- Selecting a young person as a target.

- Sharing information with other members of their gang.
- Recruiting a young person to their gang or friendship group.
- Marking a young person out as someone to watch.
- Glamourizing their lifestyle.
- Gaining and developing a young person's trust.

# Stage Two of Recruitment- Experience Stage

This stage is where an exploiter might try to get a young person used to their lifestyle or train them up in what they're doing.

## **At this stage, an exploiter might:**

- Make a young person feel wanted.
- Give them gifts and rewards.
- Include them in their activities.
- Test out a young person's loyalty
- Listen to a young person and remember what they say.
- Offer a young person protection.
- Relate to a young person and offer them advice.
- Give them a sense of belonging.
- Praise a young person.
- Give them a weapon.
- Introduce a young person to more established members of their gang.
- Ask to see and test a young person's skills.

# Stage Three of Recruitment- Hooked Stage:

This is the stage where an exploiter will make a young person feel like they're a member of their gang, even though they're just exploiting them.

**Signs that a young person is in the hooked stage of being exploited can include them:**

- Having an identity in the group.
- Being given a bigger role in the group (e.g., people running for them).
- Getting more responsibilities within the group e.g., more money.
- Engaging in thrill seeking behavior/ committing low level crimes.
- Feeling more powerful (although this may not be the reality).
- Feeling they've made a progression in the group (although this may not be the reality).
- Others may know their name, helping them feel more powerful (but this can result in rivalry).
- Having a dependency created by their exploiter.

## Stage Three- Continued...

- Being exposed to possible consequences to their actions.
- Being given access to information.
- Engaging in activities such as drugs, alcohol and sexual behavior.
- Being asked for favors/to keep secrets/to recruit others to the gang.
- Becoming involved with trap houses.

## Stage Four of Recruitment- Trapped Stage

Now a young feels dependent on the group, their relationship with their exploiter may start to become unpleasant, as their exploiter's true intents or character is revealed.

**At this stage, a young person may experience:**

- Threatening behavior.
- Attempts to reinforcing their dependency/make them indebted to their exploiter.
- Blackmail – include 'fake' mugging organized to create a debt.
- Physical violence and sexual assaults including strip searches, drugs being inserted for running (plugging).
- People playing on their guilt, shame and fear and attempting to isolate them from their family, friends and society.
- People forcing them to abuse others, assault or even shoot people.
- People humiliating them, either sexually or by exposing their mistakes to others

# Stage Four Continued...

- Being made to feel trapped.
- Involvement in Class A drugs (cooking or running).
- Running a trap house.
- Drug addiction (encouraged by others) or dependency on their exploiter (resulting in them having less money).

## **Definition: Trap House**

a place, especially an empty house, where illegal drugs are sold: She was selling drugs in a trap house. The gangs use abandoned houses - known as trap houses - for illegal gambling, drugs, and sex trade. Other names: Crack shack, flop house, party shack



# What are the Different Forms of Sexual Exploitation?

- Luring a young person via the internet or social media for sexual purposes
- Involving a child in sexual activity in exchange for money, food, shelter, clothes, electronics or other items of value to the child or youth
- Making, selling or distributing child pornography
- It includes trafficking and sex trade (prostitution)
- Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions
- It includes sexual slavery, child abuse and sexual assault
- Provide sex for a place to sleep, a meal or a ride
- Trade sexual activities in exchange for money, drugs, alcohol, gifts, services, or other items

# Resources:

- <https://read-me.org/s/online-child-sexual.pdf>
- <https://www.mycampbellrivernow.com/76986/news/national-news/rcmp-warns-youth-at-risk-of-online-recruitment-by-extremist-groups/>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/campaigns/human-trafficking/sex-trafficking.html>
- [https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/Youth%20Involvement%20in%20the%20Sex%20Trade\\_3.pdf](https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/Youth%20Involvement%20in%20the%20Sex%20Trade_3.pdf)
- <https://covenanthousetoronto.ca/the-problem/sex-trafficking/>

# Final Thoughts:

Thank you on behalf of the Child, Youth and Family Department for the BC Metis Federation

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