

Social Media and Human Trafficking

The digital age has opened many doors for contact—including the doors to traffickers. Human Traffickers are flooding our digital gateway more frequently, looking to manipulate our children and young adults.

- Social Media Platforms to Watch:
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- TikTok
- Kik
- Meetme.com
- WhatsApp
- Dating sites (Tinder, Grindr, Bumble, and Plenty of Fish)

Traffickers may use social media to prey upon a vulnerable individual's emotional state by forming an intimate relationship with them. Please visit attorneygenerallynnfitch.com for more information on how you can protect your and your child's social media account.



Organizations Combating Human Trafficking

Polaris Project: www.polarisproject.org

Shared Hope International: www.sharedhope.org

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov

Resources

Mississippi Human Trafficking Coordinator

601.987.1671 or ReportHT@dps.ms.gov

Mississippi Child Abuse Hotline

800.222.8000

National Human Trafficking Hotline

888.373.7888 or text HELP or INFO to 233733 (BEFREE) for additional information.

Office of the Attorney General
Bureau of Victim Assistance
P.O. Box 220 Jackson, MS 39205
601.359.6766 | 800.829.6766
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Lynn Fitch
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch, as a member of the Mississippi Human Trafficking Council, works collaboratively with national, state and local agencies and organizations to improve our state's response to Human Trafficking offenses. The Attorney General's Office has dedicated staff to provide victim assistance and community awareness as well as develop and conduct training on Human Trafficking issues. Attorney General Fitch has made Human Trafficking a priority of her administration and is committed to the continued improvement of our laws and to working closely with law enforcement partners to hold traffickers accountable for these horrific crimes. Attorney General Fitch is further committed to assisting victims in accessing resources that will allow them to recover physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING



What is Human Trafficking?

- Human Trafficking is a form of modern day slavery where people profit from the exploitation of others. Victims of Human Trafficking can be men, women, or children of all races, nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Human Trafficking takes place in cities and towns throughout Mississippi and is one of the fastest growing crimes in our state.
- Sex trafficking occurs when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or when the person performing the commercial sex act has not attained 18 years of age.
- Trafficking does not require physical force, physical abuse, or physical restraint—other forms of coercion such as threats, intimidation or blackmail are often used by traffickers. Nonphysical forms of coercion may include:
 - threats to publish sexually explicit photographs or videos of the victim; or
 - providing, administering or withholding drugs or alcohol to/from the victim.
- Traffickers prey on victims' insecurities and vulnerabilities to gain trust and control. Once a trafficker has control over a victim, they often use threats of physical harm, or threats of physical harm to the victim's family, in order to force victims into unwanted sexual activity.

Human Trafficking is not prostitution.

- Human Trafficking victims do not choose to engage in prostitution. Victims are often lured by traffickers with promises of love, family and financial security.
- Children are **not** prostitutes. A child under the age of 18 who has been identified as a victim of Human Trafficking is not liable for criminal activity committed during their time as a Human Trafficking victim, including but not limited to the crime of prostitution. Any person who knowingly subjects, recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides or obtains a minor under the age of 18 to engage in commercial sexual activity, sexually explicit performances, or the production of sexually explicit material shall be guilty of procuring sexual servitude of a minor and, upon conviction, shall be subject to 20 years to life in prison. Miss. Code Ann. §97-3-54.1
- Runaway and homeless youth are particularly susceptible to traffickers.
- Contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of Human Trafficking victims are not kidnapped or physically forced into sexual servitude.
- Many victims are trafficked by someone they know, whether a friend, a romantic partner, or even a family member.



How do you Identify Human Trafficking?

If you suspect something is wrong, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there bruises or other signs of physical abuse?
- Are there signs of psychological abuse?
- Is the person submissive or fearful?
- Is the person being controlled?
- Is the person being deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other life necessities?
- Is the person allowed to be in public alone?
- Can the person freely contact friends or family?
- Is the person allowed to socialize or participate in extra-curricular or religious activities?

For a complete list of warning signs to look for, please visit attorneygenerallynnfitch.com.

How do Traffickers Control Victims?

Human Trafficking poses a significant danger to our nation's most vulnerable. Human traffickers prey on individuals living in poverty, struggling with addiction, and victims of familial and sexual abuse, just to list a few.

How are these victims controlled?

- **Force:** physical restraint, transporting, beatings, rape.
- **Fraud:** false offers of employment, marriage, or a better life.
- **Coercion:** threats, destroying legal documents, withholding personal identification information, abuse of the legal process, debt bondage, psychological abuse.