#### Investigating, Prosecuting, and Preventing Human Trafficking in West Michigan

What is human trafficking?

"Trafficking":

"to deal or trade in something illegal."



#### What is sex trafficking?

Sex Trafficking = Recruiting, Facilitating, Transporting, Persuading, Coercing, or Enticing someone to Engage in Sexual Acts







#### Human trafficking does <u>**not</u>** typically look like this.</u>



# Human Trafficking <u>does</u> typically look like this.



# If sex trafficking doesn't require physical violence, kidnapping, or restraint, then how do traffickers get their victims?



#### Vulnerabilities that lead to targeting by traffickers

- Drug-seeking/alcohol
- Running away/homelessness
- Foster care
- Distrust of authority figures
- Difficult and/or abusive home life
- Low self-esteem/seeking validation in unhealthy ways
- Cutting
- Needing money or other basic needs Craving love and validation
- Learning difficulties



#### How can you tell someone is being trafficked?

• Gut reaction: Does something feel off?

- Ask:
  - × Are you ok?
  - × Who is that person with you?
  - × Are you traveling/on vacation?
  - × Are you by yourself?
  - × Are these your friends?
  - Can I help you out with anything?
- Call 911, FBI, or Homeland Security Investigations, Grand Rapids.



#### Kids are the eyes and ears

#### **×** Educate tweens and teens on red flags



× It is NEVER too late to tell. You are never in too deep to get help.

# **Red flags**

- •New influx of cash
- •Missing school
- •Hair/nails out of the ordinary
- •Hotel keys
- •Condoms
- •Older "friends" or "boyfriend" (including online)
- •Offers or online chats about making money "modeling" or "dancing"
- •"Strung out"
- •Despair

- Rotting teeth, unhealed injuries, or other signs of physical neglect
  Walking into hotel/motel with no luggage
- •Cell phone contacts only with nicknames or physical descriptions
- •Lingerie
- •Multiple cell phones or cell phone from someone unexpected as a "gift"
- •Fake ID or no ID
- •Tattoos with trafficker's name, brand, or moniker; or concepts like "love" and "loyalty.





#### Experts in this field DO NOT rely on statistics.

Why?

# We know that we DO NOT KNOW the extent of the problem.

## How to talk about human trafficking

- Experts in the field do NOT rely on statistics.
  - Victims do not come forward and report.
  - Pimps do not come forward and report.
  - We know there are more pimps and victims than reports.
- Wherever there are people, there is a market for sex.
- Trafficking is about control and manipulation, not about kidnapping and smuggling.
- Kids who have low self-esteem, are unhappy at home and school, are bullied, and lack support are vulnerable to targeting.
- If you see something, say something to:
  - Guidance counselors
  - Parents
  - Teachers
  - Police
  - FBI/Homeland Security
  - YWCA confidential human trafficking hotline

## Common Myth # 3

Sex trafficking mainly happens during big events where outsiders come to town, like Art Prize, the auto show, and professional sports games.



Sex trafficking mainly happens at hotels and street corners you pass on a daily basis. Traffickers are typically hiding in plain sight.



#### Sex trafficking doesn't happen in West Michigan.



Sex trafficking happens here. The United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Michigan has prosecuted 18 defendants for sex trafficking since 2013. Many others are prosecuted at the state and county level.

# **Examples of Cases Prosecuted**



#### **Eddie Jackson**



From July to August 2012, Jackson recruited teenage girls in Muskegon to work for him as child prostitutes. He drove them back and forth to Grand Rapids, where he put them out on the street to solicit men for sex. He also took them to semi-vacant houses to perform acts of prostitution with men. The teens were in 8th, 9th, and 10th grades.



#### **Christopher Bryant**



In 2014, Bryant met and sex trafficked three teenage girls in Lansing, Michigan. Bryant posted prostitution ads for these girls online, and he arranged commercial sex dates for them in cars, homes, and hotels. Bryant typically kept all of the money, and he provided food, drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol to the minor girls.



#### **Michael Clayton**



In 2017, 33-year-old Clayton met a 16-year-old runaway. Clayton initially showered her with affection and hooked her on cocaine. Clayton later told her that she could not expect to keep receiving cocaine for free, and that she needed to have sex for money. When the girl attempted to escape, Clayton threatened her with a gun and forced her into his basement so the police would not find her.



#### **Female Pimps Exist Too**

#### Judge: Teen's role in sex-trafficking ring 'sickening'

By Matt Mencarini, Lansing State Journal 12:28 p.m. EDT July 15, 2015



(Photo: Rod Sanford / Lansing State Jour, Rod Sanford | Lansing State Journal)

activity and prostitution.

LANSING – An Ingham County judge called a Lansing teen's role in a sex-trafficking ring "sickening" before sentencing her this morning to at least four years in prison.

Mariah Haughton, 17, pleaded guilty to human trafficking and transporting of a female for prostitution last month. Several other charges were dropped as part of her plea agreement, among them human trafficking, child sexually abusive commercial

Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Joyce Draganchuk sentenced Haughton, who will turn 18 later this month, to four to 20 years on both counts. She will serve the sentences at the same time.



Chasiffe I Ihas laurarif in



#### Holland woman sentenced for sex trafficking of teens

24 Hour News 8 web staff Published: August 4, 2016, 9:56 am | Updated: August 4, 2016, 10:14 am





Stephanie Martin's mug shot from the Kent County Correctional Facility. (October 2015)

#### **Related Coverage**

🔗 Send

tike 694 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

3 plead guilty to sex trafficking of minors

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) — A Holland woman was sentenced to four years in prison for her role in the

3 accused of sex trafficking of minors

prostitution of two teens in West Michigan.