

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Red Flags & Indicators

RELATIONSHIPS & POTENTIAL GROOMING

- Communicating with older teens or adults (including receiving messages, calls, etc.)
- Spending time with older teens or adults
- Romantic or sexual involvement with older teens or adults
- In-person meeting with someone they met online
- Carrying weapons or drugs for a “friend” or for someone the youth believes they are in a relationship with

ONLINE

- Using a phone from an unknown source or that the youth could not reasonably explain or afford
- Being secretive about online activity (e.g., hiding screens or apps when an adult approaches)
- Sexual conversations or messages with others on apps, social media, or websites
- Distress when unable to access their phone
- Inappropriate technology use (e.g., communication & posting online)

EMOTIONAL

- Trauma response (exhaustion, fear, hypervigilance, etc.)
- Distrust of adults
- Mixed emotions about the exploiter
- Increase in negative mental health symptoms and signs of distress
- Drastic emotional changes

BEHAVIORAL

- History of running away, being missing, and/or skipping school
- Using slang related to CSEC (“pimp,” “the life,” “daddy,” “renegade,” “out of pocket,” “bottom,” etc.)
- Reporting a false name or age
- Spending time in areas known for prostitution or commercial sexual activity (hotels, residences, streets, etc.)
- Traveling out-of-state
- Gang-involvement
- Addiction or substance abuse
- Drastic behavior changes

PHYSICAL

- Multiple STIs (sexually transmitted infections)
- Signs of physical assault, sexual assault, or injury
- Multiple pregnancies or terminated pregnancies
- Tattoos, scars, or branding (e.g., exploiter’s name)
- Drastic change in appearance
- Access to goods the youth couldn’t reasonably afford or explain, such as money, clothing, cell phones, beauty products, healthcare (e.g., hormone injections), etc.

LABOR TRAFFICKING*

- Working excessively long or unusual hours
- Being unable to take breaks or time off
- Having unusual restrictions at work
- Was recruited under false promises of the nature/condition of the job
- Being unpaid, paid very little, or pay is withheld by the employer
- Being unable to leave the job
- Owing a large debt and being unable to pay it off



For more information,
visit bit.ly/cacseen.



**FYSB Runaway & Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center*