



Prevention: What You Can Do

A safe and supportive adult is fundamental in preventing the Commercial Exploitation of Children (CSEC). When a youth feels heard, valued, and understood it minimizes vulnerabilities. Support can increase a child's resilience, teach them healthy boundaries, and create an environment where they feel empowered to disclose concerns without fear of punishment. Safe adults model healthy behaviors, can educate a youth about their rights, and recognize early signs of abuse or exploitation.

Creating safety:

Creating safety requires:

- Being authentic, present, and actively listening, even during difficult conversations
- Being genuine and consistent, and by showing you are trustworthy and dependable
- Letting youth know your support is available. This builds trust for youth who have experienced trauma
- Developing trusting relationships with multiple safe adults: If you foresee a time when you will no longer have contact with a youth, be transparent about any future communication. For example let them know you'll be thinking of them. Talk with them about other safe adults in their life. If necessary, help the child or youth identify adults they can trust.

Communication:

Effective communication involves being mindful about what you say and how you say it. Tone, body language, and showing genuine care by noticing changes in behavior signal your support. Asking about what they need may feel overwhelming to youth. Instead, consider ways to identify another trusted adult in their school or elsewhere, or asking how they feel about going home today (will they feel supported going home?). Validating their feelings without judgement fosters trust and openness. If they're not comfortable confiding in you, it's important to connect them with others to ensure they feel heard and supported.

If You Are Concerned

- If you believe that a child or youth is being sexually exploited and are a mandated reporter, you are required to file a 51A report with the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- Youth rarely identify themselves as being exploited. Most instances of concern arise out of a recognition of risks that are identified. Listen to what they are saying and share why you're worried for their safety.
- Be a patient listener and allow them to tell you what they feel comfortable sharing without asking follow-up questions.
- Listen and tell them that you believe them, thank them for trusting you, and let them know that they are brave. Call the [Department of Children and Families, \(DCF\)](#) and file a report of Human Trafficking-Sexually Exploited Child.

