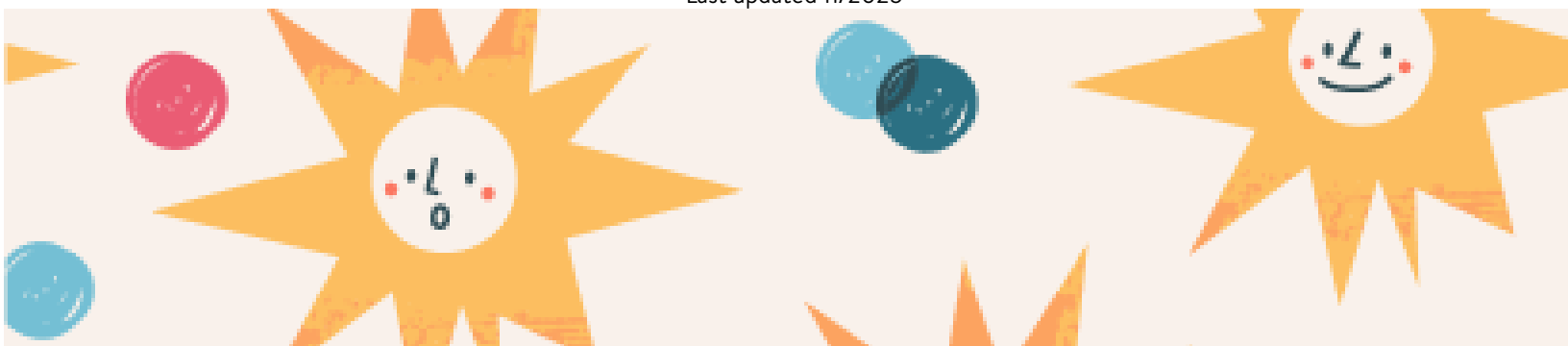


iverstrong

Prevention Portal

Facilitator Guide

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Everstrong Prevention Portal: Facilitator Guide

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Introduction

About Everstrong

We believe the well-being and safety of children are foundational to building strong, thriving communities. When every child has the opportunity to grow up supported, valued, and free from harm, our entire society is stronger—now and for generations to come.

Creating these conditions is a shared responsibility. It requires individuals, institutions, and communities to work together to shift the systems and cultures that shape children’s lives. This work is not only important; it’s essential.

None of us can do this alone, but together, our efforts can drive meaningful, lasting change.

Our Mission

To prevent child sexual exploitation and trafficking through education, advocacy, and empowerment.

Our Values

Integrity | Courage | Collaboration | Optimism | Pursuit of Excellence | Generosity of Spirit

Statement of Equity

We celebrate the rich diversity of our communities and center the voices of those with lived experience. Our work is rooted in inclusion, cultural humility, and community-driven solutions. By addressing the root causes of violence and prioritizing those most at risk, we believe we can build a world free from harm where everyone has what they need to thrive.

Purpose and Uses for Everstrong’s Prevention Portal

We created this Prevention Portal with one central goal in mind: to support educators in teaching this critical yet complex topic in a way that is flexible, accessible, and adaptable to diverse classroom environments. Teaching about human trafficking and exploitation can feel overwhelming—both because of the subject matter and the very real time constraints educators face. Our aim is to remove some of that burden by offering ready-to-use, mix-and-match lesson plans, activities, assignments, and resources that can be tailored to fit a wide variety of needs.

We recognize that no two classrooms are the same. Students come from different backgrounds, learn in different ways, and have varying levels of exposure to the issues discussed in these lessons. Communities, too, have unique contexts, concerns, and priorities. That’s why these materials are designed to be used individually, combined in creative ways, or scaffolded into longer, more in-depth programming. Whether you’re integrating a short activity into an existing health unit or building a multi-week prevention series, you’ll find flexible tools to help meet your goals.



Young people spend the majority of their waking hours at school, and as a result, educators carry an extraordinary responsibility not just to teach academic content, but to help students navigate the world around them. Our intention is not to add another task to an already full plate, but rather to offer meaningful, ready-to-implement resources that support educators in equipping students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills they need to stay safe and informed.

We hope this resource helps you feel confident, empowered, and supported in bringing trafficking prevention into your classroom—on your terms and in the ways that work best for your students.

The Three (Skills) to Transform (Culture) Model

At the heart of our violence prevention work is the belief that cultural transformation begins with skill-building. **The Three to Transform Model** identifies three foundational skills—**empathy**, **critical thinking**, and **social responsibility**— as essential to preventing all forms of violence, including human trafficking and exploitation. These aren't just character traits; they are teachable and learnable tools that help young people navigate relationships, question harmful norms, and take action to create safer, more just communities.

We have intentionally and thoughtfully woven these three skills throughout our lesson plans, activities, and classroom materials. Each one plays a unique and interconnected role in prevention and culture change.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings and experiences of others. It is the foundation of respectful relationships and a key driver of prosocial behavior. When young people practice empathy, they are better able to recognize harm, understand different perspectives, and build deeper connections rooted in care and consent.

In the context of violence prevention, empathy helps:

- Reduce dehumanization and “othering,” which often underlie exploitation and abuse
- Increase compassion for those who have experienced harm, replacing victim-blaming with support
- Build inclusive communities where people look out for one another and intervene when something feels wrong

By centering empathy, we support students in developing the emotional intelligence necessary to reject violence and foster safety for themselves and others.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking empowers students to ask questions, evaluate information, and challenge harmful messages and systems. In a world filled with media, misinformation, and social pressure,



this skill is crucial for recognizing red flags, understanding manipulation, and disrupting patterns of harm.

In the context of violence prevention, critical thinking helps:

- Unpack myths and stereotypes that normalize or excuse violence
- Identify grooming tactics, coercion, and digital manipulation
- Evaluate power dynamics in relationships and recognize when boundaries are being crossed

By nurturing this skill, we equip youth to think beyond surface-level messaging, resist harmful narratives, and make informed, safe decisions.

Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is the belief that we each have a role to play in creating a safer and more equitable world. This skill helps young people understand their impact on others and inspires them to act in ways that promote dignity, justice, and safety for all.

In the context of violence prevention, social responsibility helps:

- Encourage bystander intervention and peer support
- Normalize speaking up, setting boundaries, and holding others accountable with care
- Promote collective responsibility and challenge cultures of silence and complicity

By cultivating social responsibility, we shift the burden of prevention away from individuals alone and toward a shared commitment to safety and equity.

By centering the Three to Transform Model, we offer an accessible entry point into the work of violence prevention. The details and data surrounding human trafficking can often feel overwhelming or intimidating, especially for those without specialized training. But you don't need to be an anti-trafficking expert to make a meaningful impact. When educators focus on building empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility, they are already laying the groundwork for prevention. These skills empower students to recognize harm, challenge injustice, and make safer choices, no matter what specific topic is being discussed. Through the Three to Transform Model we aren't just preventing violence, we're building a future rooted in kindness, consent, and collective care.



Understanding the Issue

Key Terms and Definitions

Human Trafficking

The exploitation of a person through force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of forced labor, sexual exploitation, or other forms of involuntary servitude. Under U.S. federal law, any commercial sex act involving a minor is considered trafficking, regardless of force, fraud, or coercion.

Educator Tips:

- Students may think trafficking always involves kidnapping or movement across borders. Clarify that most trafficking happens within communities and often involves people the victim knows.
- For minors, consent is not legally relevant in cases of commercial sexual exploitation.

Sex Trafficking

A type of human trafficking involving the use of force, fraud, or coercion to cause a person to engage in a commercial sex act. When the victim is under 18, any commercial sex act qualifies as trafficking, even without force, fraud, or coercion.

Educator Tips:

- Prepare for questions like, “What if they agreed to it?” or “What if they got paid?”—Use these to talk about manipulation, power imbalance, and the legal protections for minors.

Labor Trafficking

The use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel someone to work or provide services, including in homes, farms, restaurants, or construction sites, often under abusive or exploitative conditions.

Educator Tips:

- Students may associate trafficking only with sex. Use labor trafficking examples (e.g., forced domestic work or agricultural labor) to broaden their understanding.

Coercion

Using threats, pressure, manipulation, or abuse of power to force someone to do something against their will.

Educator Tips:

- Students may associate coercion only with physical threats. Include emotional blackmail, threats to tell secrets, or withholding resources as examples.



Force

Physical violence or threats used to control a person or make them perform labor or commercial sex acts against their will.

Educator Tips:

- Explain that while not all trafficking involves physical force, the *threat* of violence (to self or others) is often used.

Fraud

Lying, deceiving, or making false promises to manipulate someone into labor, services, or commercial sex.

Educator Tips:

- Use examples like false job offers, fake modeling gigs, or misleading social media posts to explain how traffickers deceive.

Exploitation

Taking advantage of another person for personal gain. In this context, it often refers to using someone's vulnerabilities (age, immigration status, economic situation) to manipulate or control them.

Educator Tips:

- This can help bridge the gap between everyday experiences and trafficking. Ask students what it means to “take advantage” of someone and guide them toward deeper examples.

Grooming

A manipulative process used by traffickers or abusers to build trust, gain access, and gradually violate boundaries—often with the goal of sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Educator Tips:

- Students may not recognize grooming behaviors if they look like flattery, gift-giving, or friendship. Emphasize the pattern and the intent behind the actions, not just isolated behaviors.

Consent

A clear, enthusiastic, and ongoing agreement to participate in a specific activity. Consent must be given freely and can be withdrawn at any time.

Educator Tips:

- Reinforce that minors cannot legally consent to commercial sex. Discuss power dynamics and how manipulation undermines true consent.



- In this program we use the FRIES framework (Freely given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic, Specific) to define consent, but you should use what works best for your students.

Sextortion

A form of online exploitation where someone threatens to share sexual images or information unless the victim provides more content, money, or sexual favors.

Educator Tips:

- Be prepared for emotional responses—many students may know someone impacted. Offer clear steps for seeking help and emphasize that it's never the victim's fault.

Digital Grooming

The process of building trust with someone online in order to exploit them, often through direct messages, gaming platforms, or social media.

Educator Tips:

- Students may not recognize grooming if it happens online. Discuss warning signs like secrecy, excessive compliments, requests for private communication, or gifts.
- A person can be groomed and exploited completely online without any requests to ever meet offline. Discuss the risks of photo and video sharing and the role of AI technology and photo manipulation.

Recruitment

The act of targeting and drawing someone into a trafficking situation, often done by someone the victim knows and trusts—including peers, romantic partners, or family members.

Educator Tips:

- Students may imagine traffickers as strangers, but peers or people close to them can be recruiters. Normalize talking about red flags and asking for help.



Risk Factors and Vulnerable Populations

While anyone can be trafficked or exploited, certain life circumstances and systemic barriers increase vulnerability. Risk does not come from personal failure but from how systems and environments can fail to protect or support individuals.

These are not predictors of trafficking but factors that traffickers may exploit.

Common Risk Factors

These may include:

- Unstable housing or homelessness
- Family conflict or abuse
- History of sexual abuse or trauma
- Foster care involvement or running away
- Lack of a supportive adult or community network
- Substance use (personal or within the home)
- Poverty or unmet basic needs
- Immigration status or language barriers
- Mental health challenges
- Social isolation, bullying, or belonging struggles
- LGBTQ+ identity in non-affirming environments

Vulnerable Populations

Groups that face higher systemic barriers often experience disproportionately high rates of trafficking and exploitation:

- Youth in foster care
- LGBTQ+ youth
- BIPOC communities
- Immigrant and refugee populations
- Youth with disabilities
- Survivors of domestic or sexual violence

By understanding the risk factors and acknowledging the groups who have been made most vulnerable to exploitation, we can more easily and intuitively navigate conversations in the classroom, answer student questions, and make connections to previously covered lessons.



Alignment with Learning Standards and Connections to School-based Curricula

Learning Standards

Our prevention program is thoughtfully designed to integrate with both **state-specific K–12 Learning Standards** and key **national education standards**, ensuring that the content is not only developmentally appropriate but also aligned with the broader goals of public education. Each component may not meet all standards independently, but when combined and scaffolded, the materials collectively align with a diverse range of learning standards. To see the full table, see document [*National and State Learning Standards Alignment*](#).

School-based Curricula

Understanding that human trafficking and exploitation are complex, real-world issues, it's essential to approach prevention education in a way that feels relevant, interdisciplinary, and integrated into the broader school experience. This non-exhaustive list offers examples of how trafficking prevention concepts can naturally connect to existing topics across a range of subject areas. Whether you're teaching literature, science, health, or technology, there are meaningful opportunities to reinforce safety, critical thinking, empathy, and digital awareness—all of which are protective factors against exploitation. By weaving these connections into your classroom, you help students not only meet academic goals but also build lifelong skills for recognizing harm, making informed choices, and advocating for themselves and others.

Health Education

- *Topics:* Consent, healthy relationships, personal safety
- *Connection:* Teach students to set boundaries, recognize red flags, and understand grooming, coercion, and other risk factors for exploitation.

Social Studies

- *Topics:* Chattel slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, migration, women's suffrage
- *Connection:* Draw parallels between historical and modern forms of exploitation. Explore how systems of oppression and inequality increase vulnerability to trafficking.

English Language Arts (ELA)

- *Topics:* Narrative writing, memoirs, media literacy, dystopian literature
- *Connection:* Analyze stories of survival, manipulation, or coercion. Examine how media and literature shape societal narratives about victims, perpetrators, and justice.

Technology / Computer Science

- *Topics:* Cyberbullying, digital privacy, digital citizenship
- *Connection:* Help students recognize online grooming tactics, protect personal information, and engage in safe, ethical digital behavior.



Art

- *Topics:* Identity, justice-themed projects, protest art
- *Connection:* Allow students to express themes of empowerment, resistance, healing, or social justice through creative visual storytelling.

Math

- *Topics:* Data interpretation, reading graphs, statistics
- *Connection:* Use trafficking-related data sets to build critical thinking and numeracy skills. Teach students how to spot trends and draw conclusions from real-world statistics.

World Languages

- *Topics:* Cultural norms, communication skills, translation
- *Connection:* Explore how language reflects power dynamics and social expectations. Discuss how cultural context affects views on consent, boundaries, and relationships.

Best Practices for Prevention Education

Human trafficking prevention education is most effective when it's proactive, strengths-based, and embedded in broader efforts to build safe, inclusive school communities. Ground your facilitation in a few core principles:

- **Focus on skills, not scare tactics.** Our approach centers empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility as key tools for prevention. These are skills that benefit students far beyond a single lesson.
- **Create a trauma-informed environment.** Acknowledge that some students may have direct or indirect experience with harm. Use grounding activities, clarify that students can step out, and always provide trusted adult and support contact info.
- **Build on what students already know.** Connect concepts to everyday experiences, including relationships, media, identity, and online interactions.

Facilitation Tips

Facilitating conversations about trafficking and exploitation with young people requires intentionality and care. Consider the following:

- **Start with shared agreements.** Co-create community guidelines that emphasize respect, confidentiality, and non-judgment.
- **Be clear, not graphic.** Use accurate, age-appropriate language to describe harm without sensationalizing it. Focus on patterns and dynamics, not trauma details.
- **Normalize questions and emotions.** Let students know it's okay to feel confused, angry, or surprised—and that you're there to process together.



- **Model openness and curiosity.** If you're asked something unexpected, it's okay to say: "That's a great question—I want to think more about it and come back to it."

Integrating Different Learning Styles

Students absorb information in different ways, so offering varied approaches helps ensure all learners can access, connect with, and retain trafficking prevention content.

- **Visual learners:** Use diagrams, infographics, videos, and visual timelines to illustrate concepts like grooming or consent.
- **Auditory learners:** Include read-alouds, discussions, podcasts, or student reflections shared aloud.
- **Kinesthetic learners:** Incorporate movement activities like scenario stations, role plays, or physical mapping.
- **Reading/writing learners:** Offer journals, graphic organizers, or written responses to deepen personal reflection and critical thinking.

Responding to Challenging Questions

Difficult questions are a sign that students are engaged and thinking deeply. When they come up:

- **Clarify, don't avoid.** If a student asks "Is sex work the same as trafficking?" or "What if someone chooses it?" clarify definitions without shutting them down. Encourage nuance.
- **Name the complexity.** You can say: "That's a complex issue and people have different views—what matters is that no one should be forced, manipulated, or coerced into the sex trade by another person, group, or circumstances like poverty."
- **Redirect if needed.** If a question becomes disruptive or triggering, thank the student and suggest returning to it later or in a one-on-one space.
- **Stay aligned with your role.** You don't need to have every answer—you just need to hold space for honest conversation and connection to support.

Encouraging Critical Thinking & Empowerment

Trafficking prevention isn't just about warning signs—it's about helping students understand systems and feel empowered to shape culture.

- **Invite questions, not just answers.** Whenever possible, allow the group to generate solutions and hear each other's perspectives.
- **Highlight resistance and resilience.** Talk about young people, survivors, and communities who are creating change. Make space for hope and action.
- **Connect the personal to the systemic.** Help students link their own relationships, choices, and digital habits to broader conversations about justice and equity.



- **Reinforce that prevention is a shared responsibility.** Empower students to be informed bystanders, safe friends, and thoughtful digital citizens—not perfect, but engaged.

Handling Disclosures & Reporting

Conversations about trafficking, exploitation, and abuse may surface lived experiences or open the door to disclosures. Educators are not investigators—but you *are* trusted adults. Your role is to listen, respond with care, and follow mandated reporting protocols.

Recognizing Signs of Trafficking or Abuse

There is no single “look” to trafficking. Often, there are **no visible signs**, and what we think of as “red flags” may overlap with many other life experiences. The most important indicator is **a shift in behavior, mood, or engagement**—and your **relationships with students** are what help you notice.

Be mindful of:

- Sudden withdrawal from peers or activities
- Increased anxiety, hypervigilance, or fatigue
- Controlling relationships or secretive new friends (online or offline)
- Statements that suggest fear, obligation, or lack of autonomy in a relationship
- Repeated absences or changes in appearance that seem inconsistent with context

These signs don’t confirm trafficking—but they do signal a need for connection, support, and potentially, a safety conversation.

Steps to Take When a Disclosure Occurs

1. **Stay present and calm.** Believe them. Let them guide the pace. Avoid pressing for details. You can say, *“Thank you for telling me. I’m really glad you shared this with me so you don’t have to navigate it alone.”*
2. **Be clear about your role.** If you haven’t already, gently remind the student you are a mandated reporter. Try: *“I care about your safety. I may need to share this with someone who can help keep you safe.”*
3. **Follow school reporting protocols.** Immediately report to your designated school counselor, administrator, or child protection contact per district guidelines. You do not need to (and should not) investigate further. Engage youth in the reporting process, including keeping them informed of exactly what you are going to do and offering them the opportunity to be present during the reporting process.
4. **Offer follow-up support.** Check in with the student, help them connect to trusted adults and resources, and reinforce their strengths and agency. Even if they’re not ready for help now, knowing someone believes them can be a powerful protective factor.



Thank you

Youth educators are on the frontlines of so many of the complex issues young people face today. From navigating digital spaces to building healthy relationships, students turn to trusted adults in their schools and communities for guidance, safety, and support.

Our goal with this Prevention Portal is simple: to equip teachers, school staff, and youth-serving professionals with the tools, language, and confidence they need to help young people stay informed, empowered, and safe. Whether you're using a single activity or building a full prevention unit, know that you are not alone in this work.

Thank you for the care, commitment, and courage you bring to the lives of the children and youth you work with.

