



Essential Knowledge for College Students on Human Trafficking

- **Human trafficking is exploitation for labor or commercial sex and does not require transportation across borders** (it can happen entirely within a campus town or dorm community). [dhs.gov], [fbi.gov], [polarisproject.org]
- Traffickers most often rely on **force, fraud, or coercion** (including psychological coercion, threats, and manipulation) rather than obvious physical restraint. [dhs.gov], [fbi.gov]
- Under U.S. law, **anyone under 18 in commercial sex is a trafficking victim** even if force, fraud, or coercion is not shown. [fbi.gov], [ojp.gov]
- College students can be targeted through **fraudulent job offers, “modeling”/promotion pitches, and “too-good-to-be-true” opportunities** that create dependence and control over time. [dhs.gov]
- Traffickers may also use **false promises of love, belonging, or a better life** (grooming) to gain trust and isolate someone from friends, roommates, and support networks. [dhs.gov], [polarisproject.org]
- Technology is a major gateway: perpetrators use **dating apps, online ads, and encrypted messaging** to recruit, advertise exploitation, and evade detection. [state.gov]
- Many victims **do not self-identify** or ask for help due to fear, distrust, shame, isolation, or manipulation, so “not asking” never means “not harmed.” [cops.usdoj.gov], [polarisproject.org]
- “Red flags” are contextual (not a checklist) but can include **excessive monitoring by another person, inability to speak freely, scripted answers, sudden withdrawal, or signs of coercive control** in relationships. [polarisproject.org], [dhs.gov]
- If something feels off, **don’t confront a suspected trafficker or alert a potential victim to your suspicions**—prioritize safety and report through proper channels. [dhs.gov]
- For immediate danger call **911**, and to report tips you can call the HSI Tip Line at **1-866-347-2423**. [dhs.gov]
- To get help or share concerns, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-888-373-7888** or text **“BEFREE/HELP” to 233733** (24/7, confidential support). [humantraffickinghotline.org], [dhs.gov]

- Avoid profiling: **race, ethnicity, gender, and religion are not indicators**, and reporting should focus on behaviors, control dynamics, and safety concerns. [dhs.gov]
- Use campus-ready prevention resources—like the DHS Blue Campaign **Student Leaders on College Campuses Awareness Guide**—to learn indicators and share trusted reporting options with peers. [dhs.gov]

Blink3 is the **Universal nonverbal SOS** for victims of human trafficking and abuse, blinking 3 times is a way to ask for help. Please see <https://blink3.org/> for more information, and free courses.