

Engaging Parents and Guardians of High School-Aged Sons in Stopping Sexual Exploitation and Harm



Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation
3304 N. Lincoln Ave. Ste. 202
Chicago, IL 60657
773-244-2230



Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) addresses the culture, institutions, and individuals that perpetrate, profit from, or support sexual exploitation. Our work includes prevention, policy reform, community engagement, and legal services.

CAASE envisions a community free from all forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual assault and the commercial sex trade.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood . . . Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

—United Nations, articles 1 and 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Engaging Parents and Guardians in Ending Sexual Exploitation is a resource created by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) for families and role models (i.e. parents, partners, step parents and extended family members etc.) and any other person involved in the lives of young men who are passionate about ending sexual exploitation. The toolkit provides background information on issues of sexual exploitation, tips on initiating conversation about the issues, and resources for parents and guardians.

This toolkit includes:

- Activities that can be used to help explore issues surrounding sexual exploitation in a way that is relevant to your family.
- Activities and advice on engaging your son around issues of sexual exploitation

Additionally, there are supplemental materials available on your website (www.caase.org/toolkits) where you can find information on Chicago organizations you may want to partner with, as well as movies and book to raise awareness.

How Parents and Guardians Can Help

Throughout our lives, we are constantly searching for self-meaning- a search that often begins as soon as a child discovers there is a world outside their front door. As parents, you have the wonderful opportunity to positively influence your son's understanding of himself and the world around him. Remember- it is a very different world out there than when you were growing up. Your son faces new pressures and has access to people and material that you didn't have when you were a teenager. Constantly working to be a positive influence in your son's life is a challenge, but by staying informed about what issues your son may be facing, and by being involved with helping your son navigate confusing situations, the difference you can make is immeasurable

This kit is a tool for you. It provides suggestions about how to tackle challenging conversations within your family. The toolkit can be used within your home and with extended family, as well as within your neighborhood and community. It can also be a useful tool for any individual who is passionate about ending sexual harm.

Sexual exploitation, such as prostitution and human trafficking, are a violation of human rights that occur in neighborhoods all over Chicago and throughout Illinois. As long as people remain unaware of the extent and root cause of sexual exploitation, the violence and harm experienced by victims will continue to grow. Your family can be a vehicle for both awareness-raising and change for this very important issue.

"Likewise, for those of us who are in position to do something to combat human slavery, however small our contribution, neutrality is a sin."

– Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz,
Department of Defense

".prostitution is not a victimless crime. It's a terrible life, and a caring society has a responsibility to help these women."

– Richard Daley, former mayor of Chicago

Activist Spotlight: **A CALL TO MEN**



Co-founders Tony Porter and Ted Bunch created **A Call To Men** on the belief that preventing domestic and sexual violence is primarily the responsibility of men. Although historically work to end gender-based violence has predominantly viewed as a “woman’s issue”, **A Call To Men** believe that it is essential that men play a primary role in the solution. To do that, well-meaning men...men who, for the most part don't see themselves as part of the problem...need to get involved.

A Call To Men is a leading national men's organization working on domestic and sexual violence prevention and the promotion of healthy manhood. They are committed to maintaining strong partnerships with women's organizations already doing this important work. Additionally, they help to organize communities in order to raise awareness and get men involved in this effort. Through seminars, workshops and other educational vehicles, **A Call To Men** challenges men to reconsider many of the social norms that define manhood, in an effort to create a more just society.

<http://www.acalltomen.com/>

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Human trafficking is the world's second largest enterprise after drugs and it is the fastest growing. Human trafficking, a form of modern day slavery, is pervasive nationally and internationally. There are more people enslaved today than at the peak of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In the U.S., a person is a victim of sex trafficking if s/he is being exploited to engage in commercial sex. A person is a victim of a *severe* form of sex trafficking if:

s/he is being forced, coerced, or tricked to either work or engage in sex for money, and s/he would experience serious harm if s/he tried to leave situation.

OR

s/he is under 18 and is having sex for money--it isn't necessary to prove force or coercion for minors: the law recognizes that children cannot meaningfully consent to sex.

Victims of human trafficking are people forced, coerced, or deceived into labor or commercial sex. According to Federal law, children who are under the age of 18 and purchased for sex are automatically considered victims.¹

The International Labor Organization of the United Nations estimated that there are 1.39 million victims trafficked into the sex trade each year.

Sex trafficking occurs in all sectors of the sex industry, including street prostitution, online escort services, strip clubs, pornography, brothels, and the use of children for commercial sex.

¹ *William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008*, Public Law 110-457, 110th Cong. (December 23, 2008), codified at US Code 18 section 1591.

MEN CAN STOP THE MAJORITY OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Trafficking does not require physical abuse, force, or restraint. Often, traffickers use psychological manipulation/abuse, deception, threats of harm, or debt manipulation to control their victims.

Our response to victims of sex trafficking is almost uniformly sympathetic, while our response to women in prostitution is usually arrest, incarceration, and blame for "getting themselves in that situation." Every time a man speaks out about this injustice, the world becomes safer for us all.

The average age females enter the sex trade is 12-14. According to the Center for Impact Research, 35 percent of all women in the sex trade entered before the age of 15.² The effects are devastating for these children. Youth in prostitution are seriously affected developmentally, suffering from lack of sleep, malnutrition, loss of appetite and concentration, addiction to drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, and a feeling of intense isolation.

Despite Federal law stating that any child under the age of 18 who has performed a commercial sex act is a victim of a severe form of human trafficking³, children are still treated as criminals by law enforcement.

² National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, www.missingkids.com

³ *William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008*, Public Law 110-457, 110th Cong. (December 23, 2008), codified at US Code 18 section 1591.

PROSTITUTION AS A MEN'S ISSUE: WHY YOUR SON SHOULD CARE ABOUT PROSTITUTION

Men can stop the majority of sexual exploitation. Purchasing sex is a choice men make to use sex as a commodity for power and control. To stop men from purchasing sex, men must be empowered to make different choices and to hold each other accountable.

It is overwhelmingly men who purchase sex. The vast majority of all sexual services are purchased by males.

Men ARE purchased for sex. Male survivors are often blamed for their own victimization and respond by remaining silent and suffering alone.

Purchasing sex harms men. When sex is turned into a commodity that can be purchased, it can easily lose its meaning and positive associations.

Prostitution is a human rights violation. Trafficking victims face violence and psychological devastation in ways almost unimaginable.

“More legislation, more agencies, more social services, more shelters for battered women, more grants, more counselors, more social workers, more case workers, and more money!” – male who has purchased sex in response to the question: *What would it take it end prostitution?*

TALKING TO YOUR SON ABOUT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Practice makes perfect. Talking with your son about potentially difficult situations before they happen can better prepare him to handle these circumstances. For example, you can talk to your son about what he would do if he felt pressured to engage in sexual activity that made him feel uncomfortable.

Read with your son. You and your son can both read, *Breaking Out of the “Man Box:” Ending Violence Against Women*, by Anthony Porer. This book radically challenges the socialization of men by examining the social norms, cultural, and traditional images of manhood that have created an environment that supports, tolerates, and often encourages men’s violence against women.

Another great book to **read with your son** is *The Macho Paradox*, by Jackson Katz. Katz says that all men have a role to play in preventing male violence against women. His basic assertion is that rape, battering, sexual abuse, and harassment are so widespread that they must be viewed as a social problem rooted in our culture, not as the problem of troubled individuals.

Watch *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity* with your son. This film identifies several cultural developments in the last 30 years that are in part responsible for the current levels of violence against women.

IT IS OVERWHELMINGLY MEN WHO PURCHASE SEX. END THE DEMAND

Although ample research demonstrates that the customers (“johns”), pimps, and other traffickers are fueling the sex trade and abusing women and girls, the criminal justice and legal system continue to target and punish the victim. **This one-sided focus fails to address the root cause of prostitution: the demand.**

As long as demand exists, more vulnerable women and children will be forced, coerced, and manipulated to meet the demand. The equation is simple: **eliminate demand, eliminate commercial sexual exploitation.**

In Illinois, the rate of prostituted individuals being arrested for felony prostitution has increased over 1000 percent since 1995⁴. This makes it difficult for women to escape prostitution and pursue rehabilitation due to the fact that an arrest record makes it much more difficult to secure a job or home. Johns, when facing any consequences (which they rarely do), receive lesser punishment such as car impoundment, fines, and municipal violations.

TALKING TO YOUR SON ABOUT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Social pressure refers to the influence exerted by an individual, group, or other entity to encourage a person to change his or her attitudes, values, or behavior in order to conform to group norms.

Your son is confronted everyday with messages from the media and peers about expectations to have sex. Talk about these messages with your son.

Research shows that parental involvement is key to protecting young men from engaging in unsafe and problematic sexual activity.

Help your son understand the cultural factors that may make him feel buying sex is normal or “cool” or something that “real men” do.

Know who your son’s friends are and who his sexual partner is (are).

Watch *Demand* with your son. This documentary exposes the men who buy commercial sex, the vulnerable women and children who are sold, and the facilitators of the sex trade within the market of sexual exploitation. It can be accessed at <http://www.sharedhope.org/Resources/DEMAND.aspx>

⁴ Illinois Department of Corrections, *Statistical Presentation 2004* (Springfield, Ill., 2005), 38.

MEN ARE PURCHASED FOR SEX

Men are not immune to the epidemic of sexual violence. Studies show that a staggering 10 to 20 percent of all males are sexually violated at some point in their lifetimes.

The average age that boys and transgender youth begin prostitution is even younger than that of girls: 12–14 years old.⁵

Young prostituted males are also more likely to be involved in criminal or delinquent behaviors in addition to prostitution (Flowers, 1998); however, they are arrested much less frequently.⁶

Male victims of sexual exploitation often enter the trade after running away from home. This is true for female victims as well.

Boys are at particularly high risk of contracting HIV due to high rates of unprotected anal sex with adult men as well as frequent intravenous drug use.⁷

TALKING TO YOUR SON ABOUT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

It is important that you communicate values and beliefs that will help your son build healthy relationships free from violence and exploitation.

It's never too early. Talk to your son about healthy relationships before he starts dating. Help him understand the harm that comes from stereotypes about “real men” and “real women.”

Keep communicating. The more often you bring up issues about healthy sexual relationships, the more comfortable your son will be talking with you.

Create the space. Make an open and safe place for your son to talk about relationships. Always listen to what he says and answer his questions. Talk with him, do not talk at him.

Watch out. Look for warning signs that your son is being abusive in a relationship. Pay attention to how your son and his partner interact. Watch for controlling or mean behavior. Some boys who are in an unhealthy relationship get angry easily, are unpredictable, and often moody.

⁵ Estes, R., & Weiner, N. (2001). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

⁶ McKnight, P. (2006). Male prostitutes face enormous risks. In L. Gerdes (Ed.), *Prostitution and sex trafficking* (pp. 57-61). Detroit, MI: Thomas Gale.

⁷ Flowers, R. B. (2001). *Runaway kids and teenage prostitution*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

PURCHASING SEX HARMS MEN

Men who purchase sex often describe negative feelings after doing so, such as feeling guilty, ashamed, lonely, and regretful. Others have said that once they purchased sex, they were never able to relate to a woman in the same way again.

In a study conducted in Chicago surveying 113 men who had purchased sex, 60 percent said that they did not think that men under the age of 18 should purchase sex. Several interviewees stated they would discourage young men from buying sex because they might then see themselves negatively or that it might adversely affect future relationships.⁸

In the same Chicago study, 75 percent of interviewees agreed that harm is done to a marriage if the man goes to a prostitute, even if the wife does not know about it. 72 percent agreed that men who go to prostitutes have broken their marriage vows. Only 7 percent said that the presence of prostitution in a community helps married men stay in marriages.

“It demeans how you think and treat women. It will affect your whole image of women and unfortunately most men can’t get past that.” – *male who purchased sex*

“Sometimes I feel guilty because I know that’s somebody’s mother, somebody’s sister, somebody’s daughter.” – *male who purchased sex*

TALKING TO YOUR SON ABOUT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Talk about the media. If your son watches a lot of television or plays video games, watch or play with him. Use examples from TV or games that you have watched or played together to start a dialogue about gender roles and how the media normalizes the idea that women are objects or continually available sexual beings.

Teach positive behaviors. Reinforce kind, compassionate behavior. Teach empathy and provide opportunities for cooperation.

Set an example. Show your son how conflicts with friends and family can be solved through respectful discussion. Treat your son with respect so that he will respect others.

Provide your son with a variety of experiences serving others. Spend time with your son volunteering in a women’s shelter, building houses for *Habitat for Humanity*, or running a race benefiting a domestic violence shelter (make sure he knows what he is running for). These could be combined with ‘rites of passage’ activities with your son.

⁸ Durchslag, R. & Goswami, S. (2008).

PROSTITUTION IS A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION

Even though an adult in prostitution who entered the sex trade entirely of her or his own volition and is not involved with a third party is not legally considered a victim of trafficking, it is important to move beyond legal definitions to understand the human rights violations experienced by both trafficked and non-trafficked individuals in prostitution.

Research on women in prostitution in Chicago shows that approximately 90 percent are physically, sexually, and emotionally abused of the hands of pimps and johns.

The sexual and physical violence and psychological harm inherent in prostitution erodes an individual's human dignity, concept of self-worth, and even basic health.

According to an FBI estimate, a woman's average life expectancy is only seven years after the date of entry into prostitution. Girls and women in the sex industry also have a mortality rate 40 times higher than the national average.⁹

Research conducted both in Chicago and nationwide reveals that a substantial percentage of women in prostitution are homeless, and/or survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, and other start selling sex at a very young age.

TALKING TO YOUR SON ABOUT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Tell your son that **it is okay to say no** and that it is okay to leave a situation if he feels uncomfortable. Tell him if someone does something or asks him to do something that makes him feel uncomfortable, he should tell that person to stop. Emphasize to him that if the person does not listen, stop, or continues to him feel uncomfortable, they should tell an adult that they trust.

Read *The Guys Guide to Feminism* by Michael Kaufman & Michael Kimmel, a "hip and accessible" book that contains nearly a hundred entries from autonomy to zero tolerance. This book is written in varying tones, such as humorous, satirical, and serious. You and you son can both read this book and then have a dialogue about parts that stuck out to each of you and answer any questions he may have.

Watch *Turning a Corner* with your son, a documentary that tells the stories of those affected by the sex trade in Chicago and their efforts to create necessary policy reforms to end the harms experienced by those in prostitution. Discuss the movie afterward and answer any questions that may arise.

Watch *Very Young Girls* with your son. This is a film that follows 13 and 14-year-old girls in New York and addresses the mistreatment and abuse that they endure as prostituted young women. Discuss the movie afterward and answer any questions that may arise.

⁹ Melisa Farley, The Prostitution Fact Sheet, prostitutionresearch.com

Thank you for using our toolkit. We hope that you and your son found the resource helpful. Your son will continue to encounter confusing messages and difficult situations that will challenge his sexuality, test his values, and influence his behavior. It is so important to continue these conversations and guide him through these moments. CAASE is always available to answer any questions, suggestions, or concerns that you may have while reading and working with this toolkit. Please do not hesitate to contact us at outreach@caase.org.

We also encourage you to look at the supplemental information provided in addition to this toolkit. These materials include:

- Must Read Books
 - Books on Raising Boys
 - Books on Gender Expectations
 - Books on Sexual Exploitation
- Multimedia for Parents
- Must See Films
- Low-Cost Counseling Services in Chicago-land Area
- Chicago-based Organizations That Address Sexual Exploitation:
 - Direct Service/Outreach
- Chicago-based Organizations: Advocacy
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Lastly, we would greatly appreciate your feedback regarding your experience with the toolkit. You can fill out a brief survey online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W5NZRXM>.