

What is commercial sexual exploitation?

The commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents **is a crime** that occurs when one of more people involve a boy, girl or adolescent (under 18 years of age) in sexual or erotic activities in exchange for payment or any other reward in kind (clothes, food, drugs, etc.).

It includes any of the following forms of exploitation:

- Paid sexual intercourse and activities
- The production and distribution of child or adolescent pornography
- Participation in public or private sex shows

Due to the fact that commercial sexual exploitation is a very complex problem, the fight to eliminate it requires that it be dealt with in a comprehensive manner involving the active participation of all social sectors. The intervention of the health sector, along with that of officials from the education, migration, legal and police sectors, in addition to child and adolescent protection institutions, non-government organizations, international cooperation organizations and the public at large, is fundamental for preventing and putting a stop to this problem.

Those involved in situations of commercial sexual exploitation

The exploiters

- This group is made up of:
 - ◆ **Client-exploiters:** pay (with money or rewards of any kind) for sexual activities with underage persons.
 - ◆ **Pimps:** involve or lure boys, girls and adolescents in sexual activities, and in exchange they receive payment from the client-exploiters.
 - ◆ **Intermediaries:** facilitate or mediate the exploitation in order to obtain financial gain (can be taxi drivers, owners and staff of hotels, massage parlours and photographic studios, etc.).
- They are the people who are directly responsible for the problem.
- They may be any age, nationality, profession, marital status or sex, although the majority are male.
- They may be locals (nationals or foreign residents) or from other areas or countries (tourist exploiters).
- They sometimes bring about the movement of victims within or outside the country, thus committing the crimes of sale and trafficking in persons.
- In addition to sexually exploiting the victims, the client-exploiters may infect them with sexually transmitted diseases, impregnate them, attack them physically and reduce them to objects.
- **The exploiters should be reported and penalized.**

The victims

- They are boys, girls and adolescents under 18 years of age; however, the majority are female.
- They have lived in conditions which make them vulnerable: poverty, intra-family violence, being turned out of the family, exclusion from the education system, addiction to alcohol or other drugs, child labour and living on the streets, etc.
- They have not chosen to be sexually exploited, nor can they consent to it.
- Although they are not guilty of the situation, they feel responsible for what happens to them and cannot find a way out.
- Their human rights have been violated (the right to live with their family, the right to health, education, State protection, justice, integrity, etc.).
- They are subjected to sexual violence, economic exploitation and slavery.
- They do not “like” to be exploited or abused and they are not perverse, promiscuous or seducers, nor have they “lost” their moral values.
- They experience many negative consequences: social stigmatization, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, physical and emotional abuse, drug addictions and even death.
- **The victims should be protected by the State, the families and society.**

All children and adolescents, without any discrimination whatsoever, have the right to enjoy the highest possible standard of health and have access to health services and rehabilitation (Article 24, Convention on the Rights of the Child)

What are the responsibilities of the health sector in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation?

Preventive action:

- Training and creating awareness of the issue in different population groups: staff working in health centres, adults and underage persons being provided with care by the centre, and the community in general.
- When dealing with the issue of sexual and reproductive health with those who turn up at the health centre, take advantage of the opportunity to inform them of the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and the current legislation.
- Put up posters or informative material aimed at potential exploiters and the general public that attends the health centre for healthcare.
- Tackle the issue with existing work groups (committees, institutional networks, associations, etc.) at the health centre or within the community.
- Provide effective care for the cases of child sexual abuse detected, especially since the latter constitutes a risk factor for the possibility of commercial sexual exploitation in the future.
- Participate in local networks, committees or inter-institutional coordination to ensure a reference and counter-reference system both of the victims and the population at risk.

According to a regional study carried out by ILO/IPEC (2003), out of the 618 victims of exploitation interviewed in all the countries throughout the region 33.5% had been subjected to some form of sexual abuse before the age of 12. Only 15% of the victims of these cases received care from an institution and only 12% of the abusers were reported.

Detection measures

The care you provide the boys, girls and adolescents with will allow you to identify the **probability indicators** that are signs of suspecting, or **warning signs** of, a possible case of commercial sexual exploitation. It is important that you are very much aware of:

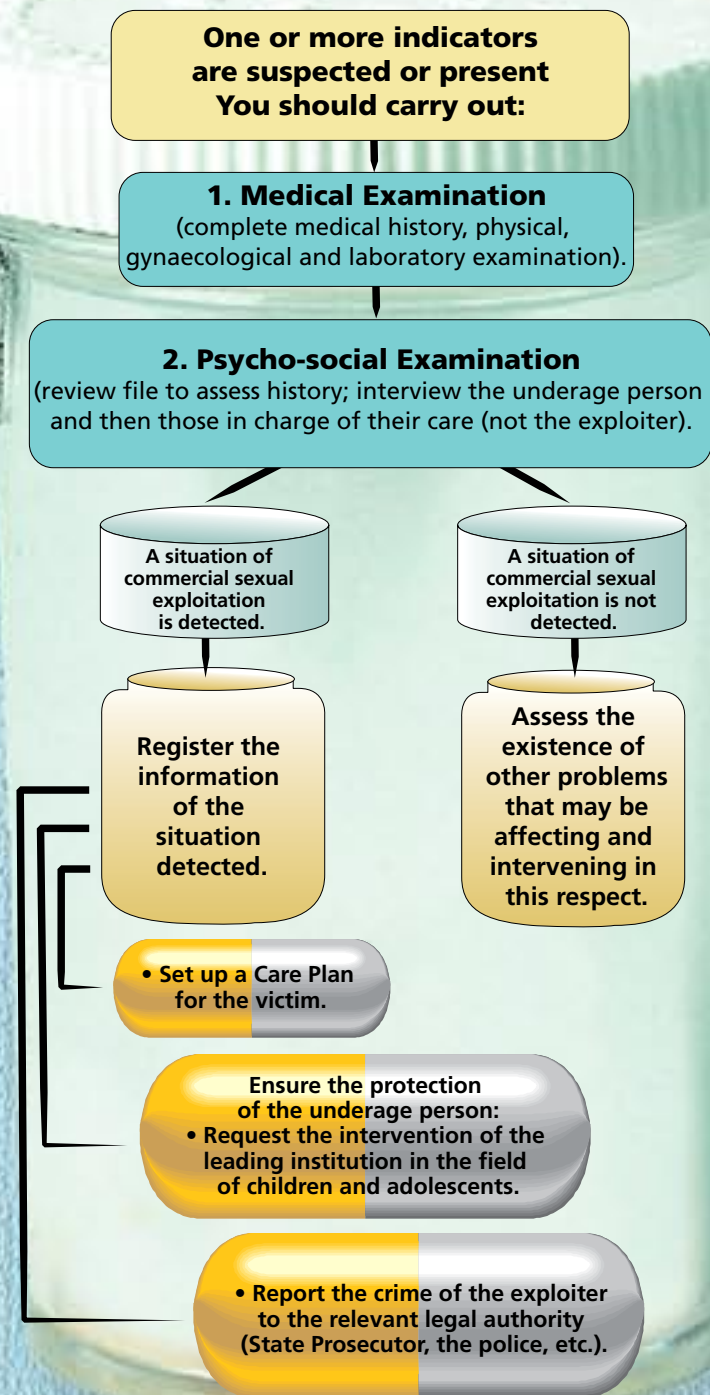
Physical Indicators:

- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancies
- Induced or spontaneous abortions
- Physical evidence of aggression, vaginal or anal rape
- Fissures or destruction of the anal sphincter
- Drowsiness
- Nutritional problems or disorders
- Clinical evidence of sexual activity that is inconsistent with the person's age

Psycho-social Indicators:

- Self-destructive behaviour: self-mutilation or suicide attempts.
- Running away from home.
- Poor performance at school or exclusion from the education system.
- Handling quantities of money clothes or objects that are inconsistent with the family's economic situation (for example, mobile phones).
- Drug taking (including cigarettes).
- Sexualized behaviour and language with peers and adults.
- Night time spent in places linked to commercial sexual exploitation.
- Involvement in criminal activities.
- The boy, girl or adolescent belongs to a socially vulnerable group, that is, they present some of the following conditions: the family lives in conditions of poverty or faces problems related to drug addiction; they have been subjected to intra-family violence, child sexual abuse, incest, abandonment and mistreatment; they have been turned out of the family; they have been excluded from the education system; they work, wander or live on the streets.

If you identify one or several of the probability indicators, adopt the following procedure:



Care and penalization actions

The care process is one in which resources (institutional, family and community) are coordinated and mobilized in order to ensure the following:

- The protection of the victim faced with exploitation and any other risk of re-victimization.
- The full exercising of all their human rights.
- General recovery from the effects produced by victimization.
- Reporting of the crime committed by the exploiter(s) or the situation of sexual exploitation.

A care plan should, therefore, include the following intervention components:

1. The right to life and the right to health

- Ensure the underage person has access to health services.

Result

The victim is in good health and is protected from any risk of re-victimization.

2. The right to protection against all forms of abuse and exploitation

- Report the crime committed by the exploiter(s)
- Request the intervention of the main institution responsible for child and adolescent-related issues.
- Coordinate with the relevant institutions for providing care for situations of intra-family violence.

Result

The victim and their family exercise all their human rights and are protected and in good health.

3. Watch over the exercising and full enjoyment of all human rights

- Promote permanence in or reinsertion into the education system, referring the case to the respective school or authority.
- Coordinate the family's access to aid programmes and economic benefits with social welfare authorities.

4. Follow up on each of the actions taken

- Provide follow-up to the institutional references made by the health centre.
- Monitor the impact of the plan and actions carried out in order to protect the victim and ensure the exercising of their rights.

Considerations of the Care Plan:

- Inform your immediate boss of the situation detected and together decide what intervention measures are to be taken.
- Draw up and carry out a care plan in conjunction with the victim and the person in charge of taking care of them. Ensure that the plan responds to the victim's multiple needs.
- Listen, at all times, to the victim's opinion and that of the person in charge of taking care of them, and keep them informed of the procedures that are going to be undertaken.
- Avoid scolding, complaining or blaming the boy, girl or adolescent. Remember that he or she is the victim and is not guilty of what is happening.

- Ensure the boy, girl or adolescent has access to the health services offered by the centre you work at.
- In addition to including care related to sexual and reproductive health, the care plan for victims of commercial sexual exploitation should take action to ensure the protection of this person against all forms of abuse and exploitation. For example, if an adolescent victim of commercial sexual exploitation arrives at the centre with a sexually transmitted disease (STD), they should be offered comprehensive care: medical treatment for the STD, information on the prevention of STDs, and the victim should be referred to the authority responsible for child and adolescent protection.
- Although health information is confidential, in some cases it is important to send regular reports on how the victim's health condition has evolved only to the authorities able to handle this information.
- With the aim of reporting the crime committed by the exploiter(s), familiarize yourself with the current legislation on sex crimes; who has the legal authority to report these, and what the procedure is.

Below please find basic information on some of the institutions that combat commercial sexual exploitation and whom you may contact:

Key phone numbers to report CSEC

Department of Human Services	Belize Police Department / Family Violence Unit
Belize Dist.....227-7451 / 7452	Belize City.....227-2222 / 2223
Cayo Dist804-2098	Belmopan822-2221 / 2222
Corozal Dist.....402-2120	Corozal422-2022
Orange Walk Dist.....302-2058	Dangriga.....522-2022
Stann Creek Dist.....502-0038	Orange Walk.....322-2022
Toledo Dist702-2021	Punta Gorda.....722-2022
	San Pedro226-2022

For more information or orientation about CSEC contact:
National Committee for Families and Children
Tel: 2230059 / 1180 • Fax: 2231229 • E-mail: ncfc@btl.net

REMEMBER:

You may be the only source of support for a boy, girl or adolescent victim of commercial sexual exploitation.

We must fight for the victims' protection and report the exploiters!

Project: "Contribution to the Prevention and Elimination of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children and adolescents in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic."
International Labour Office
International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
For further information, please visit the following web page: www.oit.or.cr/ipecc/esc

Responsibilities of the Health Sector faced with the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents

What is commercial sexual exploitation and how can we fight it?

