

What is commercial sexual exploitation?

The commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is a crime that occurs when one of more people use a boy, girl or adolescent under 18 years of age in sexual activities, in exchange for payment or the offer of purchase of clothes, food, drugs, etc.

It includes using persons under 18 years of age for:

- Having sexual intercourse or carrying out other erotic or sexual acts
- Taking photographs of them, making pornographic videos or films and distributing this material.
- Carrying out sex shows in nightclubs, bars, private parties, etc.
- Transporting them outside or within the country for commercial sexual exploitation purposes.

Who are directly responsible for and guilty of the problem?

The "client-exploiters": are the people who pay for sexual activities with boys, girls and adolescents. They may be of any nationality, age, marital status, profession, social class and sex, although the majority are male.



For example, a client-exploiter may be a man who contacts an adolescent under 18 years of age in a bar and offers to pay for having sexual intercourse with her.

- **The pimps:** are the people who, taking advantage of the boys, girls and adolescents, involve, lure or recruit them in sexual activities and offer them to "client-exploiters".



For example, a woman who is the owner of a so-called "massage parlour" who offers one of her "clients" the "sexual services" of the persons under 18 years of age who "work for her".

- **The intermediaries:** can be certain taxi drivers, and owners and staff of hotels, massage parlours and photographic studios, who facilitate the exploitation in exchange for some bonus or economic or material benefit.



For example, a taxi driver who provides information and takes a tourist to a nightclub where persons under 18 years of age are sexually exploited.

The exploiters set up highly organized criminal networks which should be reported to the authorities and penalized in accordance with the Penal Code.

Who are the victims?

They are boys, girls and adolescents who, on the whole, have lived very negative conditions: they have suffered abuse and violence within the family, abandonment, poverty, being thrown out of their homes, with few opportunities for studying and they spend a lot of time on the streets. The exploiters take advantage of these conditions to lure them into situations of commercial sexual exploitation.

REMEMBER:



The victims have not "chosen that life", nor are they "in it because they want to be" or "they like it" or because they are "shrewd" or "seducers". Commercial sexual exploitation has very negative consequences, such as, for example: unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, physical aggression, social isolation, drug addiction and even death.

A series of conventions, laws and regulations have been approved at the international level and in this country, which establish the right to protection of all persons under 18 years of age, and, at the same time, **the obligation of public officials, including police officers, to provide that protection.**

What situations should we be on the watch for?



- ✓ Persons under 18 years of age wandering around areas known to be frequented by sex exploiters.
- ✓ Boys, girls or adolescents entering or present in bars, nightclubs, massage parlours, brothels or arcades that hire pornographic videos.
- ✓ One or more people in a car acting suspiciously that approach

boys, girls and adolescents in public spaces for example: parks, outside hotels, nightclubs, bars, etc.

- ✓ Adults entering or hanging around public places (for example, a park, a cybercafé or a video arcade) and who directly approach underage persons or are suspected of offering them pornographic material.
- ✓ Boys, girls, adolescents and adults going in and out of houses or private premises at different times of the day (even late at night), leading to the suspicion that there is a sexual exploitation network operating there.
- ✓ The transporting of pornographic material, since it may contain images of underage persons (magazines, videos, films, photographs, etc.).
- ✓ Someone approaches the police or calls them to report a possible case of commercial sexual exploitation.



Due to the fact that all commercial sexual exploitation situations are different, no single procedure can be established. Police intervention will depend on each situation. Despite this, there are certain basic procedures you should follow:

When faced with a suspicious situation

Contact the specialized police unit or the State Prosecutor's Office that investigates these types of crimes immediately to coordinate the intervention that will take place.

Follow the recommendations of the State Prosecutor's Office or the specialized police unit because if they were already carrying out an investigation on the case, your intervention could alert the exploiters.

Make a note of everything you see and hear, especially information about the premises, vehicles, persons and any other important details for identifying those responsible.

If surveillance of the place in question is requested, care should be taken in order that those being watched do not notice your presence.

Contact the state institution that protects children and adolescents in order that they may assist potential victims.

If the underage person **IS NOT IN DANGER** of being harmed physically, and you are not in direct contact with the suspects and do not know their personal details:

Do not move or interrogate the underage person

Do not attempt to interrogate the suspects or ask the people near the premises (neighbours, for example) questions since this could alert the potential exploiters to the police actions.

Hand a report in to the legal authority in charge of investigating this type of crime.

Collaborate with the legal authority investigating the case by providing additional details of the facts or clarifying information you have given them.



¹ If this type of specialized unit does not exist in the country you should contact the offices in charge of criminal investigation.

Faced with a situation in which the underage person **IS IN DANGER** of being harmed physically:

Introduce yourself to the underage person in such a way as to demonstrate you are going to help and protect them. Offer them trust, confidentiality and unconditional support at all times.

With regard to proof of the crime and the suspect.

Do not ask unnecessary questions or any that may make them feel they are responsible for the situation. Avoid re-victimizing the boy, girl or adolescent.

If there is any possibility that the suspect or proof may disappear, a police officer should stay and guard the premises until they move the victim.

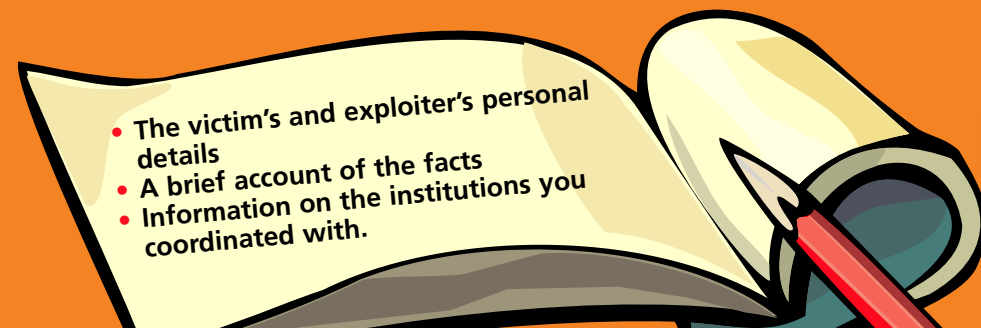
Take the victim to the legal authority in order that both the underage person and you yourself may make your statements.

If a lack of staff means choosing between moving the victim or arresting the suspects, the protection of the victims should always take priority.

Ensure the safety and protection of the underage person until the children and adolescents' institution you contacted comes to take charge of the case.

If the children and adolescents' institution do not fulfil their duties and do not show up, report this to your superiors. This type of report can also be processed as a result of failure to comply, in the service comptroller's office of public institutions.

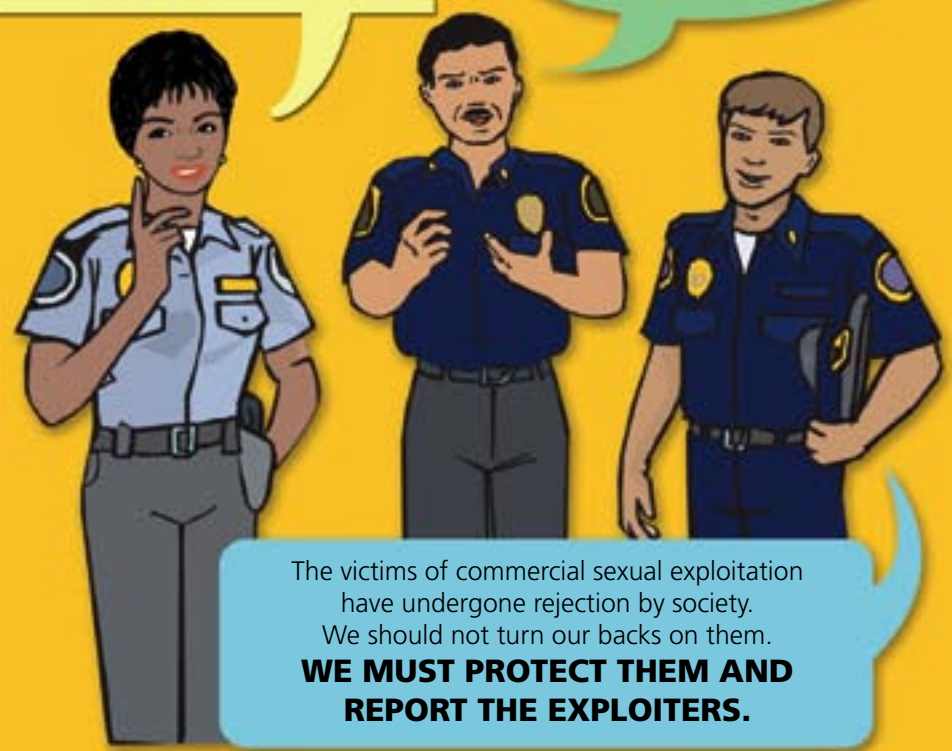
Write a police report that at least contains the following information:



- The victim's and exploiter's personal details
- A brief account of the facts
- Information on the institutions you coordinated with.

Underage persons involved in commercial sexual exploitation are not delinquents. They are people whose human rights have been violated. We cannot, for any reason, arrest them, use force against them or torture, mistreat or degrade them.

No police officer should take advantage of the vulnerable situation in which the victims of sexual exploitation find themselves. If we do, we are committing a crime and we are exposing ourselves to administrative and penal sanctions.



The victims of commercial sexual exploitation have undergone rejection by society. We should not turn our backs on them. **WE MUST PROTECT THEM AND REPORT THE EXPLOITERS.**

With the financial support of the United States Department of Labour

Key phone numbers to report CSEC

| Department of Human Services | Belize Police Department / Family Violence Unit | For more information or orientation about CSEC contact: |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Belize Dist.....227-7451 / 7452 | Belize City.....227-2222 / 2223 | National Committee for Families and Children Tel: 2230059 / 1180 Fax: 2231229 E-mail: ncfcb@btl.net |
| 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 | |

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/ipec/esc

Our role as police officers in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents

