Procedure for School Administrators Responding to Sex-Trafficking in Schools

* Human sex-trafficking is a problem across the country, especially in Ontario, that can affect some of our most vulnerable youth. In your work as a school principal, you may become aware that a student at your school is at risk of, or has experienced in some way, sex-trafficking. This document has been prepared to help detail the procedure for intervening in these situations.
* A flowchart has been developed as a board resource to be used by any employee who suspects a student may be involved in sex-trafficking, or at risk of becoming involved. It designates the School Board Mental Health Lead as the point person for these cases. Please see Appendix D
* If you or another school staff member become aware that a student is at risk of or may be involved with sex-trafficking (including the recruiting of others), ensure the Mental Health Lead is called immediately.
* Given the nature of many sex-trafficking cases, a call to a child protection agency may be necessary. If you or another employee supporting the student in question becomes aware of, or suspects child abuse, ensure that the person first receiving the information passes these concerns along to the child protection agency. Note that some information may be highly sensitive and may fall under privacy provisions laid out in the Education Act and/or PHIPA.
* Steps must be taken to help ensure the immediate safety of the student. Is the student a risk to themselves or others? Does s/he/they have a safe home environment to be released to? Are there others who may put the student at risk in the school? If the student is identified as at imminent risk of, or having already experienced, sex-trafficking, they should be closely monitored while at school. Additional safety provisions may be necessary where the student is living alone (e.g., if they are emancipated, 18 years or older) as there may be less supervision in their home.
* Parents and guardians should be contacted early on in this process if it is safe to do so. Parents / guardians can play an important role in keeping these students safe when they are not in school. They will also be heavily involved in the transition process, which is explained in more detail later in this procedure.
* In the case that a student is not under care of a guardian, one need not be included in the process.
* Involve your in-school support team for support with the student. The team can also help perform risk assessments to help ensure the immediate safety of the student. The team can help to provide support to the students directly and indirectly involved in the situations.
* The Mental Health Lead will be available to work closely with you to support you with any of the previously mentioned steps. The Lead will also connect with local agencies with programs specializing in this area. Given the complex nature of intervening in these cases, referrals to these programs will be paramount to ensure the student receives the support that they need.
* The Mental Health lead and Indigenous Lead can assist with a partnership with Indigenous community organizations, as well as the Atikameksheng and Wahnapitae communities, so that appropriate support persons and resources are available in order to ensure knowledgeable and skilled service is provided for students and staff who may be involved in these cases. They will be able to provide culturally appropriate care, be able to connect with appropriate cultural resources and referrals. Some Indigenous students may not want to use cultural support and follow mainstream practices- and therefore follow mainstream protocol but the option should be offered and revisited through the process. With Indigenous girls making up 50% of sex-trafficking cases- 25% of those being below the age of 18, it is likely these services will be required within our catchment area.
* Upon learning that a student is at acute risk of, or has experienced, sex- trafficking (including the recruiting of others), a student may be removed from their regular classroom until transition meetings can be held to ensure safety planning is complete. This will be especially important where a student has been groomed or recruited by another person at their school, or where a student has participated in the recruiting of others at their school. Transition meetings should also be held prior to the entry of a new student who is known to have experienced sex-trafficking.
* Transition meetings will include relevant school staff, the student, their guardian(s) (if appropriate and safe to do so), and agencies that are providing support to the student. The goals of these meetings will be to establish a plan that will meet the student’s safety, mental health, and academic needs upon their return to school. Supports should be trauma informed and should include

culturally responsive resources for each student. Part of each plan should involve regular check-ins with the student by the counsellor, mental health staff or another trusted school staff.

* Incidents in schools relating to sex-trafficking should be well documented by staff. After the necessary initial reporting has been completed (e.g., child protection agency, police) a record of the situation and steps taken throughout the process will be maintained by the school. All information gathered will be secured to ensure the protection of information.
* Intervening in these situations can be very challenging and can have impacts on our staff who are providing support. School boards offer resources to these employees, including mental health counselling through Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).