03. RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

- Relationships do not just exist online or offline today. Interaction and communication occur face-to-face, virtually, and digitally, and usually through a variety of messaging, social media, and other online platforms. In person communication, texting, video calling, and social media can all enhance the opportunities we have to speak to each other. Unfortunately, these tools can also be misused by exploiters.
- Healthy relationships include mutual respect, trust, considerate communication, honesty, consent, and understanding, among other factors.
- Young people, like adults, often forge relationships online. Even when they have met partners in person, most people communicate with their partners via text and social media as well as in person.
- Young people will also receive solicitations online, and some may be related to finding work. Exploiters use job postings for positions like traveling sales crews, restaurants, hotels, or other jobs that seem "too good to be true" to identify youth looking for work and then traffick them through labor.
- Sexting has become a normalized part of many relationships in our digital era. While sexting among consensual adults for private use is legal, depending on the age of the parties involved, sending explicit photographs can have academic, social, and emotional consequences and may violate state or even federal laws. Find more information [here](#).
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, teen dating violence affects over 25% of women and approximately 15% of men, and may involve cyberstalking and/or cyber-harassment.[1]
- Cyberstalking, cyberbullying, and cyber-harassment involve the use of the Internet, computers, or other electronic devices to engage in harmful, threatening, or harassing behavior. There are often intersections between cybercrime and human trafficking.
- Relationships between employers and employees can be exploitive as well. The International Labor Organization estimates that 79 million children are in hazardous work.[2]

LOGO

TRAFFICK STOP

Learning Objectives
1. Apply elements of healthy relationships to in person and online interactions.
2. Discern between harmless and potentially unsafe relationships.

Warm-up: Choose an icebreaker or activity to help students get to know each other better.

Guided Discussion
Use these questions to generate a discussion among team members.
- Are there ways in which technology can improve and/or help relationships? In what ways does technology negatively impact relationships?
- Does your school have specific rules or policies that address sexting?
- Think about some adults (parent, coach, teacher, etc.) whom you trust and would be comfortable talking to about relationship issues.
- What resources exist in your school/community to help teens who are dealing with teen dating violence and/or digital dating abuse? What about cybercrime?

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, March 5). *Preventing Teen Dating Violence.* Retrieved October 17, 2021, from https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teendatingviolence/fastfact.html.
[2] International Labour Organization. (2020). Child Labour: Global estimates 2020. Retrieved August 23, 2022, from https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang—en/index.htm.

- Does your school's workforce program address suspicious job postings? Do you know how suspicious postings or employers can be reported to the Better Business Bureau and Department of Labor?

Learning in Action
Review the power and control wheels for domestic violence and human trafficking.
- What are some similarities?
- Where are there differences?

Connecting the Dots
- Sexting can lead to sextortion – when a person who has the images tries to use them to take advantage of the sender.
- When establishing new relationships, it is important to set healthy boundaries early, and to be able to recognize red flags and potentially abusive behavior.
- Perpetrators of human trafficking often use romantic relationships to gain victims' trust and leverage that trust to manipulate victims. They may also use cyberstalking to intimidate or harass victims.
- Exploitive employers often use threats of violence and deportation by law enforcement to instill fear in workers and to ensure they remain compliant. Employers may also blame a lack of personal protective equipment and staffing on the economy or other factors - but without proper equipment and overtime pay, workplace violations exist.

Reflect & Review
Have students respond to one or all of the following prompts (time-permitting):
- What are some components of a healthy relationship?
- What are some warning signs or red flags that may indicate that a relationship is becoming unhealthy?
Invite students to share their answers with the group.

Tips for Adapting to Online Delivery
- See "Online Delivery Tip Sheet" in the Facilitator Toolkit for more information about adapting your meeting plan to an online platform.

Facilitator Notes   **Upcoming Meeting Dates: __/__/__**

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References
CyberSWAT
love is respect
Unbound
Stop Sextortion