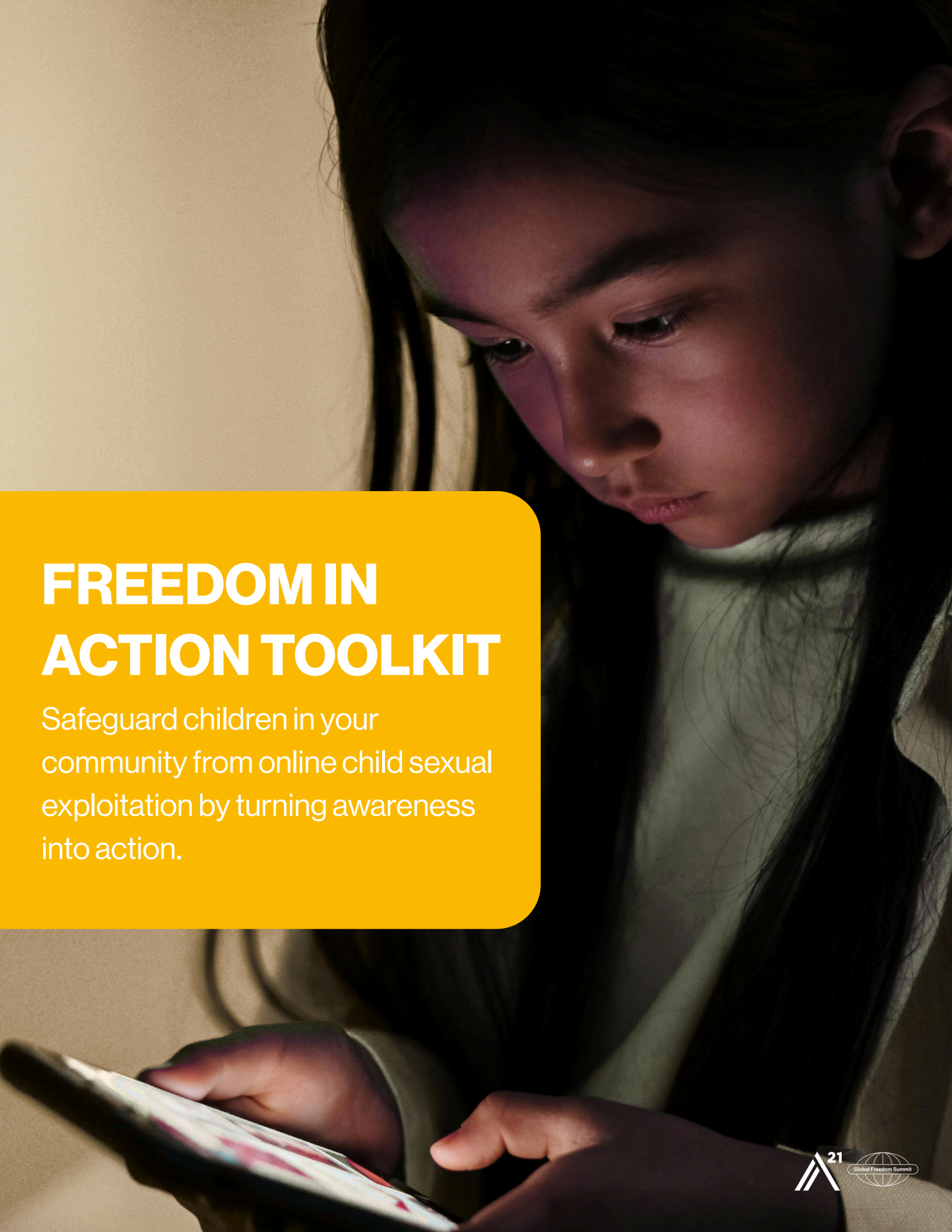


A close-up, high-angle shot of a young girl with dark hair, looking down intently at a smartphone held in her hands. The lighting is soft and focused on her face and the device. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

FREEDOM IN ACTION TOOLKIT

Safeguard children in your community from online child sexual exploitation by turning awareness into action.

THE PROBLEM



A Global Crisis: The Cycle of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is hidden, fast-growing, and complex—generating billions each year through the exploitation of millions of people. The vulnerable are being deceived, those who are exploited are left with no way out, and the few who do escape often lack the support needed to avoid revictimisation. Unless there's intervention, the cycle will continue...

VULNERABILITY

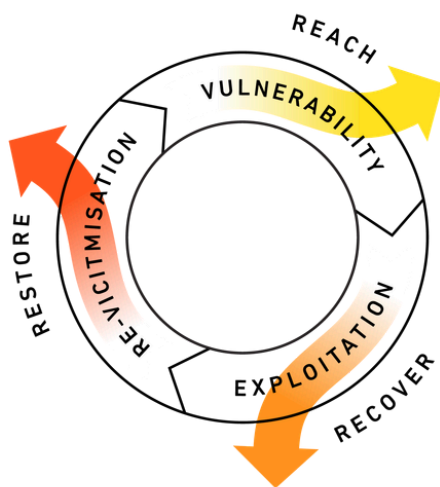
An individual becomes vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation when they are exposed to risk factors like instability, violence and abuse, poor education, substance misuse, poverty, homelessness, unemployment and more.

EXPLOITATION

Victimisation occurs when someone is coerced, deceived, forced, or when there is an abuse of power. This can look like false job opportunities, a loverboy method, or being sold by a family member into labour or sex trafficking.

RE-VICTIMISATION

When a survivor exits a trafficking situation, the resulting trauma combined with the original unresolved risk factors perpetuates the likelihood of being re-exploited, and the cycle of trafficking continues.



A Radical Hope: A21's Solution

Since 2008, we've seen awareness prevent trafficking on a massive scale, hotlines and professional trainings lead to the identification of victims, and countless lives that were once enslaved restored to freedom and independence. We know how to stop the cycle of human trafficking—and with your help, we will.

REACH

Educating and equipping everyone to understand, identify, and reduce the risk of human trafficking through programs like education curriculum, prevention materials, and awareness campaigns.

RECOVER

Partnering with authorities to secure the freedom of victims and the conviction of traffickers through initiatives like hotlines, Child Advocacy Centres, identification trainings, and legal support.

RESTORE

Empowering survivors of human trafficking on their unique journeys toward restoration and independence through holistic aftercare, safe accommodation, and relocation services.

EXPLOITATION CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

You may have heard us say this before: human trafficking and exploitation are constantly evolving. New forms of exploitation are continually emerging. Perpetrators are becoming increasingly strategic, refining how they recruit, manipulate, and control, using both familiar tactics and new tools to exploit vulnerability with greater precision.

One of the most significant forces shaping the landscape of exploitation today is the **rapid rise of technology**.

Technology has undeniably opened doors for connection, education, and access to information on an unprecedented scale. At the same time, it has widened the pathways through which exploitation can occur. Vulnerability remains the entry point, and in a hyper-connected world, those points of vulnerability are easier to access. This is especially true for children, who are growing up in a digital age.

WHAT IS ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) is one of the most urgent crises of our time, and it's growing faster than most people realise.

In the past, exploitation often required physical proximity and took place in hidden or isolated environments. Today, it can happen anywhere. It can happen in a bedroom, in a classroom, or in any place that appears safe.

Let's get practical for a moment. What exactly is "Online Child Sexual Exploitation?"

Online child sexual exploitation covers a range of illicit activities, including:

GROOMING

Building a child's trust online to gradually manipulate or exploit them, often sexually.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL (CSAM)

Sexual images or videos involving anyone under 18.

GENERATED AI CSAM (GAI-CSAM):

Sexually explicit images or videos of children created or manipulated using AI.

ONLINE ENTICEMENT

Communicating with who they believe to be a child online with the intention of committing a sexual offense or abduction.

SEXTORTION

Using sexual images or information to threaten or blackmail someone into providing more sexual content, money, or other demands.

VIOLENT EXTORTION AND GORE NETWORKS

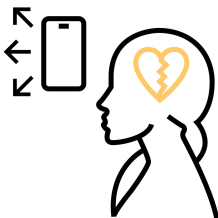
Online groups that manipulate or pressure minors into violence, self-harm, or other extreme behaviours.

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE SAFE RELATIONSHIP GUIDE

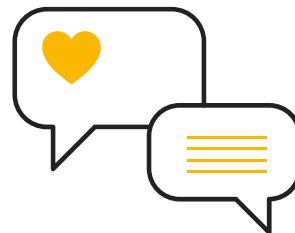
THE FACTS



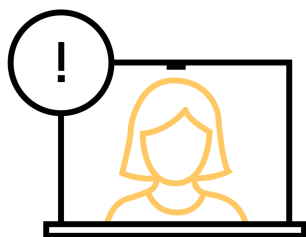
Millions of children a year are estimated to be victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse.¹



According to the United Nations, it is estimated that **1 in 3 Internet users** worldwide is under 18 years old.²



An estimated **89% of sexual advances directed at children** occur in internet chatrooms or using game messaging apps.³



There are an estimated **500,000 predators** lurking online every day.³

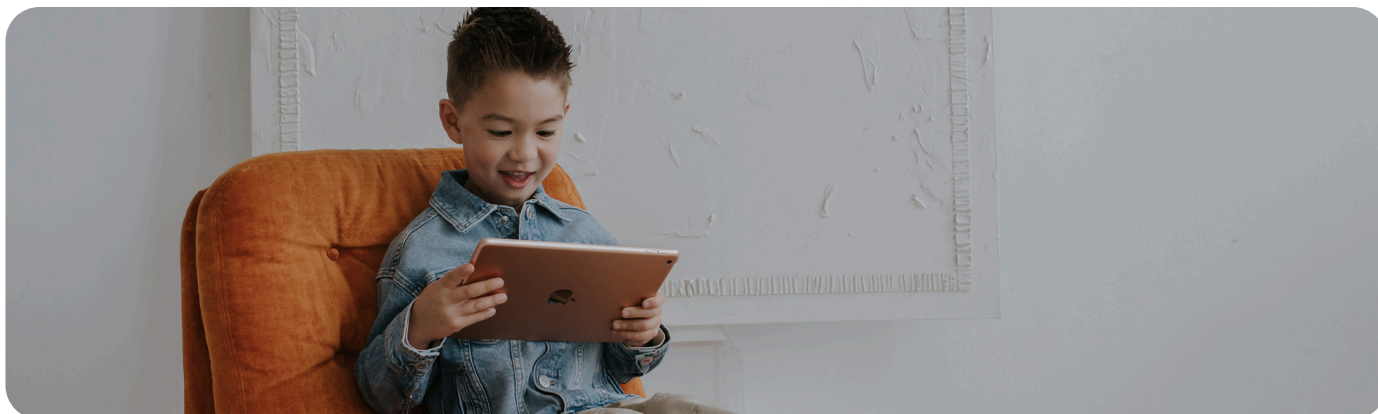


20M+ reports involving child sexual abuse material (CSAM) made in 2024 to the CyberTipline.⁴



It has never been easier to gain access, build trust, and exploit children.

Minors are increasingly comfortable interacting with strangers online. Today's generations (unlike previous ones) are growing up using social media, gaming platforms, and online spaces not just to stay connected, but to meet new people and build meaningful relationships. Digital connectivity is embedded in nearly everything they do: learning, playing, connecting. But without the proper tools, these spaces have become breeding grounds for some of the most heinous exploitation our world has ever known.



1. Childlight Global Child Safety Institute. (2024). Into the Light Index: Global estimates of online child sexual exploitation and abuse
 2. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. (2021). Investigating risks and opportunities for children in a digital world: A rapid review of the evidence.
 3. Child Crime Prevention & Safety Center. (2026). Online predator statistics.
 4. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. (2025). CyberTipline data.

POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS THAT A CHILD MAY BE BEING SEXUALLY EXPLOITED ONLINE

1

Experiencing a breakdown in relationships—isolating from peers or family, or withdrawing from usual social circles.

2

Changes in physical appearance, such as sudden weight loss or alterations in makeup or clothing choices.

3

Showing up with gifts or possessions that can't be explained.

4

Becoming upset, withdrawn, or anxious after using the internet or texting.

5

Shifting temperament — becoming moody, aggressive, or withdrawn.

6

Accumulating numerous new phone numbers, texts, or email addresses.

7

They exhibit secretive behaviour, especially when asked about their activities.

8

Receiving excessive texts or calls.

9

Excessive time on mobile phones, gaming consoles, or other electronic devices.

10

Leaving home without explanation or frequently returning home late.

11

Struggling with sleep or eating habits, showing signs of anxiety.

12

Skipping school or becoming disruptive in class.

Helpful Reminders:

One or even a few of these indicators do not necessarily mean a child is being exploited online. However, they can be important signals that something may be going on and can be an opportunity to pause, pay attention, and start a conversation.

Many of these indicators can also be associated with other mental health or medical concerns. Rather than jumping to conclusions, approach changes with curiosity and care, while considering whether additional support may be needed.

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE DIGITAL SAFETY GUIDE



PREPARING FOR DISCLOSURE

No one is ever fully prepared to discover that a child is being exploited. These tips are designed to help you navigate those first moments, respond with care, and take the next steps toward safety and support.

YOUR FIRST REACTION MATTERS

- Take a moment. Take a breath.

LISTEN BEFORE QUESTIONING

- Enter the conversation with curiosity and the desire to understand

REASSURE THEM THEY DID THE RIGHT THING

- Say something like: "I'm glad you told me."

FOCUS ON SAFETY FIRST

- Consequences and next steps can come later.

LEAD WITH SAFETY, NOT PUNISHMENT

- Avoid blame, lectures, or immediate punishment.

Kids are more likely to ask for help when they believe telling the truth will bring support, not punishment.

HAVING THE HARD CONVERSATIONS IN A SAFE, HEALTHY, AND EFFECTIVE WAY

For the parents and guardians reading this, open communication and creating a safe and trusted environment where your child feels comfortable sharing is key to their safety and protection.

- Consistently reinforce that you love them and that you want to make sure they are safe and feel protected.
- Maintain a non-judgmental, supportive attitude throughout all conversations.
- Avoid shaming or criticism, which can shut down open communication and prevent your child from sharing concerns in the future.
- Be honest about the dangers of the internet while avoiding language that creates unnecessary fear or anxiety.
- Tailor your approach to what is developmentally appropriate for your child's age and maturity level.
- Acknowledge your child's desire to be online and connect with friends.
- Work together to establish safe online interaction guidelines that feel reasonable to both of you.

MORE TIPS & CONVERSATION STARTERS



THE FIRST 12 HOURS: WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU FIND OUT A CHILD IS A VICTIM?

BEGIN WITH SUPPORTING THE CHILD

- Do not chastise them. How you respond matters greatly.

DON'T DELETE OR ERASE ANYTHING

- Messages, images/videos, and accounts are evidence.

DON'T CONTACT THE SUSPECT

- Contacting the suspect can hinder the investigation.

IMMEDIATELY LIMIT CHILD'S ACCESS

- Ensure that they aren't able to still connect with the suspect through any sites, apps or platforms.

WRITE DOWN CRITICAL INFORMATION

- Get your child's account names, email address, and passwords.
- Get the suspect account name, username, phone number, email, etc.

CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Go to your local office and ask to speak with a detective
- Be prepared to turn over electronic devices used by your child to help the investigation.

MAKING A REPORT

Even if you've already been in touch with your local police, it's important to make an official report about what has happened.

In Australia, you can report relevant matters to the Australian Federal Police (AFP). The AFP provides an online reporting service for Commonwealth crimes, and reports can be assessed and referred to the appropriate law-enforcement agency where necessary.

- 1 If a child is in immediate danger call 000
- 2 If a child is being exploited online, [click here to report via ACCCE](#)
- 3 If you find child sexual abuse material online or wish to have content removed, [click here to report via eSafety](#)
- 4 If you're unsure where to report or want to report anonymously, call Crime Stoppers at 1800 333 000 or [click here to report online](#)



ONLINE SAFETY PLANNING CHECKLIST

Creating an Online Safety Plan can help children navigate the online world safely and confidently. Here are practical steps you can take together to establish safeguards, recognise concerning situations, and know what to do if something goes wrong.

- ☐ **Stay involved in your child's online world:** Take an active interest in the apps, games, platforms, and online communities your child uses. Talk regularly about their online experiences and pay attention to changes in behaviour that may indicate something is wrong. Create opportunities for open conversation so your child knows they can come to you with questions or concerns.
- ☐ **Establish age-appropriate digital boundaries:** Set clear, age-appropriate expectations around device use, screen time, appropriate apps and platforms, and supervision. Follow platform age requirements and use available parental controls and privacy and safety settings. Review boundaries regularly as your child grows and becomes more independent.
- ☐ **Protect personal information and location:** Talk about information that should not be shared publicly or with people your child does not know and trust, such as their address, school, phone number, location, routines, passwords, or private images. Review who can see your child's location and disable unnecessary location sharing.
- ☐ **Discuss online warning signs:** Talk with your child about online behaviours that may be warning signs, such as someone asking them to keep conversations secret or send sexual images, sending them sexual content, offering gifts, money, or gaming credits, pressuring them to move conversations somewhere private or meet in person, pretending to be someone they are not, pushing boundaries, making threats, or using blackmail.
- ☐ **Make a plan in case something goes wrong:** Make sure your child knows they can come to you or another trusted adult, even if they made a mistake, shared something, broke a family rule, or are worried about getting in trouble. Agree on what you will do together, which may include stopping contact with the person, not complying with threats or demands, preserving relevant messages or other evidence, blocking and reporting the person, and seeking emergency assistance if someone is in danger.
- ☐ **Identify trusted adults and ways to get help:** Identify at least two trusted adults your child can contact if they need help, and make sure they know how to reach them. Talk with your child about the emergency number in your country and when to use it, identify safe places they can go if they feel threatened (libraries, police stations, trusted neighbours), and create a simple code word, phrase, or signal they can use if they feel unsafe and need your help.

PUT YOUR PLAN INTO PRACTICE

Complete the Our Online Safety Agreement together to establish shared expectations, identify trusted adults, and agree on what to do if something goes wrong.

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE PARENT GUIDE



ONLINE SAFETY AGREEMENT

This agreement is about working together to make online experiences positive and safe. We agree to communicate openly, make thoughtful choices, and ask for help if something doesn't feel right.

WHEN I'M ONLINE, I WILL DO MY BEST TO:

Protect my privacy

- Use the privacy and safety settings we have agreed on for my online accounts
- Avoid sharing personal information that could identify where I live or spend time, and keep my passwords secure.
- Think carefully before posting personal struggles or private family information publicly, and turn to people I trust when I need support.

Be thoughtful about who I interact with

- Remember that people online may not always be honest about who they are.
- Pay attention to warning signs, such as secrecy, sexual content or requests, gifts or money, pressure to move conversations somewhere private or meet in person, or threats.
- Tell a trusted adult if someone repeatedly contacts me when I don't want them to or makes me feel uncomfortable.
- Never arrange to meet someone I know only online without talking to my parent or caregiver first. If we agree to meet them, we will make a safety plan together, including meeting in a public place and having a trusted adult present.

Make thoughtful choices about what I share

- Think before I post, send, or share something and consider whether I am comfortable with others seeing or sharing it.
- Not send or request sexual or intimate images, and tell a trusted adult if someone sends me sexual content or asks me for an intimate image.
- Respect other people's boundaries by accepting "no" the first time without pressuring them to change their mind or responding negatively.
- Respect other people's privacy and not participate in cyberbullying or share or forward private or intimate content, or content intended to hurt or embarrass someone.

IF SOMETHING FEELS WRONG OR GOES WRONG ONLINE, I WILL:

- Stop or step away and tell a trusted adult if something makes me feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or unsure what to do.
- Not give in to threats or demands, including requests for additional images or money.
- Ask a trusted adult to help me decide what to do next, including whether to block or report someone.

I know I can ask for help even if I made a mistake, responded to someone, shared something I wish I hadn't, broke one of our family rules, or am worried about getting in trouble.

AS YOUR PARENT OR CAREGIVER I WILL:

- Listen, stay calm, and take you seriously if you come to me about something that happened online, without blaming or shaming you.
- Remind you that asking for help is always the right thing to do and work with you to decide what steps we need to take.
- Respect your growing independence while continuing to help you navigate online experiences safely.

MY TRUSTED ADULTS

1. **Name:**

Phone:

2. **Name:**

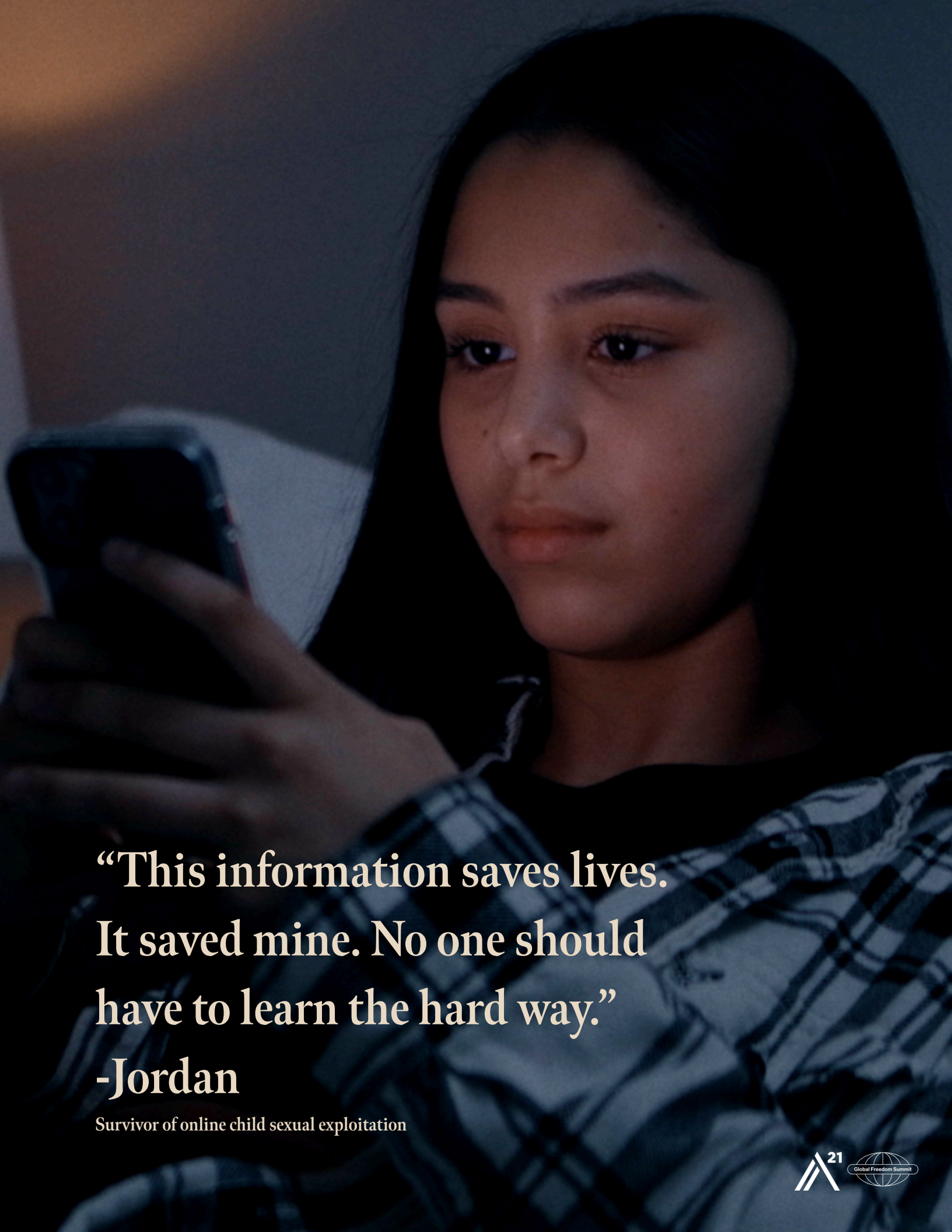
Phone:

Child / Young Person: _____

Parent / Caregiver: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____



“This information saves lives.
It saved mine. No one should
have to learn the hard way.”

-Jordan

Survivor of online child sexual exploitation

RESOURCES

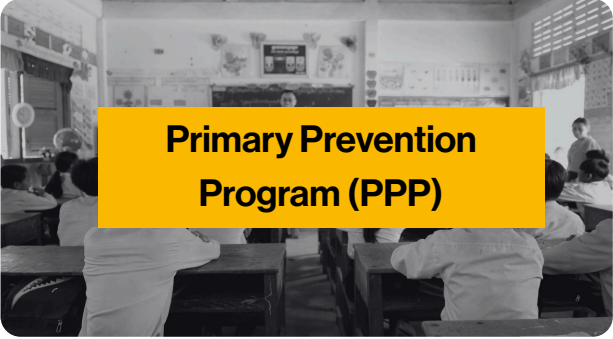
Here at A21, we believe that education plays a vital role in prevention. This is why our team of experts has carefully created prevention programs and education curriculum for nearly every stage of childhood.



Early Child Prevention Program (ECP)

The Early Childhood Prevention Program equips vulnerable children ages 3-6 with safety tools through activity-based learning to help protect them from exploitation.

[Learn More](#)



Primary Prevention Program (PPP)

The Primary Prevention Program equips children ages 6-12 with the confidence and safety tools to make informed decisions through activity-based learning, helping protect them from exploitation.

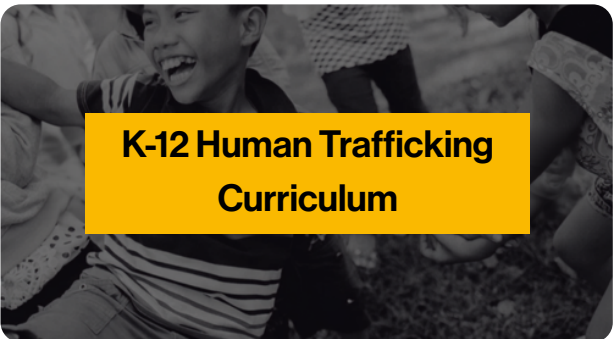
[Learn More](#)



Secondary Prevention Program

The Secondary Prevention Program equips young people ages 13-17 with practical tools to navigate exploitation, safe migration, relationships, employment, digital safety, and more.

[Learn More](#)



K-12 Human Trafficking Curriculum

The K-12 Human Trafficking Education Curriculum equips American students with the knowledge and tools to recognise, respond to, and reduce their risk of exploitation and human trafficking.

[Learn More](#)

CAN YOU SEE ME?

Can You See Me? is A21's global awareness campaign, which has reached billions of people worldwide. Through locally relevant stories and real-world trafficking indicators, the campaign helps communities recognise what human trafficking can look like in their region and know how to report it.

This year, through the Global Freedom Summit, we launched *Seen*, the latest CYSM film, shining a light on the growing reality of online child sexual exploitation and how children can be targeted in the digital world.



Watch the Short Film

This short film is based on real stories from survivors of online child sexual exploitation, following a young girl who is exploited online by someone she thought she could trust.

[Watch Now](#)



Share on Social Media

Share this story on social media to help raise awareness and equip others in your community with information that could make a difference. You never know who in your world may need it most.

[Share Today](#)



Download Posters & Canvas Your City

Victim identifications happen often because someone recognised the signs after seeing a CYSM billboard or poster. Your action could be the reason someone is seen, identified, and protected.

[Download](#)

[CHECK OUT OTHER CAN YOU SEE ME? FILMS](#)

HELP US END ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EVERYWHERE, FOREVER.

YOUR AWARENESS IS PROTECTING THE CHILDREN IN YOUR WORLD.

Give to protect the children beyond it.

\$25 can help equip communities to recognise trafficking and online grooming, exposing what was meant to stay hidden.

\$75 can help bring prevention education to vulnerable children, helping them to recognise risk and stay safe.

\$150 can help provide trauma-informed care for child survivors as they heal, recover, and rebuild their lives.



Give Today



Find & Share More Resources

YOUR AWARENESS IS PROTECTING THE CHILDREN IN YOUR WORLD.

Share to protect the children beyond it.

The more we understand about online exploitation, grooming, and trafficking, the better equipped we are to recognise the warning signs, have informed conversations, and create safer environments for children.

Share what you've learned with a parent, caregiver, teacher, or coach, in person or on your social media.