



# Human Trafficking in Waterloo Region

## It Happens Here

**KNOW THE FACTS.  
PROTECT YOURSELF.  
KNOW THERE IS HELP.  
YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

**This resource will focus on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (i.e. sex trafficking)**

**MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESPONSE  
TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING,  
WATERLOO REGION**

# Overview

Contrary to popular belief that human trafficking is just an international problem, it is actually a big problem right here in Canada, in Ontario, and in Waterloo Region.

The rates have been rising in Waterloo Region and youth are the prime group at risk. While certain groups of people are at greater risk of being trafficked than others, this can and does affect all types of people, even those not considered “high risk”.

The goal of this resource is to help prevent human trafficking by raising awareness of the issue, from a local lens. This resource focuses on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (i.e. “sex trafficking”). Information is provided on what human trafficking is, how and where it happens, how to recognize the signs, safety tips, and how to get help.

For an electronic version of this document and for other free resources, please visit **ithappenshere.org**.

*Please share this resource and the knowledge you gain from it with others!*

**If you are in immediate danger, call 911.**

See page 12 for a list of service providers.

## A note for youth educators/service providers:

A human trafficking awareness poster and PowerPoint presentation (complete with speaking notes) are available at no cost; please visit **ithappenshere.org** for more details. These resources are very well suited for use by educators/service providers in the community who work with youth (age 13+) in Waterloo Region. Using these tools, educators/service providers will be able to effectively deliver information to youth in Waterloo region to help them better understand human trafficking, how to protect themselves, how to identify the signs of trafficking, and how and where to seek help.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Presented by the Multi-Disciplinary Response to Combat Human Trafficking Committee. For more information on the committee, visit **ithappenshere.org**.

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This document was prepared with a grant provided by the **Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services**.

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*Through **raising awareness** of human trafficking,  
we can work to **prevent it!***



# What is human trafficking?

First, let's clear up the common misconception that human smuggling and human trafficking mean the same thing. These commonly confused terms are not the same.

**Human smuggling** is when a person voluntarily pays to be transported illegally to a new country and is free from the smuggler upon arrival.<sup>1</sup> Note that human smuggling can turn into human trafficking if an individual is smuggled into another country and then held captive or exploited on their arrival.<sup>2</sup>

**Human trafficking** is when a person is manipulated, controlled, and/or forced to do things against their will (e.g. being forced into sex work, aka "sex trafficking"). They are exploited in some way to benefit someone else.<sup>3</sup>

There are different types of human trafficking (e.g. labour trafficking, organ trafficking, etc). This resource will focus on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (i.e. sex trafficking) and any reference to 'human trafficking' herein refers specifically to sex trafficking.

**Note: Sex work and sex trafficking are different. In sex work, a person:**

- Has made a choice to enter the sex trade
- Has control over their working conditions (e.g. they control the types of services they provide, how many clients they see in a day, etc)
- Has control over their own profits
- Is not controlled by someone else
- Can choose to stop engaging in sex work at any time

This is not the case for individuals who are being sex trafficked.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the often complex relationship that exists between a trafficked individual and their trafficker (or "pimp"), some may not even realize that they are being trafficked<sup>5</sup> and they may have their situation confused with sex work.

This chart can help to clarify how sex trafficking and sex work differ:

	Sex Work	Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation
<b>Entry</b>	VOLUNTARY (by choice or circumstance)	INVOLUNTARY/FORCED
<b>Control over working conditions</b>	YES	NO
<b>Control over profits</b>	YES	NO
<b>Control by a third party</b>	NO	YES
<b>Option to exit</b>	YES	NO

MCIS Language Solutions ([helpingtraffickedpersons.org](http://helpingtraffickedpersons.org))

**Note:** Recruiting anyone under the age of 18 years old for the purpose of sexual exploitation is considered trafficking, even if no coercion or deception was involved.<sup>6</sup> Those under 18 have special legal status and CANNOT consent to engage in sex work.<sup>7</sup>

# Who does it happen to?

Human trafficking can happen to anyone from any socioeconomic background, race, gender, culture or age group. While 95% of reported cases in Canada involve females, sex trafficking can and does happen to men and boys in Canada.<sup>2,6</sup>

Most reported cases involve trafficked individuals who are Canadian-born females between the ages of 14 and 22 years old.<sup>8</sup> According to Statistics Canada, over 70% of victims identified by police are under age 25.<sup>2</sup> The average age is estimated to be 17<sup>9</sup> and many are being recruited as young as 12 and 13 years old.<sup>6</sup>

Certain groups tend to be at higher risk including:<sup>9,10</sup>

- Young women and girls
- Indigenous women and girls
- Youth in care
- Those with mental health and addiction issues
- New immigrants
- Homeless youth
- LGBTQ+ youth

According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), in recent years, individuals with relatively stable backgrounds are becoming increasingly targeted.<sup>8</sup>

# What are some of the risk factors?<sup>9,11</sup>

Although there is no standard “profile” for a trafficked individual, the following factors can make someone more vulnerable:

- Mental health issues
- Body image issues
- Low self-esteem
- Learning disabilities
- Social isolation
- Abuse or lack of support in the family
- Violence in the home
- Poverty and a need for survival

An individual may have a desire for a better life – maybe they wish for the supportive family life that they’ve never had, money, nice clothing, or just someone to tell them that they are beautiful. **Traffickers prey on an individual’s vulnerabilities to lure and manipulate them.** They scope out people who are vulnerable, naive and trusting and lure them with things like expensive gifts, the promise of affection, a glamorous lifestyle, etc.<sup>11</sup>

## How does it happen?

*It may not happen how you think...*

Many tend to think that an individual is forced into trafficking by being forcefully abducted or drugged – although this does happen – the more common scenario involves a trafficker pretending to be kind or in love to lure a vulnerable person into sex trafficking (this type of trafficker is sometimes called a “Romeo Pimp” or “Boyfriend Pimp”).

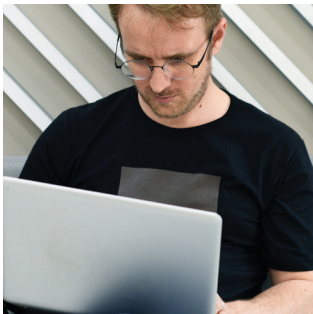
The process often consists of luring, grooming, coercion and manipulation, and ultimately sexual exploitation. In this section we refer to the trafficked individual as ‘she’ and the trafficker as ‘he’ as this is often the case; however, both traffickers and trafficked individuals can be any gender.

### **Luring:**

Traffickers tend to connect with people directly or through mutual friends or acquaintances. This can occur anywhere, especially where youth hang out: schools, shopping malls, parties, fast food restaurants, youth facilities/shelters, the internet, etc.<sup>11</sup> Snapchat and Instagram are noted by Waterloo Regional Police as common tools used by traffickers. Some traffickers get teens to recruit in high schools<sup>13</sup>, or they may set up bogus job interviews to make contact with unsuspecting, vulnerable people.<sup>14</sup> The trafficker starts by forming a connection with someone and collects as much information as possible about them to use against them later on.<sup>12</sup>

### **Grooming:**

The trafficker may make a girl feel like a princess and she thinks that she is in love and has found the man of her dreams. He often makes false promises of providing things like a family or a home. He may make her feel special by taking her out shopping, to get her hair and nails done, etc. They may engage in physical intimacy and often she is led to believe that he is her boyfriend.<sup>12</sup>



## Coercion & Manipulation:

Once a strong sense of attachment and dependency is formed he starts sending mixed messages. By shifting between acting caring and being threatening, he maintains psychological control.<sup>9</sup> She feels both loyal and intimidated.<sup>9</sup> He begins to ask her to do sexual acts that she may be uncomfortable with or to pay her for sexual acts – gradually desensitizing her to these actions and getting her used to the idea that sex comes with a price. He may use the information he gained about her to maintain control (e.g. reminding her that he knows where her family members live, etc). She grows more and more dependent on him and feels like she has to follow the rules he sets out.<sup>15</sup> He may move her away from her home to hotels/motels<sup>13</sup>, ensuring that she is disoriented and without resources.<sup>9</sup>

## Exploitation:

Her self-esteem is completely shattered. He threatens her and her loved ones, using the information he knows about her.<sup>12</sup> She feels that she owes him and is obligated to contribute financially. She is withstanding emotional, mental and often-times physical abuse all resulting in intimidation and control. She is forced to perform sex acts for customers, and she sees little or none of the profits. She is alone, isolated and has no control of her situation and feels that there is no way of getting out. She is trapped in a life of exploitation.<sup>12</sup>



# Where does it happen?

## *It happens here in Ontario, in Waterloo Region*

Many believe that human trafficking is only an international issue, when the reality is that most human trafficking cases are domestic (over 90%), where all stages of trafficking occur within Canada's borders.<sup>16</sup>

Nearly 70% of all human trafficking reported in Canada happens in Ontario.<sup>2</sup> Trafficked individuals are forced to provide sexual services to customers (often upwards of 10 times per day), primarily in hotels, private residences and adult entertainment establishments.<sup>15</sup>

### **It is a Bigger Problem Than We Know**

The true amount of human trafficking occurring in Canada is difficult to measure. It is a much bigger problem than we know. Sex trafficking is only officially recorded when it comes into contact with law enforcement or federal agencies, which poses great limitations since it's difficult to identify victims, and not all victims come forward to police.

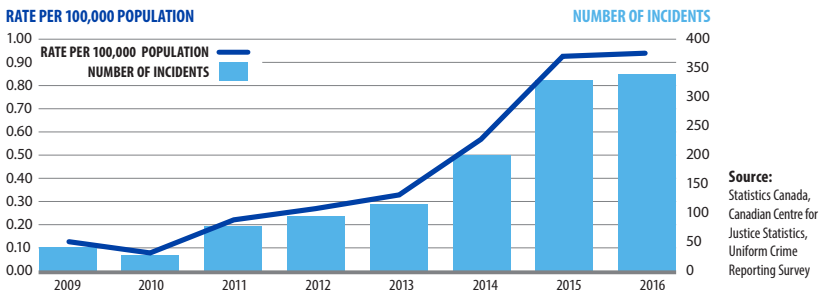
There are many reasons that someone may not come forward to police. Trafficked individuals are often hidden, forbidden from talking with others, controlled by threats and abuse, and may have been taught to mistrust police and other authorities.<sup>16</sup> Cases may also go unreported due to manipulation, shame and language barriers.<sup>17</sup>

It's important to keep these factors in mind when you look at the number of reported cases of human trafficking.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Rates are Increasing**

From 2009 to 2016, there were a total of 865 trafficked individuals who became known to police in Canada. The rates of police-reported incidents have been increasing rapidly in Canada from 41 police reported incidents in 2009 up to 340 in 2016 (see chart below).<sup>2</sup> Whether this is due to a true increase in the crime, or more of a reflection of improved detection, reporting and investigation of human trafficking is unclear.

### **Police-reported human trafficking incidents in Canada, 2009 to 2016**





In a 2014 report, 266 organizations across Canada said that they provided services and supports to trafficked and sexually exploited women and girls. When asked about the people they served in 2012 alone, these organizations identified a total of 2,872 trafficked women and girls (most of whom were first trafficked at age 14)<sup>6</sup>– this number is much higher than the number of cases being reported to police, which speaks to the hidden nature of this crime and the reluctance of trafficked individuals to come forward to police.

Human trafficking is a much bigger problem than we know and the cases that are reported are likely just the tip of the iceberg.

### **In Waterloo Region:**

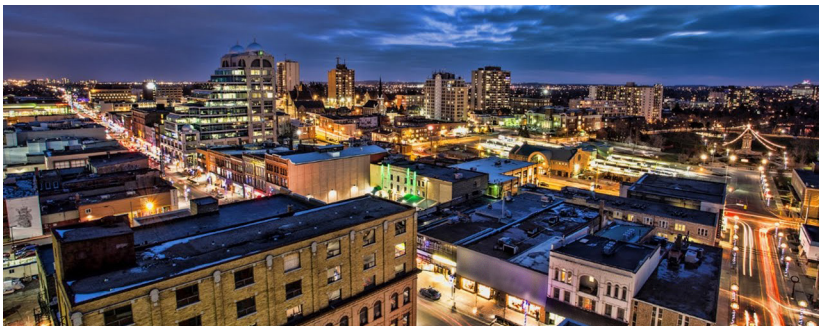
Waterloo Regional Police report that in 2019 there were:

- 90 investigations of human trafficking
- 40 criminal charges laid through these investigations
- Males from Waterloo Region were also arrested and charged in other jurisdictions
- More investigations of human trafficking cases compared to previous years

In Waterloo Region, the majority of sex trafficking is occurring within hotels and motels. Most victims are young Canadian females.

Both men and women have been charged with trafficking in our region. Many of the women charged are survivors of trafficking themselves. Most trafficked individuals who come to the attention of Waterloo Regional Police are young women and girls and have ranged in age from 14 to 47 years old.

**Remember!** Human trafficking is a vastly under-reported crime, and these statistics likely show only a glimpse into the real problem of sex trafficking in Waterloo Region.



# What makes Waterloo Region especially vulnerable to this crime?

## Waterloo Region is...

- **Close to 401 and QEW:** sex trafficking is common along these major highways, as people can be easily transported into and out of the Region. Moving trafficked individuals along these major highways from hotel to hotel is common, as it helps traffickers avoid detection, and also allows them to isolate their victims further, making them more dependent on their trafficker, since the individual has limited opportunity to establish trust with others to ask for help.<sup>15</sup>
- **Close to other major cities (e.g., Detroit, Quebec):** provides a quick pipeline for trafficking, where trafficked individuals can be easily and quickly taken from city to city.
- **A fairly prosperous area:** where there is money to be made, there will be buyers for the sex trade.

*“As the knowledge of human trafficking grows and media attention increases, we will continue to see an increase of cases in our Region. Human trafficking has been around for a very long time, sometimes right under our noses, but only recently have we been able to put a definitive label on it.”*

**DETECTIVE MATT DEMARTE**, SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT, WATERLOO REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE



# How to recognize the signs of human trafficking

Being able to recognize the warning signs of human trafficking can help you support someone who may be experiencing it. While these general signs are related to human trafficking, remember that they can also be signs of other things and are not necessarily “proof” that someone is being lured/groomed or trafficked.

## **Signs That Someone is Potentially Being Lured/Groomed<sup>9</sup>**

The individual:

- Has low self-esteem and a strong need for approval, love or attachment
- Is suddenly being given expensive things (like purses, shoes, jewelry)
- Is suddenly being showered with attention (for example, someone is taking them out for expensive dinners, giving them flowers, etc)
- Has become isolated or turned against their family and friends
- Has a new boyfriend who they won't introduce to friends and family
- Has been skipping school and their grades have fallen
- Has been staying out late, missing curfew

## **Signs That Someone is Potentially Being Trafficked<sup>9,13</sup>**

Characteristics may include:

- Fearful, anxious, depressed
- Submissive, tense, nervous, paranoid
- Someone else speaks for them
- Fear of police
- Not receiving proper health care
- Appears malnourished
- Signs of abuse (e.g., cuts, bruises)
- Does not possess official ID
- Unable to clarify where they are staying
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts
- Lost sense of time
- Inconsistent story
- Denied basic necessities
- Branding (e.g. tattoos)
- Drug or alcohol addiction

# How to help a friend you think is being exploited

- **Don't take matters into your own hands** – your personal safety could be at risk. Those involved in human trafficking often use violence, so it is important to keep yourself safe
- If it is safe to do so, provide support to your friend in a non-judgmental, compassionate manner – let them know that you care and that you are there for them
- Let them know about the resources that are available in the community (see page 12)
- Approach a safe adult, such as a school resource officer, for help
- Contact Crime Stoppers to report anonymously (page 12)
- If you or the other person are ever in immediate danger or crisis, call 911

## What to do if you are ever approached *Whether it be at the mall, online, at school – anywhere, remember<sup>11</sup>:*

- Never provide personal information about yourself, friends or family (e.g. address, sports teams you belong to, where your parents work, etc.)
- Walk away and get help
- Report to police
- Contact Crime Stoppers
- Speak to a trusted adult or speak to a counselor (resources provided on page 12)
- Tell your friends and family
- Try to get a physical description of the person or any other information that might help police locate them



# Safety tips

Traffickers often use social media to identify and lure young people into human trafficking. In addition, young people are often targeted at parties and social gatherings.

## How to stay safe online...

- Ensure all social media accounts are private
- Never “add” or “friend” people that you don’t know
- Do not provide any personal information online (including your home address, phone number, etc.)
- Be careful who you trust online – a person may not be who they say they are
- Never agree to meet someone in person without checking with your parents/ caregivers
- Be wary of ads/promises to “make easy money” or “work as a team/together”

## How to stay safe at a party...

- Ensure someone knows where you are at all times
- Use the ‘buddy system’; always stay close to trusted friends
- Keep your phone charged and always close by
- Don’t leave drinks unattended or accept drinks from a stranger
- Always keep in mind that your judgment may be impaired if you have been drinking or taking drugs. Drugs can be stronger than you may expect. It also may not be the drug you think it is.
- If you ever feel unsafe, leave to go somewhere you are more comfortable
- Never go somewhere alone with a person you have just met



## Resources for help

There are many resources in Waterloo Region that you can turn to if you or a loved one need help. You are not alone, it is not your fault, and you do not need to suffer in silence. Help is available.



**Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS)** has a Special Victims Unit which has detectives who are dedicated specifically to investigating cases of human trafficking. This branch conducts investigations of sexual assault and human trafficking while assisting and supporting victims. WRPS also connects victims to other resources within the community. You can contact WRPS by telephone, in-person, or online to submit non-emergency reports.

- Emergency line: **9-1-1**
- Non-emergency line: **519-570-9777**
- Online: [wrps.on.ca/en/services-reporting/online-reporting-.aspx](https://wrps.on.ca/en/services-reporting/online-reporting-.aspx)



If you suspect someone is being exploited, **Crime Stoppers of Waterloo Region** is a great resource in the community to submit a tip anonymously. While considering submitting a tip, keep in mind that any information can be helpful, even if you think it seems minor. Individuals will not be required to appear in court, make a police statement or provide any personal information.

- Anonymous Tip Line: **1-800-222-TIPS (8477)**
- Secure, anonymous tip online: **p3tips.com** or the free '**P3 Tips Mobile App**', available in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.
- Website: [waterloocrimestoppers.com](https://waterloocrimestoppers.com)



**Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) of Waterloo Region** has an Anti-Human Trafficking Program which provides many free and confidential services to the community. These services include a 24-hour support line, information, crisis intervention, referrals and both individual and group counseling. In addition, SASC provides support and safety planning for both survivors and their families. SASC can be reached by telephone, in person and online.

- 24 Hour Support Line: **519-741-8633**
- Office Telephone: **519-571-0121** extension **111**
- Email: **ahtp@sascwr.org**
- Address: **300-151 Frederick St. Kitchener, ON**
- Website: **sascwr.org**



**The Waterloo Region Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Treatment Centre (SA/DV)** is a team of on-call nurses and social workers who are available 24/7 and respond to the needs of individuals who have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence, including those who have been trafficked. All services are private and confidential. Services include medical examination, forensic evidence collection, STI, HIV, and pregnancy treatment, Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA) screening, crisis intervention, referrals to community resources, as well as acute and follow up care counseling.

- The team can be accessed through the Emergency Departments of St. Mary's General Hospital and the Cambridge Memorial Hospital.
- **St. Mary's General Hospital: 911 Queen's Blvd, Kitchener, ON**
- **Cambridge Memorial Hospital: 700 Coronation Blvd, Cambridge, ON**
- Telephone: **519-749-6994**

## Resources for help



### Victim Services Waterloo Region

**Victim Services of Waterloo Region** is available 24/7 in our community. They provide immediate crisis intervention, telephone intervention, emotional support and referrals to individuals affected by crime and tragic circumstances. They support individuals who have been trafficked through the Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) which aims to support direct victims, witnesses, and families impacted by human trafficking, by providing financial assistance with essential expenses in order to lessen the impact of crime, enhance safety and meet practical needs.

- Telephone: **519-585-2363** (Business hours)
- Telephone: **519-570-5143** (After hours)
- Website: **[vswr.ca](http://vswr.ca)**



### Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

**The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline** is a confidential, multilingual service, operating 24/7 to provide crisis response to people being trafficked, connect victims and survivors with social services, law enforcement, and emergency services (as requested), provide general information, as well as receive tips from the public. Support is available in over 200 languages. The hotline will respond to all forms of human trafficking including both sex and labour trafficking.

- Telephone: **1-833-900-1010**
- Email: **[hotline@ccteht.ca](mailto:hotline@ccteht.ca)**
- Submit a tip online: **[canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/submit-a-tip](http://canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/submit-a-tip)**





Giving  
Hope  
Today

**The Salvation Army** is a Christian organization that gives hope and support to vulnerable people. They offer practical assistance for children and families, often tending to the basic necessities of life, provide shelter for homeless people and rehabilitation for people who have lost control of their lives to an addiction.

- Telephone: **519-745-4215**
- Address: **300 Gage Ave, Kitchener ON**
- Website: **salvationarmy.ca**

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## Kids Help Phone

**Kids Help Phone** has counsellors available 24/7 to provide private and confidential support. They can be reached by phone or through live chat, which is available online or on the 'Always There' app. You can also chat confidentially with a trained volunteer crisis responder through text, where no data, internet connection or app is required.

- Telephone: **1-800-668-6868**
- Live Chat: Website: **kidshelpphone.ca/live-chat**  
**'Always There'** App: download for free on your iOS or Android device, available in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store .  
Text **"CONNECT"** to **686868**



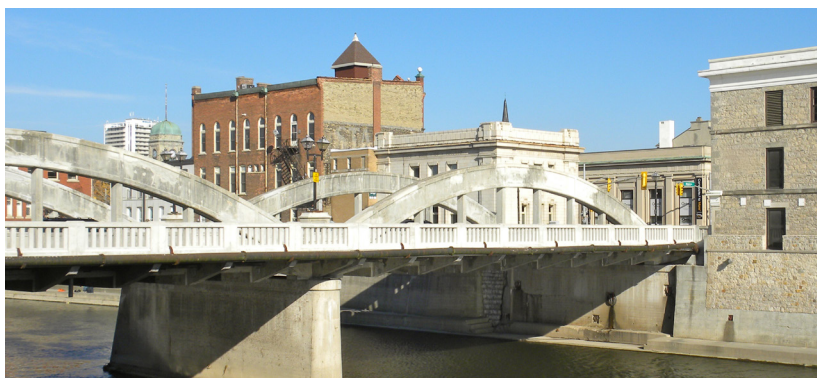
## Chrystalis Anti-Human Trafficking Network

**The Chrystalis Anti-Human Trafficking Network** offers free, confidential telephone counselling services available 24/7 for women, men and youth who have been trafficked, or those who do not identify as trafficked but work in the sex industry.

- Telephone: **1-866-528-7109**
- Website: **chrysalisnetwork.org**

## List of Key Terms

- **Human trafficking** is when a person is manipulated, controlled, and/or forced to do things against their will (e.g. being forced into sex work). They are exploited in some way to benefit someone else.<sup>3</sup>
- **International human trafficking:** Involves someone, who in the process of being trafficked, crosses an international border, regardless of the victim's immigration status.<sup>18</sup>
- **Domestic human trafficking:** When an individual is trafficked within the borders of a country, regardless of the victim's legal status.<sup>18</sup>
- **Human smuggling:** A person voluntarily pays to be transported illegally to a new country, and is free from the smuggler upon arrival.<sup>1</sup>
- **Coercion:** Persuading someone to do something using threats.
- **Exploitation:** Treating someone unfairly in order to take advantage of them.
- **Romeo/boyfriend pimp:** A trafficker who pretends to be in love in order to lure a vulnerable person into sex trafficking.



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Be careful who you trust.

Human  
Trafficking in  
Waterloo Region

**It Happens Here**

KNOW THE FACTS.  
PROTECT YOURSELF.

**KNOW THERE IS HELP... YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

For more information, visit [ithappenshere.org](http://ithappenshere.org)

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESPONSE TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING, WATERLOO REGION