



Awareness

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Stop Trafficking! Newsletter www.stopenslavement.org/index.html

January

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Human Trafficking of Minors Through Social Media

Texas Man Found Victims Through Social Media

Social media can be dangerous for young people. In 2014, a Houston man was sentenced to 40 years in prison on child sex trafficking charges after identifying and contacting young girls through social media platforms and then luring them into prostitution.

Back in 2012, 20-year-old Tevon Harris—aka “*Da Kidd*” or “*King Kidd*”—didn’t have a legitimate job. He lived on and off with his mother but mostly moved from one motel room to the next. He was very good at manipulating people. He trolled social media websites looking for vulnerable young girls he could sexually exploit. Online, he complimented them. He offered them modeling jobs. And he promised them lots of money.

Some agreed to meet with him, and he would go and pick them up. But what waited for them was not a glamorous modeling world, but a nightmarish world of motel rooms, forced sexual encounters—with Harris himself and then with paying customers—and other degrading and violent acts. Using photos he took or occasionally pilfered from the victims’ own social media pages, Harris advertised the girls’ services on various Internet websites.

Harris used violence and intimidation to keep the girls cooperative. He took their wallets and their cell phones, cutting off their communication with the outside world. In one instance, he deprived a victim of food for four days because he thought she wasn’t serving a client well enough. He also supplied her with marijuana and alcohol. Another victim was beaten with a towel rack torn from a motel room wall when Harris found her using a phone to call her mother for help. And he helped himself to all the money paid by customers.

Houston uniformed officers recovered one of Harris’ victims and subsequently notified the FBI’s *Child Exploitation Task Force*. The task force collected enough evidence to convince Harris to plead guilty. There was also enough evidence to prompt the judge to order that—after serving his 40-year sentence—Harris spend the rest of his life on supervised release. He’s also required to register as a sex offender. (<http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/october/sex-trafficker-receives-40-year-sentence/sex-trafficker-receives-40-year-sentence>)

Be Prudent When Posting Images Online

You may unwittingly be letting others know where you live and work and your travel patterns and habits. These details can be revealed through bits of information embedded in images taken with smartphones and some digital cameras and then shared on public websites. The information, called metadata, often includes the times, dates, and geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) where images are taken. While the geospatial data can be helpful to plot image locations, it also opens the door for criminals, including burglars, stalkers, and predators.

Mobile phone users should check the settings on their phones (and any applicable mobile applications) to see if they are sharing location information. “*It’s just a best-practice if you don’t want to give out your location. We simply want to make sure people know this is happening.*” said an FBI agent. In many cases, the default setting is to share location information. (http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2011/december/cyber_122211)

Tips on How to Stay Safe Online:

- Only “friend” and connect to people online that you know personally.
- Set your social media security settings so that only confirmed friends and connections can see what you post.
- Never post a picture of yourself or write anything on social media sites—or in e-mails and text messages—that you wouldn’t want the world to see.
- Be wary of giving anyone you meet through social media your phone number, e-mail address, or home address. Use common sense.
- And most importantly, be aware that those you meet online may not be who they say they are.



Beware of ‘Sextortion’

At the beginning of summer break, a 15-year-old FL girl logged onto her computer and received a startling instant message. The sender, whom she didn’t know, said he had seen her photo online and that he wanted her to send him pictures—of her in the shower. When the girl didn’t comply, the sender showed he knew where she lived and threatened to hurt the girl’s sister if she didn’t agree to his demands.

Worried and hoping to avoid alarming her parents, the girl sent 10 black-and-white images. When her harasser said they weren’t good enough, she sent 10 more, nude and in color. Then he wanted more.

How Kids Can Help Prevent ‘Sextortion’

- Don’t take for granted that your computer’s anti-virus software is a guarantee against intrusions.
- Turn off your computer when you aren’t using it.
- Cover your webcam when not in use.
- Don’t open attachments without independently verifying that they were sent from someone you know.
- Be suspicious. If you receive a message with an attachment from your mother at 3 a.m., maybe the message is not really from your mother.
- If your computer has been compromised and you are receiving extortion threats, don’t be afraid to talk to your parents or to call law enforcement. (http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2012/february/sextortion_021012/sextortion_021012)