

OFFICE OF THE HONORABLE MAYOR

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*****NEWS RELEASE*****

Mayor's Sheng Thao's Advisory Council on Human Trafficking Helps Young People Identify the Signs of Teen Sex Trafficking

Sexually Exploited Minors Awareness Week is April 22 to April 26

Oakland, CA - During Sexually Exploited Minors Awareness Week, April 22 to April 26, Mayor Sheng Thao's Advisory Council on Human Trafficking (MACHT) is conducting extensive outreach at Oakland high schools to raise awareness around teen sex trafficking. Advisory council members will provide information and resources about how to prevent, recognize, and report underage sex trafficking.

Sex trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Minors under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex are considered to be victims of human trafficking, regardless of the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

In 2023, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) assisted law enforcement, families, and child welfare with 28,866 missing children cases. In 2023, NCMEC's CyberTipline® received 36.2 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation online, a 360% increase over the number of reports received ten years ago.

Sex traffickers frequently target victims and then use violence, threats, lies, false promises, debt bondage, or other forms of control and manipulation to keep victims involved in the sex industry for their profit.

Advisory Council members will help Oakland teens identify recruitment tactics and behaviors sex traffickers often engage in and provide resources on how to stay safe.

How Teens Can Identify Sex Traffickers and Sex Trafficking:

- Offers of gifts, money, or other incentives in exchange for favors.
- Shows excessive interest in your personal life or background.

- Tries to isolate you from friends and family.
- Pressures you into doing things they are not comfortable with.
- Promises a better life or opportunities that seem too good to be true.

How Teens Can Stay Safe from Sex Trafficking:

- Be cautious when interacting with strangers online and in person.
- Trust your instincts and speak up if something does not feel right.
- Be aware of the tactics sex traffickers use.
- Stay connected with friends and family. Share your location if you are going somewhere.
- Educate yourself and your friends about sex trafficking and how to protect yourself.

How to Help Someone in a Sex Trafficking Situation:

- Call 9-1-1 if someone is in immediate danger.
- Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888 or text 233733. If you or someone you know is involved in a sex trafficking situation. For more ways to connect, visit <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/report-trafficking>.
- Call BAWAR (Bay Area Women Against Rape) at 510-430-1298 to obtain services for a victim or survivor.
- Additional local resources are listed below.

How to Report Suspected Sex Traffickers:

- Call 9-1-1 if there is a crime in progress or the suspected sex trafficker is present.
- Call 510-777-3333 the Oakland Police Department to make a police report.
- Provide an anonymous tip to the Oakland Police Department and Alameda County District Attorney's Office at 510-238-2373 or make an anonymous [report online](#).
- Report missing children or child pornography to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST (843-5678) or through their [Cybertipline](#).
- Call the Know2Protect Tipline at 833-591-KNOW (5669). All information received via the Tipline will be reviewed by appropriate personnel and referred to Homeland Security Investigations field offices for potential investigation.

What They Are Saying:

“The Mayor’s Advisory Council on Human trafficking works to support survivors and interrupt buyers and exploiters through prevention, intervention, and enforcement

strategies. During Sexually Exploited Minors Awareness Week we are focusing on ensuring Oakland teens get the knowledge, resources, and support to identify, avoid, and escape sex traffickers looking to prey on a young person's vulnerability during their formative years," **said Mayor Sheng Thao.**

"I am grateful to work alongside a powerful team that is committed to combating the distress of human trafficking in our city. This week is Sexually Exploited Minors (SEM) Week, and it is essential that we raise awareness in our community about the safety of our youth. We all must be invested in protecting our children throughout our city. We started the year strong by implementing the Ebony Alert in California, but the work is far from over. As we lead human trafficking prevention campaigns on school campuses this week, we urge everyone to hold space for dialogue, action, and accountability around this issue. We are here to lead out as a resource and encourage community members to connect with us," said **Treva Reid, District 7 Councilmember, City of Oakland.**

"As a survivor of teen sex trafficking and an expert in this field, I understand firsthand the challenges young people face, especially in cities like Oakland. Providing accessible information in a relatable language and connecting them with supportive individuals is essential during SEM awareness week and beyond," said **Nola Brantley, Nola Brantley Speaks.**

"It's critical to involve and center youth at every junction -- from prevention, to intervention, to education," said **Kate Walker Brown, Attorney and Senior Director of the Collaborative Responses to Commercial Sexual Exploitation Initiative at the National Center for Youth Law.**

"The Mayor's Advisory Council on Human Trafficking's prevention sub-committee is looking forward to launching the first in a series of awareness and education actions focused on Oakland's youth. Being present on high school campuses this week to share information about commercial sexual exploitation is aligned with our commitment to proactive, direct engagement with young people. We believe in the power of and have witnessed the brilliance of Oakland's youth and are excited to be a part of this community resiliency building effort," said **Sara-Serin-Christ, Gender Based Violence Planner, City of Oakland, Department of Violence Prevention.**

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