

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF APPROPRIATE ENGAGEMENT WITH CSEC VICTIMS

**DO** put into practice your knowledge of **risk factors, pathways to CSEC**, and techniques for **victim identification** when identifying and engaging with youth.

**DON'T** rely on **stereotypes** to identify or engage with sexually exploited children.

**DO** provide a **safe** place for engagement.

**DON'T** question or engage a sexually exploited child at a location where they feel **threatened** or **unsafe**.

**DO** be **nonjudgmental** when listening to a sexually exploited child.

**DON'T** react verbally or physically in a way that communicates **disgust** or **disdain**. Refrain from displaying a **shocked** face or talking about how “awful” the child’s experience was. This may shut the child down.

**DO** work to build **trust** with a sexually exploited child.

**DON'T** expect immediate **gratitude** for your efforts.

**DO** pay attention to your **body posture**. Face the child and make eye contact. Show interest, empathy and understanding through verbalizations, nods and facial expressions. Speak in a calm and even tone.

**DON'T** act or appear to be distracted, disinterested or disapproving. Do not use **intimidation** tactics like interrogating the child or standing over the child.

**DO** keep **physical contact** to a minimum. When there is physical contact, let a child know exactly what you are doing and remind the child that you are not there to hurt them.

**DON'T** use physical contact where it is not appropriate. Physical contact as a comforting response should be initiated by the child.

**DO** be familiar with **street language** and slang that children and youth might use.

**DON'T** try to use street language and slang **out of context** when talking with children and youth.

**DO** use language and terms that are **appropriate** and **sensitive** to a child’s experience as a victim.

**DON'T** expect youth to always phrase their experiences in language that is appropriate or to **refer to themselves as victims**. Do not use inappropriate language, derogatory terms, shame or belittlement when discussing the child's experiences.

**DO** recognize the various symptoms of **trauma** exhibited and **coping mechanisms** used by a CSEC victim that may not be those one typically associates with victims.

**DON'T** use strategies that switch intermittently between treating the child as an **offender**, then as a **victim**.

**DO** recognize the child as a victim and a survivor of severe **child abuse**.

**DON'T** treat the child as a **perpetrator** by prosecuting the child and not using statutory rape, sexual abuse and trafficking laws to prosecute pimps, johns, traffickers, and recruiters.

**DO** help a child “slow down” and **debrief** if they seem overwhelmed or disconnected when telling their story. Limit the amount of information you ask them to disclose.

**DON'T** expect or push every child to **disclose** all the details of their abuse. Sometimes heavy information will need to be gathered in stages.

**DO** keep the child **talking** and make them feel comfortable.

**DON'T** dispute facts or comment on a child’s motivation. This is likely to stop the flow of information.

**DO** take sexually exploited youth **seriously**.

**DON'T** diminish the seriousness of their experiences or concerns.

**DO** meet a sexually exploited child **where they are** and on their terms, and try to meet the needs they present.

**DON'T** expect a child to recognize their situation as **exploitative** or to present themselves as a victim in need of immediate intervention or rescuing.

**DO** apply sensitivity and attention to a child’s **cultural background**.

**DON'T** draw **conclusions** based on stereotypes of a child’s culture, race, ethnicity, class, gender or sexual orientation. Do not impose **actions** that are culturally inappropriate or insensitive.

**DO** continually **process** your own experiences, feelings, and judgments concerning the issues surrounding sexual exploitation.

**DON'T** ignore signs of vicarious re-traumatization or burnout fatigue.

**DO** improve a **systemic response** to CSEC by creating interagency relationships to comprehensively meet victims’ needs.

**DON'T** assume sole responsibility for meeting the myriad and **complex needs** of a CSEC victim.

**DO** collaborate with local **experts** and **survivors** of sexual exploitation to engage with victims or to work for policy change.

**DON'T** marginalize the experiences or voices of survivors in a community response to CSEC.