Possible Indicators for Identifying Commercially Sexually Exploited Children

☐ Offers canned responses
☐ Cannot speak privately
☐ Unable to socialize
☐ Has gaps in schooling/not in school
☐ Has heightened sense of fear or distrust of authority
☐ Lying about age/false ID/not in possession of ID
☐ Inconsistencies in story
☐ Has gaps in memory
☐ Demeanor: fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, nervous
☐ Unable or unwilling to give local address or information about parents
☐ Lives in an unstable environment
☐ Lives with a non-parent/non-guardian
☐ Lives at workplace/with employer
☐ Sleeping/living separately from “family” (in the garage or on the floor instead of bedroom)
☐ Has hotel keys
☐ Chronic runaway/homeless youth
☐ Mentions a pimp/boyfriend
☐ Presence of older male or boyfriend who seems controlling
☐ Shows signs of physical, psychological, or sexual abuse
☐ Deprived of food, water, or medical care
☐ Threats of traffickers reporting child to police/immigration
☐ Threats to child’s parents, grandparents, sibling, or own minor children
☐ Methods of control leave no visible signs of abuse
☐ Cannot freely contact parents or guardians
☐ Is paid very little or nothing for long hours of work or services performed
☐ Forced to sell drugs, jewelry, magazines on the street
☐ Any child working where “pay” goes directly towards rent, debt, living expenses/necessities
☐ Has excess amount of cash
☐ Exploitation on the internet, online ads
☐ Under age 18 and in commercial sex work
☐ Loyalty, positive feeling toward trafficker
☐ Does not consider self a victim

The existence of one or more of these indicators is not proof positive of child sex trafficking. Each case must be individually assessed based on all of the circumstances.

This list was compiled by:

with additional suggestions from Kavitha Sreeharsha, Global Freedom Center.