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Essential role for pediatricians in care of sexual exploitation victims



Pediatricians have a role to play in identification and treatment of victims of child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, according to a clinical report published online Feb. 23 in *Pediatrics*.

(HealthDay)—Pediatricians have a role to play in identification and treatment of victims of child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), according to a clinical report published online Feb. 23 in *Pediatrics*.

To help pediatricians recognize potential CSEC victims and respond appropriately, Jordan Greenbaum, M.D., from the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, and colleagues discuss risk factors, recruitment practices, possible indicators of CSEC, and common medical and behavioral problems experienced by victims.

The authors note that male and female victims of sex trafficking and CSEC may present for medical care for reasons related to trauma, infection, reproductive issues, and [mental health problems](#). They require a comprehensive assessment and multiple referrals. Victims of CSEC rarely identify themselves; some may have a history of running away from home, truancy, [child maltreatment](#), involvement with Child Protective Services or the juvenile justice system, pregnancy, or substance use or abuse. Evaluations can be challenging; obtaining a comprehensive history with a nonjudgmental open attitude may provide important revelations. Providers may advocate for victims by educating professionals and families, and giving anticipatory guidance to parents and children. Pediatricians are required to report suspected [child](#) abuse and neglect, including CSEC/[sex trafficking](#) in states where this is considered a form of abuse.

"As health care providers, educators, and leaders in child advocacy, pediatricians play an essential role in addressing the public health issues faced by child victims of CSEC," the authors write.

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