

PREVENTATIVE ADVOCACY

While CASA programs and stakeholders diligently seek to provide restorative services and resources for youth victimized by sex trafficking, it is imperative that CASA programs “share the dangers of sex trafficking with youth and challenge myths and misconceptions that glamorize sex trafficking.”^[5] CASA programs should be a key partner to help youth in the child welfare system to recognize dangerous situations, understand factors that may make them vulnerable and know how to respond to concerns. Through education and awareness, youth in the child welfare system are empowered to be able to protect themselves.

Preventative Advocacy is when CASA programs implement human trafficking education with youth ages ten and older as an upstream preventative measure. Additionally, CASA programs can support youth who have been exposed to sexual exploitation. CASA volunteers can be at the forefront of educating the youth for whom they advocate.

To help prepare CASA volunteers to advocate with youth who are trafficked, the [Advocacy for Youth Affected by Sex Trafficking: A Guide for CASA Volunteers and Staff](#) may be utilized as a resource.

[5] https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/trafficking_agencies.pdf



PREVENTATIVE ADVOCACY IN ACTION

One of the main deterrents from commercial sexual exploitation is to have a mentor for youth, a person who will advocate with them, support them and build rapport.[6] Each visit that the CASA volunteer has with the youth, they can spend balanced, incremental portions of their time talking about human trafficking in an age and developmentally-appropriate way.

CASA volunteers can utilize [Unbound Now's Sentinels](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page to access "Sentinels"), a five-part series of anti-human trafficking training that helps youth understand the dangers of sex trafficking. CASA volunteers watch a 12–20-minute episode by themselves to understand the material, then plan to review it with youth.



The most important part of educating youth about sex trafficking is the opportunity to ask questions and talk freely with someone they can trust. Sentinels offers discussion questions and activities to facilitate communication between CASA volunteers and youth in foster care. The Sentinels information is easy to understand, not graphic, and features high school students, teachers, principals and caregivers. These videos may be watched with youth age ten and up as is age and developmentally appropriate. They should be watched with the youth, not sent to them to watch alone. During visits, CASA volunteers share the videos with youth using a digital device (cell phone, iPad or another device connected to the internet). Other trusted adults, like the caseworker, foster parent or the youth's parent, may also like to be a part of this learning opportunity if the youth so desires. The CASA volunteer should ensure that the youth has a support person available to them after any difficult topic, such as this, is discussed with them. To start using Sentinels, follow [Unbound Now's Sentinels Fact Sheet](#).

It is not feasible nor recommended for youth who are at risk of trafficking to watch five 20-minute lessons and be expected to remember these lessons several years down the road. Once CASA volunteers finish the Sentinels program, they could consider adding lessons learned from the [CASA ACT Advocacy for Youth Affected by Sex Trafficking: A Guide for CASA Volunteers and Staff](#). This can include reviewing vulnerabilities, types of traffickers, stages of change or safety planning.

An international qualitative study of youth in the child welfare system revealed that youth want advocates to explain the risks, teach about dangerous situations using case studies and talk more about the issue.[7] CASA volunteers can be the catalyst to help prevent sex trafficking.

[6] Wolfe, M. E., et al. (2018). *Trafficking Prevalence and Child Welfare Risk Factors Among Homeless Youth*.

[7] Pereda, N. et al. (2022). *Giving a Voice to Adolescents in Residential Care*.