



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
**ARCHDIOCESE**  
of **DUBUQUE**  
*Share Jesus Love*

## Office of Protection of Children

P.O. Box 479 • Dubuque, Iowa 52004-0479  
Phone (563) 556-2580 FAX (563) 556-5464  
[www.dbqarch.org](http://www.dbqarch.org)

### Do You Know Lacy?

Below are some facts, figures and a video link to illustrate why the subject of sexual trafficking of minors is important for us here within the VIRTUS® Programs.

- Did you know that 100,000 American children are exploited for sexual trafficking each year? This conservative number is from the Department of Justice, whereas various non-profit organizations denote there are as many as 300,000. Sexual trafficking of human persons is a problem right here in America.
- Were you aware that the exploitation of American children is fueled by the purchasing and consumption of pornography? This is because victims of sex trafficking become part of the pool of videos and images circulated online.
- What about the fact that the average age a child is first exploited through "prostitution" or sexual trafficking is 13? The next time you see a female (or male) on the street corner, or hear about one and are tempted to think about the person as a prostitute, I urge you to reflect upon these numbers. And I invite you to ponder where she came from, because data is showing that these girls started out as trafficking victims when they were kids. And many of them are still kids.
- Did you know that traffickers recruit from schools, malls, parks, protective shelters and social media websites? It can be as easy as picking out a child who has her head down in the mall, or sending a "friend" request or message via social media, such as Facebook.
- How about the fact that victims come from all demographics? Lacy was a member of a church youth group when she met her trafficker. I encourage you to take the next 4 minutes and 32 seconds from your day to view this YouTube video by clicking on the following link: [Do you know Lacy?](#)



You might actually know this girl or someone like her. Lacy is not a stranger-she could be a student in your parish or school. She could be a youth that you could help if you can identify some of the warning signs and were equipped to communicate your concerns. Girls like Lacy need you to step up and be heroes, to protect them from harm and abuse happening right here in our communities.

You can see that this is a grave matter that directly affects us in our roles as protectors of children and youth from sexual abuse. One of the first action items we can do to prevent the sexual trafficking of children is to [inform](#) ourselves more about the problem and dispel our own myths about this horrifying reality. Another goal we can achieve is to make sure that we are not glorifying the problem or exacerbating it. Thank you for being a part of the solution.

**References:**

Federal Bureau of Investigation online information. Retrieved from the Internet: <https://leb.fbi.gov/2011/march/human-sex-trafficking>

Shared Hope International. Do you know Lacy? Online Video. Retrieved from the Internet September 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfo2pmBVrCI>

Shared Hope International statistics. Retrieved from the Internet September 2016: <http://sharedhope.org/the-problem/what-is-sex-trafficking/>

Some information based on interviews with Detective Bill Woolf, Investigator on the Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force and Consultant to the VIRTUS Programs. Interview conducted in Washington, D.C., on March 11, 2014.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Human Trafficking. Retrieved from the Internet September 2016: <https://www.ice.gov/human-trafficking>

This article is the copyrighted property of National Catholic Services, LLC (National Catholic), all rights reserved, and is reprinted here with National Catholic's permission. It originally appeared on the VIRTUS Online™ risk management website at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). For more information about VIRTUS Online or other VIRTUS products and services, call 1-888-847-8870.