

Case Studies: Peer to Peer Platforms

The Polaris FIU reviewed sex and labor trafficking cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline which included financial information relating to P:P platforms. This document includes selected cases that contain significant details and illustrate how P:P platforms are utilized in various human trafficking situations.

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Polaris received \$3.5 million through competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant # 90ZV0138-01- 00. The project will be financed with 77.7% of federal funds and 22.3% (\$1.002 million) by non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

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Case 1:

A self-identifying victim reported that she was forced to advertise herself for commercial sex online via AdultSearch, Eros, Ourhome2 and Preferred 411. While victim reporting was not underage while she was a victim of sex trafficking, she stated her alleged trafficker is known to drive around high schools looking to recruit underage girls. Buyers of commercial sex paid her alleged trafficker via cash, Venmo and Zelle. The alleged trafficker got victim a bank card through Bank of America in order to send money to victim's bank card via Zelle so victim could pay her bills. Trafficker also stole victim's social security number and purchased a car in her name.

Case 2:

A self-identifying victim of sex trafficking reported she was forced to engage in commercial sex by a trafficker for over 10 years. The victim was forced to walk streets and provide internet-based commercial sex. The victim reported that she was required to send her alleged trafficker the profits via CashApp or Western Union, sometimes sending the money to the trafficker's children so it is not directly connected to him. The victim estimates she has sent nearly \$10,000 to trafficker in total.

Case 3:

A self-identifying victim of sex trafficking reported she was forced to engage in commercial sex at various high-end hotels and strip at various strip clubs. The alleged trafficker forced the victim to engage in internet-based sexual acts as well and advertised victim on Megapersonal.com. The victim stated the advertisements were not in her own name. The victim stated trafficker used CashApp to accept money from buyers.

Case 4:

The caller reported that a minor was given money in exchange for sexual acts. The caller alleged trafficker reportedly sent this victim money via CashApp with captions referring to sexual acts. Additionally, the alleged trafficker has hacked into all of victim's social media accounts.

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Case 5:

A self-identifying victim reported that she met her alleged trafficker on the dating app Tinder. The victim lived with the trafficker and was in a romantic relationship with him for a few months. Without the victim's knowledge, the trafficker took photos of the victim while naked and recorded videos of them having sex. The trafficker then created a profile of the victim on a sugar daddy website to collect money for these photos and videos without the victim's knowledge. The victim began receiving money on CashApp which was buyers purchasing the photos and videos trafficker posted online. The victim reported that her alleged trafficker also created other profiles online where he collected money earned from the non-consensual sexual images directly.

Case 6:

An anonymous caller contacted the hotline to report a military officer soliciting sex from minors. Caller provided name, phone number, potential residential location of the trafficker, and Venmo username. The trafficker met the victim through an unnamed Sugar Daddy app and coerces the victim to introduce him to other roommates and college classmates for the purposes of commercial sex. The caller reported that at least \$2,400 USD has been sent from trafficker to victim during a one-month period. The caller also provided a Venmo payment number.

Case 7:

The caller contacted the hotline to report ads seen on TikTok of minors selling explicit photos for money. The caller stated the minors offer to send photos in exchange for money, sent through Venmo. Caller provided name of TikTok account.

Case 8:

The caller contacted the hotline to report a situation involving a minor victim. Caller stated he met the victim on the app MeetMe. The caller was texting with the victim and the victim sent explicit images of a potential minor. The caller received a phone call from the victim's number, but a male on the line indicated he was the victim's father. The victim's father/trafficker told the caller to send him \$800 by Thursday and then requested regular payments of \$600 until the caller paid a total of \$8,200. The caller did not send any money. The caller reported this situation to law enforcement and they had received a similar report from another person involving the same phone number. The caller provided the hotline the trafficker's Venmo name, phone number, and the victim's MeetMe username.

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Case 9:

The caller contacted the hotline to report a sex trafficking situation involving her minor foster children. Trafficker contacted victims via Snapchat stating he is looking to be a sugar daddy. The trafficker sent \$140 via Venmo to the victim and \$300 in a separate transaction. Trafficker requests explicit photos and videos from victims, unknown if victims sent this. Traffickers has tried to meet victims in person. The trafficker also bought both victims new iPhones and sent them to be picked up at a Verizon store. The caller stated she found the trafficker's address, name, Snapchat username, and Venmo from phone records.

Case 10:

A self-identifying victim of sex trafficking contacted the hotline about her situation. The victim met the trafficker via SeekingArrangements.com and met up with the trafficker. The trafficker drugged and forced the victim to have sex with himself and other men for money at a specified hotel. The victim also states she received 8,000 Bitcoin for having sex with men while sedated. The trafficker stole the victim's phone and obtained her tax ID and social security number. The victim reported the trafficker's phone number and home address, Venmo, Instagram, Facebook, Seeking Arrangement profile and Reddit username.

