

OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE

YOUTH PASTOR



MEET JASON, A YOUTH PASTOR.

Jason's church has recently become aware of human trafficking and is exploring how different ministries can engage in the fight. His church is medium-sized with not much in the budget to start a brand-new initiative. Jason first ensures that anyone working with youth at the church are trained on the **warning signs** that a youth might be at risk, **how to report** suspected abuse, and what to do if a youth confides in them about a dangerous situation.

For his youth group, Jason seeks out curriculums and programs that specifically address the issue of human trafficking. He finds that there are **youth-specific programs** that educate about internet safety, healthy relationships, and exploitation. He has also reached out to the local law enforcement to have them share information with the group on a Wednesday night.

Jason knows that several of the youth in his group do not come from homes where there is a strong example of **healthy relationships**. He recognizes that by sharing with the youth skills and concepts like setting boundaries, communication, and self-worth, he can help them guard against some of the unhealthy relational habits that students often find themselves facing.

Jason also looks at programs within his church. Once a month the church hosts a meal and classes for single parents and their children. After speaking with the parents in this group, he learns of the need for regular afterschool care for middle-schoolers, allowing those who are in vulnerable situations to have **a safe place** to come after school until their parents return home. It would also allow the youth to build positive lasting friendships, creating a community they can turn to when crisis occurs. He presents this information to his church's leadership for consideration in the church growth plans.

Additionally, several of the youth who attend the group have shared they have little to no relationship with their father or that their father is not a role model for them. Jason recognizes this as one of the key **vulnerability factors** that traffickers often exploit. He works to set up bi-monthly events where the men in the church participate in activities with the youth, such as a BBQ with flag football and other games, volunteering together, and opportunities for mentorship and job shadowing.

Jason did not have to start a new ministry, he simply enhanced what he was already doing with the youth group to make an impact.

**YOU
CAN
TOO!**

Jason did not have to start a new anti-human trafficking ministry, create a new budget, or change the focus of the youth group. Instead, he was able to enhance what the church was already doing, using the resources and network he already had, to make a difference.

RESOURCES FOR YOU

Human trafficking disproportionately affects youth. Teens are vulnerable to human trafficking for many reasons outside of their control. Teens lack experience in navigating potentially dangerous situations, they are dependent on the resources of others, they may belong to families with fractured safety nets, and they long for approval, acceptance and love. A youth pastor may be one of the only positive adult role models that a teen has to confide in. If that's you, you are uniquely positioned to equip teens with the skills and information they need to stay safe.

Consider how you can incorporate the following with your youth groups and children's ministries:

- Learn the signs of human trafficking, particularly as it relates to youth. Get the essential and critical knowledge about commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) that you need with the Justice U™ CSEC Series. Earn your certification today at learnwithjusticeu.com/csecseries.
- Program the National Human Trafficking Hotline (888-373-7888) into your mobile devices, and include a link to the humantraffickinghotline.org on your church website and social media pages so that you and your congregation can quickly and anonymously report any suspicious activity.
- Mentor vulnerable youth in your community formally or informally, and let youth know that you are a safe adult to talk to if they ever need help.
- Include information about digital citizenship, internet safety, and how to report an online predator in your teachings. Utilize materials for youth at netsmartz.org.
- When you have new students transition from the children's ministry to the youth group, ask children's ministry workers if there is anything you should know or look out for about the youth moving up regarding the youth's safety or wellbeing.
- Explore with your youth group what the Bible has to say about justice and caring for those in need.
- Empower youth to be justice advocates on behalf of others in their school and community. The resources available at engagetogether.com/students will help!
- Review the Engage Together Online Safety Toolkit to get the links, resources, and tools you need to educate yourself, youth, and parents about online safety. Download at engagetogether.com/resources

YOU ARE UNIQUELY
POSITIONED TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.

DISCOVER HOW.



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