

SAFE HARBOR FOR MINNESOTA'S YOUTH

Safe Harbor has increased awareness, understanding and identification of the commercial sexual exploitation of youth. In Minnesota, sexually exploited youth are not seen as criminals, but as victims in need of services. In 2014, Minnesota Safe Harbor Law went into effect.

THE SAFE HARBOR LAW:

- Protects youth from being arrested or prosecuted for prostitution;
- Adds the definition of sexually exploited youth to Minnesota's child protection codes so that child protective services and child welfare can respond;
- Assigns funding to develop protocols and trainings, and to provide services, housing, and outreach of youth 24 and under.

MINNESOTA'S RESPONSE

Any door a youth goes through – in any community – should provide a safe, protected environment that leads them to services that can help empower them to leave the exploitation. Sexually exploited youth 24 years old and younger deserve and are eligible for specialized, trauma-informed services to heal and recover.

CREATING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The State of Minnesota developed a Safe Harbor network of services with 8 Regional Navigators, who direct youth to specialized services, housing and shelter as well as provide training and community coordination. The Department of Health funds the state Safe Harbor Director as well as supportive services, regional navigators, protocol development, and system evaluation grants. Housing and community outreach is funded through the Department of Human Services.

health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/response/navigators.html

YOUTH OUTREACH

Victims of sexual exploitation rarely see themselves as victims. To assist with outreach, Safe Harbor worked with sexually exploited youth to create materials that speak directly to victims.

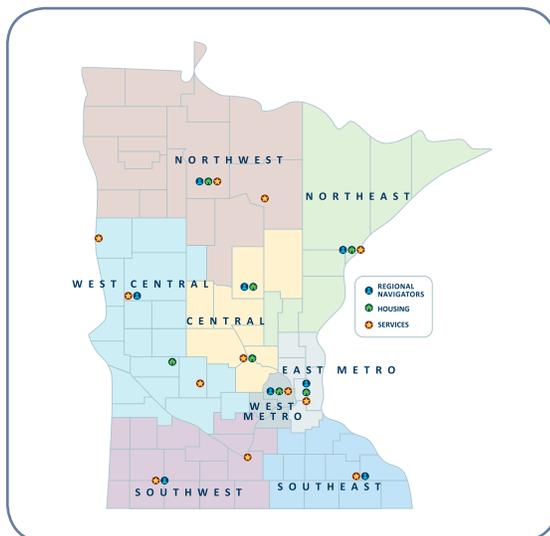
health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/communities/youthoutreach.html

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Commercial Sexual Exploitation occurs when someone exchanges sex for anything of value or a promise of something of value such as money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, or higher status in a gang or group. Another person may or may not be involved in arranging this exchange.

SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking is a type of commercial sexual exploitation that involves the prostitution of an individual in which a third person – not the buyer or the victim – facilitates or profits. MN Statute 609.321-609.322.



SAFETY THROUGH CHILD PROTECTION OR CHILD WELFARE RESPONSES

Sexually exploited and sex trafficked youth need protection. Child protection services should be notified of all youth victims and survivors of sex trafficking, whether or not their families are involved in the trafficking. County child protection welfare agencies will respond to sexually exploited and sex trafficked youth and families with a focus on youth safety while making connections to trauma-informed specialized services.

mn.gov/dhs/safe-harbor

USING LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement plays a critical role in identifying victims, referring youth to services, arresting traffickers and sex buyers, and protecting the public from these crimes. Law enforcement departments across Minnesota, in coordination with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension in the Department of Public Safety, have formed task forces to focus on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation investigations. The state funds several law enforcement task forces, while non-state, locally funded task forces also exist.

dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/grants/Pages/justice-community-grants.aspx

IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

Professionals must work across specialized teams to provide the most appropriate response to sexually exploited youth. The Ramsey County Attorney's Office and Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault created Safe Harbor Protocol Guidelines to help form teams and develop protocols. The State of Minnesota provides statewide funding for protocol implementation, however, local areas can also create teams and implement protocols without state funding. Access the Safe Harbor Protocols and learn more about developing protocols and putting them into practice.

mncasa.org/sh/guidelines

RELATED PROJECTS

Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice Expansion

This federal grant expands Safe Harbor services to labor trafficking and tribal nations. Additionally, it increases survivor advisement on implementation of programs and services.

Safe Harbor for All (SH4A)

The Department of Health and research partners with The Robert T. Jones Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center at the University of Minnesota, The Advocates for Human Rights, and Rainbow Research recently submitted a report and strategic plan to the legislature exploring ways to help adults affected by commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/response/safeharborforall.html

Hotel Training

The Department of Health in partnership with the Minnesota Lodging Association developed an online Prevention and Response Training curriculum for hotel licensees to raise awareness among staff and patrons about commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

health.state.mn.us/hoteltrafficking

