

# For Minnesota's Sexually Exploited Youth

Starting August 1, 2014, Minnesota youth who engage in prostitution will no longer be seen as criminals, but instead as victims and survivors of sexual exploitation. The **Safe Harbor** law treats youth with dignity and respect, and directs them to appropriate supportive services, including shelter and housing.

## The Safe Harbor Law:

- Excludes sexually exploited youth under 18 from the definition of delinquent child;
- Adds the definition of sexually exploited youth to Minnesota's child protection codes;
- Increases the penalties against commercial sex abusers or purchasers; and
- Directs the Commissioner of Public Safety to devise a victim-centered, statewide response for sexually exploited youth.

## No Wrong Door

No Wrong Door is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and multi-state agency approach. It will ensure communities across Minnesota have the knowledge, skills and resources to effectively identify sexually exploited and at-risk youth. These youth will be provided victim-centered trauma-informed services and safe housing.

## About sexually exploited youth

In almost all cases, youth are not choosing this life. Traffickers/pimps, recruit youth who may also be struggling to escape from poverty or unsafe living conditions.

**They are victims** – exchanging sex for money, food, shelter, drugs, or other payments. They are not – and should not be referred to as – child prostitutes. They might also be a part of sexual performances like stripping or child pornography.

Victims of sexual exploitation come from every background, race, gender, sexual orientation and economic status. These youth may not appear to be victims. They may be hostile, not telling the whole truth, or struggling with mental health or addiction issues. It is likely that they've had troubles in their lives that have led to being victimized. Our job is to consider and respect that history and get them the support they need.

## What is sexual exploitation?

A sexually exploited youth is someone under the age of 18 who may be subject to sexual exploitation because they engaged, agreed to engage, or were forced into sexual conduct in return for a fee, food, clothing or a place to stay. A youth also can be sexually exploited if he or she has engaged in exotic dancing, been filmed doing sexual acts, traded sex for drugs, or has been found guilty of engaging in prostitution or prostitution-related crimes.

For the purposes of Safe Harbor/No Wrong Door the means of exploitation is irrelevant in determining eligibility for services.

## Statistics

In 2013, respondents to the Minnesota Statewide Human Trafficking Survey reported that they had worked with the following number of victims in the past 12 months. Because sexual exploitation is a clandestine crime and many victims go unidentified, misidentified and unreported, these numbers represent an under-counting of the extent of sexual exploitation in Minnesota:

- 13 adult male victims of sex trafficking
- 202 adult female victims
- 35 minor male victims
- 119 minor female victims



# New Initiatives

In 2013, Department of Public Safety published the No Wrong Door report, setting forth recommendations to implement the 'No Wrong Door' model. This includes creating a statewide director, safe shelter and housing, regional navigators, comprehensive supportive services, training and protocol development.

## Regional Navigators

Eight organizations are the program's base for Regional Navigators, – the main points of contact for sexually exploited youth and concerned agencies throughout Minnesota. Navigators are responsible for connecting youth with services and serving as regional experts for communities.

## Housing Providers

Four organizations are creating additional emergency, transitional and permanent housing for sexually exploited youth. These organizations will work with the Regional Navigators to safely house sexually exploited youth and address their unique housing needs. They will include on-site supportive services, appropriate security, assistance from survivors of sex trafficking, and collaboration with law enforcement and juvenile justice systems. The anticipated opening of shelter beds will be late summer or early fall 2014.

## Statewide Training and Protocol Development

The Ramsey County Attorney's Office in conjunction with MNCASA is developing a model statewide protocol that can be adapted in communities throughout the state. Using a victim-centered approach, the protocol will advise on best practices in responding to and supporting sexually exploited youth through prosecution, law enforcement, health care, advocacy, social services, child protection/child welfare, schools and corrections. Additionally, Ramsey County Attorney's Office is responsible for statewide training for law enforcement and prosecutors.

For more information about Safe Harbor and No Wrong Door please visit [www.health.state.mn.us/injury/topic/safeharbor/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/injury/topic/safeharbor/)

## Regional Navigator Host Agencies:

- **American Indian Navigator**  
– DOVE on White Earth  
(Down ON Violence Everyday)  
[www.whiteearthdove.com](http://www.whiteearthdove.com)
- **West Central**– Heartland Girls' Ranch  
[www.heartlandgirlsranh.org](http://www.heartlandgirlsranh.org)
- **Metro West** – The Link  
[www.thelinkmn.org](http://www.thelinkmn.org)
- **Metro East** – Breaking Free  
[www.breakingfree.net](http://www.breakingfree.net)
- **Northeast** – PAVSA Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault  
[www.pavsa.org](http://www.pavsa.org)
- **Northwest** – Support within Reach:  
[www.supportwithinreach.org](http://www.supportwithinreach.org)
- **Southeast** – Olmsted County Victim Service  
[www.co.olmsted.mn.us/cs/victimservices](http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/cs/victimservices)
- **Southwest** – Southwest Crisis Center [www.mnswcc.org](http://www.mnswcc.org)

## Housing Providers:

- **St. Paul** – Breaking Free  
[www.breakingfree.net](http://www.breakingfree.net)
- **Minneapolis** – The Link  
[www.thelinkmn.org](http://www.thelinkmn.org)
- **Benson** – Heartland Girls' Ranch  
[www.heartlandgirlsranh.org](http://www.heartlandgirlsranh.org)
- **Duluth** – Life House  
[www.lifehouseduluth.org](http://www.lifehouseduluth.org)

