Sexually Exploited Youth (SEY)

What you can do...
Northwest Safe Harbor Regional Navigator

Bailey Wethern

- Graduated from Bemidji State University with Bachelor in Social Work and minor in Chemical Dependency
- Started working at Support Within Reach in August 2014
- Experience working with homelessness, emotionally disturbed youth, Sexual assault victims, and chemical dependency Issues
Northwest Safe Harbor Regional Navigator

Amanda Ysen

- Graduated from Kaplan University, Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice, Forensic Psychology
- Working in victim services (sexual/domestic violence) for 17 years.
- Experience working with homelessness, emotionally disturbed youth, Sexual assault victims, and chemical dependency Issues
Mission Statement:
To reduce the impact and harm of sexual violence for individuals and families in the communities we serve.
What and who is Support Within Reach

- Support Within Reach provides services to women, children, and men who have experience sexual violence directly or indirectly. Services are available 24 hours a day.
- SWR provides safety/risk assessments, assists clients in obtaining protective orders, and helps through the lengthy report/court process.
- Advocates are able to provide options and information related to the victims experience, provide a listening ear, and offer emotional support.
- SWR holds a grant through the MN Department of Health and holds one full-time position for a Regional Navigator in order to address issues surrounding sexually exploited youth in northwestern MN.
Victim Support & Advocacy Services

- 24 hour Crisis Line
- Safety/risk assessments
- Basic one to one peer counseling
- Follow-up Support
- Assistance in obtaining protective orders
- Medical Accompaniment to Sexual Assault Examinations
- Law Enforcement Advocacy through the reporting process
- Prosecution Advocacy through the lengthy court process
- Support Groups
- Outreach to Outlying Areas
- Information/Referral
Sexual Violence Advocacy Area
Regional Navigators

- Breaking Free (Metro-East)
- The Link (Metro-West)
- Southwest Crisis Center (Southwest)
- Heartland Girls’ Ranch (Central)
- PAVSA (Northeast)
- Olmsted Victim Services (Southeast)
- Support Within Reach (Northwest)
- White Earth DOVE Program (Northwest)

• Call Support Within Reach for any SEY case, to provide statistic and referrals
• Pass out handouts
Review Safe Harbor Law

Sexually exploited youth
17 years old and under
can no longer be criminalized in Minnesota but should be referred to services.

“I used to blame myself. How could I be so stupid to get into this! Now I know better. I was 13 and he was 20. He said he loved me, but all along he knew exactly what he was doing.”
Safe harbor/No Wrong Door Laws

The Safe Harbor Law
- Excludes sexually exploited youth under 18 from the definition of delinquent child/ youth cannot be criminalized
- It adds the definition of sexually exploited youth to MN child protection codes
- Increases penalties against commercial abusers or customers

No Wrong Door Model
- No wrong door is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and mulit-state agency approach. It will ensure communities across MN have the knowledge, skills and resources to effectively identify sexual exploitation and at risk youth.
- Sexually exploited youth under the age of 18 can be provided with Navigator’s services
Role of regional navigators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outreach/Education</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Capacity Building</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide information to general public about juvenile sex trafficking</td>
<td>• Coordinate services for SEY in their community</td>
<td>• Resource for professionals</td>
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<td>• Go out and talk to youth and hand out resources</td>
<td>• Complete victim assessments</td>
<td>• Engage community stakeholder in primary prevention</td>
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<td>• Initial case management and comprehensive service plan development</td>
<td>• Training/presentations</td>
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<td>• Help youth navigate services</td>
<td>• Regional Conference</td>
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What is “Sexual Exploitation?”
Minor Commercial Sexual Exploitation occurs when someone under the age of 18 engages in commercial sexual activity. A commercial sexual activity occurs when anything of value or a promise of anything of value (e.g., money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, or higher status in a gang or group) is given to a person by any means in exchange for any type of sexual activity. A third party may or may not be involved.
Continuum of Sexual Abuse

- Linking of “love”, sex and abuse
- Violation of boundaries
- Guilt & shame
- View self as sexual object
- Low self-esteem
- Run away/homeless
- Poverty & need
- Unequal power dynamics of adult/child relationship
- Media influence
- Billion dollar sex industry
- Demand approached by recruiters, pimps, traffickers

Child Sexual Abuse

Sexual Exploitation of Children

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
Importance of Language

- Prostitution → Sex trafficking/exploitation
- Prostitute → Victim/Prostituted
- Pimp → Trafficker
- John → Predator, exploiter

Examples of Sexual Exploitation

- Prostitution (Back page)
- Stripping (texting)
- Pornography (forced to watch)
- Commercial Trafficking (in our communities)
- Survival Sex (housing/food/drugs)

- Call Support Within Reach for any SEY case, even if you are unsure if it is sexual exploitation
RISK FACTORS & INDICATORS

• Earlier childhood sexual/physical abuse
• Homelessness
• Running away
• Truancy
• Poverty/Lack of resources (food, clothing, shelter)
• Family/community history of exploitation
• Exposure to domestic violence in the home
• In foster care, staying in group homes
• Inappropriate usage of Social Media
Risk Factors & Indicators contd.

- On probation
- Substance abuse issues
- Race
- Lack of immigration status
- Lack of support system
- Gender and/or sexual orientation
- Inexplicable appearance of expensive gifts, clothing, or other costly items.
- Presence of an older boy/girlfriend
Pathways to Entry

- Family selling children
- Violence and kidnapping
- Seduction and coercion
- False advertising for “modeling,” “acting,” or “dancing”
- Peer recruitment
- Internet enticement through chat rooms or profile sharing sites (dating websites)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=in_NRLihYAM
Pimps/Johns

- A “pimp” is a common term used for someone who controls and benefits financially from the exploitation of a child or youth.

- A “john” “trick” or exploiter refers to those who buy sex from someone who is being prostituted or otherwise sexually exploited.

- However, these terms should not distract from the reality that those who exploit children and youth for profit and sexual pleasure are diverse. They can be businessmen, trusted members of a community, a neighbor, a family member, a gang, or an intimate partner. (many females who work the track from Wisconsin to ND talk about the “nice rich farmers”)
Pimp Tactics of Coercion and Control

- Enforcing Trivial Demands - develops habit of compliance, damaging to self-esteem.
- Isolation - deprives victim of social support that is necessary for the ability to resist.
- Monopolization of Perception - fixes attention upon immediate predicament,
- Induced Debility & Exhaustion - weakens mental and physical ability to respond and resist.
- Occasional Indulgences - Provides positive or motivation for compliance. (clothes, nice dinner, drugs)
- Threats - cultivates anxiety and despair.
- Demonstrating Power/Control - Suggests resistance is pointless/useless
- Degradation - loss of self-respect, mentality that they deserve to be treated this way
While unknown persons can pose a threat, most children and youth are victimized by someone known to them. In fact, perpetrators often establish or build upon an existing relationship to coerce or manipulate children and youth into sexually exploitative acts. For example, one common tactic used by pimps is to play the role of a boyfriend and then gradually begin to exploit the victim once trust and loyalty have been developed.
Exploiter Grooming Tactics

- Recruiting youth occurs online (social media profile sites like Facebook), dating websites (kids are posing as adults), and chat rooms. May pose as talent or modeling scouts online to coerce children into sending personal information/images online.

- Recruiting occurs at public events, malls, schools, on streets, in shelters.

- Recruiters may be adults or youth. (Bottom Girl)

- Perpetrators may also use an existing relationship with a child or youth to coerce or manipulate them into sexually exploitive acts.
Exploiters

- Gain trust through grooming tactics.
- Will exploit other vulnerabilities or factors in the victims life - existing trauma, low self-esteem, isolation from family or friends, lack of basic resources, sexual orientation, homelessness, or criminal behavior.
- Perpetrators will use force, violence, threats, lies, false promises, or other forms of control and manipulation to keep their victims reliant on them and involved in sexually exploitive activities or other ongoing illegal activity.
- Technology such as social media, webcams, and smart phones offers perpetrators access to children in nuanced and evolving ways. Not to mention how these offenders then use technology to share images, advertise their victims, and maintain further control over their victims.
Stockholm Syndrome & Trauma Bonds

- Most the time, the relationship that a victim has with their offender is the largest obstacle in their recovery.
- A victims relationship with the perpetrator can be complex.
- We see this in all forms of person-on-person violence.
- The perpetrator is likely meeting emotional, physical, and other basic needs of the victim.
- Victims likely will not identify that they are being sexually exploited - this comes from the perpetrator’s expertise in grooming tactics - which leaves the victim feeling in some way responsible for their own victimization.
How are trauma bonds formed?

- Violence and threats of violence
- Alternating violence and kindness increases this bonding.
- Believe if they even think a disloyal thought, exploiter will know and retaliate.
- Isolation increases bonding.
- Shame and stigma associated with being prostituted, rape, losing virginity, etc. all increases bonding.
What are the major indicators of trauma bonding?

- **Denial/Minimizing or Bragging** - Denies anger at exploiter to others and self. Denies violence and threats of violence are actually occurring. Rationalizes violence.

- **Search for Control** - Believe they have some control over the abuse. Believe if they control the situation it lessens exploiters control and abuse. Tries to get inside exploiters heads.

- **Lack of Self** - May or may not have own perspective. Experiences sense of self through exploiters eyes.
Major indicators, contd.

- Empathy with Exploiter - Sees world from exploiter’s perspective. Sees exploiter as a good person, their protector. Sees exploiter as a victim. Self-blame for situation and abuse. Is thankful and grateful that exploiter has not killed them. Sees outside authorities/people trying to win release (escape) as bad guys.

- Others - Shows ongoing symptoms of trauma or PTSD. Intensely grateful for small kindness. Hyper vigilant to exploiter’s needs. Seeks to keep exploiter happy to decrease violence.
Barriers for Victims

- **Victims typically do not self-identify**

  Force, fraud, or coercion is used to virtually enslave victims. This can include threats toward the victims' family, pornographic pictures can be used as blackmail, as well as physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. Victims may be gang raped to desensitize them to sexual activity.

- **Victims are taught to not trust law enforcement and other system providers who could help intervene.** Many victims have also experienced negative encounters with law enforcement officers.

- **Victims often remain with pimps out of fear of being physically harmed, having another victim endure physical harm, or a threat to their family members.**

- **Pimps have been convicted of plotting to murder cooperative victim witnesses and for the homicide of victims, further instilling fear.**
Barriers for Victims - Trauma Bonding

- The victim experiences a strong link to the pimp/exploiter based in what the child perceives as an incredibly intense or important relationship, but one in which there has been an exploitation of trust or power.

- Emotional bonding is a learned tactic for survival and is common in exploited individuals.

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is very common among children exposed to sexual exploitation/trafficking. It includes symptoms: anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks, emotional numbing, hyper-alertness, etc.

- Victims have unique needs given the frequent nature of multiple acts of sexual exploitation or violence, by multiple offenders, various relationships of offenders, over potentially a sustained period of time.
### 1. Recruitment/Grooming/Conditioning

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Flirtation/initial contact</th>
<th>Victims given special attention/affirmation</th>
<th>Victims given gifts (phone, purse, clothes, jewelry, etc.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addiction or victims given drugs/alcohol</td>
<td>Peer recruitment</td>
<td>Past sexual assault or child sexual abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early exposure to prostitution as a norm or option</td>
<td>Survival/promise of money and a better life</td>
<td>“Relationship” → Isolation</td>
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<td>First customer</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>Rape/gang rape</td>
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<td>Pornography/blackmail</td>
<td>Making an “example” out of another victim</td>
<td>New name/identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inducing or enabling chemical addiction</td>
<td>Threat of “getting in trouble”/criminal prosecution</td>
<td>Exploiting trauma bond (loyalty towards “family” or “boyfriend”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threat of physical violence</td>
<td>Threats to family or children</td>
<td>Exploiting trauma bond (loyalty towards “family” or “boyfriend” or peers)</td>
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<td>Shame</td>
<td>Isolation from former support system</td>
<td>Normalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of other options</td>
<td>Learned obedience</td>
<td>Addiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Criminal history</td>
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What can you do to help a victim?

- Be patient
- Open door policy
- Non-Judgemental
- Understand this is a cycle

- Be a part of your communities solution:
  - Develop protocols
  - When a child runs away in your community - how does your community respond to that?
  - Training
  - Identification
  - Assessment
  - Basic needs (housing, food, etc.)
  - Treatment/Support
Take-aways:

1. MN definition is very broad - Force fraud coercion is not required - you can not consent to being exploited

2. Sexual Exploitation is not just “sex trafficking”

3. Most victims will not self-identify but educating them helps them to identify their trauma. Victims may not look like traditional victims but they still need our help

4. Advocates are THE bridge between their clients and the system. Knowledge is power and understanding the law can help you advocate for SEY.

5. Call Support Within Reach with any SEY case

6. This is Happening in our Communities!!!!
ROLE OF COMMUNITY

1. You may be the FIRST CONTACT a victim has had with someone who cares.
2. You are a RESOURCE in your community, and you know where the other resources are.
3. You have the skills ALREADY - think about how you would handle a situation with a victim of domestic abuse/sexual assault.
4. You are NOT ALONE - this is a statewide effort, so connect with your Regional Navigator and other advocates and partners in your community.
5. You can start to CHANGE THE CONVERSATION around this topic in your personal and professional lives.

- Call Support Within Reach for any SEY case, to provide statistic and referrals
Call your local Regional Navigator with all SEY Cases

- The Regional Navigator is here to support you with referrals or more information about sexual exploitation. Working together will provide the best outcome for these youth and be sure that less youth are going unidentified or misidentified.

- DOVE is the central point for tracking sexual exploitation within the Mahnomen County area. Support Within Reach covers the rest of the northwest region.

- This will provide more information on hot spot areas for the Navigator to provide more outreach or education and report back to MDH about trends occurring in these areas.

- Sexual Exploitation occurs in many different ways, tracking one case may open up a path to help more youth.
QUESTIONS?

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