

SAFE HARBOR for Minnesota's Sexually Exploited Youth

WHAT IS SAFE HARBOR?

Since April of 2014, Safe Harbor has increased awareness, understanding and identification of the commercial sexual exploitation of youth.

The **Safe Harbor Law**:

- Excludes sexually exploited youth under 18 from the definition of delinquent child so that youth can no longer be 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;
- Appropriates funding to develop protocols and trainings, services, housing and outreach.



WHY IS THE LAW NECESSARY?

The Safe Harbor law treats sexually exploited youth with dignity and respect, meeting them where they are to help them reach the services they need. This means that Minnesota youth who engage in prostitution are no longer seen as criminals.

THEY'RE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

They are not – and should not be referred to as – child prostitutes.

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, guarded, not telling the whole truth, or struggling with mental health or addiction issues.

That is why sexual exploitation is a hidden crime and many victims go unidentified, misidentified, and unreported.

These behaviors help youth survive “the life.” It's likely that they've suffered various hardships, making them more vulnerable to being victimized.

IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP, NOT TO JUDGE.

Our job is to consider and respect what lead these youth to sexual exploitation and get them the support they need.

MINOR COMMERCIAL 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.



WHAT IS MINNESOTA DOING?

NO WRONG DOOR

Any door a youth goes through – school, child protection, law enforcement – they find a safe, protected environment that helps them leave the abuse and leads them to specialized services.

SERVICES FOR YOUTH

- Regional navigators – connect and coordinate services for youth.
- Housing providers – safely house youth in emergency, transitional and permanent housing.
- Supportive services – provide victim-centered services including mental health, legal, health care, advocacy, culturally specific services and ongoing support.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONALS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Regional navigators – regional experts for communities.
- Statewide law enforcement and county attorney training – Safe Harbor introduction and best practices for identifying and intervening with youth and traffickers.
- Sexual exploitation training – how to identify and refer youth to services
- Youth sexual exploitation response – assist communities in developing best practices.
- Safe Harbor protocols – guidelines on how professionals can identify and refer youth to services. advocacy, culturally specific services and ongoing support.

Because of Safe Harbor, in Minnesota there is more conversation about how to best serve commercial sexually exploited youth and more attempts to improve delivery of those services. And, we're seeing a shift from viewing sexually exploited youth as delinquents to viewing them as victims.

NO WRONG DOOR APPROACH INCLUDES:



Regional Navigators to connect and coordinate services for youth



Supportive services that are victim-centered, culturally specific, and ongoing



Safe emergency, transitional, and permanent housing

LEARN MORE:



Minnesota Department of Health
health.state.mn.us/injury/topic/safeharbor/



Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force
mnhttf.org/



Day One: provides services to all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or sexual trafficking.
Day One Hotline: 1-866-223-1111