

# SAFE HARBOR

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, the 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.
- Funds protocol development, training, and evaluation, and provides services, housing, and outreach for youth ages 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, state-funded services to heal and recover. Federal funding from the Office for Victims of Crime, U.S Department of Justice supports Minnesota's response to labor trafficking and exploitation.

### Creating a Community Response

Minnesota developed a Safe Harbor network of services with nine Regional Navigators who direct youth to specialized services, housing, and shelter. Regional Navigators are available to increase local capacity and awareness by training communities. Safe Harbor also funds Tribal Nations and services, as well as survivor advisement on program implementation through state and federal funds.

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/response/navigators.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/response/navigators.html)

### Youth Outreach

Victims of sexual exploitation might not see themselves as victims. To assist with outreach, Safe Harbor created materials, with help from sexually exploited youth, to speak directly to youth and their situation. Access or view the materials:

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/communities/youthoutreach.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/communities/youthoutreach.html)

### Safety through Child Welfare System Responses

Sexually exploited and sex trafficked youth need protection. Child protection services should be notified of all youth victim/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 connecting them to trauma-informed, specialized services.

[www.mn.gov/dhs/safe-harbor](http://www.mn.gov/dhs/safe-harbor)

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## 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.

## Labor Trafficking and Exploitation

Labor trafficking includes debt bondage or forced labor or services. Debt bondage means someone is under another's control or debt and the debt cannot be paid back with reasonable work due to fraud by the trafficker. MN Statute 609.281-609.282. Labor exploitation involves violations of laws protecting how workers are treated, including how much and when someone is paid, child labor, and health and safety in the workplace.

## 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 (BCA) in the Department of Public Safety (DPS), have formed task forces on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation investigations. BCA coordinates the statewide Human Trafficking Investigations Task Force. Contact the BCA 24/7 hotline regarding suspected exploitation/trafficking at 651-793-7000.

[www.dps.mn.gov/divisions/bca/bca-divisions/investigations/Pages/human-trafficking-investigations.aspx](http://www.dps.mn.gov/divisions/bca/bca-divisions/investigations/Pages/human-trafficking-investigations.aspx)

## Implementing Community Response Protocols

Professionals must work across specialized teams to provide the most appropriate response to sexually exploited youth. Access the Safe Harbor Protocols and learn more about developing protocols and putting them into practice.

[www.mncasa.org/sexual-exploitation-trafficking](http://www.mncasa.org/sexual-exploitation-trafficking)

## RELATED PROJECTS

### Minnesota Student Survey and Sexual Exploitation

MDH Violence Prevention Programs Unit developed a question on sexual exploitation for the Minnesota Student Survey. In 2019, the question was given to 9th and 10th graders. Preliminarily, the University of Minnesota, working in partnership with MDH, estimates that at least 5,000 youth in the state have experienced some form of sexual exploitation. MDH Safe Harbor Program will use this information to direct its response and prevention efforts.

[www.nursing.umn.edu/research/research-projects/trading-sex-and-sexual-exploitation-among-high-school-students](http://www.nursing.umn.edu/research/research-projects/trading-sex-and-sexual-exploitation-among-high-school-students)

### Hotel Training

The Department of Health in partnership with Hospitality Minnesota 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.

[www.health.state.mn.us/hoteltrafficking](http://www.health.state.mn.us/hoteltrafficking)

### Expungement Project

With MDH support, the Office of Minnesota Attorney General has a statewide expungement project to help people seal certain criminal records without going to court, hiring a lawyer, or paying a filing fee. People, including victims of trafficking and exploitation, can submit a request to seal their records of arrests or convictions through a new portal on the attorney general website. Staff will then refer requests to prosecutors across Minnesota jurisdictions for processing.

[www.helpsealmyrecord.org](http://www.helpsealmyrecord.org)

### Minnesota Youth Human Trafficking and Exploitation Identification (MYTEI) Tool and Guide

The Minnesota Youth Trafficking and Exploitation Identification (MYTEI) Tool and Guide is a survivor-centered and trauma-informed identification tool. The MYTEI Tool is designed to help non-experts identify and assist youth ages 13-17 who are experiencing human trafficking or exploitation. A training webinar is required before obtaining the MYTEI Tool and Guide.

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/communities/mytei.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/communities/mytei.html)

### Safe Harbor for All

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 submitted a report and strategic plan to the legislature exploring ways to help adults affected by commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/response/safeharborforall.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/response/safeharborforall.html)

### Not A #Number: A Child Trafficking and Exploitation Prevention Curriculum from LOVE146

This prevention curriculum teaches youth how to protect themselves from human trafficking and exploitation. MDH has embraced this prevention curriculum for statewide use.

[www.love146.org/notanumber](http://www.love146.org/notanumber)

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St. Paul, MN 55164-0882

To obtain this information in a different format, email [health.safeharbor@state.mn.us](mailto:health.safeharbor@state.mn.us) or call 651-201-5400.

