

Safe Harbor

Evaluation Findings on Minnesota's Effort to Help Sexually Exploited Youth

Safe Harbor began in Minnesota in 2011 to provide legal protection and services for sexually trafficked or exploited youth and young adults. Safe Harbor funds agencies and grantees to provide services, housing and shelter, training, outreach, and evaluation. Over \$15 million have been invested in Safe Harbor each biennium.

Wilder Research has evaluated the Safe Harbor initiative to understand progress in implementation and impact, and to identify and guide areas for improvement in related efforts.

Safe Harbor in Minnesota – A multi-agency response

Safe Harbor involves multiple agencies working in partnership with grantees throughout the state. Participating state agencies include:

- Minnesota Department of Health – provides regional navigator/supportive services grants management, coordinates trainings, and works with the external evaluator
- Minnesota Department of Human Services – provides housing grant management and coordinates the child welfare response
- Office of Justice Programs and Bureau of Criminal Apprehension within the Minnesota Department of Public Safety – provide law enforcement training and investigative response

Who is served by Safe Harbor?

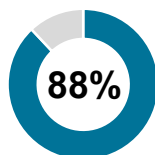
Safe Harbor provides services to youth and young adults through age 24 who have been sexually exploited and trafficked. Sexual exploitation occurs when someone is engaged in any type of sexual activity in return for anything of value, or a promise of anything of value, such as money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, or social status. Sex trafficking involves individuals profiting from the commercial sexual exploitation of others. While sex trafficking is a form of sexual exploitation, sexual exploitation does not always involve a profit for a third party, so it is not always an act of sex trafficking. People who survive sex exploitation and/or trafficking may have many feelings about their experience, including forced, coerced, or that they freely consented to trade sex for a thing of value.

Since 2011, there have been 2,661 people served by Safe Harbor-funded grantees.

PEOPLE SERVED BY SAFE HARBOR (2011-2019)

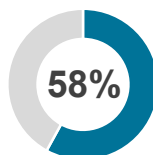


Female-
identified



(N=2,337)

People
of color

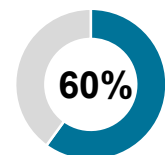


(N=1,537)

Median
age

16
years old

Served in
greater MN

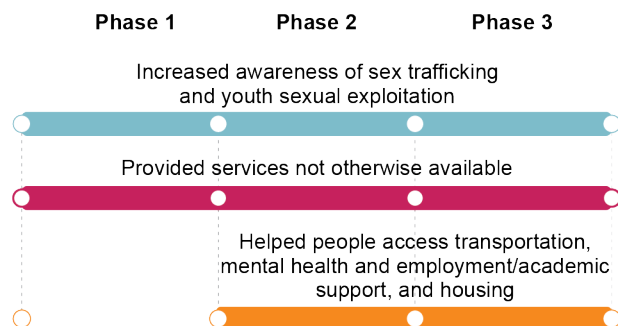


(N=1,585)

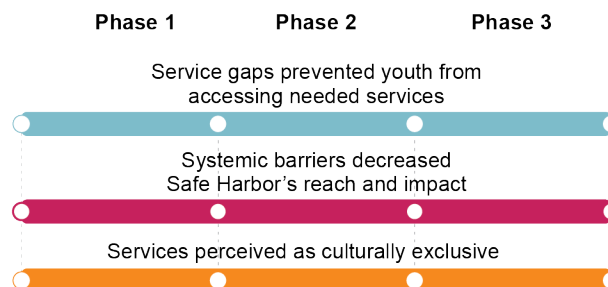
What we learned from the evaluation

The evaluation was broken into three separate phases over eight years. Below is an overview of the themes that emerged by Phase from 427 youth and stakeholder surveys; 129 key informant interviews, including youth served; and 73 focus group participants.

SAFE HARBOR'S IMPACTS



SAFE HARBOR'S CHALLENGES



Recommendations and considerations

Wilder Research identified the following recommendations. Together, these actions may move Minnesota closer to achieving Safe Harbor's goals to ensure that all youth victimized by sex trafficking and sexual exploitation get the services and supports they need, and to prevent further sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.

- ✓ **Target work and resources to address missing or inconsistent services.** This should include closing service gaps, ensuring grantees are fully funded, aiming for more diversity in leadership, providing consistent training, addressing collaboration challenges, and implementing Safe Harbor for All.
- ✓ **Support the implementation of an enhanced, more rigorous evaluation.** This would entail collecting data annually, requiring participation from all grantees, collecting consistent and reliable data, continuing the implementation evaluation, and improving the efficiency in reporting.
- ✓ **Improve focus on preventing sex trafficking and exploitation.** In addition to the current work, it is important to address ways to diminish the demand for exploitative sex and decreasing the need for youth to engage in survival sex. **Expand research and evaluation funding.** Priorities for this funding could include exploring the longitudinal impact of Safe Harbor programs and services, and creating data collection methods and program staff capacity increases to implement the ROI framework.
- ✓ **Increase robust cross-agency and community collaboration.** Providers and funders should be encouraged to work closely with each other, increase prevention efforts, and align them with the strengths and needs of Minnesotans at risk of trafficking and exploitation.

Additional information

An Evaluation of the Safe Harbor Initiative in Minnesota – Phase 3
<https://bit.ly/2RoriC4>

Safe Harbor Minnesota – Minnesota Department of Health
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/>

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For more information

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