

## Safe Harbor Summary of First Year Evaluation Report

Safe Harbor laws were developed to address how children who are exploited for commercial sex are treated. Under federal law, a child under eighteen who is induced into providing commercial sex is a victim of trafficking and must be treated as such.

In Minnesota, a Safe Harbor law was passed in 2011 that provided a legislative framework for legal protections and state services for sexually exploited children and youth. This legislation shifted legal definitions of “sexually exploited youth” and “delinquent child” to acknowledge that exploited minors are not delinquent, but are victims. An expansion of the law in 2013 and 2014 included implementing No Wrong Door, a statewide, victim-centered response for serving exploited children and youth.

With the support of the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Wilder Research evaluated the implementation of the Safe Harbor Law and No Wrong Door model in adherence to Minnesota Statute 145.4718.

### *Implementing the No Wrong Door model*

The goal of the No Wrong Door model is to ensure that children and youth who are exploited for commercial sex are identified, receive trauma-informed services, and are housed safely to enable them to lead productive lives and no longer be sexually exploited. It seeks to do this by providing:

- Comprehensive, coordinated intervention services and housing for commercial sexually exploited youth and children across the state.
- Region-specific navigation services, as well as culturally specific services.
- Multi-sector training on identifying, serving, and referring sexually exploited youth.

These activities are carried out by three types of grantees: Regional Navigators, service providers, and housing providers.

	Number of funded agencies	Grant start date	State agency with oversight
Regional Navigator	8	4 in April 2014 and 4 in July 2014	MDH
Housing	4*	Summer/Fall 2013	MN Dept. of Human Services
Service Provider	13	November 2014	MDH

*\*This figure includes Breaking Free, which is no longer a housing grantee.*

Services typically did not start immediately as many grantees had to prepare for service provision. Data for the report was primarily collected from intake and service tracking forms completed by Regional Navigators, as required by the legislature. In addition, Wilder Research conducted interviews with 24 key informants who have expertise in addressing commercial sex trafficking and with Safe Harbor grantees. Additional data from service provider and housing grantees will be available for the next report as well as outcome information from the youth being served.

Safe Harbor Regional Navigators began their work in spring and summer of 2014 with four main goals:

- Improve community capacity to identify commercial sexually exploited youth in Minnesota
- Provide regional expertise throughout the state, serving as resources for communities on youth services and sexual exploitation
- Increase services available and improve service effectiveness to sexually exploited youth to enhance positive outcomes for youth
- Enhance coordination and collaboration between systems (criminal justice, health care, child protection and welfare, etc.) and professionals serving, interacting, and engaging youth.

*continued*

## Key themes around successes, challenges, and impacts

Key informants and Safe Harbor grantees were asked to describe successes and challenges related to the implementation of the Safe Harbor legislation and the perceived impact of the model so far.

### Themes related to components of successful implementation include:

- Capitalizing on Minnesota's pre-existing assets in identifying and serving sexually exploited youth.  
*In Minnesota, we have a good history of strong victim services. We may not have everything in place we need to, but...we have a strong history of looking at the services we provide and trying to fill gaps. – Justice/corrections sector key informant*
- The collaboration across and within sectors, as well as across geographic locations.
- The effectiveness of the navigator role and the Regional Navigators' ability to coordinate efforts and act as a regional contact for other organizations and agencies.  
*I think the Regional Navigators have had a huge impact on coordinating efforts -- it hasn't been without its challenges...but it's, for me, hard to overstate how different it is to be a child who has been identified as a trafficking victim -- how different it is now than it was before Safe Harbor. – Key informant*
- The passing of the Safe Harbor law and decriminalization of youth victims of trafficking and exploitation.
- Availability of funding and resources to implement the model, create services, and establish housing.
- Having separate residences and group services for commercial sexually exploited youth as crucial to positive outcomes.

### Themes related to challenges include:

- A lack of funding inhibited full implementation of the model, including the development of needed housing, services, training, and investigations.  
*There's not enough shelter space or money for ongoing services. This population needs long-term care. This isn't a 3-month or 6-month intervention. You need a minimum of 6 months to a year of services to be effective. – Prosecution key informant*
- The need for more collaboration and the creation of a cohesive infrastructure across organizations and sectors, including the need to build more trust between service providers and law enforcement.
- A lack of clarity around the Regional Navigator role and a concern that it may be too complex for one entity. Also, the Regional Navigators may be too spread out geographically, especially in greater Minnesota where Regional Navigators cover larger regions that are less connected and have fewer services.  
*We're trying to figure out where the Navigator needs to be, what role [he/she] needs to play, building something sustainable so that it's not all on the Navigator to coordinate. – Key informant*
- A lack of clarity around confidentiality of victim information and interpretation of mandated reporting laws.  
*I know service providers are unsure if it's a mandated report and how to go about doing that and who to go to. And then, our member programs and direct service providers, they are really concerned about the effect that mandated reporting will have on young people seeking services. That is something problematic that we need to figure out how to handle. – Youth victim services key informant*
- A need for greater inclusion of tribes and other underrepresented populations in planning, as well as a need for culturally specific services and resources.  
*People aren't aware of it. People just aren't aware of the law, including tribal leaders. We need to get the information to tribal leaders. There's also this colonized thinking that we have to have lawyers develop tribal laws and codes for us. We don't. – Key informant*

- Disagreement about whether or not locked placements are needed for youth when they are initially identified.
- For the Safe Harbor grantees specifically, confusion about the data collection requirements for the evaluation, including what forms to complete and how and when to complete them.
- Difficulties getting youth access to needed services, because of challenges around referrals and transportation, and, in some cases, a lack of services available.

### Themes around impacts include:

- Increased awareness and understanding of the commercial sexual exploitation of youth, including how to identify victims. The majority of interviewees felt that professionals' lack of awareness about what commercial sexual exploitation is, how it happens, and its frequency were substantial barriers to identifying and serving sexually exploited youth prior to Safe Harbor.

*I've seen it in the church bulletin-- I've just seen so much more awareness throughout our community and up to the Capitol since implementation of this [model]. – Law enforcement key informant*

- More discussion about how to best serve commercial sexually exploited youth and more attempts to improve service provision. Conversations have begun among and within organizations to evaluate and develop service provision practices and procedures. Discussions have also specifically addressed how to serve male victims and LGBTQ youth.
- The creation of housing and services for sexually exploited youth. Respondents said that there is more service infrastructure, there are services in more communities, and there are more service providers. Twin Cities metro area key informants were more likely to cite this as a strength than those working in greater Minnesota.

*The biggest success is that we've gone from a state with very few resources to one with the capacity to build capacity across the state. Now we have options. Before there was this huge gap -- if there was a victim, where do we send them?...It's remarkable that we've built the capacity of the entire state. If they ever had contact with the victim before implementation of the model, they weren't strategic about it or doing outreach, and now they are. They are cognizant, strategic, and intentional. – Key informant*

- Service providers, law enforcement, and/or the general population shifting from seeing sexually exploited youth as delinquents to viewing them as victims.
- Minnesota emerging as a national leader in law and service provision for sexually exploited youth.
- New referrals, collaborations, and cross-agency coordination to improve services to commercial sexually exploited youth.

### Recommendations

Wilder Research compiled the following recommendations based on information collected:

- **The state should seek options for full funding** to adequately implement services, create housing, support training, and provide resources for law enforcement investigations and identification of exploitation.
- **Expand age limit of Safe Harbor law** to include individuals 18 and older to provide long-term service provision.
- **Develop more services**, including 24-hour triage, outreach, and transportation, as well as services for males, the LGBTQ communities, and specific cultural groups. Respondents highlighted the need for more mental health service providers who are trained in working with victims and in complex trauma, and the importance of having multiple services located in one easily accessible site to help youth make use of them. The need for additional services was particularly notable in tribal communities and in greater Minnesota.

- **Create more housing** especially in greater Minnesota.
- **Improve collaboration across sectors.**
- **Focus on prevention** addressing the culture of demand for trafficking and providing education on healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.
- **Provide more grantee training upfront and expand non-grantee training opportunities to others.** Initial training opportunities focused on law enforcement and prosecutors. Training is also needed for schools, sexual assault nurses, domestic violence agencies, child protection and welfare, homeless youth shelters, and other youth organizations.
- **Make the model more responsive to schools and to other cultural groups, including tribal communities.** Raise awareness of the law among tribal leaders and communities, providing resources to help tribes develop codes similar to the Safe Harbor law and to support their implementations of services for victims, and providing culturally appropriate services and materials as part of the Safe Harbor/No Wrong Door model.
- **Increase public awareness and understanding of commercial sexual exploitation** among the general population, service providers, and other professionals who come in contact with youth about the realities of human trafficking in order to increase the number of youth who are successfully identified and assisted.
- **Expand the evaluation to encompass the work of all grantees and a longitudinal study of impacts and challenges.**
- **Clarify the roles of grantees, other stakeholders, and committees** and consolidate meetings and work as appropriate.

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### For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *Safe Harbor First Year Evaluation*. For more information about this report, contact Laura Schauben at Wilder Research, 651-280-2655.

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