



Contact: Caroline Palmer, Safe Harbor Director, caroline.palmer@state.mn.us

For program information visit <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/>

The Minnesota Safe Harbor law protects youth under the age of 18 from being arrested or prosecuted for prostitution. It adds the definition of sexually exploited youth to Minnesota's child protection codes so that child protective services and child welfare can respond. The law also assigns funding to provide specialized, trauma-informed services, shelter and outreach for youth age 24 and under plus training, protocol development, and evaluation. Safe Harbor is funded by the Minnesota State legislature. In addition, the program has expansion funding from the United States Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to respond to labor trafficking as well as support tribal nations in Minnesota.

Program Highlights:

- Minnesota utilizes a multi-pronged public health, human services, public safety, and human rights approach to human trafficking and exploitation. The Safe Harbor program is based at the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and funds regional navigators, supportive services, protocol development, program evaluation, and other activities. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports Safe Harbor shelter and outreach as well as the child welfare response. The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) investigates cases and trains law enforcement.
- Safe Harbor involved sexually exploited youth to create awareness materials for survivors.
- Safe Harbor supports the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) to provide technical assistance for protocol teams. MNCASA, in partnership with MDH and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, created the *Safe Harbor Protocol Guidelines*.
- Per legislative mandate, MDH, in partnership with the Minnesota Lodging Association, developed an online *Prevention and Response Training* curriculum for hotel licensees.
- MDH developed a question on sexual exploitation for the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS). Results analyzed in partnership with the University of Minnesota have provided new prevalence data about youth statewide.
- MDH worked with research partners at the University of Minnesota, The Advocates for Human Rights, and Rainbow Research to submit a report and strategic plan to the state legislature about expanding Safe Harbor to all ages.
- DHS has developed several best practice and other guidance tools to assist child welfare in responding to cases involving sex and labor trafficking.
- Under the OVC grant MDH worked with The Advocates for Human Rights to develop *Labor Trafficking Protocol Guidelines* plus a specialized identification tool, guide, and online training.
- MDH recently funded the Minnesota Attorney General's office to launch an expungement program to assist victims of trafficking and exploitation, among others, to seal criminal records.
- Safe Harbor is actively involved in the state's COVID-19 response by working with a multi-state-agency work group addressing the needs of At-Risk Populations, including crime victims.