

Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth

2015 Legislative Agenda

During the 2013 and 2014 legislative sessions, Minnesota took significant steps forward in the fight to end child sex trafficking with investments in safe shelter and housing, training for law enforcement personnel, comprehensive services for sexually exploited youth, and a statewide infrastructure to connect victims to services. The first several months of implementation work since Minnesota's Safe Harbor Act took effect on August 1, 2014 have seen **considerable progress** and also revealed **substantial remaining gaps** in our Safe Harbor / No Wrong Door system. The purpose of this memo is to highlight critical areas for additional investment in the 2015 legislative session.

Implementation to Date:

- ✓ **\$1.5 million** in shelter and housing grants (through DHS) supporting **4 projects statewide** and providing **partial operating funds for 25 dedicated emergency shelter and transitional/long term housing beds**.
- ✓ **Safe Harbor Director** hired and housed in the Minnesota Department of Health.
- ✓ **8 Regional Navigator positions** filled throughout the state.
- ✓ **Training** for law enforcement professionals (approximately 1,000 trained to date).
- ✓ **Protocol development** for a variety of disciplines encountering sexually exploited youth.
- ✓ **\$1 million** in comprehensive service grants to **13 projects** around the state.

Resource Gaps:

Though the State of Minnesota made significant investments in the nation-leading Safe Harbor / No Wrong Door model in 2013 and 2014, the **\$5 million currently allocated in the FY 16/17 budget is only 38% of the \$13.3 million needed for full implementation**. We are looking ahead to the 2015 legislative session to address **5 remaining resource gaps** that require immediate attention:

1. **Safe shelter and housing.** The \$2 million allocated in the FY 16/17 DHS budget only provides partial operating funds for 25 dedicated beds (63% of the estimated number of dedicated beds needed). **Additional resources needed = \$4 million to fully fund 35-40 emergency shelter and transitional/long term housing beds.**
2. **Trauma-informed, culturally specific services.** The \$2 million allocated in the FY 16/17 MDH budget is inadequate to support the wide array of trauma-informed, culturally specific services needed by sexually exploited youth around the state. **Additional resources needed = \$2 million for statewide service grants.**
3. **Statewide youth outreach.** Research solidly supports the effectiveness of youth outreach workers in connecting sexually exploited youth and youth at risk of sexual exploitation with shelter and services. **Additional resources needed = \$800,000 for 18 youth outreach workers across Minnesota.**
4. **Training.** The one-time training allocation of \$750,000 (in FY 13) funded limited initial law enforcement training, but additional investment is needed to implement to train a wider range of frontline personnel statewide who may encounter sexually exploited youth through their work. **Additional resources needed = \$1.2 million for statewide training.**
5. **Protocol implementation.** The one-time \$750,000 (in FY 13) training allocation also partially funded the initial development of protocols for a variety of disciplines encountering sexually exploited youth, but additional investment is necessary to disseminate them statewide and to provide training and technical assistance for their implementation. **Additional resources needed = \$300,000 for protocol implementation.**

Total 2015 Legislative Session Request: \$8.3 million to fully implement the Safe Harbor / No Wrong Door system.