DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

An Evaluation of the Safe Harbor Initiative in Minnesota

PHASE 5: APRIL 2021-MARCH 2023

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An Evaluation of the Safe Harbor Initiative in Minnesota

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- Safe Harbor Grantees
- Multidisciplinary partners.
- Youth survey and interview participants.

Executive summary - Safe Harbor Phase 5 evaluation

The Safe Harbor network receives funding from the State of Minnesota to provide supportive services, regional navigation, housing, shelter, and outreach for youth ages 24 and under at risk[1] of or who experienced sexual exploitation. Every two years, as required by Minn. Stat. section 145.4178, the Safe Harbor program partners with evaluators to understand what is working well and where to improve. Specifically, the statute requires an evaluation of whether the program increases identification of sexually exploited youth, coordination of investigations, access to services and housing for sexually exploited youth, and effectiveness of services. This report shares findings from the fifth evaluation of Safe Harbor, for services provided April 2021 through March 2023.

Today's state agencies, grantees, and multidisciplinary partners responsible for implementation of Safe Harbor inherited a system built on policies that have oppressed communities of color and American Indian communities. Safe Harbor is not at fault for this harmful legacy—but people involved are accountable for responding to sexual exploitation in a way that remedies, rather than perpetuates, these injustices.

The Improve Group, an evaluation firm, worked with Safe Harbor on the evaluation. The evaluation centered youth and applied mixed methods to tell the full story of Safe Harbor. Youth Advisers with lived experience provided valuable input on the evaluation (e.g., how to ask survey, focus group, and interview questions). Methods included a survey of youth; interviews with youth; program data analysis; and focus groups with grantees and multidisciplinary partners. The following questions guided the evaluation:

1. Which services and supports are needed by and being provided to youth, and are these services and supports culturally appropriate for all who need them?
2. What factors contribute to Safe Harbor's impact?
3. What are the gaps and challenges that impede the work of Safe Harbor?
4. What are the opportunities for improvement?

Key findings

Ultimately, Safe Harbor is about treating youth with dignity and creating systems that give young people choices in how to lead their lives. Results point to the strengths of youth receiving services, aspects of Safe Harbor that work well for youth, and areas to build upon for improved dignity, choice, and healing.

First and foremost, findings emphasized the **strengths of youth**. Youth want services that support them to grow toward self-sufficiency; they are thinking about the future and want independence. Most youth survey participants (83 percent) agreed or somewhat agreed that

[1] Safe Harbor describes people as "at risk" for sexual exploitation in its materials, so this terminology is used as necessary in the report. However, during the course of the evaluation, some participants identified this characterization as harmful. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and The Improve Group acknowledge the importance of focusing on systems and inequities that put people at risk, versus attributing the risk to the people themselves. Where possible, this report uses alternative language for describing youth accessing services.

they were hopeful about the future. Further, youths' resourcefulness and determination to get what they need—exemplified through Youth Advisers' contributions to how the program should be evaluated—is a key reason why Safe Harbor is successful.

The following are summarized lessons learned from the evaluation.

Over the two-year period, **at least 1,494 individuals were enrolled in Safe Harbor services, and 1,649 individuals were reported receiving Safe Harbor services**.[2] White (33 percent) and Black, African, or African American (22 percent) youth were the two largest racial/ethnic groups who received Safe Harbor services. Just over three-quarters of clients identified as cisgender female. Transgender male and female clients made up 3 percent of clients served.

A **strong majority (95 percent) of youth survey respondents said they were satisfied** with the *organization* from which they received Safe Harbor services; 80 percent said they were satisfied with the *services* they received. While 41 percent of participants said they were "very satisfied" with the organization, no respondents reported being "very satisfied" with the services.

Youth survey respondents most often reported receiving **emotional support, case management, housing advocacy, social services, and employment assistance**.[3] Grantees similarly reported most often providing emotional support; case management; criminal justice advocacy; personal items; and education services to clients.

Evaluation participants pointed to parts of Safe Harbor that result in positive impact for youth:

- **Meeting basic needs is a critical first step** for youth overcoming exploitation.
- **Permanent housing is particularly important** and is a support Safe Harbor organizations frequently work to provide youth.
- **Strong, trusting relationships** between providers and youth go a long way. Youth shared ways providers build strong relationships, such as by being non-judgmental.

> *"Everyone has been so helpful and respectful and understanding with my situation and never judge me." - Youth Participant*

- Services and supports can **help youth feel like they are part of a community**.
- Respect for **privacy and confidentiality** is important to youth.
- Youth co-creating services **values youths' voices and provides choices**.
- **Providers partnering** helps youth. For example, when other organizations can provide public education about trafficking and exploitation, after receiving training from Safe Harbor grantees, then Safe Harbor providers have more time to focus on services.

[2] The number of enrollments and total services are different because individuals who enrolled before April 2021 and were receiving services during the evaluation period were included in the data pull from REDCap for this evaluation period covering April 2021 through March 2023.

[3] Youth were asked about their experiences with Safe Harbor as this was the focus of the evaluation. However, it is possible youth also reflected on non-Safe Harbor services (e.g., if they have stayed in multiple shelters) in their responses.

The evaluation pointed to important needs Safe Harbor works to meet and areas for continued attention.

- **Mental health services persist as a need**. More than half of youth survey respondents (54 percent) said mental health support services were "very important" for supporting youth facing sexual exploitation. Seventeen percent of Metro clients and 18 percent of greater Minnesota clients over the evaluation period told providers they had depression; 15 percent and 16 percent, respectively, reported anxiety.

"There have been multiple reports about mental health being a gap and nothing has happened—[I'm] tired of hearing it is a need, but not seeing anything done about it." - Shelter Provider

- **Consistency and stability of services** is important to youth and can be particularly difficult in rural communities.

"It's a very rural area, we do not have many options here. And if we have somebody under the age of 17, that really limits the capacities of services we can get to them" - Tribal Law Enforcement

- Agencies varied in the extent to which they provide **culturally responsive services**, including providing services in languages other than English.

"A youth opened up and talked more when they were with a staff who spoke the same language and was better able to understand the youth's unique needs." - Service Provider

- **Trauma-informed approaches** are vital to ensure positive experiences for youth.
- Providers, especially shelters, need resources and **training to respond to the complex and multilayered issue of violence within shelters**. Youth need to feel safe from violence while in shelter; at the same time, youth perpetrating violence—which often is rooted in their own traumatic experiences—equally deserve safe shelter.
- **Shelter remains in short supply**, which hinders Safe Harbor providers' efforts.
- **Coordination of services and care supports youth**. Participants shared examples of successful collaboration as well as areas to continue to foster relationships.
- **Training and resources are particularly needed to serve transgender and non-binary youth**, as well as LGBTQ youth overall.

Recommendations

The above findings point to the following recommendations:

1. Provide more resources for centering youth voice as a trauma-informed practice.
2. Support shelters to respond to violence in trauma-informed ways, while increasing housing options for youth committing violence.

3. Support small, rural organizations to increase their cultural responsiveness.
4. Help agencies plan for youths' transition to adulthood.
5. Create a collaborative system where schools and social services work together to protect youth who may be targeted for sexual exploitation.
6. Provide more time for collaboration among grantees and community organizations to foster stronger relationships and facilitate new introductions after turnover occurs.
7. Work to increase the supply of and connections to mental health providers, especially for culturally specific services and evidence-based therapy.
8. Provide training that goes beyond Trafficking 101 and addresses current challenges.
9. Support quality REDCap data entry through ongoing training and technical assistance for grantees to ensure an accurate picture of Safe Harbor services.
10. Incorporate ways to support grantee staff retention into Safe Harbor strategic planning.
11. Increase funding to Safe Harbor to support grantee staff retention.

Introduction

Safe Harbor laws, which most states have adopted in some form[4], represent a broad shift in philosophy. Instead of seeing young people involved in sex trafficking and exploitation as criminals, Safe Harbor views them as victim-survivors in need of comprehensive services. Minnesota's Safe Harbor law passed in 2011; the state implemented part of it in 2011 and the rest in 2014. The law connects victim-survivors through age 24 to a "No Wrong Door" system of services across the state; victims under 18 are protected from criminal prosecution.[5] Ultimately, Safe Harbor is about treating youth with dignity and creating systems that give young people choices in how to lead their lives.[6]

Safe Harbor serves young people who are experiencing, have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing sexual exploitation. Three agencies distributed Safe Harbor funds in the following manner from April 2021 through June 2023:

- The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) administered state funds for nine regional navigators and two Tribal regional navigators, supportive services, nine Tribal Nations, protocol implementation, and this evaluation. Using federal funds, MDH supported nine Tribal Nations, supportive services for victim-survivors of human trafficking and exploitation (sex and labor), and state agency partners.
- The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) administered funds for outreach, emergency shelter, and supportive housing.
- The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Justice Programs (OJP) administered funds to local and county law enforcement entities to aid in the investigation and coordination of sex trafficking cases. In addition, the Office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, the first in the nation, was opened during this period.

The "No Wrong Door" model of Safe Harbor assumes no single agency or profession can adequately identify and address the needs of youth who may experience sexual exploitation. Youth deserve a trauma-informed multidisciplinary response from all intersecting community and system partners. In Minnesota, these partners include law enforcement, child protection/child welfare, prosecutors, juvenile justice, youth-serving community agencies, domestic and sexual violence agencies, child advocacy centers, organizations serving people who are homeless, school professionals, mental health and substance misuse service providers, and more, depending on the community.

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[4] Shared Hope International. (2023). *Safe Harbor Laws*. Report Cards on Child & Youth Sex Trafficking. https://reportcards.sharedhope.org/safeharbor/

[5] Minnesota Department of Health. (2023, July 31). Safe Harbor Minnesota. https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/

[6] Minnesota Department of Health. (2023, July 31). Safe Harbor Minnesota. https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/

About the evaluation

The Minnesota Legislature requires an evaluation under Minn. Stat. section 145.4178 every two years to measure the effectiveness and reach of Safe Harbor. After a competitive RFP process, MDH selected The Improve Group, a St. Paul-based evaluation firm, to conduct this evaluation, which examined the period of April 2021 through March 2023. MDH and its partner agencies hope to use these results to better understand the effectiveness of Safe Harbor from the perspectives of youth who accessed services, grantees who provided services, and multidisciplinary partners who played important roles in the system during the evaluation period. Results can inform changes to enhance and improve services; incorporate youth voice; design stronger trainings, presentations, and grant applications; compare with other studies and previous evaluations; prioritize funding; and show the public what trafficking and exploitation look like in Minnesota.

Past evaluations have found that Safe Harbor has increased awareness of sex trafficking and youth sexual exploitation; provided services not otherwise available; and helped people fulfill needs such as for transportation and housing.[7] Challenges to meeting goals have included the deeply entrenched root causes of sexual exploitation that create risks for youth; lacking services to meet the needs of all youth; missing and inconsistent data; and systemic challenges regarding collaboration and inconsistent buy-in.[8]

About this report

This report summarizes results of the two-year Safe Harbor evaluation covering the period of April 2021-March 2023 ("Phase 5," in other words the fifth evaluation since the Safe Harbor law was passed). Audiences include the state Legislature, youth contributing to the evaluation, MDH leadership, partner state agencies, grantees, youth receiving services, federal and state partners, researchers, the general public, and evaluation partners (e.g., Youth Advisers).

Earlier in the Phase 5 evaluation, The Improve Group produced a process report for MDH documenting helpful lessons learned about effective engagement of people with lived experience (attached in the Appendix). The Improve Group shared these findings with the intention of informing future State engagement with people with lived experience, including young people.

Information on Penalty and Forfeiture funds

Minnesota Statutes section 609.3241 sets forth penalty assessments by the courts. In addition, Minnesota Statutes section 609.5315 sets forth disposition of forfeited property. Assessments under these statutes are distributed to MDH for grants to services supporting sexually exploited youth. In addition, these funds are distributed to DPS to support the law enforcement and prosecution response to sexual exploitation of youth.

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[7] Atella, J., & Turner, L. (2020). An Evaluation of the Safe Harbor Initiative in Minnesota – Phase 3. St. Paul: Wilder Research. Retrieved from https://www.wilder.org/sites/default/files/imports/SafeHarbor_EvaluationReport_9-19.pdf

[8] Ibid.

During fiscal year 2023, the Safe Harbor program executed a one-year inter-agency agreement with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office for $4,500 to support interns for ongoing support of its statewide expungement program. Access to expungement was identified as a key need for sex trafficking victims in the 2018 "Safe Harbor for All: Results from a Strategic Planning Process in Minnesota."[9] This report was submitted to MDH by The Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach Engagement Center at the University of Minnesota, The Advocates for Human Rights, and Rainbow Research, as directed by the Minnesota Legislature, and reported to the Legislature in January 2019 by MDH through the "Safe Harbor for All: Statewide Trafficking Victim/Survivor Statewide Strategic Plan."[10]

MDH also allocated funds during fiscal years 2022 and 2023 to support funding for Safe Harbor grant recipients as well as enhance service provision by staff survivor leaders in the Safe Harbor grantee programs Breaking Free and The Enitan Story. MDH also allocated funds during Fiscal years 2022 and 2023 to supplement funding for a supportive services grant to The Link as well as enhance service provision by staff survivor leaders.

[9] Martin, L., Melander, C., Fritz Fogel, K., Saito, B., Garnett McKenzie, M., & Park, R. (2018). (rep.). *Safe Harbor For All: Results from a Statewide Strategic Planning Process in Minnesota*. Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center. Retrieved from https://uroc.umn.edu/sites/uroc.umn.edu/files/2019-11/SH4ALL-Findings-and-recommendations-1.13.19.pdf.

[10] Minnesota Department of Health Safe Harbor, Violence Prevention Unit, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Division. (2019). (rep.). *Safe Harbor for All: Statewide Sex Trafficking Victim/Survivors Strategic Plan*. Minnesota Department of Health. Retrieved September 18, 2023, from https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/documents/mdhSH4ALLreport.pdf.

Evaluation approach and methods

The Improve Group used a mixed-method, youth-centered, utilization-focused approach for this study. Multiple methods were used to gather qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources utilizing a survey, interviews, and focus groups.

The team also applied a community-responsive approach to engage individuals and organizations who are interested in, will use, and will be impacted by the findings throughout the phases of this study. Evaluators prioritized engaging people with lived experience, knowing they have the most accurate and useful perspectives. While evaluation has often excluded people with these critical perspectives, MDH and The Improve Group affirmed that engaging people with direct experience helps funders and service providers improve what they do, including by assessing biases and keeping up with changing contexts. Safe Harbor's philosophy is to treat youth with dignity and create systems that give young people choices in how to lead their lives.[11] Accordingly, five young people with lived experience served as "Youth Advisers" in this evaluation.

Photo by Andrea Piacquadio via Pexels

Safe Harbor grantees, who directly engage youth and understand closely how the system functions, also participated, as did multidisciplinary voices who are key to the "No Wrong Door" model. In addition to Youth Advisers contributing their expertise as members of the evaluation team, a survey and interviews reached the broader population of youth eligible for Safe Harbor services in Minnesota. Some Youth Advisers also participated in interpreting data and reviewing draft findings and recommendations for this report. To reach youth, The Improve Group, MDH,

[11] Minnesota Department of Health. (2023, July 31). Safe Harbor Minnesota. https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/

and DHS conducted outreach through grantees who served youth currently in the program and were sometimes in touch with youth no longer accessing services.

The following questions guided the Safe Harbor evaluation design:

1. Which services and supports are needed by and being provided to youth, and are these services and supports culturally appropriate for all who need them?
2. What factors contribute to Safe Harbor's impact?
3. What are the gaps and challenges that impede the work of Safe Harbor?
4. What are the opportunities for improvement?

Survey

Youth who had received or were, at the time of the survey, receiving Safe Harbor services in Minnesota were invited to take a survey for the evaluation. The survey asked youth about their experiences with and insights about receiving services from the Safe Harbor network.

Outreach for the youth survey leveraged the Safe Harbor grantee network. MDH asked grantees to do outreach with their partners in the nonprofit community and through client lists as well as through posting flyers in places youth would see them. Agencies were asked not to help youth complete the survey, as this could lead youths to be less candid in their responses.

The survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Eligible youth received a $10 e-gift card as an appreciation for their time and input. Youth were reminded that the survey was completely voluntary and anonymous. To be trauma-informed, the survey also said questions may raise some distress or uneasiness throughout the survey and encouraged youth to take a pause in between questions; take the time they needed; and/or skip any questions as they would like.

The survey was available on QuestionPro from August 7, 2023, through September 8, 2023. In that time, 137 youth completed the survey who were eligible for inclusion in the study (had received or were, at the time of the survey, receiving Safe Harbor services in Minnesota). While incentives are known to increase response rates, they also carry the risk of attracting responses from ineligible individuals. Thousands of ineligible participants responded to the Safe Harbor survey. This limitation is described further below.

Key informant interviews

The Improve Group team also conducted key informant interviews with youth. While surveys can provide a lot of information about "what" Safe Harbor is, interviews allow for follow-up that provides answers to "why" and "how" questions. Youth were reminded that participation was completely voluntary, and they could choose not to answer a question for any reason. Interviews were designed to take one hour; interviewers took notes and recorded the conversation for backup notetaking. Fifteen youth volunteered for interviews. Youth interviewees received stipends of $50 for contributing their lived expertise.

Focus groups

The Improve Group conducted 90-minute virtual focus groups with professionals who work within the Safe Harbor system. Focus group participants included:

- Three Regional Navigators.
- Four child welfare professionals.
- Four law enforcement representatives.
- Three Tribal representatives.
- Seven service providers representing five provider agencies.
- Twenty-four shelter staff.

Program data

Evaluators analyzed quantitative data that grantees provided to MDH on a quarterly basis. MDH's Safe Harbor team shared data from the REDCap system in which grantees report their funded activities. The Improve Group requested high-level program data from MDH that could help answer the evaluation questions. To the extent that the REDCap system is new to grantees, some data submissions might be erroneous. The data submitted also had the following known limitations:

1. In adhering to sovereignty, Tribal data could not be shared without obtaining permission from each Tribe. Unfortunately, this was not possible in the evaluation timeframe.
2. Many of the requests from The Improve Group had the potential to yield numbers that were too low and ran the risk of participants potentially becoming identifiable. MDH submitted program data if the number in a given category was at least 15. Counts less than 15 are marked as "-" in data tables and are removed in charts.
3. MDH was not able to provide trend data that would allow for longitudinal analysis of some program trends.

Analysis

Evaluators analyzed qualitative data from youth interviews and grantee focus groups using Dedoose software. An inductive approach uncovered themes related to the most impactful services identified by youth, service gaps, and needed supports.

The Improve Group conducted quantitative analysis of survey and REDCap data using Microsoft Excel and developed summary statistics, cross-tabulations, and other measures to identify major issues, themes, and findings. The data was disaggregated by region, race, gender, and other characteristics that can uncover inequities. Additional high-level analysis of some grantee summary reports helped further understand REDCap data.

Evaluators reviewed quantitative and qualitative findings together to see where both types of data pointed to themes. The Improve Group then hosted an Emerging Findings meeting with Safe Harbor state staff and one Youth Adviser to deepen insights based on participants' understanding of and experiences with the Safe Harbor program.

Limitations

The evaluation comes with some limitations, which should be kept in mind when interpreting results.

First, the Tribal focus group was limited to Tribal law enforcement representatives and their interaction with trafficked youth. Evaluators were not able to obtain the perspective of Tribal service providers working with native youth.

Second, ineligible participants took advantage of the survey, a common risk when an incentive is provided. Responses received after August 14, 2023, may have been compromised, but evaluators used data quality filters in QuestionPro to identify potential ineligible responses and then exported responses into Excel to conduct more in-depth filters and manual checks for ineligible responses.. Evaluators believe the survey was shared publicly on social media, which resulted in bots and scammers submitting a flood of responses. After this problem began, additional steps were taken to identify survey bots and scammers, including using data quality flags; removing any responses submitted outside of Minnesota; using CAPTCHA; and asking for participants' age at the beginning and end of the survey to ensure responses match. Survey responses that were flagged as a bot or scam were removed to the best of evaluators' ability and were not included in data analysis. However, evaluators cannot guarantee the authenticity of every survey response.

Third, it is possible youth participants were reflecting on their experiences with services overall—not exclusively Safe Harbor—in their responses. The evaluation was about Safe Harbor and all data collection explained that. However, youth may access various types of services to get their needs met (e.g., different shelters out of the Safe Harbor network) and some youth participants expressed not knowing "Safe Harbor" by that name. For these reasons, the data cannot be guaranteed to all be about Safe Harbor services specifically.

Background and context

In reading results of the Safe Harbor evaluation, it is important to have in mind some background about sexual exploitation. All children and young people in Minnesota do not have the same opportunity for safety. The State of Minnesota's One Minnesota Plan under Gov. Walz has a vision that, "Minnesota is the best state in the country for children to grow up in—those of all races, ethnicities, religions, economic statuses, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, and zip codes."[12] Safe Harbor's role in achieving this vision is to support children and young adults who have experienced, are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing sexual exploitation to receive services and support. Safe Harbor is mindful that it is working to change an inherited system built on centuries of policies that, purposefully or inadvertently, have oppressed communities of color and American Indian communities—including their children.

In reviewing who experiences sexual exploitation and how Safe Harbor serves them, remembering racism as a root cause helps draw attention to how systems have the power to either perpetuate or diminish inequities. This context is also helpful in understanding Safe Harbor as a system of connected policies, programs, and individuals—with consideration to social norms, historical and ongoing actions, and impacts at individual, community, and societal levels. Policies based in white supremacy and mainstream culture generally do not adequately account for the needs and values of communities of color and American Indian communities in Minnesota. As a result, these communities bear undue burden of experiencing and responding to sexual exploitation. Traffickers and abusers target vulnerability, and communities that have been underserved and oppressed by governments are some of the most vulnerable populations, placing individuals in these communities at a higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Today's state agencies, grantees, and multidisciplinary partners responsible for implementation of Safe Harbor inherited this system. They are not at fault for this harmful legacy—but they are accountable for responding to sexual exploitation of children and young adults in a way that remedies, rather than perpetuates, these injustices.

In recent years, initiatives aimed at building a more comprehensive understanding of the pandemic of sexual exploitation, trafficking, and missing and murdered girls and women have called attention to the link between vulnerability, oppressed systems, and the targeting of individuals in these communities. For example, the Minnesota Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force explained in its 2020 report[13] that

> *"[c]urrent violence against Indigenous women and girls is rooted in colonization, historical trauma, racism, and the sexual objectification of Indigenous women and girls." As a result, "Poverty, the child welfare system, domestic violence, and sex*

[12] Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan. (n.d.). One Minnesota Plan. https://mn.gov/mmb/one-mn-plan/

[13] MartinRogers, N., & Pendleton, V. (2020). (rep.). *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force: A report to the Minnesota Legislature*. Wilder Research. Retrieved September 18, 2023, from https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/Documents/missing-murdered-indigenous-women-task-force-report.pdf. (p. 22, 36)

trafficking and prostitution are central risks in the web of mutually reinforcing factors that make Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people more vulnerable to violence and exploitation."

Different communities experience these root causes—and leverage community strengths to respond—in different ways. The Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force documented both root causes of missing and murdered women as well as assets communities have for responding and surviving. As stated by this Task Force[14], "[f]or the first two centuries of the American experiment, by law Black women were abused through forced labor, sexual violence, forced childbirth, and family separation." This led to increased vulnerability to sex trafficking, because of factors including a history of sexual or physical abuse, homelessness or unstable housing, low socioeconomic status, and involvement in child welfare and criminal systems. Black women and girls told the Task Force how they see themselves and what they draw on for self-care, including walks, nature, writing, and rest.

As these two Task Forces demonstrate, oppression affects communities differently. Another example is the Hispanic/Latine community, which can be made vulnerable due to challenges with the immigration system. Polaris, an anti-trafficking organization, explains, "A broken system makes immigrants vulnerable to trafficking by virtue of their status as either undocumented or beholden to certain employers if they are here on temporary work visas."[15] A youth participant in the evaluation explained, "These experiences are especially magnified in rural areas and Minnesota happens to be quite rural. Culturally, Hispanic/Latino individuals tend to not ask for help as often as they should; this can be due to many factors including immigration status or distrust in law enforcement."

Barriers to safety and justice likewise contribute to sexual exploitation and are amplified for children and young people. A study of trafficked girls in Minneapolis[16] confirmed "targeting [of] girls with vulnerabilities such as being runaway and/or homeless, living in poverty and/or unable to meet basic needs, experiencing cognitive delay or mental health issues, using drugs or alcohol, and/or absence of social protections against exploitation."

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[14] Squires, C., Lewis, B., Martin, L., Kopycinski, A., & James, A. (2022). (rep.). *Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force Final Report*. Minnesota Department of Public Safey Office of Justice Programs and Research in Action. Retrieved September 18, 2023, from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/619da6fcd79aa2566431b873/t/63f6831dcdf2f111bc1da77b/1677099810307/MMAAW+full+report+final.pdf. (p. 22)

[15] Polaris. (2020). *The Latino Face of Human Trafficking and Exploitation in the United States.* Polaris. Retrieved September 26, 2023 from https://polarisproject.org/press-releases/the-latino-face-of-human-trafficking-and-exploitation-in-the-united-states/.

[16] Women's Foundation of Minnesota, Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center, and Othayonih Research. (2014). (rep.). *Mapping the Market for Sex with Trafficked Minor Girls in Minneapolis: Structures, Functions, and Patterns* . Retrieved September 18, 2023, from https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/226836/MTM%20Executive%20Summary%202014.pdf?sequence=1. (p. 2)

These inequities continue to permeate how American Indian people and communities of color are treated, pointing to the need for intentional investment in culturally specific and Tribal service providers.

Findings

Youth receiving Safe Harbor housing and supportive services

From April 2021 through March 2023, at least 1,494 individuals were enrolled, and 1,649 individuals were reported receiving Safe Harbor services by grantee agencies. [17] By comparison, University of Minnesota analysis of the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) estimated at least 4,600 high school-aged youth in Minnesota had traded sex or sexual activity for money, food, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, or other reasons.[18] Comparison of Safe Harbor program data with the 2022 MSS suggests Safe Harbor is reaching approximately one-third (36 percent) of youth who could be eligible for services.

At least 9 percent (153 out of 1,494) of youth reported they were sexually exploited or trafficked by a family member when they enrolled in Safe Harbor services. More youth, 20 percent (302 out of 1,494), were unsure if a family member was responsible for the sexual exploitation or trafficking that they experienced. These numbers may be underreported or look different throughout a youth's journey to overcome exploitation. Agency staff and Youth Advisers shared that someone who is sexually exploited by a family member may not be aware of the exploitation and/or may not see their family member as a trafficker.

[17] The number of enrollments and total services are different because individuals who enrolled before April 2021 and were receiving services during the evaluation period were included in the data pull from REDCap for this evaluation period covering April 2021 through March 2023.

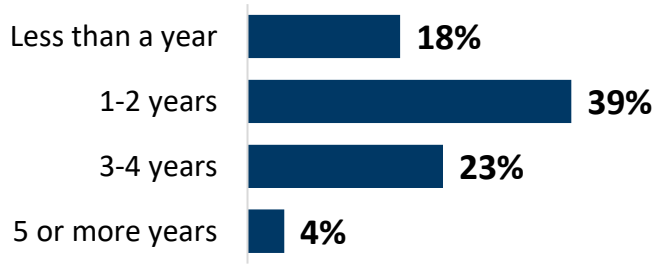
[18] Martin, L., Brown, C., McMorris, B., Johnston-Goodstar, K., Rider, G.N., Filoteo, M. (2023). *Trading Sex and Sexual Exploitation among High School Students: Data from the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey*.

Photo by Ron Lach via Pexels

Youth who took the survey, meanwhile, varied in how long they have received Safe Harbor services. Almost 40 percent of youth reported they had received services for one to two years; 23 percent said they had received services for three to four years; 18 percent said less than a year; and 4 percent said five or more years (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Length of housing and supportive services received

Most youth survey respondents have received services for at least 1 year or more, while 18 percent reported they have only received services for less than a year.



Race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation

Demographic results from the 2022 MSS, Safe Harbor program data, and the youth survey show that young people of any race/ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation can experience

sexual exploitation. Some groups reported higher rates of experiencing sexual exploitation than others. Deeper analysis in the 2022 MSS saw that Indigenous and transgender or gender-diverse students reported higher rates of sexual exploitation than others. White (33 percent) and Black, African, or African American (22 percent) youth were the two largest groups receiving Safe Harbor services and who completed the youth survey (Figure 2). Most youth enrolled in Safe Harbor programs (88 percent) identified as cisgender (Figure 3). This group made up 93 percent of youth survey respondents. Cisgender females made up about three-quarters of youth served (77 percent of unique enrollments and 76 percent of total services) while cisgender males made up 11 percent of each group. Many youth identified as heterosexual (51 percent), though a third of youth did not disclose their sexual orientation (Figure 4).

Figure 2. Unique enrollments, total housing and supportive services, and survey respondents by race/ethnicity

The largest share of enrollments and services provided were to White (35 percent, 33 percent) and Black, African, or African American (22 percent) individuals. Similarly, more youth survey respondents identified as White (33 percent) or Black, African, or African American (35 percent).

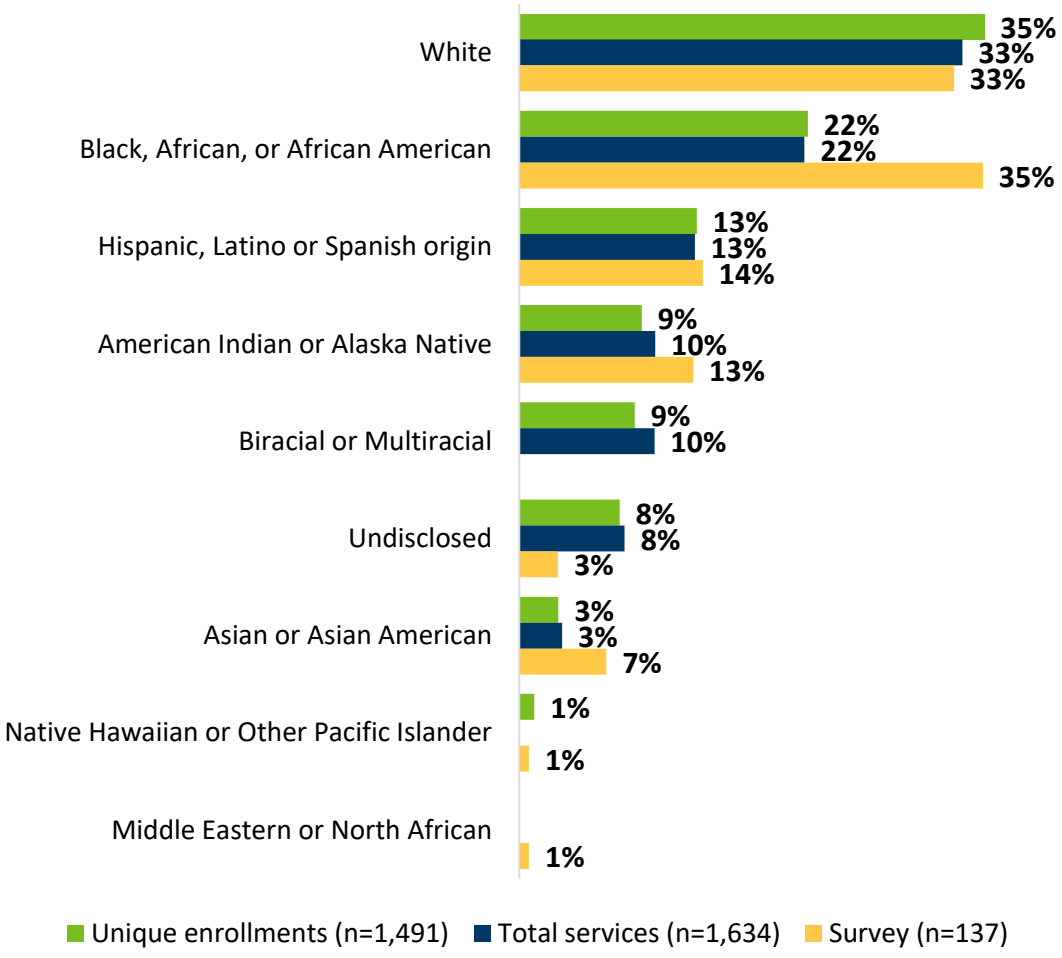


Figure 3. Unique enrollments, total housing and supportive services, and survey respondents by gender identity

Three-quarters of enrollments (77 percent) and total services (76 percent) were individuals who identified as cisgender female compared to 47 percent of youth survey respondents. Almost half (46 percent) of youth survey respondents identified as cisgender male.

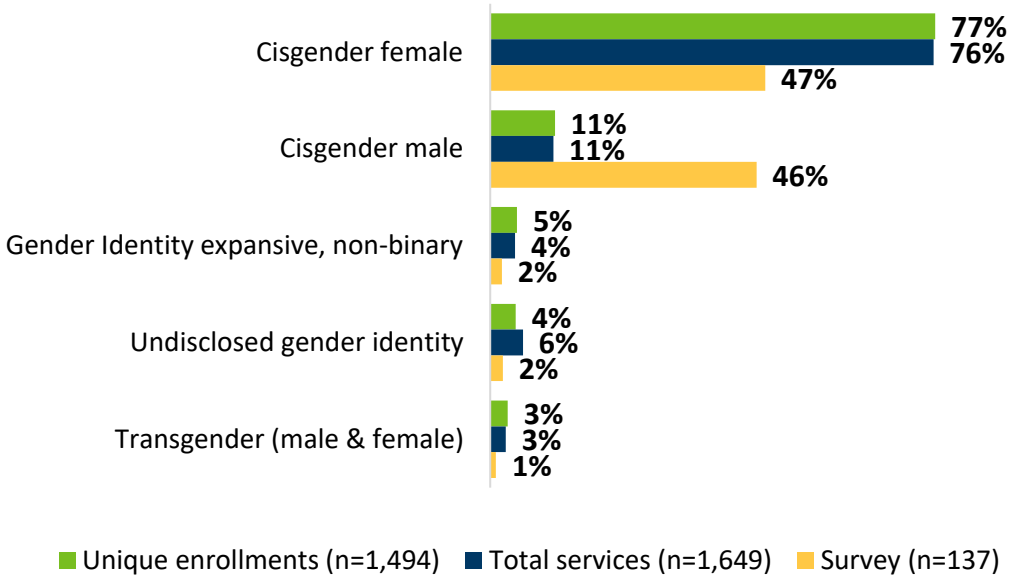
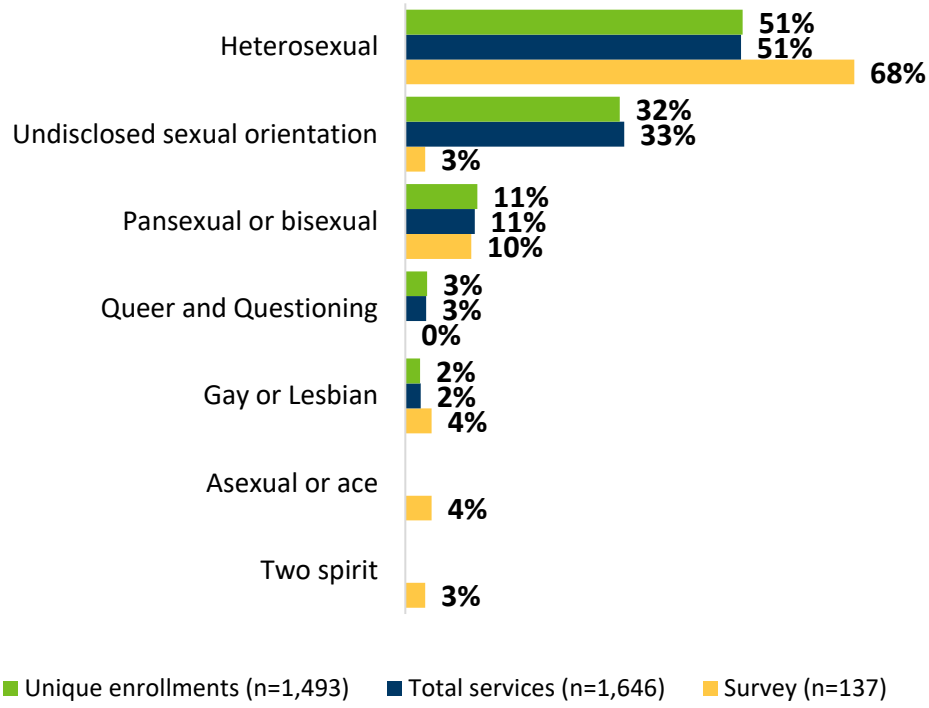


Figure 4. Unique enrollments, total housing and supportive services, and survey respondents by sexual orientation

A little more than half of enrollments and total services (51 percent) were individuals who identified as heterosexual, while 68 percent of youth survey respondents identified as heterosexual.



Age

People of all ages encounter Safe Harbor services, whether or not they are eligible. The average age of youth who were eligible for services was 18, and overall, youth ranged in age from 0[19] to 24 years old. The average age of individuals who were not eligible for services was 36 and ranged from 12 to 63 years old (Table 1). The average age of youth who took the survey was 21 and ranged from 13 to 27 years old. Most youth respondents (68 percent) were ages 20 to 24 and about a quarter were ages 15 to 19 (27 percent) (Figure 5).

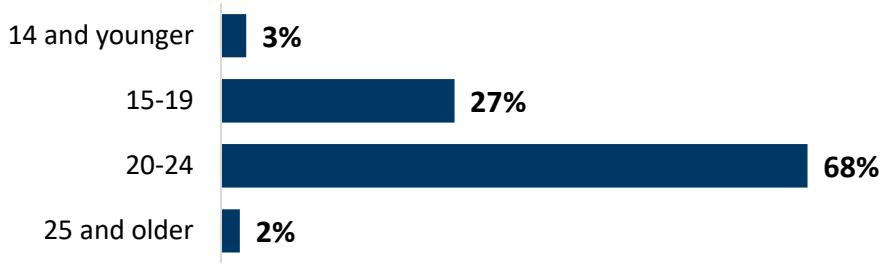
Table 1. Age of individuals served by grantee agencies

Age	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Ineligible	12	63	36
Eligible	0	24	18

[19] This information came from grantee reporting to MDH. The minimum age of zero may be an error, may be an actual case with a very young victim-survivor, or may represent the child of a victim-survivor.

Figure 5. Age of survey respondents

Almost all youth survey respondents were within the Safe Harbor service provision age of 24 years old and younger (98 percent).



Housing and supportive services provided

Early in the evaluation, grantees expressed interest in learning more about what the referral process looks like for youth to get into Safe Harbor services; what happens afterward; and how services looked across regions and demographic groups.

Figure 6: Housing and supportive services trends

Housing and supportive services grew steadily over this grant period, from 92 to 237 unique enrollments, 117 to 289 total individuals receiving services, and 22 to 29 ineligible clients.

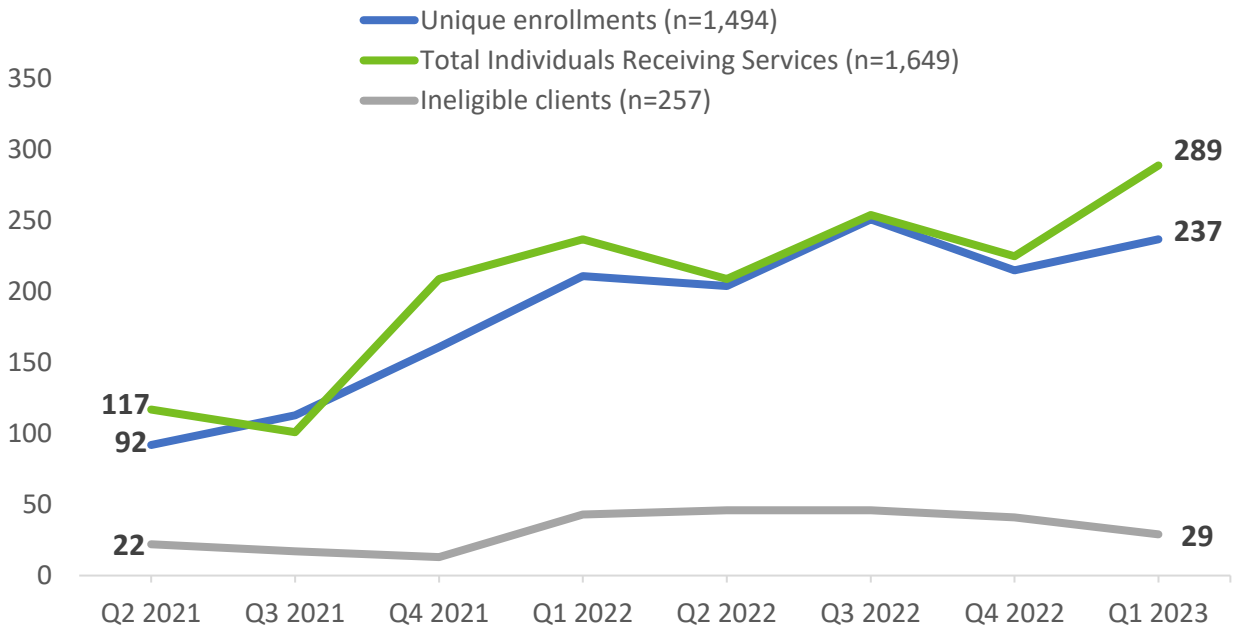


Table 2. Housing and supportive services by grant type

There were 539 unique enrollments under the DHS Housing grant that provided 1,361 total services to individuals.

Grant type	Unique enrollments	Total services
MDH Regional Navigator	380	-
MDH Supportive Services	575	-
DHS Housing	539	1,361

Note: Total services for MDH Regional Navigator and Supportive Services are not shown here because the data was not readily accessible from REDCap.

Table 3 below shows more youth are entering and exiting Safe Harbor services in the West and East Metro and Southwest and Southeast navigator regions. The Northwest, East Central, and Southeast regions have higher rates of ineligible youth compared to intakes, enrollments, total services, and exits. See more on common reasons for ineligibility below under "Ineligibility and exiting services."

Table 3. Housing and supportive service frequencies by navigator region

The West Metro region had the most intakes (24 percent), enrollments (26 percent), total services (26 percent), and exits (28 percent).

Navigator region	Intakes (n=1,753)	Ineligible (n=257)	Enrollment (n=1,494)	Individuals receiving services (n=1,649)	Exits (n=787)
Northwest	12%	**39%**	9%	8%	14%
Northeast	5%	-	5%	9%	10%
West Central	5%	-	6%	4%	5%
East Central	10%	18%	7%	7%	10%
East Metro	13%	-	15%	14%	16%
West Metro	**24%**	11%	**26%**	**26%**	**28%**
Southwest	17%	-	20%	20%	3%
South Central	-	-	-	-	-
Southeast	13%	21%	12%	12%	13%

Note: South Central enrollment and service numbers were not shared as they were too low, and sharing would threaten confidentiality.

Referral pathways

In the survey, 69 percent of youth respondents reported searching for help and services on their own. According to program data submitted by grantees, at least 14 percent of youth self-referred to Safe Harbor services—the second most common referral source (Table 4).

Program data points to the fact that youth were also often referred to services from child protection/child welfare, school or education providers, and police/law enforcement. Similarly, more youth survey respondents reported that their first contact or referral to services was through case workers (18 percent), followed by service (15 percent) and shelter (14 percent) providers (Appendix Figure 9). More than half of youth (68 percent) agree and somewhat agree they went through multiple service providers before and after they got connected to Safe Harbor services (Appendix Figure 12).

Table 4. Enrollment referral source by program data and survey results

The top referral sources were child protection/child welfare, case manager/social worker, service providers, and self-referrals.

Enrollment referral source	Program data (n=1,494)	Survey (n=137)
Child protection/child welfare	15%	7%
Self-referral	14%	69%*
School or education provider	12%	-
Police/law enforcement	12%	7%
Case manager/social worker	8%	18%
Safe Harbor Regional Navigator, supportive services or housing provider	8%	17%
Court/public defender/probation	6%	-
Social service agency	6%	15%
Friend or family member	5%	6%
Mental health provider	-	7%
Other	-	1%

**This table lists youth who reported in the survey that they looked for services on their own as a proxy for self-referrals.*

Most and least frequent housing and supportive services provided

Across all regions, most services were provided in person (Appendix Table 11). Youth survey respondents most often reported receiving emotional support, case management, housing advocacy, social services, and employment assistance.[20] Grantees similarly reported most often providing emotional support; case management; criminal justice advocacy; personal items; and education services to clients.

Related to education services, most youth who took the survey had their high school diploma or equivalent (53 percent) and some were in college or other post-secondary program (23 percent) (Appendix Figure 7).

In the youth survey, housing advocacy, employment assistance, and social services were the next most common services provided. Youth who reported working full-time (39 percent) (Appendix Figure 8) received employment assistance and social services.

Survey results showed dental care and childcare were among the services youth respondents received the least. The number of individuals who were provided dental care and childcare were too low to report in program data. However, around 8 percent (124 out of 1,494) of youth were reported by grantees as parenting, pregnant, or caregiving.

Although interpreter translation services were infrequently provided overall, this service had a higher rate of use from youth of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin compared to other groups (Appendix Table 10).

Most and least frequent housing and supportive services referred

Mental health, medical, social, legal, and education services were the most frequent services for which youth were referred elsewhere (Table 5). Mental health services are being provided to youth based on program data and survey results.

Youth survey respondents indicated that having many local resources and services available was least important, compared to other reasons, to successfully help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation (Appendix Figure 10). Having the right resource to meet youths' needs was more helpful and led to positive experiences for youth (Appendix Figure 11).

Financial assistance, housing advocacy, case management, criminal justice advocacy, and culturally specific services were the least frequent service referrals by agencies.

Table 5. Housing and supportive services provided, referred, and received

[20] Youth were asked about their experiences with Safe Harbor as this was the focus of the evaluation. However, it is possible youth also reflected on non-Safe Harbor services (e.g., if they have stayed in multiple shelters) in their responses.

Most youth survey respondents received emotional support and case management services; they were more often referred elsewhere for mental health services, compared to other services.

Service	Grantee program data (n=1,649) provided	Grantee program data (n=1,649) referred	Youth survey (n=137) received
Emotional support	**79%**	-	**41%**
Case management	**63%**	1%	**25%**
Criminal justice advocacy	**30%**	1%	10%
Personal items	**28%**	-	9%
Education services	**16%**	**5%**	15%
Housing advocacy	15%	1%	**26%**
Mental health services	14%	**16%**	20%
Financial assistance	13%	1%	8%
Legal services	12%	**5%**	12%
Social services	11%	**10%**	**25%**
Employment assistance	9%	2%	**26%**
Housing assistance	7%	3%	23%
Medical services	7%	**12%**	-
Culturally specific services	5%	1%	1%
Substance use treatment	4%	3%	4%
Interpreter translation	2%	-	3%
Dental care	-	4%	4%
Childcare	-	-	7%
Family support	-	1%	20%
Transportation	-	-	9%

Service	Grantee program data (n=1,649) provided	Grantee program data (n=1,649) referred	Youth survey (n=137) received
Not a Number Group	-	-	1%

Ineligibility and exiting services

Grantees reported various reasons they deemed people ineligible for Safe Harbor services—often it is on a case-by-case basis. Focus groups elaborated on ineligibility and how clients exit services.

One common reason for ineligibility reported by agencies was an individual being over 24 years old. When agencies were unable to provide services to someone, they referred them to other programs and resources that can help, such as when youth needed a higher level of care than what the agency can provide or if the program is full. Other reasons for ineligibility were an individual was currently using substances or had to go to treatment; had a history of aggression or assault, especially toward staff; or had high mental health needs or persistent mental illness. While Safe Harbor does not have a requirement that individuals not use substances, many grantee agencies (mainly shelters and housing providers) do.

Program data included reasons people stopped accessing a program. Common reasons were losing contact with the individual (listed in the chart below as "Ran from Program"); non-compliance with the program; and the client being referred to another program (Table 6). Grantee agencies in focus groups shared there is not always a clear exit for youth from their programs and services. They welcome and make themselves available to help youth whether they have left or completed the program. Additionally, it is important to note that youth deciding to leave a program—which may be logged in program data as "running away"—can be a manifestation of trauma, a response to dissatisfaction with how they were treated, or other reasons.

Usually, a youth who gets connected to Safe Harbor services was already identified as a sexual assault victim. Other common indicators of sexual exploitation were if the person was homeless or on the run (Appendix Table 9).

Table 6. Reason for client exiting program by region

More youth overall were reported as "ran from program" (54 percent in the metro, 12 percent in greater Minnesota) across the state.

Reason for client exiting program	Metro (n=107)	Greater MN (n=171)
Non-compliance with program--Not violence related	30%	17%
Non-compliance with program--Violence related	-	13%

Reason for client exiting program	Metro (n=107)	Greater MN (n=171)
Ran from program	54%	12%
Reached maximum age allowed	-	9%
Reached maximum time allowed	-	-
Referred to other safe living situation		13%
Client will continue to receive Safe Harbor services from this agency, but through another grant	-	-
Client was referred to another program	16%	13%
Client not eligible for specific program services/not available locally	-	-
Client passed away	-	-
Other	-	22%

Agencies providing Safe Harbor housing and supportive services

Forty agencies provided Safe Harbor services during the grant period. All 40 agencies were represented in the survey results, meaning each agency was selected at least once when youth were asked from which agencies they received services. See a list of Safe Harbor agencies and what services they provide in the appendix (Appendix Table 14 and 15).

Training and relationship-building activities

In addition to providing services and referrals, grantees work to increase awareness of sexual exploitation and trafficking and build partnerships. Grantee agencies conducted at least 376 trainings across all topics throughout the state. Trainings most often focused on exploitation and human trafficking awareness and trafficking prevention. Agencies reported at least 674 consultations with other disciplines, the most being with child protection/child welfare, community members/groups, law enforcement/corrections, and K-12 schools. (Appendix Table 12).

There is no uniform coverage of trainings throughout the state to make sure that every school, corrections, law enforcement, or welfare agency is covered every year. One youth participant explained not receiving any education on trafficking while she was experiencing victimization in high school.

Services and supports needed

A strong majority (95 percent) of youth survey respondents said they were satisfied with the *organization* from which they received Safe Harbor services; 80 percent said they were satisfied with the *services* they received. While 41 percent of respondents said they were "very satisfied" with the organization, no respondents reported being "very satisfied" with the services.

About three-quarters of youth surveyed (74 percent) agreed or somewhat agreed that they would recommend Safe Harbor services to someone who was in a similar situation as they were. Almost 1 out of 3 youth (29 percent) had not heard of Safe Harbor before receiving services (Appendix Figure 12). The reach and awareness of Safe Harbor is increasing and more quality services and supports are needed to successfully help youth who are likely to experience or have experienced sexual exploitation.

The next section describes key findings about the quality and availability of Safe Harbor services. Youth were asked about their experiences with Safe Harbor as this was the explicit focus of the evaluation. However, it is possible youth also reflected on non-Safe Harbor services (e.g., if they have stayed in multiple shelters) in their responses.

Meeting basic needs is a critical first step for youth to overcome exploitation.

Participants expressed the importance of meeting basic needs first, before moving on to other needs and being able to heal. In many cases, the trafficker fulfilled basic needs. Youth need support figuring out how to access housing and food on their own. Meeting basic needs helps youth do well, Regional Navigators said in a focus group:

> *"We talk about, 'What your most important need is right now. How can we help you?', and it may not be the need for the sexual exploitation or trafficking they identify. It might be 'Well, I am not getting along with my mum or I do not have a place to stay tonight or I need food,' so we provide that." - Regional Navigator*

Half of youth survey respondents (50 percent) agreed that Safe Harbor services helped them meet their basic needs. In interviews, youth mentioned helpful services such as getting a place to stay, food, and clothes. When asked what youth still needed help with, common survey responses were needs such as housing, mental health, employment, and financial assistance. Youth survey respondents ranked providing housing and shelter as two of the most important factors for successfully helping youth.

> *"When I faced difficulties, the organization gave me timely assistance and rescue. They provided me with food, water, medical care, shelter, and ensured my safety and basic needs were met." – Youth Participant*

Rural areas, with fewer resources, may have unique struggles in getting basic needs met. Tribal law enforcement agents said they may need to send youth far away to get services.

> *"It is a very rural area and we do not have many options here, so we will facilitate getting the victims to a facility 100 miles away to get them the services" – Tribal Law Enforcement Participant*

Permanent housing is particularly important and is a support Safe Harbor organizations frequently work to provide youth.

Permanent housing is a particularly important basic need to fulfill before moving onto subsequent needs like finding a job and getting a car. Housing grantees provided at least 1,161 services and at least 791 referrals over the evaluation period. Just over a quarter (26 percent) of youth survey respondents reported living in a rented apartment (Table 7). Others said they lived in what may be temporary housing—with family or friends or in supportive housing, shelters, group homes, or foster homes. A few reported couch hopping/surfing.

Participants explained how Safe Harbor helped them attain housing.

> *"Everything that I needed for my apartment, they helped me get all that stuff figured out so I can be on my own and I just learned like a bunch of different like things like how to be like disciplining myself not to like, stay up all night on my phone and, like, have structure." – Youth Participant*

Table 7. Current living situation reported in youth survey

The most common living situations among youth surveyed were a rented apartment (26 percent) or their family's home (24 percent).

Current living situation (n=137)	Percent
Rented apartment	26%
Family's home	24%
Supportive housing	10%
Shelter	9%
Group home	8%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Friend's home	4%
Foster home	4%
Couch hopping/surfing	3%
Treatment center	2%
Unhoused/unsheltered	0%
Other	0%

In the survey, youth respondents deemed housing services as "very important" (57 percent) more often than they deemed any other potential support to be "very important." (Appendix Figure 10).

Youth survey respondents of all ages said Safe Harbor provided them housing advocacy and assistance. Youth who received housing advocacy or assistance shared accomplishments in getting housing or finding shelter. In other contexts, such as in smaller communities, youth may face extra hurdles finding a safe place to live; in one example, a youth participant shared that their abuser moved into their same apartment building.

Mental health services persist as a need.

The need for mental health services emerged across data collection. In the survey, more than half of youth respondents (54 percent) said mental health support services were "very important" for supporting youth facing sexual exploitation. About a third (29 percent) said they were "somewhat important."

> *"There have been multiple reports about mental health being a gap and nothing has happened—[I'm] tired of hearing it is a need, but not seeing anything done about it." – Shelter Provider*

Photo by Sam Lion via Pexels

Program data show a good share of Safe Harbor clients have needs for mental health care—14 percent of Metro clients and 25 percent of greater Minnesota clients over the evaluation period told providers they had depression; 12 percent and 23 percent, respectively, reported anxiety; 11 percent and 18 percent, respectively, reported post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Table 8).

Table 8. Physical and mental health status by region

Behavioral or emotional disabilities such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD were most common among youth who received Safe Harbor services across the state.

Physical and mental health status	Metro (n=609)	Greater MN (n=885)
Unseen disability	24%	33%
ASD, ADHD, or Neurodivergent	3%	8%
Cognitive or learning disability	4%	7%
Depression	14%	25%
Anxiety	12%	23%
PTSD	11%	18%
Mental health pathology like BPD, DID, OCD, ODD	3%	7%
Substance use disorder	6%	7%
Self harm or suicidal ideation	4%	10%
Reactive attachment or disorganized attachment	-	4%

**It is important to note the amount of youth who reported having an unseen disability. Not all physical or behavioral disabilities or mental health are diagnosed.*

Having adequate partner agencies to which to refer youth is important; grantees reported providing mental health services and referring clients elsewhere for mental health services about equally (provided for 14 percent of clients; referred for 16 percent, Table 5). Some grantees intending to refer youth elsewhere for mental health services said they faced long waiting lists and insufficient providers to meet the need.

> *"[We] must find a way to get more therapists at the table. [I] spent 10 hours on a [Safe Harbor] case recently, and that's not sustainable for therapists. - Service Provider*

Participants pointed to specific mental health needs. One youth participant shared that she could not find appropriate therapy for her complex PTSD. Additionally, youth need options including, but not limited to, talk therapy. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EDMR) and Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) came up as helpful, trauma-responsive therapies. Grantees said culturally responsive providers are especially needed.

Consistency and stability of services is important to youth and can be particularly difficult in rural communities.

Youth expressed a need for stability throughout their time accessing services. Sixty-eight percent of youth either agreed or somewhat agreed that they went through multiple organizations before or after receiving Safe Harbor services (Appendix Figure 12). Based on funding and availability, youth do not always receive stable long-term support—especially from providers in rural small towns with fewer organizations.

> *"It's a very rural area, we do not have many options here. And if we have somebody under the age of 17, that really limits the capacities of services we can get to them." - Tribal Law Enforcement*

Grantee staff turnover also affects the relationships youth have and whether they return to a provider. Turnover also affects youth indirectly when law enforcement do not have up-to-date information or, similar to youth, law enforcement lose the professional relationship they had developed with a staff person who left.

Agencies varied in the extent to which they provide culturally responsive services, including providing services in languages other than English.

In the survey, a combined 84 percent of youth respondents said "culture-specific or culturally informed services" are either very important or somewhat important. Several providers shared examples of how their services are culturally responsive:

- Hiring diverse staff.
- Using language lines—though hiring bilingual staff is preferred. Most service and shelter providers mentioned hiring bilingual staff.
- Providing programming/activities where youth can reflect on and talk about their culture.
- Working with partners with lived experience or cultural backgrounds to lead culture-based programs/activities with youth.

> *"We reach out and talk and offer language courses, cultural services such as smudging, music, food, and books." - Shelter Provider*

> *"Language is still a huge barrier, and it is always helpful when there is an advocate or staff who speaks the language to help the individual." - Shelter Provider*

> *"A youth opened up and talked more when they were with a staff who spoke the same language and was better able to understand the youth's unique needs." - Service Provider*

Rural communities that do not have a lot of services struggle tremendously to provide culturally responsive services. Many rural providers were unsure how to talk about the extent to which their services were culturally responsive or answered that they have a white population, implying culturally responsive services are not relevant to their work. Some mentioned

partnering with culturally specific community organizations that can provide youth with cultural services.

Youth reported ways they experienced limited cultural responsiveness, such as an example where a youth experienced a provider accepting one type of culture but not another. They were invited to use sage to smudge/clean off but were not allowed to have crystals or tarot cards. The provider did not see the crystals and tarot cards as healing and therefore did not allow them. The youth found a way to advocate but it took a lot of time and energy.

Culturally responsive approaches can help heal harm caused by inappropriate responses to certain communities. One youth participant explained how past law enforcement mistreatment of indigenous people can result in youth not coming forward for services—an example of where Safe Harbor can work to be culturally responsive to overcome this barrier of mistrust.

> *"Indigenous people have a lot of distrust in law enforcement due to factors such as, but not exclusive to, immigration status, media, prior negative experiences in the community, and regular negligence resulting in a lack of reports made when their families are at risk."- Youth Participant*

Youth want services that support them to grow toward independence.

Youth accessing Safe Harbor services are thinking about their futures and want independence. Most youth survey participants (a combined 83 percent) agreed or somewhat agreed that they were hopeful about the future (Appendix Figure 12). Youth expressed joy in making steps toward independence—graduating high school or obtaining their GED, getting housing, securing a job, and gaining skills. One youth participant noted criminal convictions can be a challenge as youth age into adulthood; this is likely a barrier experienced by many youth affected by sexual exploitation in the state.

Youth want service providers to help them achieve goals—not dictate their lives. To these young people, independence means making their own choices but having built relationships with service providers so that, if needed, providers can help and answer questions.

> *"The service staff actively provided me with employment assistance so that I could cultivate my independence and not depend on my parents." - Youth Participant*

> *"Everybody should be able to get help with their own individual needs. We're adults but do need guidance, and someone who cares and shows that they care. Workers should actually sit down and hear us out and try to understand, so they have a better understanding rather than working a job [where] they don't know what's going on. Every place like this should have a meeting with residents and try to make things better. Training isn't going to make anybody care because anyone can go to a training and get a job." - Youth Participant*

When services do not respect youth independence, clients may stop coming back. One youth, who had been involved in state systems since birth, said they wanted independence and more freedom. By the time they got to be a teenager, they wanted to leave the system. They opted to "couch hop" so they could be free and start to build their own life and make their own choices instead of receiving services that did not support their independence.

Additionally, as youth accessing Safe Harbor services get older, they may face a cutoff—Safe Harbor services are only available until age 25. Without planning, a sudden end to services and service provider relationships can impede the progress youth have made toward independence, participants said. In some cases, young adults can continue receiving shelter and services, as long as they entered a program before they turned 25.

Factors contributing to Safe Harbor's impact

Safe Harbor grantees expressed an interest early in the evaluation in knowing what factors help them make the biggest positive difference with youth.

Strong, trusting relationships between providers and youth go a long way.

The strength of a youth's relationship with a service provider can make or break the service provision, participants said. In the survey, 82 percent of youth respondents said "staff building positive relationships with youth" was either very important or somewhat important to supporting youth (Appendix Figure 10). Youth participants shared some ways providers have built positive, trusting relationships with them:

- Being non-judgmental as they support youth to get what youth say they need.
- Not asking for details of a youth's experience if the youth does not want to share.
- Giving youth choices, for example of what happens in a meeting and what the next steps are.
- Protecting confidentiality and following youths' lead on what they want to disclose.
- Being transparent, for example disclosing what they already know about the client and being clear about steps being taken to serve them.
- Being consistent and following through on what they say they will do.
- Being patient and understanding that youth may take one step forward and two steps back.

> *"Everyone has been so helpful and respectful and understanding with my situation and never judge me." - Youth Participant*

Photo by Christina Morillo via Pexels

A grantee echoed this:

> *"We found that the most important part of increasing positive youth development was to build rapport, have consistent meetings, and engage youths through new activities and opportunities. This allowed youths to be empowered, motivated to use their voice, and step into their leadership." - Grantee Participant*

Youth also said they have positive experiences and develop positive relationships with providers when they feel heard.

Such positive experiences and relationships were more often associated with voluntary contacts where the youth had a choice about services and initiated the content themselves. The experience can be different when the contact is not voluntary (for example, with law enforcement or child welfare).

Youth shared the following when asked what made their experience go well:

> *"They keep in touch with you even as an adult; they offer so many services to make sure you don't fail just because you had a bad upbringing." - Youth Participant*

> *"The case workers, building a trust bond. Not being judged, all the resources they try and help me with." - Youth Participant*

Youth shared the following when asked about a time they felt staff, a service, or an organization successfully supported them:

> *"When staff comforted me when I felt like I should run instead of staying and getting help. Without that, I'd probably be back couch-hopping being homeless." - Youth Participant*

> *"They helped me press charges on the people who trafficked me and now it's [in] court and staff is coming to support me as I testify." - Youth Participant*

> *"When I first came into the program, they were patient, understanding, and worked with me and didn't push too far. Always let me know we can stop any services, or we don't have to do anything I don't want to. Made sure I was comfortable with everything we did, or any person we spoke to. Always wanted the best for me and still do." - Youth Participant*

> *"The honesty [the] whole time I was in the program the staff was always supportive; the staff at [agency] have be working with me since I was 16. I believe they have been through the worst parts of my life and never left me when it felt everyone else did. I am so grateful for [agency]. They honestly truly saved my life on more than one occasion." - Youth Participant*

> *"They are very kind! They always understand when I'm sad and don't force me to tell them what is happening and let me speak at my own time." - Youth Participant*

Youth are resourceful and find a way to get what they need.

Similar to youth wanting to grow toward independence, they are described as resourceful and knowing how to get what they need. Providers shared ways youth demonstrate their resourcefulness, e.g., by using as much help as they can get and having their own network or people they rely on when in crisis. Providers said youth know best what they need and see their role as helping them along the journey.

Most youth in the survey said they had searched for help and services on their own. In a survey question about youths' preparedness levels for different tasks, youth respondents most often reported being very well or somewhat prepared to seek help from an adult/someone they trust in an unsafe situation (85 percent), reach education/career goals (84 percent), and cope with their feelings (84 percent).

Youth most often indicated feeling unprepared to seek help from police in an unsafe situation (21 percent), find shelter (18 percent) and legal help (18 percent) when needed, and express their feelings in healthy ways (18 percent) (Appendix Figure 13).

Services and supports can help youth feel like they are part of a community.

Youth shared times they felt like they were with others who had shared experiences and felt like a family. Case workers can contribute to this—if youth are isolated, case workers help youth build a network of trusted individuals, they said.

"I love the [organization] community. It's like family. They build good connections with the youth." - Youth Participant

"They get connected within a group setting with others who are in similar situations and lived experiences and [this] can be a real support for them." - Regional Navigator

In interviews, some youth mentioned positive experiences with support/peer groups. They said this helps them build community with people with shared experiences and provides opportunities for new positive experiences with others. Celebrating milestones (e.g., finishing a 90-day program, reuniting with their family, or achieving a GED) are ways youths' networks support them. Forty-one percent of youth survey respondents said it was important for them to have time to be with trusted adults, friends, and peers (Appendix Figure 10).

Emotional support was the most frequent service provided to youth. Continuing and strengthening emotional support services is important for youth to build relationships with their peers and in the community.

Photo by Ron Lach via Pexels

Respect for privacy and confidentiality is important to youth.

Youth emphasized the importance of agency staff respecting their privacy and confidentiality. Over half of youth survey respondents (56 percent) said having safety, privacy, and confidentiality whenever possible is very important to successfully help youth (Appendix Figure 10). Giving youth control over what of their story is shared is key aspect of trauma-informed service provision.

> *"They discovered some of my secrets, but they never told anyone else. I am deeply moved by their protection of my privacy." -Youth Respondent*

Staff, meanwhile, say they struggle with the boundary between mandatory reporting and confidentiality. Some positions have more leeway when it comes to keeping things confidential.

> *"Confidentiality is a big part especially when talking to youth. As attorneys, we are not mandated reporters, so do not have to report to the county. I always make that clear to the youth that I work with because oftentimes they are afraid that their parents are going to get in trouble." - Service Provider*

Youth co-creating services with providers values youth voice and provides choices.

When youth have opportunities to co-create services, they have choices and ownership of the process. Respecting youths' agency and giving them choices returns to youth the power taken from them in sexual exploitation. For example, some providers have youth on their boards to build trust. In this evaluation, Youth Advisers provided powerful insights that improved the quality of data collected.

> *"We worked with [a] youth advisory [group] to develop forms and intake processes that are really low-barrier and youth-friendly." - Shelter Provider*

One shelter provider said their shelter invites youth to personalize their rooms.

> *"We have a lot of LGBTQ stuff at our shelter, and we let youth personalize their rooms and experiences even though it is shelter and not home. We support and create safe spaces with no stressors and ensure that staff uses their preferred name, and if transgender must use their proper pronouns." - Shelter Provider*

Providers partnering helps youth.

Partnerships are central to the work of a "No Wrong Door" system. In program data, grantees reported at least 674 consultations with other disciplines, the most being with child protection/child welfare, community members/groups, law enforcement/corrections, and K-12 schools. Providers partner with schools, community-based non-profits providing services, landlords, and mental health providers to support youth (Appendix Table 12).

For example, when other organizations can provide public education about trafficking and exploitation, after receiving training from Safe Harbor grantees, then Safe Harbor providers can have more time to focus on providing services, they said.

Law enforcement shared successful partnerships in their work, such as a sting on trafficking ring across the state and working with service providers to meet youths' needs. The following anecdote illustrates the power of collaboration and partnerships in supporting youth who have been trafficked across jurisdictions.

> *"The [region redacted] Safe Harbor navigator was the one that kind of made contact with this individual, [found a] phenomenal place to stay in [location redacted] and ...*

was able to help her stay there for a couple of nights. … The navigator was able to work with a shelter in [location redacted] and get the female transportation and everything up to [location redacted] and to a safe place and find the resources to change your phone number and get a new phone." - Law Enforcement Participant

Gaps and challenges

The following are gaps and challenges that emerged, where Safe Harbor can build upon its strengths to better serve youth.

Trauma-informed approaches are vital to ensure positive experiences for youth.

Youth participants provided illuminating insights into what a trauma-informed approach looks like. Trauma-informed approaches are important because of the effects youth participants said their trauma had on them: fear of authority; needing control over their own body; and not wanting to be talked to like a victim but rather being able to define who they are outside of their experience of exploitation. In the survey, more than half of youth respondents (52 percent) said trauma-informed services are "very important" to serving youth facing sexual exploitation (Appendix Figure 10). One in 4 youth respondents (25 percent) disagreed that staff knew how to help them cope with their trauma (Appendix Figure 11).

Some youth participants said they had negative experiences when staff:

- Were negligent about their safety.
- Did not respect youths' privacy and confidentiality, especially in small communities.
- Dismissed youth and invalidated their experiences.

"When I was at [shelter] and I was dealing with a lot of trauma, and I felt like I wasn't being supported and kind of like they were dismissing … the fear that I had." - Youth Participant

- Showed more interest in the salacious details of youths' experiences than in their wellbeing. Importantly, this can occur more when staff are from different backgrounds than youth and do not themselves have experience with sexual exploitation.

Some youth shared that staff required them to say they did something wrong in order to receive/get access to services.

Language used can also be stigmatizing—some youth view the language of "at-risk youth" as a trigger.

"For Hmong youth, it takes longer to build rapport, sometimes they don't know that they're referred to as at-risk youth – [there is a] negative connotation around being at risk, and being identified as Safe Harbor youth can be triggering." - Service Provider

Frequent staff turnover can make trauma-informed practice more challenging—both as well-trained and experienced staff leave and as youth lose relationships they had built with a trusted provider and have to start over by telling their story again.

Providers, especially shelters, need resources and training to respond to the complex and multilayered issue of violence within shelters.

Violence in shelters is a challenge in two ways: First, all youth and staff need to feel safe from violence while in shelter; second, youth perpetrating violence—which often is rooted in their own traumatic experiences—equally deserve safe shelter, which can be an especially complex need for shelters to meet.

Youth participants shared ways they felt staff did not hold people accountable for perpetrating violence in shelters. One youth interviewee said staff would not step in or control the situation, such as when a girl that kept committing violence against other girls and was allowed to stay in a shelter. LGBTQ youth may be particularly vulnerable to violence in shelter, such as if a youth is transitioning.

At the same time, youth with a history of aggression and violence may be banned from certain shelters. "Non-compliance with program--Violence related" was a reason clients exited a program 13 percent of the time in greater Minnesota. As the following provider quote illustrates, it can be incredibly challenging to find safe shelter for these youth:

> *"There is a huge service gap when it comes to youth who are exhibiting risk of harm to self or others or having significant issues with active substance abuse or hybrid risk, where there are not a lot of secure Safe Harbor placements, or during a crisis." - Service Provider*

Youth participants' experiences of violence illustrate the complexity of the problem and the challenges Safe Harbor shelters face in responding appropriately.

> *"I wish they had mental health services, so youth are not getting attacked by other youth as I tried to keep to myself. Legally, the staff felt they could not do anything, they could not break up fights or put their hands on anyone." - Youth Participant*

> *"It was a pleasant except for a situation where my door got broken into because someone got upset that I would not let them use her hotspot, so it was another unsafe situation. A staff member tried to get me to leave the room and the other youth was threatening to throw a speaker at me. The staff member intervention was successful, and they left. However, I heard staff talking to the person who attacked me and seemed sympathetic to them." - Youth Participant*

> *"The only good thing was having a place to stay at night, but it was not safe. [It would help] if they had mental health services, so youth are not getting attacked by other youth." - Youth Participant*

A provider discussed the needs for support:

> *"To avoid fights and punitive approaches, [we] need to build safe safety plans with youth so that they can identify their triggers and red flags that they want staff to be aware of. And share how they want staff to respond to the youth when they experience stress." - Shelter Provider*

Shelter remains in short supply, which hinders Safe Harbor providers' efforts.

Many grantees and participants reported insufficient beds available to meet the need in Minnesota. Lacking shelter causes harm and traumatization to youth—one youth survey respondent shared a negative experience of having to sleep in someone's office on a cot because there were no shelter options. Providers said the problem is especially acute in southern Minnesota.

> *"Shelters are needed in southern Minnesota to keep youth safe." - Shelter Provider*

> *"There is little capacity for shelter beds and long waiting lists for youth in the southeastern region of Minnesota." - Shelter Provider*

Exacerbating this is when law enforcement encounter youth in need of services on the weekend or overnight and are not sure where the youth may be able to stay.

> *"Housing is in short supply and law enforcement does not necessarily have good options, especially when dealing with trafficked youth at night and on weekends." -Law Enforcement Participant*

Coordination of services and care supports youth.

Partnerships across agencies came up as a strength, but coordination still could improve. For example, if shelter is not available, coordination is needed to give youth options so they can choose where they want to go. Lacking coordination causes re-traumatization as youth need to retell their story to new people and agencies.

Specific points of collaboration emerged as challenges.

Coordination with schools could improve efforts to identify youth experiencing sexual exploitation and connect them with support. One youth participant shared not being believed at school about their exploitation for several years. Finally, a social worker intervened and arranged an emergency placement. Some grantees reported challenges working with their local schools.

Relatedly, when referring youth to other organizations, organizations may have different levels of understanding of trafficking and exploitation.

> *"A lot of agencies don't understand that there's a difference between being an expert or specializing in sexual abuse and sexual assault versus trafficking and exploitation" - Child Welfare Participant*

Providers also mentioned the complicated relationship between law enforcement and Navigators. Safe Harbor stakeholders must ensure this does not affect youth. Law enforcement typically have less time to build relationships with youth, which makes Safe Harbor Navigators' role particularly important for bridging perspectives.

> *"Law enforcement definitely butts heads with Navigators; the Navigators meet the kids where they are and that does not always fall in line with what law enforcement has an obligation to do or feels is appropriate." - Child Welfare Participant*

Given a list of activities, youth survey respondents most frequently said they felt unprepared to get help from law enforcement in an unsafe situation.

Photo by Михаил Ковалевский via Pexels

Training and resources are particularly needed to serve transgender and non-binary youth, as well as all LGBTQ youth.

Participants pointed to LGBTQ youth as a population Safe Harbor could serve better with more training, resources, and housing options.

Participants expressed concerns over a lack of housing that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive for LGBTQ youth and a need for training in serving these clients. For example, LGBTQ youth may be especially vulnerable to violence in shelters. Providers need skills to create safety plans when youth enter shelter. In one interview, a youth participant who was transitioning said they did not feel like staff protected them.

Additionally, mental health services responsive to transgender and non-binary youth are lacking in the state.

Regarding training generally, some grantees expressed the need for more skills to do their job well and expressed that current training does not always meet these needs. Grantees said the training they receive in sexual exploitation of youth has existed for some time and may be outdated. Training could be updated to be more relevant (e.g., on image-based sexual abuse, a

new but very prevalent crime) and take a deeper dive (e.g., potentially include case studies and discuss how to best serve specific populations, like transgender youth).

Grantees said training in advocacy, parent support services, and Healing Centered Engagement have been effective. Some grantees found trainings through community-based organizations to be more effective.

Opportunities for improvement

Opportunities for improvement and corresponding recommendations largely relate to looking at the Safe Harbor system and youth holistically, considering what it would look like to create a space that provides services youth need, that makes youth feel safe and heard (such as through trauma-informed practices), and that provides stability (e.g., amid staff turnover). As youth enter the Safe Harbor system, the system must be ready to receive them—with sufficient beds, culturally responsive services, and system partners who know whom to call. Underlying all of this is the importance of gaining and keeping youths' trust after their traumatic experiences.

Trauma-informed practices

> *Recommendation: Provide more resources for centering youth voice as a trauma-informed practice.*
>
> *Recommendation: Support shelters to respond to violence in trauma-informed ways, while increasing housing options for youth committing violence.*

Safe Harbor Minnesota has room to grow in its use of trauma-informed practices, of which a core tenet is choice. Suggestions for more trauma-informed approaches included:

- Giving youth options and choices and not making assumptions about what they need or that one-size programming fits all.
- Building more choice into the system proactively, such as by hiring providers of multiple genders so clients have options for with whom they work.
- Providing training and protocols so shelter staff are accountable for creating safe healing spaces without violence for youth. All youth need housing, yet non-compliance due to violence was a fairly common reason youth exited programs in greater Minnesota. Supports for preventing and responding to shelter violence are critical. Efforts to curb violence in shelters can help with staff retention, as staff may leave their profession due to feeling unsafe.
- Listening to youth and validating their experiences to give them control and build trust.
- Being particularly considerate of how law enforcement can be more trauma-informed, since youth experience an automatic power dynamic with these groups. Youth survey respondents most frequently said they felt unprepared to seek help from police in an unsafe situation—law enforcement and providers can work together to create safe ways for youth to get help from police if needed.

Trauma-informed supports can include both training professionals in trauma-informed practices, and ensuring the services they provide are trauma-informed.

Culture

Recommendation: Support small, rural organizations to increase their cultural responsiveness.

Grantees provided varying responses when discussing the extent to which culture informs their services. Rural, small organizations may be most in need of support because of doing more with less—smaller staff sizes and fewer potential partner community organizations than are present in the cities. For example, one rural participant mentioned using language line (over-the-phone interpretation services); this may not be as trauma-informed as in-person interpretation.

As described in the Background and Context section, harmful policies have created higher risk to trafficking for American Indian and Black/African American communities; incorporating these communities' wisdom and culture into programming can help remedy this inequity. Grantees excelling in culturally responsive practices could support other organizations in this effort.

Transitions to adulthood

Recommendation: Help agencies plan for youths' transition to adulthood.

Safe Harbor services may stop at age 25; a frequent reason for ineligibility was potential clients being age 25 or older. Cutting off services at this age can disrupt the progress clients have made over several years. Regional Navigators said a well-defined transition plan is missing in the Safe Harbor system. The state needs to figure out a transitional period where youth at this age can get in touch with and build relationships with new providers. Funding agencies can also improve awareness of when there is flexibility to continue serving youth who started accessing a program before turning 25.

In the future, the State of Minnesota could also extend eligibility for Safe Harbor services to all ages of victim-survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation (a policy known as "Safe Harbor for All[21]). Expanding time limits for services for trafficking victims reflects that victimization can happen at any age; it also reflects that young people who experienced victimization at a young age may need years of healing before being prepared to ask for help.

Cross-system collaboration

Recommendations:

1. *Create a collaborative system where schools and social services work together.*
2. *Provide more time for collaboration among grantees and community organizations to foster stronger relationships and facilitate new introductions after turnover occurs.*

[21] Minnesota Department of Health. (2022, October 3). *Safe Harbor for All*. Safe Harbor: Safe Harbor for All. https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/response/safeharborforall.html

Gaps persist in cross-system coordination and collaboration, especially with staff turnover. Grantees already spend time consulting with other disciplines and building relationships around their community. Yet some expressed a desire for more time to collaborate with other grantees or community organizations to best serve youth. Intentional time to meet and collaborate could provide opportunities for new relationships after turnover occurs by putting faces to names and getting updated contact information. Fostering connection among grantees can also support staff retention by providing support networks.

Stronger coordination could also help address gaps in staff knowledge—for example, when law enforcement need to know whom to call when they encounter a youth overnight. Police suggested creating a 24-hour number or central information portal with current navigator and shelter information. This sentiment may speak more to a need for more connection and training, as the state does have the 24/7 Day One hotline.

Ideas also emerged for creative partnerships to serve youth, e.g., staff building relationships with landlords on youths' behalf.

Mental health

> *Recommendation: Work to increase the supply of and connections to mental health providers, especially for culturally specific services and evidence-based therapy.*

Lacking mental health services prevents healing. Talk therapy does not work for everyone; people should be able to choose from different types of mental health services. For example, one youth participant recommended the Minnesota Trauma Recovery Institute, which offers Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EDMR) and Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET).

Mental health resources must also recognize and work within different cultures; for example, some communities' varying level of support for or stigma around getting help for mental health. Safe Harbor can also focus on increasing access to mental health services that are responsive to transgender and non-binary youth.

For these and other services, some participants expressed a need for a one-stop portal to see what resources exist. Youth should be a part of creating any such resource to ensure it is responsive to what they need.

Photo by Charlotte May via Pexels

Training

Recommendations

1. *Provide training that goes beyond Trafficking 101 and addresses current challenges.*
2. *Support quality REDCap data entry through ongoing training and technical assistance for grantees to ensure an accurate picture of Safe Harbor services.*

In the survey, 79 percent of youth respondents said "Well-trained staff who can appropriately help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation" was either very important or somewhat important to helping youth. Yet, current training does not fully equip grantees with necessary skills, some organizations said. Training can improve to respond to the diversity of youth that exist in Minnesota as well as to help staff without a background in sexual exploitation overcome their curiosity to learn details of youths' experiences. Modern forms of sexual exploitation of trafficking—such as sextortion and the use of artificial intelligence—could be helpful training topics.

> *"Many people don't know nearly enough about what to do when these situations are brought to their attention, and they are often handled incorrectly, ultimately putting victims at more risk. Lack of knowledge only creates longer-lasting issues. … I think that Safe Harbor needs to be better known, especially in indigenous communities." - Youth Participant*

Many of the opportunities for improvement point to specific training needs, such as training shelter staff on how to respond appropriately to violence in shelters and increasing awareness of when youth can continue in Safe Harbor services after turning 25.

In addition to training grantees, Safe Harbor is involved in training a wide variety of professions involved in youths' lives. Refresher training on sex trafficking and exploitation is always needed, particularly with groups like judges who may not have received in-person training for some time. Law enforcement also expressed a need for more training of frontline officers, who may be the first to detect trafficking:

> *"What is needed are short, 10-minute videos officers can watch … that are educational and let them know what to do in traffic stops [when] they suspect trafficking." - Law Enforcement Participant*

Staff turnover

> *Recommendation: Incorporate ways to support grantee staff retention into Safe Harbor strategic planning.*

> *Recommendation: Increase funding to Safe Harbor to support grantee staff retention.*

Different participants in the evaluation raised ways staff turnover hinders quality Safe Harbor service provision. Turnover came up as a challenge for youth—such as if a trusted provider left the organization—as well as for law enforcement in knowing who to contact about a youth in need of services. Staff retention helps staff strengthen relationships and keeps people knowledgeable about resources. MDH will be engaging in strategic planning to look at the overall health of the Safe Harbor network and plans to address staff retention. Additionally, participants recommended increased funding to Safe Harbor. Increased funding could help with staff retention by allowing for higher pay, lower caseloads, and/or other needed supports.

Conclusion

This report summarized the findings of an evaluation of Safe Harbor services provided April 2021-March 2023. The evaluation centered on youth experiences. As stated in the beginning of this report, ultimately, Safe Harbor is about treating youth with dignity and creating systems that give young people choices in how to lead their lives. Results point to the strengths of youth receiving services, aspects of Safe Harbor that work well for youth, and areas to build upon for improved dignity and choice. The following are summarized lessons learned from the evaluation.

At least 1,494 individuals were enrolled, and 1,649 individuals were reported receiving Safe Harbor services by grantee agencies during the 2-year period of this evaluation.[22] These and other data in the evaluation show how young people of any race/ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation can experience sexual exploitation. Some groups reported higher rates of experiencing sexual exploitation than others. Historical and ongoing oppression of communities of color and American Indian communities contributes to inequities by creating vulnerabilities of which traffickers take advantage.

Youth participants were mostly satisfied with the services they received, which ranged widely from emotional support to the provision of personal items to housing advocacy. In reflection on this 2-year period, youth, Safe Harbor grantees, and multidisciplinary partners pointed to important supports Safe Harbor provides:

- Meeting youths' basic needs.
- Helping youth secure permanent housing.
- Mental health services.
- Ensuring consistency and stability of services.
- Culturally responsive services.
- Services to support youth to grow toward independence.

Participants also pointed to strengths that make Safe Harbor effective:

- Strong relationships between youth and providers.
- Youths' resourcefulness and determination.
- Providing a community so youth feel less alone.
- Protecting privacy and confidentiality.
- Enabling youth to co-create services.
- Provider partnerships.

[22] The number of enrollments and total services are different because individuals who enrolled before April 2021 and were receiving services during the evaluation period were included in the data pull from REDCap for this evaluation period covering April 2021 through March 2023.

Some areas in need of extra attention, where Safe Harbor can harness the above strengths to respond, include:

- Trauma-informed approaches.
- Violence in shelters.
- A short supply of shelter space.
- Statewide coordination of services and care.
- Training and resources to adequately serve LGBTQ youth.

These findings point to recommendations to deepen Safe Harbor's impact. These recommendations are summarized in the Executive Summary.

Appendix

Process report: Lessons learned from a participatory evaluation approach

June 30, 2023

Introduction

The Improve Group, a St. Paul-based evaluation firm, is evaluating the Safe Harbor Minnesota program for the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). This report shares early activities and lessons learned from Phase I of the 2023 evaluation to inform Minnesota State agencies aiming to do equitable and effective community engagement.

Equitable, effective, and authentic community engagement is vital to the State, with State agencies recognizing that people in the population a program aims to serve are the most important perspective in an evaluation. While evaluation has often excluded people with these critical perspectives, The Improve Group affirms that engaging people with direct experience helps funders and service providers improve what they do, including by assessing biases and keeping up with changing contexts.

Youth and young adults are among these critical perspectives, and they, along with the Safe Harbor grantees providing services, have a lot to say in efforts to improve Safe Harbor Minnesota. Simply engaging youth and young adults, however, is not good enough—evaluators must consider *how* they are engaged. The Safe Harbor program evaluation is ongoing, with a full report expected in September 2023.

Lessons learned

Engaging youth

Minnesota's Safe Harbor system serves individuals age 24 and younger who are experiencing, have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing sexual exploitation. Engaging youth and young adults as those with lived experience accessing Safe Harbor services is central to this evaluation.

Five young survivors with lived experience serve as "Youth Advisers" in the current evaluation. The Improve Group and MDH partnered to connect with Safe Harbor grantees for suggested candidates for Youth Advisers. Recruitment intentionally focused on youth who are a range of ages, gender identities, and racial and ethnic identities, given the inequities of sexual exploitation. These Advisers are a part of the evaluation team, informing what questions to ask youth and grantees—and how—by informing the interview, focus group, and survey protocols. Though the evaluation is just beginning, Youth Advisers have already drawn attention to several important considerations, and the rest of the evaluation team has applied this input to adjust approaches, questions, and other aspects of the evaluation. The following are some lessons the evaluation team has learned thus far from Youth Advisers.

Pay attention to the details of logistics.

What may seem like minor details of interactions with youth can make or break engagement.

Flexibility and willingness to work with participants' schedules necessitate accommodation (e.g., working outside the 9-to-5 workday), particularly with youth and young adults. Additionally, safety is subjective—virtual meetings may not feel safe for young people with a history of exploitation, as they do not know who could be listening in the background. It is important to address safety concerns seriously and swiftly, which contributes to trust-building. Youth Advisers have different preferences, so the team uses hybrid meetings with options to allow people to participate the way they are comfortable. For people joining in person, the location must feel safe, be central to people across the Twin Cities, and be accessible by public transportation. When meeting in a part of the state that is not accessible by public transit, the centrality of the meeting location is especially important. Evaluators can also pay for rideshare or other transportation to support youth to attend. Snacks can help make people feel comfortable and invited into a space.

Flexibility and willingness to work with participants' schedules necessitate accommodation.

There must be a variety of communication methods available and accessible to youth. For example, youth are particularly responsive to texting. When the evaluation team emails a document for review, they text, prompting Youth Advisers to check their email.

The evaluation team also established memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Youth Advisers to formalize the arrangement and affirm what was important to them. The MOUs were based on a subcontract template and outlined responsibilities, hours, and an hourly rate. The team explained the MOUs in plain language. Because the Advisers expressed privacy concerns, the MOUs stated that the team would preserve privacy by getting written permission to report any identifiable information. Youth appreciated that the team listened to confidentiality concerns and built them into the MOUs.

Demonstrate humanity and care for people's trauma.

Youth come to the evaluation from varying circumstances. Suppose someone expresses a need, e.g., for housing. In these cases, evaluators can demonstrate humanity and compassion by taking time to hear about the need and what might be helpful before moving onto the planned agenda. In acknowledgment of the different experiences people are bringing, the Safe Harbor evaluation team starts meetings with a grounding exercise led by a trauma expert.

In acknowledgment of the different experiences people are bringing, the Safe Harbor evaluation team starts meetings with a grounding exercise led by a trauma expert.

Work to build trust through feedback loops and transparency.

Youth who may access Safe Harbor services have experienced exploitation and are wary of adults and other authority figures. Trust-building is required for people to openly share their experiences for meaningful and accurate evaluation. Trust-building can be proactive and occur through responses to questions, concerns, and commentary that youth raise—e.g., making space for criticism, receiving it graciously, and applying it.

Transparency is also important for trust. The Improve Group conveyed their conversations with MDH about incentives to youth, so Advisers were in on the process. In meetings, the team shares their notes so youth can see their contributions in real-time and correct notes that did not accurately record what they meant. The team then emails notes to youth after the meeting, inviting additional corrections, to continue transparency and power-sharing.

Keep trying.

Youth have a lot to say—evaluators need to ask the right questions and create the appropriate space to invite youth in to answer them. Different youth respond differently to prompts; the evaluators ask various questions and rephrase when needed.

At the same time, evaluators must not ask too many questions—the team tries to let conversations flow based on what youth express as interests and concerns. For example, Youth Advisers informed evaluation questions to guide the evaluation and interview/focus group protocols. Evaluators may listen for neatly written questions that end with a question mark, but people do not think exclusively in those terms. In addition to coming up with evaluation questions, youth shared their ideas by discussing their experiences, which the evaluation team can use to craft questions.

Pay youth for their time and expertise.

It is also critical that evaluators and the State acknowledge youth and young adults as experts in their own lived experience. Part of this acknowledgment is monetary compensation at a living wage for their time and engagement. With MDH support, The Improve Group pays Youth Advisers $100 an hour. Key informants and survey participants will receive stipends. The Improve Group included compensation in its budget, which streamlined the process of paying participants. MDH worked internally to allow for the inclusion of compensation in the project contract.

Part of acknowledging lived experience is providing monetary compensation at a living wage for people's time and engagement.

Early learnings from youth

What have youth shared so far in the evaluation of Safe Harbor? Effective engagement uncovers insights like the following feedback youth have already shared:

- Despite the good intentions of Safe Harbor, misperceptions among the general public abound—many people still see youth who are being trafficked or exploited as criminals or do not understand what sex trafficking looks like in the real world.

- Safe Harbor is a system of varying types of programming, and youth experiences vary based on what types of services they receive, e.g., housing versus case management, and where they receive them. Understandably, youth may not distinguish which services are Safe Harbor and which are provided through other agencies and systems.
- In most case management, talk therapy is provided. Not everybody is a talker. So, programs need to have a diversity of therapies for different kinds of people.
- Some processes (e.g., intake) and programming (e.g., counseling) retraumatize youth, in part because everybody asks youth to re-tell their stories of what they have lived through.

Engaging grantees

Safe Harbor grantees provide services, navigation, and housing to young people experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation. Initial engagement with grantees led to the following lessons learned for engaging community organizations in evaluation.

Engage grantees early.

Grantees provide valuable data about services provided. Their perspectives provide more than responses to evaluation questions—they can inform the design of the evaluation. Above all, grantees expressed a need to hear what youth say is most helpful and needed within Safe Harbor programs. Grantees shared interests in learning more about the experiences of specific populations, e.g., youth in certain regions of Minnesota; male-identifying survivors; and what Black, Indigenous, and youth of color need but may not receive from white-dominant programs. Grantees also want to learn more about topics relevant to implementing their services, including colonization and racism; what assets keep youth safe and surviving; how youth are doing several months after leaving Safe Harbor services; and the broader Safe Harbor network.

Characterize evaluation as a learning exercise—not a judgment.

People have all sorts of experiences with evaluation, including some that have caused harm. Evaluators are working to foster an environment where people are open to learning versus seeing evaluation as a punitive process of funding agencies judging them. An introductory session with Safe Harbor grantees defined evaluation, its use, and how equitable evaluation can support Safe Harbor.

Evaluators are working to foster an environment where people are open to learning.

It can also be helpful to acknowledge how evaluation has been misused or conducted inappropriately, validating well-founded fears people may have. In responding to complex issues like sexual exploitation, some approaches work, and some fail—evaluators are working to create an environment where grantees are comfortable sharing what does not work so people learn from each other.

Early learnings from grantees

What have we learned so far? Effective engagement uncovers insights like the feedback grantees have shared in Phase I, such as their reflection that youth are resilient and want stability through housing, education, and work. Grantees also shared that required reporting could improve to document what grantees see as important—like measuring the quality, not just the quantity, of culturally responsive services. They also expressed frustration with various reporting requirements from different funders and wished for uniform reporting requirements.

Recommendations for State agencies

State agencies are not always set up to smoothly accommodate compensation for people providing lived expertise to evaluation. Agencies could consider writing go-to justification language for paying community members as advisers, such as:

"In equity-focused engagement, everyone should be compensated for their time and contributions of expertise, including lived expertise. Professionals get that from being compensated for their role through their job, and we want to make sure we do that for community members and not expect them to provide unpaid labor."

Providing evidence that incentives boost participation in marginalized populations may be helpful. A 2003 *Journal of Primary Prevention* article[23] reported that monetary incentives may increase participation in research, particularly among people less likely to participate.

Next steps

In summer of 2023, people working in agencies that respond to sexual exploitation—child welfare, law enforcement, etc.—will participate in focus groups for the evaluation. The Improve Group will include full findings from engagement with these individuals, youth, and grantees in the Safe Harbor evaluation report. The final report, due in September 2023, will include the following detail to inform the Safe Harbor report to the Legislature:

1. Grantee reporting about youth receiving Safe Harbor services and service types, including demographic information, e.g., the average age of clients, race and ethnicity of clients, gender identity of clients, sexual orientation of clients, disability, invisible disabilities; and data on factors such as whether the youth is also a parent or caring for children, whether the trafficking/exploitation was intrafamilial, etc.
2. Any housing and supportive services trends, such as enrollment numbers (unique clients served and unique enrollments; ineligible clients; total service numbers; repeat and multiple services).
3. Client housing and supportive services by grant type.
4. Unique enrollments/total services by navigator region.
5. Client housing, supportive services, and referrals by region type.
6. Housing services agencies, program, bed type, and number of beds.

[23] Guyll, M., Spoth, R. & Redmond, C. The Effects of Incentives and Research Requirements on Participation Rates for a Community-Based Preventive Intervention Research Study. *The Journal of Primary Prevention* **24**, 25–41 (2003). https://doi-org.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/10.1023/A:1025023600517

7. Most frequently provided services by race demographic.
8. Infrequently provided and referred services.
9. Key findings, including services youth most need and service gaps, from The Improve Group's youth and community evaluation of Safe Harbor services (surveying clients, interviewing clients, interviews with community partners in focus groups).
10. Information for the section on the Assessment, Collection, and Distribution of Funds under Minn. Stat. Sec. 609.3241.
11. The Improve Group's Phase 5 Evaluation Recommendations and Conclusion.

Supplementary data tables and charts

MDH housing and supportive services program data

Table 9. Indicators of sexual exploitation reported by grantee agencies

Sexual exploitation indicators (n=1,326)	Percent
Client is a sexual assault victim	32%
Client is a runaway or runs away frequently	17%
Client is homeless	16%
Other	13%
Client refuses to discuss or gives vague/misleading information about their relationships, age, whereabouts, etc.	10%
Client is in a sexual/romantic relationship with an older person	5%
Client has access to unexplained money, credit cards, cell phones, or other items of value	4%
Client requires frequent STI and/or pregnancy testing	2%
Client uses heroin/methamphetamines/cocaine	1%
Client has unexplained scars/ brands/or tattoos	-
Client has an STI	-
Client has disclosed or showed signs of gang affiliation	-

Table 10. Housing and supportive services provided and referred by race/ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	American Indian or Alaska Native		Asian or Asian American		Black, African, or African American		Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin		White		Biracial or Multiracial		Undisclosed	
Service	**Provided (N=168)**	**Referred (N=71)**	**Provided (N=53)**	**Referred**	**Provided (N=352)**	**Referred (N=353)**	**Provided (N=271)**	**Referred (N=71)**	**Provided (N=547)**	**Referred (N=476)**	**Provided (N=167)**	**Referred (N=191)**	**Provided (N=130)**	**Referred**
Mental Health Services	24%	**48%**	28%	-	19%	**17%**	-	**48%**	15%	**22%**	25%	**23%**	-	-
Medical Services	-	28%	-	-	19%	10%	-	28%	7%	13%	-	19%	-	-
Culturally Specific Services	20%	-	-	-	9%	-	10%	-	3%	-	-	-	-	-
Financial Assistance	17%	-	-	-	25%	-	12%	-	11%	-	20%	-	-	-
Personal Items	42%	-	43%	-	37%	-	16%	-	23%	-	44%	-	-	-
Substance Use Treatment	15%	-	-	-	-	6%	-	-	5%	8%	15%	12%	-	-
Interpreter Translation	-	-	-	-	-	-	**24%**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Housing Assistance	10%	-	-	-	16%	6%	-	-	7%	8%	20%	10%	-	-
Education Services	11%	-	-	-	17%	8%	10%	-	3%	7%	28%	-	-	-
Dental Care	-	-	-	-	-	4%	-	-	-	8%	-	14%	-	-
Childcare	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Race/ethnicity	American Indian or Alaska Native		Asian or Asian American		Black, African, or African American		Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin		White		Biracial or Multiracial		Undisclosed	
Service	**Provided (N=168)**	**Referred (N=71)**	**Provided (N=53)**	**Referred**	**Provided (N=352)**	**Referred (N=353)**	**Provided (N=271)**	**Referred (N=71)**	**Provided (N=547)**	**Referred (N=476)**	**Provided (N=167)**	**Referred (N=191)**	**Provided (N=130)**	**Referred**
Legal Services	-	24%	-	-	18%	11%	11%	24%	14%	9%	14%	8%	12%	-
Housing Advocacy	15%	-	-	-	25%	6%	9%	-	14%	4%	28%	-	-	-
Social Services	13%	-	-	-	11%	**17%**	7%	-	18%	10%	16%	14%	-	-
Case Management	70%	-	47%	-	68%	-	59%	-	64%	-	80%	-	41%	-
Family Support	19%	-	30%	-	22%	-	25%	-	23%	3%	29%	-	12%	-
Employment Assistance	11%	-	-	-	16%	6%	-	-	10%	5%	16%	-	-	-
Emotional Support	**78%**	-	**87%**	-	**69%**	-	**89%**	-	**88%**	-	**84%**	-	**58%**	-
Criminal Justice Advocacy	24%	-	-	-	16%	6%	34%	-	37%	5%	37%	-	35%	-

Table 11. Service methods provided by navigator region

Service methods type (number of services) (n=6,205)	Percent
Total PIP: Provided, in Person	70%
Total RIP: Referred, in Person	11%
Total PVR: Provided, Virtually	15%
Total RVR: Referred, Virtually	4%

Table 12. Disciplines with which grantee agencies consulted

Disciplines (n=674)	Percent
Child Protection System (CPS)/child welfare	7%
Community member/community group	7%
Law enforcement/corrections	6%
School (K-12)	6%
Social service agency/governmental	6%
Youth-centered organization	5%
DV/SA specific organization	5%
Health care provider	5%
Social service agency/non-governmental	5%
Sexually exploited adult	5%
Multidisciplinary team (MDT)	5%
Shelter or drop-In center	4%
Legal service provider	4%
Task force	4%
Culturally-specific organization	4%
Religious Organization	4%

Disciplines (n=674)	Percent
Juvenile center	3%
Tribal community organization	3%
Policymakers	3%
University	3%
Business	3%
Media	2%
Other	1%

Table 13. Partnerships and relationship-building activities reported by grantee agencies

Partnerships & Relationship building activities (n=315)	Percent
Collaboration/project planning	18%
Referrals received	18%
Referrals provided	17%
Check-In	17%
Initial contact	15%
Capacity building	11%
Conflict resolution	3%
Other	1%

Figure 14. Grantee agency overview

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
180 Degrees	Metro	East Metro	Housing, Regional Navigator, Service	Though based in the Twin Cities metro area, 180 Degrees has housing locations around the state. Their organizational focus is on supporting youth who are homeless, sexually trafficked, or at high risk. They provide emergency shelter, residential programming, and community services.
Ain Dah Yung Center	Metro	East Metro	Housing, Service	This homeless shelter focuses on supporting American Indian youth in a culturally supporting manner within the Twin Cities. They provide a wide range of services, including emergency shelter, street outreach, and trauma-informed care.
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa	Greater Minnesota	Northeast	Tribal	Bois Forte Health and Human Services focuses on raising awareness within their community and training professionals on human trafficking.
Breaking Free	Metro	East Metro	Housing, Service	This program is focused on providing housing, advocacy, direct services, and healing for those who have experienced sex trafficking.
Esperanza United	Metro	East Metro	Service	Though based in St. Paul, Esperanza United (formerly known as Casa de Esperanza) also has national initiatives. In Minnesota, they focus on advocacy, shelter services, and community engagement for Latinx youth and families.
Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	Greater Minnesota	Northeast	Tribal	Fond du Lac Police Department works with the TRUST Task Force, trains community members and

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
				professionals on human trafficking, and provides referrals to victims.
Central MN Sexual Assault Center (CMSAC)	Greater Minnesota	East Central	Service	CMSAC provides crisis intervention 24/7 for anyone impacted by sexual violence. They provide direct services as well as prevention and awareness training.
Cornerstone	Metro	West Metro	Service	Cornerstone specializes in advocating and caring for people who have experienced trauma from crime, human trafficking, and domestic or sexual violence. They also provide education and seek to decrease the prevalence of violence.
The Enitan Story	Metro	West Metro	Service	This organization is survivor-led and dedicated to advocating for and empowering victims of human trafficking through education, services, and support groups.
Evergreen Youth and Family Services (EYFS)	Greater Minnesota	Northwest	Housing	EYFS focuses on Northern Minnesota families and youth. They are client-centered and provide housing, proactive services, education, and advocacy.
The Family Partnership	Metro	West Metro	Service, Housing	The Family Partnership seeks to help youth and families through early education, family home visiting, mental health services, and anti-sex trafficking programs (PRIDE). They focus on intergenerational work with clients and multicultural work within communities.
Heartland Girls Ranch	Greater Minnesota	West Central	Housing	This provider focuses on strength-based and trauma-informed services to empower girls. They also provide housing and equine therapeutic programming.

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
Hmong American Partnership (HAP)	Metro	East Metro	Service	HAP supports clients and neighborhoods through social services, housing, and community and economic development. They provide a variety of services, and though they started as support for the Hmong community, they also serve the broader immigrant and refugee community.
International Institute of Minnesota	Metro	East Metro	Service	The focus of this organization is providing a wide variety of services and resources for new Americans. They provide support in obtaining citizenship, increasing educational attainment, provide a model for workforce development, and support refugees and immigrants in navigating complex systems - such as housing, medical services, and more.
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	Greater Minnesota	Northwest	Tribal	The Leech Lake Police Department helps organize the TRUST Task Force, trains community members and professionals on human trafficking, and provides referrals to victims.
Life House	Greater Minnesota	Northeast	Service, Housing	Life House focuses on providing services to homeless and street youth. They provide a drop-in center, housing, mental health services, and employment support. Their perspective focuses on acceptance, harm reduction, and positive youth development.
The Link	Metro	West Metro	Regional Navigator, Service, Housing	The Link works with both youth and families to combat poverty and social injustice's impact on their community. The main services they provide are housing and services for

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
				homeless youth, alternative programs for those in the juvenile justice system, and emergency shelter, housing, and services for sexually exploited youth.
Lutheran Social Services	Greater Minnesota	East Central, West Central, and South Central	Regional Navigator, Service, Housing	This statewide organization has several locations that have contracts with Safe Harbor. The Mankato, Willmar, St. Cloud, Rochester, and Brainerd branches all provide housing and other supportive services for the youth in their communities.
Lower Sioux Indian Community	Greater Minnesota	Southwest	Tribal	Lower Sioux Police Department raises awareness within the community on human trafficking. Their community liaison works to build trust, connect victims to resources, and raise awareness.
Midwest Children's Resource Center (MCRC)	Metro	East Metro	Service	MCRC is affiliated with Minnesota Children's Hospital and provides advocacy, mental health, and physical wellness services to help youth recover from a variety of trauma and abuse.
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid	Metro	West Metro	Service	This organization provides legal services and advocacy for vulnerable Minnesotans. Their work is affordable and rooted in the communities they serve.
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC)	Metro	West Metro	Service	The services provided by MIWRC are rooted in their cultural values and seek to center and empower their Native community. They provide services such as advocacy, support groups, family services, community engagement, healing spaces, and outreach.

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	Greater Minnesota	East Central	Tribal	The Mille Lacs Family Violence Prevention program provides services, referrals, and trainings for the community. They work to build a broad collaboration within the region, acting as a tribal navigator for Safe Harbor.
North Homes Children and Family Services	Greater Minnesota	Northwest	Service, Housing	North Homes focuses on the provision of comprehensive mental health services across Northern Minnesota. They have school-based, community-based, residential, and other types of services.
Northwest Indian Community Development Center (NWICDC)	Greater Minnesota	Northwest	Service	NWICDC targets their services towards the Red Lake Nation, White Earth Nation, and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and seeks to promote wellness, equity, and resources for all American Indian families in North-Central Minnesota. They have family supports, promotion of healing, support for those impacted by intergenerational trauma, and other comprehensive services.
Dodge and Olmsted Counties Victim Services	Greater Minnesota	Southeast	Regional Navigator, Service	The Victim Services Section of Dodge and Olmsted Counties connects youth with services and supports other agencies in their area. They also provide case management, outreach, community groups, training, programming, and other assistance.
OutFront Minnesota	Metro	West Metro	Service	OutFront focuses on creating equity throughout Minnesota for all LGBTQ individuals. They try to prevent violence through advocacy, outreach, community engagement,

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
				education, public policy, and justice services.
Prairie Island	Greater Minnesota	Southeast	Tribal	Prairie Island conducts outreach and awareness raising events to the community and provides referrals to victims.
Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA)	Greater Minnesota	Northeast	Regional Navigator, Service	PAVSA provides free and confidential services for victim-survivors and their loved ones throughout Saint Louis County through direct service provision, education, and advocacy.
Rape and Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo-Moorhead (RACC)	Greater Minnesota	West Central	Service	RACC seeks to provide comprehensive services to people who have experienced sexual and domestic violence, trafficking and exploitation, and elder abuse in both eastern North Dakota and West Central Minnesota. Their services include crisis intervention, counseling, community education, and community prevention services.
Rebound, Inc.	Metro	West Metro	Housing	Rebound, Inc. partners with their community in North Minneapolis to address the over-representation of Black youth in the juvenile justice system. They have residential services as well as holistic services, including education and advocacy.
Red Lake Band of Ojibwe Indians	Greater Minnesota	Northwest	Tribal	The Red Lake Police Department's victim advocate provides information and referrals to victims, trains the community and professionals, and is working to build policies that improve their overall response to human trafficking.

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
Someplace Safe	Greater Minnesota	West Central	Regional Navigator, Service	This organization helps victims, survivors, their families, and communities through advocacy and parenting support. They assist those impacted by a variety of crimes and violence.
Southwest Crisis Center (SWCC)	Greater Minnesota	Southwest	Regional Navigator, Service	SWCC supports people affected by human trafficking and domestic violence through initial contact and referrals. Among other things, they provide advocacy, support groups, and education.
Support Within Reach (SWR)	Greater Minnesota	Northwest	Regional Navigator	SWR's focus is to support all people affected by sexual violence, whether victims, survivors, or their friends and family. They provide advocacy, prevention education, community empowerment, and other services.
Terebinth Refuge	Greater Minnesota	East Central	Housing	This shelter and safe home is Christ-centered and provides a wide variety of services that are trauma-informed, strength-based, victim-centered, and survivor-informed.
Upper Sioux Community	Greater Minnesota	Southwest	Tribal	The Upper Sioux Police Department provides referrals to victims and trains both community members and professionals.
White Earth Nation	Greater Minnesota	Northwest	Tribal	The White Earth DOVE program operates as the Tribal navigator for Safe Harbor. They provide services, referrals, trainings, and work with young people in Not a Number groups.
WoMen's Rural Advocacy Programs (WRAP)	Greater Minnesota	Southwest	Service	WRAP's free and confidential services are for all victims of domestic violence in Southwest Minnesota. They include a crisis line,

Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
				safe housing, transportation, advocacy, safety planning, referrals, support groups, system coordination, and community education.
YMCA of the North	Metro	West Metro	Service	Through their youth and family services, the YMCA of the North provides a variety of prevention services through a resource line, education, outreach services, and one on one support.

Housing and shelter are a large and important part of Safe Harbor services. The following table lists each housing agency, the region they serve, the type of housing program they provide, the type of bed, and the number of beds available.

Table 15. Housing services agencies, program, bed type, and number of beds

Fifteen housing agencies operated 21 housing programs during the evaluation period, with up to 135 beds available. Housing programs had a minimum of one bed and up to a maximum of 15 beds supported through Safe Harbor grant funds.

Housing agency	Region type	Housing program	Type of bed	Number of beds
180 Degrees	Metro	Emergency Shelter	Shelter Bed	5
180 Degrees	Metro	Congregate Transitional Housing	Congregate Housing Bed	8
Evergreen Youth and Family Services	Greater MN	Scattered Site Housing	Apartment Unit	3-5
Evergreen Youth and Family Services	Greater MN	Emergency Shelter	Shelter Bed	1-2
Heartland Girls' Ranch	Greater MN	Congregate Transitional Housing	Congregate Housing Bed	10

Housing agency	Region type	Housing program	Type of bed	Number of beds
North Homes Children and Family Services	Greater MN	Congregate Transitional Housing	Congregate Housing Bed	6
LSS Mankato	Greater MN	Scattered Site Housing	Apartment Unit	4
LSS Rochester	Greater MN	Scattered Site Housing	Apartment Unit	6
Ain Dah Yung	Metro	Site-based Independent Housing	Apartment Unit	15
Life House	Greater MN	Site-based Independent Housing	Apartment Unit	10
Life House	Greater MN	Congregate Transitional Housing	Congregate Housing Bed	5
Rebound, Inc.	Metro	Emergency Shelter	Shelter Bed	1
The Family Partnership	Metro	Scattered Site Housing	Apartment Unit	4
The Link	Metro	Site-based Independent Housing	Apartment Unit	5
The Link	Metro	Scattered Site Housing	Apartment Unit	5
The Link	Metro	Emergency Shelter	Shelter Bed	8
Lutheran Social Services, Central (Brainerd, St. Cloud, Willmar)	Greater MN	Scattered Site Housing	Apartment Unit	8
Terebinth Refuge	Greater MN	Emergency Shelter	Shelter Bed	10

Housing agency	Region type	Housing program	Type of bed	Number of beds
Terebinth Refuge	Greater MN	Congregate Transitional Housing	Congregate Housing Bed	4
Breaking Free	Metro	Emergency Shelter	Shelter Bed	4
YMCA	Metro	Scattered Site Housing	Apartment Unit	10
Total	-	-	-	132-135

Table 16. Housing services by program type

Fifteen percent of individuals who received housing services were provided with emergency housing, 19 percent were provided supportive housing, and 8 percent were provided scattered site housing during the evaluation period.

Housing (n=1,284)	Percent
Total number of clients provided emergency housing	15%
Total number of clients provided supportive housing	19%
Total number of clients provided scattered-site housing	8%
Total number of clients reporting exit data	58%
Total number of clients provided after care	-

Youth survey data

Figure 7. What is the highest level of education you've completed? (n=137)

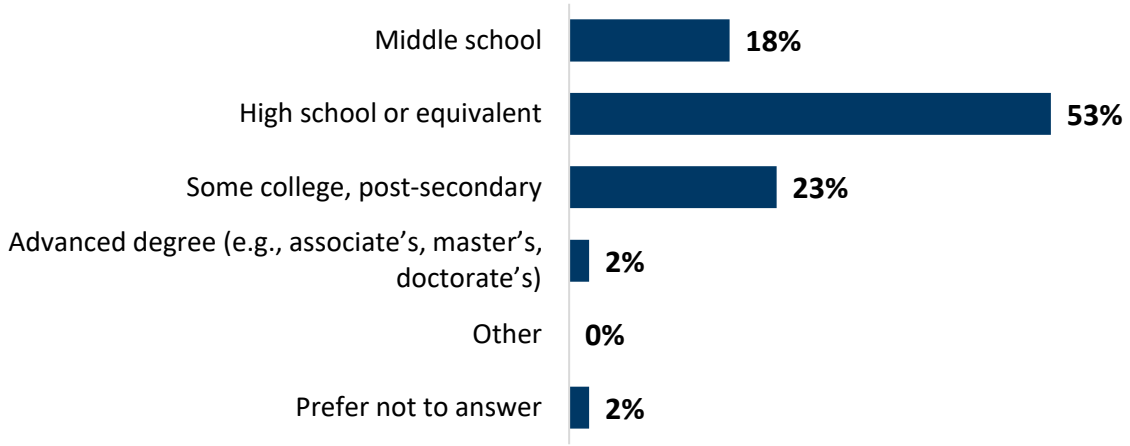


Figure 8. What is your employment status? (n=137)

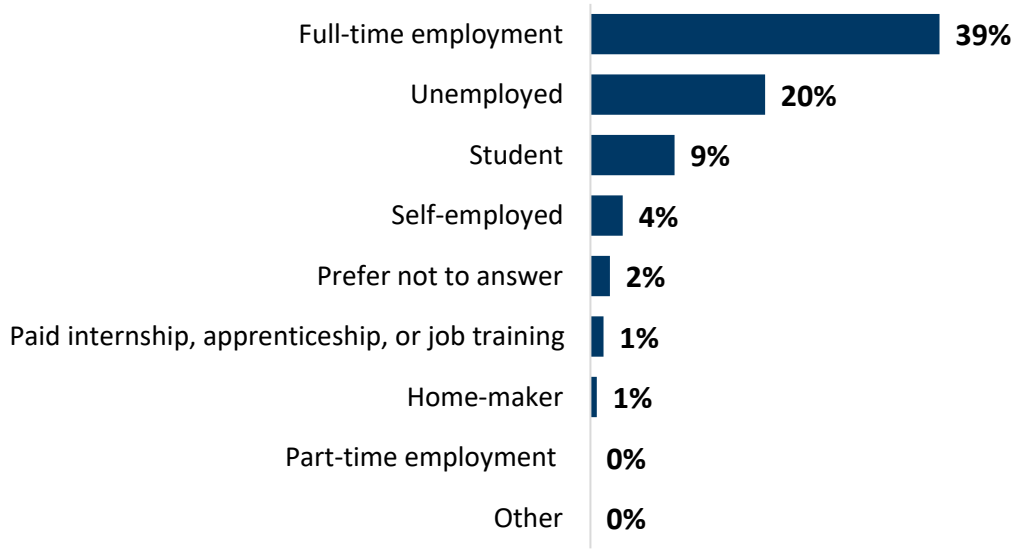


Figure 9. Who did you reach out to first, or referred you to your first service when you started seeking support? (n=137)

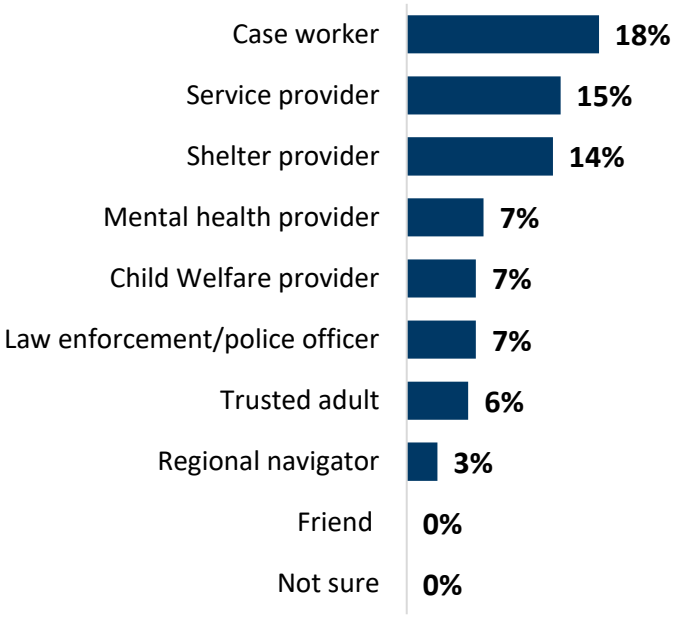


Figure 10. How important is each of the following to successfully help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation?

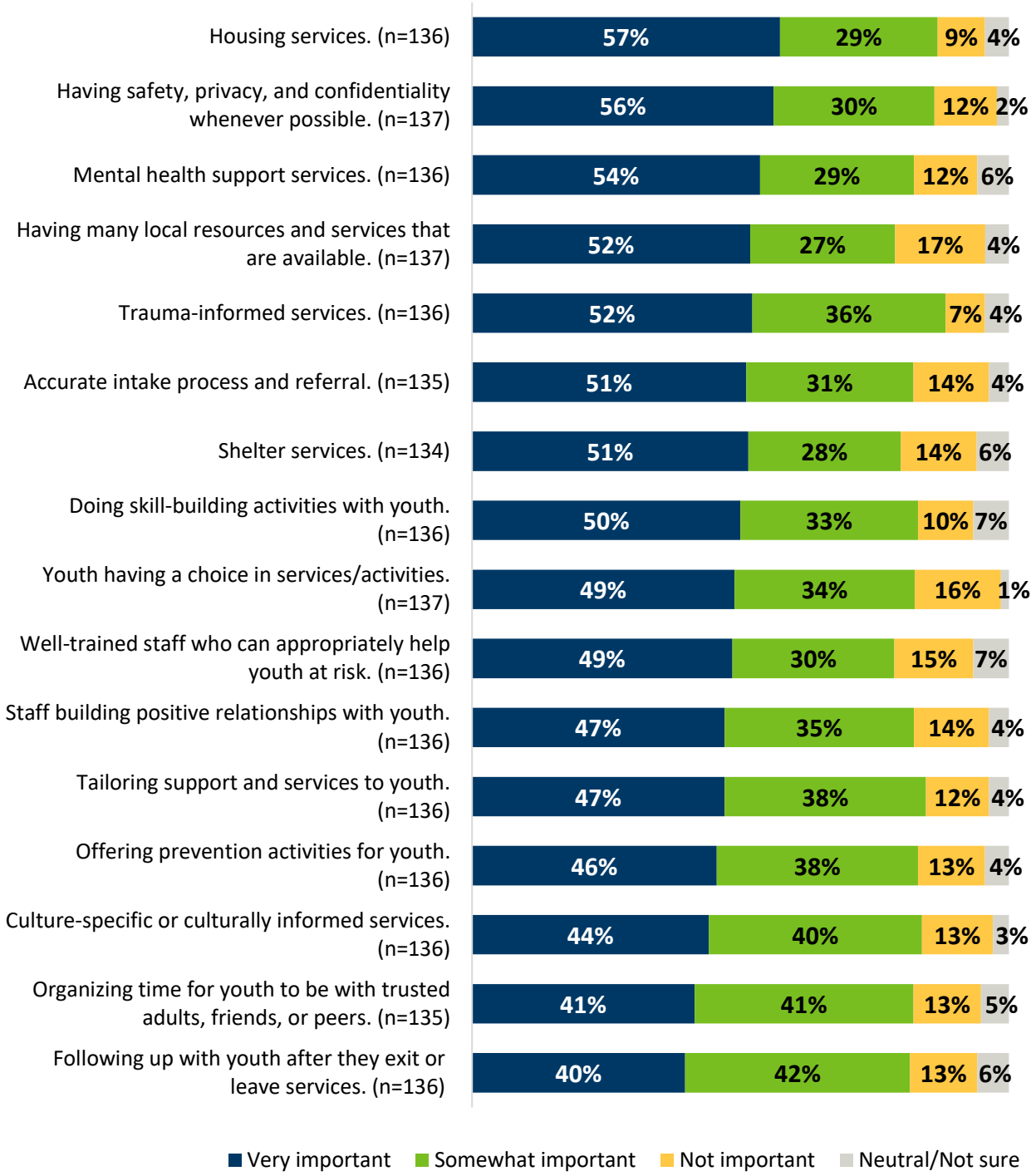


Figure 11. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Staff who work for Safe Harbor organizations:

The majority of youth survey respondents agree staff who work for Safe Harbor organizations connected them to services that were helpful (53 percent), care about them (53 percent), and listen and respond their preferences (51 percent).

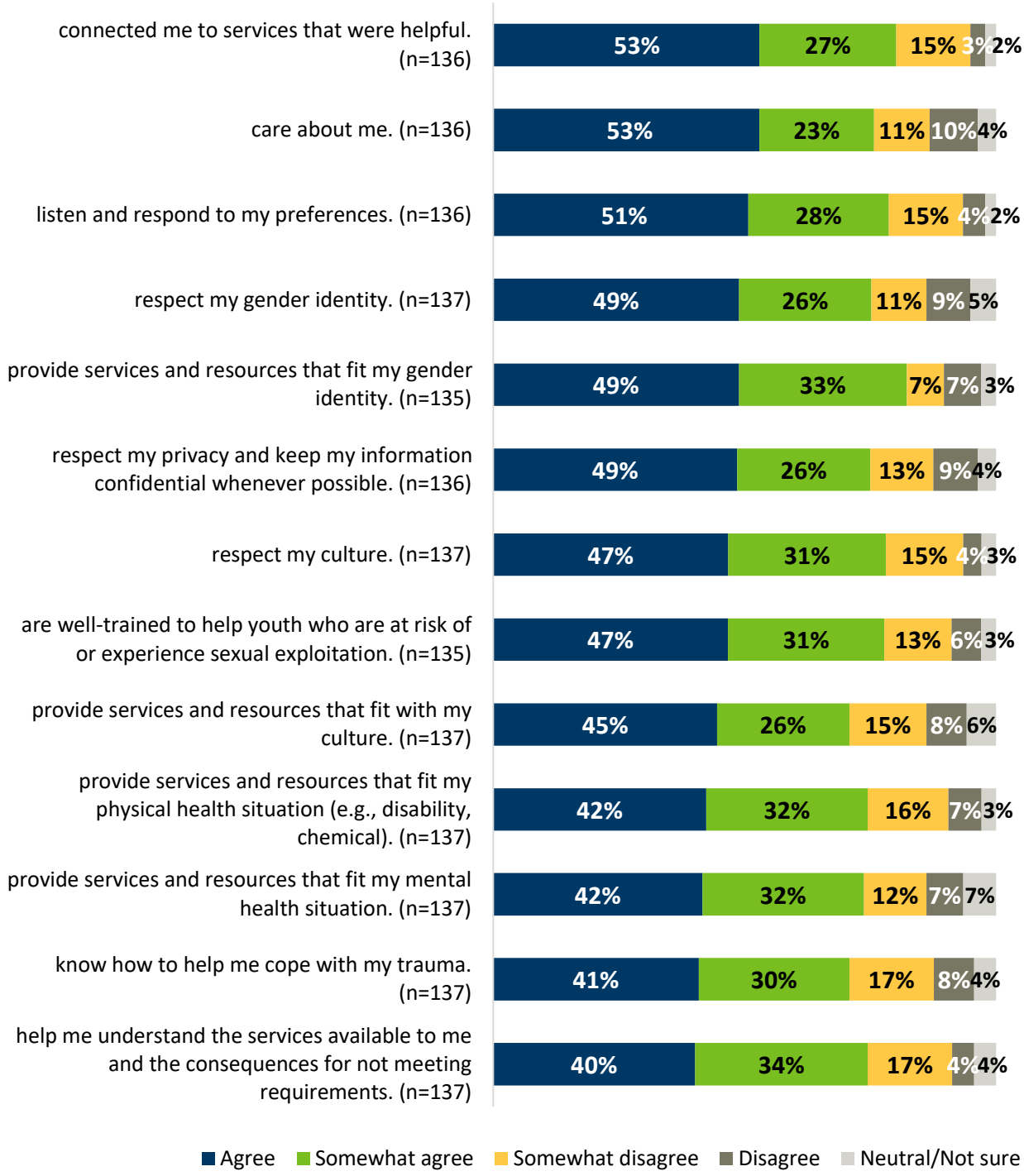


Figure 12. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The majority (54 percent) of youth agree they feel more hopeful about the future at the time of the survey.

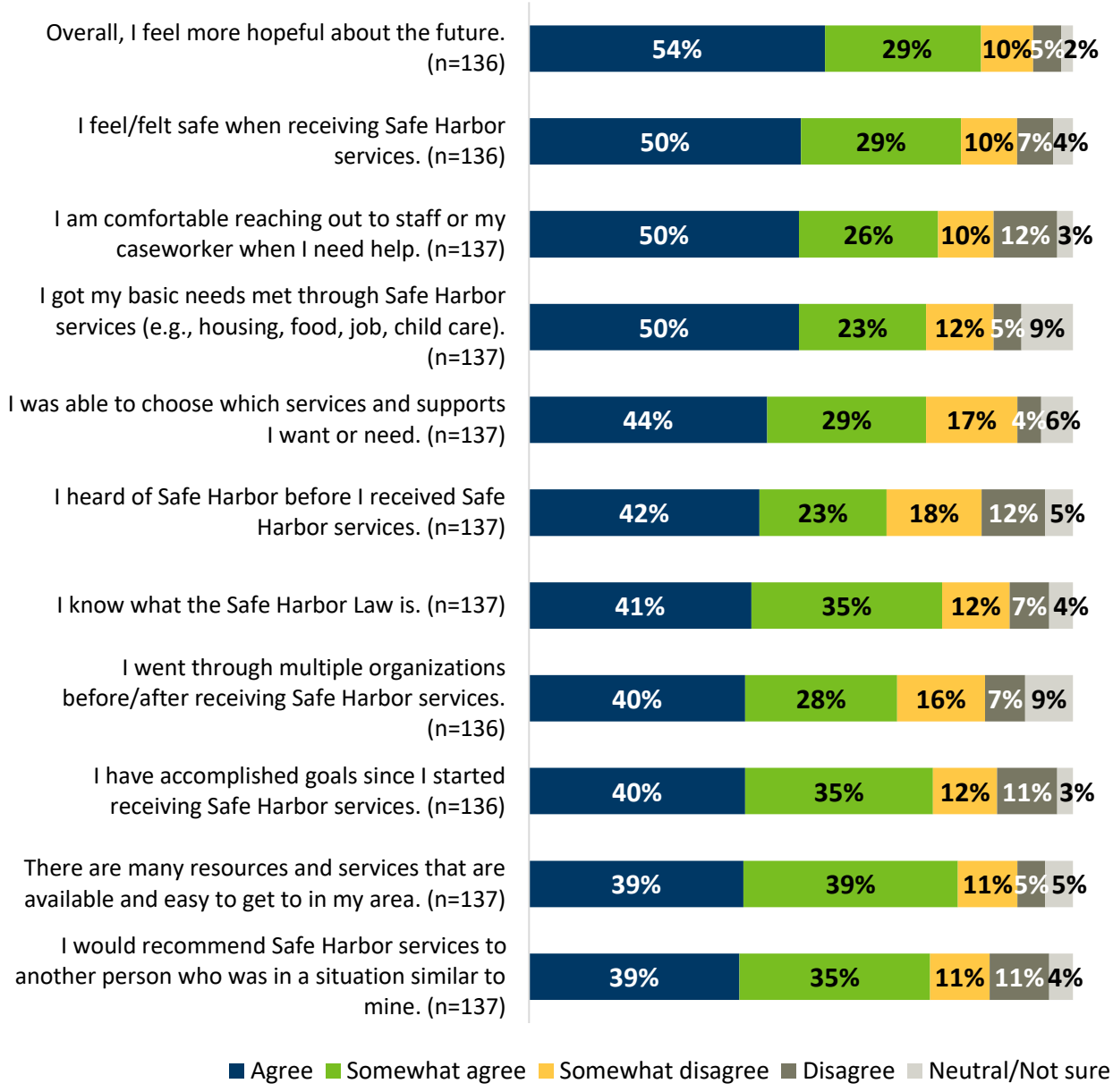
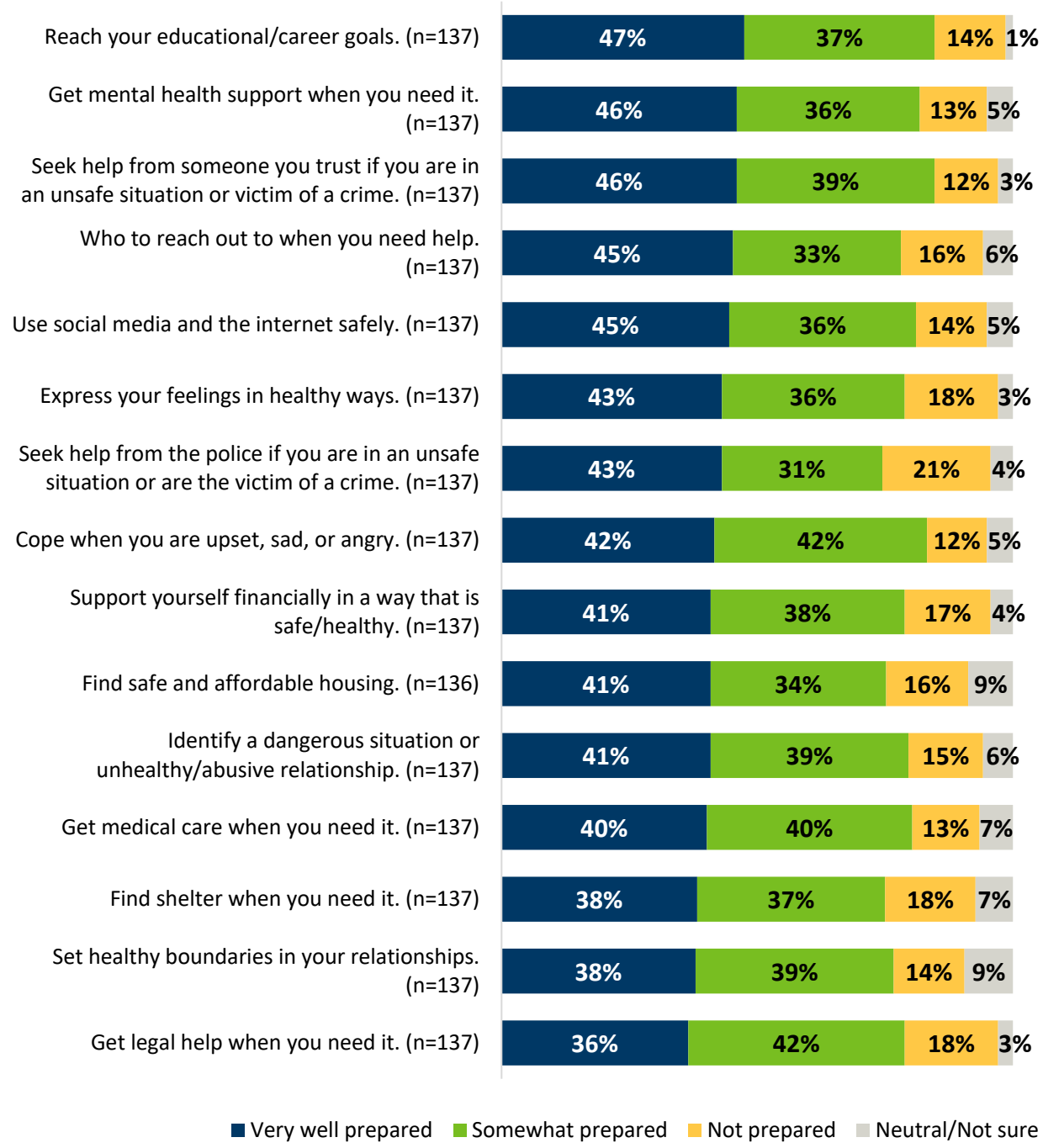


Figure 13. How prepared do you feel to do each of the following because you received Safe Harbor services?

The majority of youth survey respondents reported feeling very well or somewhat prepared to support themselves when reaching out for help or finding services when needed and reaching their education or career goals.