



An Evaluation of the Safe Harbor Initiative in Minnesota

PHASE 6: APRIL 2023-MARCH 2025

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Minnesota Department of Health
Safe Harbor Program, Violence Prevention Programs Unit, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Health
Promotion and Chronic Disease Division
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5492
caroline.palmer@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5400.

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- Gabrielle Nelson.
- Symmieona Williams.
- Gisela Medina.
- Additional Advisors who did not give permission to be named.

We also express our gratitude to participants in the evaluation:

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

Executive summary

The State of Minnesota funds the Safe Harbor network to provide supportive services, regional navigation, housing, shelter, and outreach for youth ages 24 and under who are at risk of or have 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**. This report shares findings from the sixth evaluation of Safe Harbor, focused on services provided April 2023-March 2025. The evaluation **centered youth and used mixed methods**. Youth Advisors with lived experience provided valuable input on the evaluation methods, which included a survey, interviews, data analysis, and focus groups. Several of the findings and recommendations in this evaluation have come up in previous years. **Enduring findings around needs reinforce the stubbornness of some of the root causes of human trafficking**: poverty, oppression, and the siloing of public systems, for example. Hearing consistent themes over the years reinforces the need for long-term, systemic change.

Safe Harbor overview

The Safe Harbor program within the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Human Trafficking Prevention Program consists of an **interconnected network of grantee agencies** with 12 regional navigators (including two Tribal navigators with White Earth Nation and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) and 51 supportive services programs based in community, county, and Tribal Nations. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) funds 16 shelter and housing providers, as well as outreach services.

These MDH and DHS grantee programs **serve sexually exploited youth through age 24** and are funded primarily through state dollars, although currently MDH also administers an Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking grant through the United States Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime. In addition, the MDH Human Trafficking Prevention Program funds six grantees through state funding to provide supportive services for victims and survivors of labor trafficking and exploitation of all ages.

In addition to administering state and federal funding, MDH provides **support through training and technical assistance, protocol development, multisector collaboration, policy development, and program evaluation**. To learn more about the program visit: [Human Trafficking and Exploitation Prevention and Response](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/index.html>)

What Safe Harbor does in Minnesota

Safe Harbor serves more than 2,000 youth. During this two-year period, 1,783 individuals initiated services with Safe Harbor. When including individuals who initiated services prior to this period, Safe Harbor served a total of 2,312 individuals. Youth served most commonly identified as only (i.e., not in combination with another race) White or only Black, African, or African American. Just under three-quarters of youth served identified as cisgender female, while transgender individuals made up 3% of clients. Youth most often connected with Safe Harbor through self-referral or a referral from child protection or child welfare. Almost all youth survey respondents reported satisfaction with the services from Safe Harbor organizations.

Safe Harbor grantees educate the state on sexual exploitation. Grantee agencies conducted at least 442 trainings and 794 consultations with other disciplines, as well as the general public.

Safe Harbor grantee staff work to establish positive relationships and foster trust with youth. Youth reported having positive experiences and relationships with providers when they feel heard and staff follow through on what they say they will do.

Youth are resourceful and know how to get what they need—the Safe Harbor network supports them to become independent. Youth most often reported receiving emotional support, housing assistance, case management, housing advocacy, and resources for personal items.

Safe Harbor grantees refer youth to additional help as needed. Safe Harbor most often referred youth to mental health, medical, education, social, and legal services.

Where Safe Harbor can improve

Support youth to meet basic needs first, especially housing. The number of youth needing shelter vastly outnumbers the number of available shelter beds. Permanent housing is another area of need.

Expand grantee training in needed skills, including crisis de-escalation, trauma-informed approaches, cultural competency, and immigration and asylum processes.

Reduce staff turnover to retain expertise and maintain relationships.

Provide training and facilitate partnerships to better serve youth who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQIA, and/or Two Spirit. In particular, shelter staff need training in violence prevention to protect non-binary and transgender youth who are transitioning.

Foster stronger cross-disciplinary connections and the sharing and institutionalization of best practices.

Recommendations

- Define what being trauma-informed means, what trauma-informed services are, and what they are not.
- Provide more resources for centering youth voice as a trauma-informed practice.
- Provide more time for collaboration among grantees and community organizations to foster stronger relationships and facilitate new introductions after turnover occurs.
- Pay staff more to retain their expertise. Regional navigators experience pay disparities across different regions.
- Increase staff retention rates. Turnover is an issue across various organizations, including MDH, which impacts technical assistance to grantees and partners.
- Work to increase the supply of and connections to mental health providers, especially culturally specific services.
- Create a 24/7 resource portal for accessing navigators and finding trauma-informed services.

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- Develop a collaborative system that brings together schools and social services.
- Provide training that goes beyond trafficking and diversity 101 to address current challenges.
- Increase partnerships with providers who are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other ways youth identify.
- Institutionalize best practices and share them across all groups in all relevant forums.
- Provide continuous training to new staff to improve REDCap data quality.

Additionally, Youth Advisors shared recommendations for Safe Harbor to:

- Provide language assistance to youth whose primary language is not English.
- Change the language around “trafficking” as the language itself may deter some youth because it may not be how they describe their experience.
- Make public awareness campaigns with input from youth.
- Publicize additional community-based resources that help youth.
- Provide more training and assistance on online sexual abuse for Safe Harbor grantees.
- Increase connections to accessible higher education.
- Create a pathway from Safe Harbor programming to meaningful employment.
- Improve outreach and accessibility of Safe Harbor programming.

Introduction

Safe Harbor laws, which most states have adopted in some form¹, 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.² Ultimately, Safe Harbor is about treating youth with dignity and creating systems that give young people choices in how to lead their lives.³

Safe Harbor serves young people who are experiencing, have experienced, or are at risk⁴ of experiencing sexual exploitation. Three agencies distributed Safe Harbor funds from April 2023 through June 2025:

- The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) administered state funds for 10 regional navigators (Northwest, North Central, Northeast, West Central, East Central, South Central, Southeast, Southwest, West Metro, and East Metro); two Tribal regional navigators (White Earth Nation and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe); 51 supportive service grantees, including seven Tribal Nations; protocol implementation; and this evaluation. Using federal funds, MDH supported seven 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 to 16 grantees.
- The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Justice Programs administered funds to local and county law enforcement entities to aid in the investigation and coordination of sex trafficking cases.

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

¹ Shared Hope International. (2025). *Safe Harbor Maps*. <https://reportcards.sharedhope.org/safeharbormap/>

² Minnesota Department of Health. (2023, July 31). Safe Harbor Minnesota. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/>

³ Minnesota Department of Health. (2023, July 31). Safe Harbor Minnesota. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/>

⁴ The Safe Harbor program sometimes describes people as "at risk" for sexual exploitation in its materials, and "at risk" is also used in statute, so this terminology is used in this report. However, some participants identified this characterization as harmful because it describes a person, rather than a condition or a situation creating the risk. Risks are created by outside factors in society and are not a personal failing of the individual. MDH acknowledges 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. Addressing terminology is also recommended by a strategic planning process for the statewide human trafficking program, with implementation and activities planned for FY27 through FY30.

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 use disorder service providers, and more, located in a variety of communities and Tribal Nations.

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. The Improve Group conducted this evaluation. The Improve Group is a worker-owned evaluation consulting cooperative that provides evaluation, planning, facilitation, and community engagement to support mission-driven organizations. Based in St. Paul, The Improve Group has worked with public, nonprofit, and philanthropic clients across Minnesota, the U.S., and internationally for 25 years.

Throughout this report, “evaluators” refers to The Improve Group. This evaluation, the sixth of Safe Harbor, examined the period of April 2023 through March 2025.

MDH and its partner agencies aim to utilize these results to gain a deeper understanding of Safe Harbor’s effectiveness from the perspectives of youth who accessed services, grantees who provided services, and multidisciplinary partners who played crucial 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.** Additionally, the MDH Human Trafficking Prevention Program can reference these findings as it plans the implementation of its 2025-2029 strategic plan.

Audiences for this report 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 Youth Advisors.

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. During fiscal years 2024 and 2025, MDH allocated funds to The Advocates for Human Rights, The Center for Child Abuse Prevention (aka Family Enhancement Center), The Enitan Story, Standpoint, and Victim Services of Olmsted County for supportive services activities.

Evaluation approach and methods

Evaluators used a **mixed-method, youth-centered, utilization-focused approach** for this study. Multiple methods were employed to gather qualitative and quantitative data from various sources, including a youth survey, interviews, and focus groups with staff from Safe Harbor grantee organizations.

The team applied a community-responsive approach to engage individuals and organizations who are interested in, will use, and will be impacted by the findings.

Safe Harbor's philosophy is to treat youth with dignity and **create systems that give young people choices in how to lead their lives**. To align the evaluation with this philosophy, five young people with lived experience served as Youth Advisors in this evaluation. Evaluators **prioritized engaging people with lived experience, knowing they have the most accurate and useful perspectives**. Evaluators worked with grantee organizations to identify a diverse group of youth to advise the evaluation. Youth Advisors represented both urban and rural perspectives, as well as diverse racial and gender backgrounds. Evaluators met with youth several times during the design phase of the project. **Youth had decision-making power**, particularly in shaping the protocols for youth surveys, interviews, and grantee focus groups. Youth were compensated at \$100 per hour (maximum 20 hours each) for their time contributing to:

- The design and review of protocols for the youth survey, agency and partners focus groups, and key informant interviews.
- Conducting outreach (flyer, email, social media) for the youth survey.
- Meaning-making of evaluation findings.
- Reviewing the final report and providing feedback.

While evaluation has often excluded people with these critical perspectives, MDH and evaluators affirmed that engaging people with direct experience helps funders and service providers improve their work, including by assessing biases and adapting to changing contexts. Evaluation serves as an opportunity to continue checking in with youth about how Safe Harbor is doing at responding to the current forms of sexual exploitation. In acknowledging the expertise of youth based on their lived experiences, recommendations from Youth Advisors are included in this report.



Photo by Manuel Guillén Vega via Pexels

Safe Harbor grantees, who directly engage with youth and understand the system closely, also participated, as did multidisciplinary partners who are key to the “No Wrong Door” model. In addition to Youth Advisors contributing their expertise as members of the evaluation team, surveys and interviews were conducted with youth who had received or were, at the time of the survey, receiving Safe Harbor services. Some Youth Advisors also participated in interpreting data and reviewing draft findings and recommendations for this report. To reach youth, evaluators, MDH, 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:

- 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?
- What factors contribute to Safe Harbor’s impact?
- What are the gaps and challenges that impede the work of Safe Harbor?
- What are the opportunities for improvement?

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. Evaluators requested high-level program data from MDH that could help answer the evaluation questions.

Survey

The above-mentioned program data is based on grantee reports. To complement that data with what youth had to say themselves, the evaluation **directly engaged youth through a survey and interviews**.

For the survey, youth who had ever 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. The **youth survey outreach 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 youth to be less candid in their responses. Youth advisors also shared the survey link with anyone in their networks who had accessed Safe Harbor services. The survey link was not posted or shared on social media due to the risk of the ineligible survey respondents taking the survey for the incentive, thus protecting the integrity of responses.

The survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Eligible youth received a \$10 e-gift card as a token of appreciation for their time and input. Youth were reminded that the survey was completely voluntary and anonymous. To be trauma-informed, the survey also prefaced that some questions may raise some distress or uneasiness 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 only available in English; MDH plans to offer the survey in additional languages in the future. The survey was exempt from IRB review because it was voluntary and targeted to youth over 18 years old.

The survey was available on QuestionPro from November 20, 2024, through March 20, 2025. In that time, **93 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 REDCap data provides a more comprehensive picture of the demographics of the youth served, it is also helpful to understand the characteristics of the youth who took the survey to know who is represented in that data. Of the 93 youth who took the survey and were eligible for inclusion in the study:

- A third of the youth reported receiving services for one to two years; 32% said they had received services for less than a year; 6% said they had received services for three to four years; and 3% said they had received services for five or more years.
- Fifty-five percent had their high school diploma or equivalent and some were in college or other post-secondary program (12%).
- Cisgender individuals made up three-quarters (77%) of survey respondents.
- Thirty-nine percent identified as White and 38% identified as Black, African, or African American.
- Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents identified as heterosexual; almost one-third of (29%) identified as bisexual or pansexual.

- The average age of youth who took the survey was 21 and ranged from 13 to 49⁵ years old. Most youth respondents (47%) were ages 20 to 24 and over one-third were ages 15 to 19 (38%).

Importantly, only 12 (of 40 funded) agencies were represented in the survey results, based on where youth reported receiving services. This illustrates that because it used a convenience sampling approach, the survey results are not representative of all youth served by Safe Harbor.

Key informant interviews

Evaluators also conducted key informant interviews with youth. While surveys and program data can provide a lot of information about “what” Safe Harbor is, interviews allow for follow-up to answer “why” and “how” questions. Grantees supported the recruitment of youth for interviews. **Seventeen current and past clients of Safe Harbor services volunteered for interviews.** Evaluators reminded youth 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. Youth interviewees received a \$50 e-gift card for contributing their lived expertise.

Focus groups

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

- Eleven regional navigators.
- Eleven child welfare professionals.
- Two law enforcement representatives.
- Three Tribal representatives.
- Thirteen service provider staff.
- Thirteen shelter staff.

⁵ The reported age range is outside of the Safe Harbor age range eligibility, which cuts off after age 24. Six survey respondents reported their age as 25, which while outside of the range of eligibility, are not unlikely to have encountered Safe Harbor services. Three respondents reported their age as over 30, which is outside of the range of eligibility but represents only 3% of the survey data. One explanation for these responses is that some grantees provide services to adults through other funding sources outside of Safe Harbor. It is possible that these outlying survey respondents conflated all survivor services with Safe Harbor services due to not understanding what services are funded by which source. Further, grantees are empowered to provide emergency services to anyone who seeks help. These are often one-off instances where grantees may provide some services and then a referral to another provider with whom the person is eligible. In these cases, the grantee would complete an ‘ineligible client’ form for that person, but it’s unlikely that the person would be aware of that process and would complete a survey anyway, thinking that the grantee is a Safe Harbor provider.

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.

Evaluators conducted quantitative analysis of survey and REDCap data using Microsoft Excel. They 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. Evaluators then hosted **an Emerging Findings meeting with Safe Harbor state staff and three Youth Advisors** 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.

- The goal of 200 participants for the youth survey was not reached.
- It is possible youth participants in the survey or interview shared experiences with other services available in the community – not exclusively Safe Harbor – in their responses.
- It is possible there are inconsistencies in grantees reporting program data in REDCap that affect the accuracy of program data reported in this evaluation.

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:

- 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.
- Many of the requests from evaluators 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 15 or more. Counts less than 15 are marked as “-” in data tables and are removed in charts to protect confidentiality.
- MDH was not able to provide trend data that would allow for longitudinal analysis of some program trends. MDH hopes this will be possible in the future.

Recommendations include providing continuous training to new staff to improve REDCap data quality.

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 Governor

Tim 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.”⁶ 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.** Additionally, policies rooted in “color blindness” or supposedly not seeing the race of someone contribute to the harm that white supremacy culture perpetrates on systems and individuals. 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. For example, the increased detention and deportation of immigrants during the latter part of this evaluation period created increased fears around accessing public services; traffickers can exploit this.

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 (which led to the creation of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office) explained in its 2020 report⁷ that

“[c]urrent violence against Indigenous women and girls is rooted in colonization, historical trauma, racism, and the sexual objectification of Indigenous women and

⁶ Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan. (n.d.). One Minnesota Plan. <https://mn.gov/mmb/one-mn-plan/>

⁷ 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)

girls.” As a result, “Poverty, the child welfare system, domestic violence, and sex 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 (which led to the creation of the Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls Office) documented both root causes of missing and murdered women as well as assets communities have for responding and surviving. As stated by this Task Force⁸, “[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.”⁹

Barriers to safety and justice likewise contribute to sexual exploitation and are amplified for children and young people. A study of trafficked girls in Minneapolis¹⁰ 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.”

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**.

⁸ 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 Safety 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)

⁹ 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/>.

¹⁰ 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)

Findings

The below section describes findings from the Phase 6 evaluation of Safe Harbor. First, the report describes results of quantitative analysis of REDCap data, which Safe Harbor grantees use to report their activities to MDH. This data can be useful in understanding the types of services Safe Harbor provides and the lives and characteristics of youth served. The report then describes findings based on the survey and interviews conducted by evaluators. These findings intend to blend quantitative and qualitative data to understand Safe Harbor strengths, facilitators of impact, gaps, and challenges. The report concludes with a section on areas for further attention and improvement, based on all findings.

About youth receiving Safe Harbor housing and supportive services

Safe Harbor counts how many youth it serves in two ways:

- Youth who initiated contact with a Safe Harbor agency during the period (“**unique enrollments**”).¹¹
- **Total services** are youth receiving services during the grant period, including youth receiving services who enrolled prior to the grant period.

From April 2023 through March 2025, grantees reported that at least 1,783 individuals were enrolled and 2,312 individuals received Safe Harbor services.¹²

One way to measure the degree to which Safe Harbor is reaching all the youth it could serve is by comparison to other data. University of Minnesota analysis of the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) estimated that **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.**¹³

Assuming this data represents all youth experiencing sexual exploitation in Minnesota, Safe Harbor is reaching approximately half (50%) of youth who could be eligible for services. However, MSS is likely an underestimation of youth experiencing sexual exploitation. It also only represents the experiences of some youth who answered the survey on one date. This means Safe Harbor is most likely serving less than half of the youth who could be eligible for services.

Eight percent (140 out of 1,783) of youth reported being sexually exploited or trafficked by a family member when they enrolled in Safe Harbor services. More youth, 24%, were unsure if a family member was responsible for the sexual exploitation or trafficking they experienced. Agency staff and Youth Advisors shared that someone who is sexually exploited by a family

11 This may include clients who formally exited Safe Harbor services and then returned. Organizations may vary in how they define a formal exit.

12 The number of enrollments and total services are different because individuals who enrolled before April 2023 and were receiving services during the evaluation period were included in the data pull from REDCap for this evaluation period covering April 2023 through March 2025.

13 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.

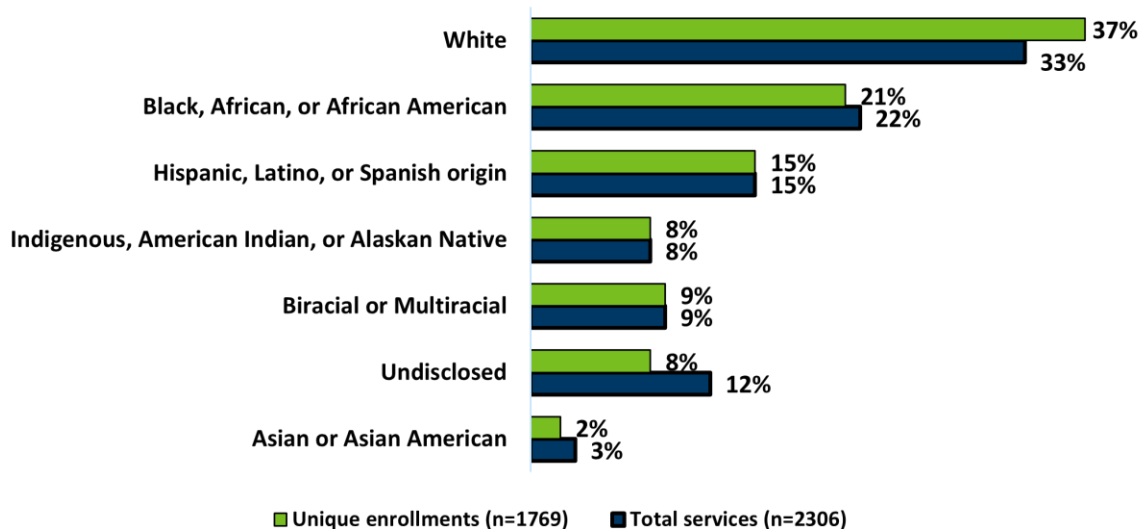
member may not characterize it as exploitation and/or may not see their family member as a trafficker. Thus, these numbers may be lower than the actual rate of familial trafficking.

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, which can be traced to the historical and systemic oppression against certain populations (described in “Background and Context” above). Deeper analysis of the 2022 MSS showed that Indigenous and transgender or gender-diverse students reported higher rates of sexual exploitation than others.

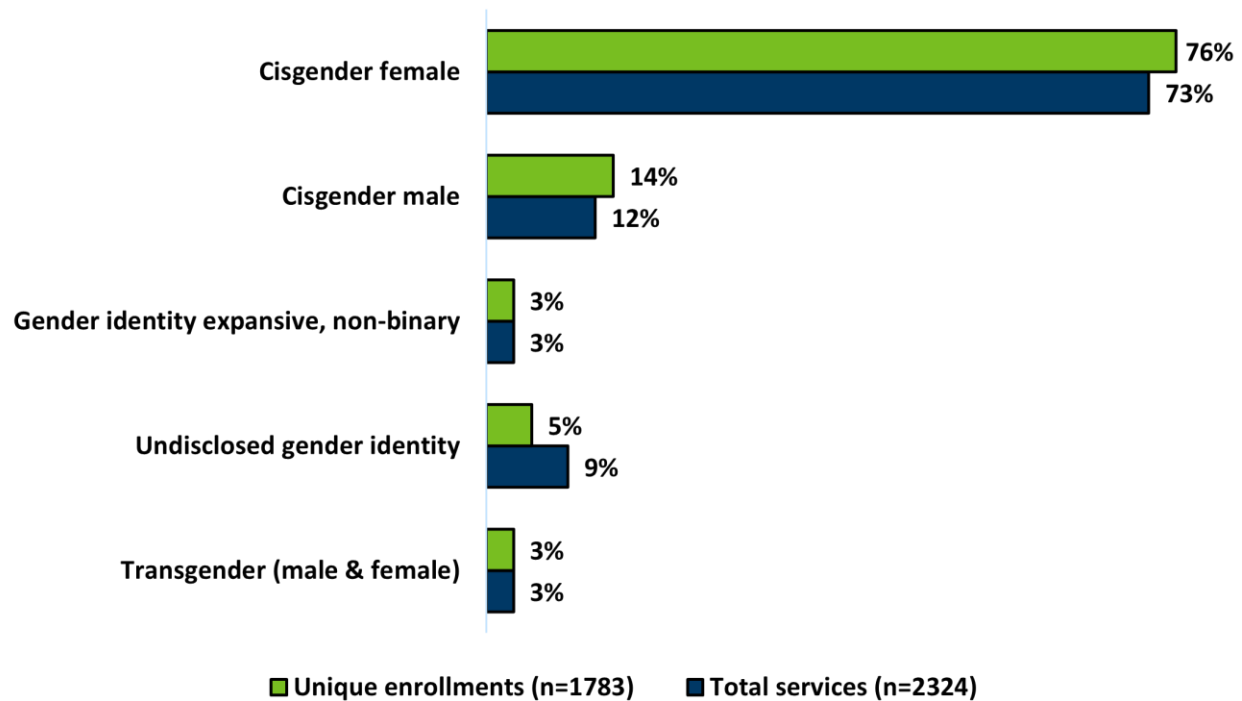
Most enrollments and services were for individuals who identified as only White (37% and 33%, respectively) and only Black, African, or African American (21%, 22%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Unique enrollments and total housing and supportive services respondents by race/ethnicity



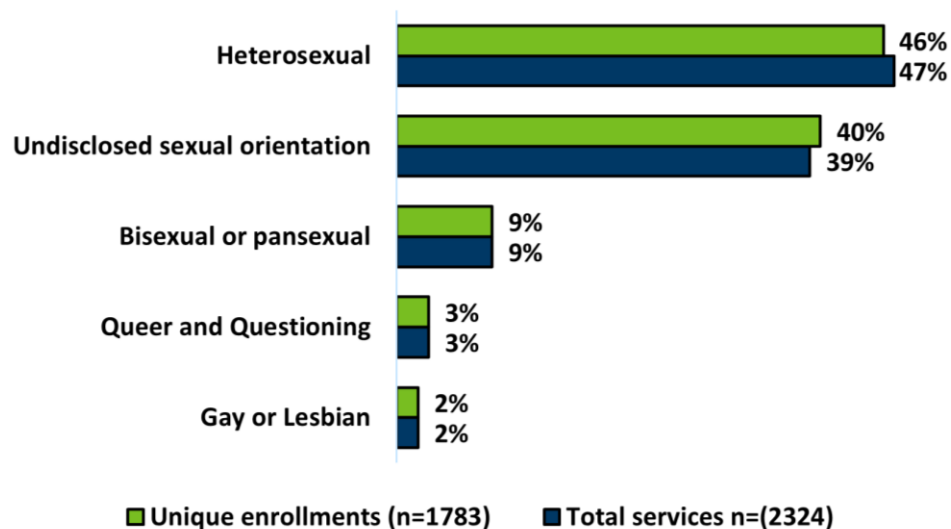
Most youth enrolled in Safe Harbor programs (90%) identified as cisgender (Figure 2). Cisgender females made up about three-quarters of youth served (76% of unique enrollments and 73% of total services) while cisgender males made up 14% of unique enrollments and 12% of total services.

Figure 2. Unique enrollments and total housing and supportive services respondents by gender identity



A little less than half of enrollments (46%) and total services (47%) were individuals who identified as heterosexual (Figure 3). Nine percent of enrollments and total services were individuals who identified as bisexual or pansexual.

Figure 3. Unique enrollments and total housing and supportive services respondents by sexual orientation



Age

People of all ages can encounter Safe Harbor services, although not all are eligible. The **average age of youth who were eligible for services was 17**, and overall, the age of people receiving services ranged from less than a year old¹⁴ to 59¹⁵ years old (Table 1).

The average age of individuals who were not eligible for services was 31, ranging from less than a year old to 68 years old. When Safe Harbor encountered individuals who were ineligible due to age, the organization may have served them through other programming or referred them to another organization.

Table 1. Age of individuals served by grantee agencies

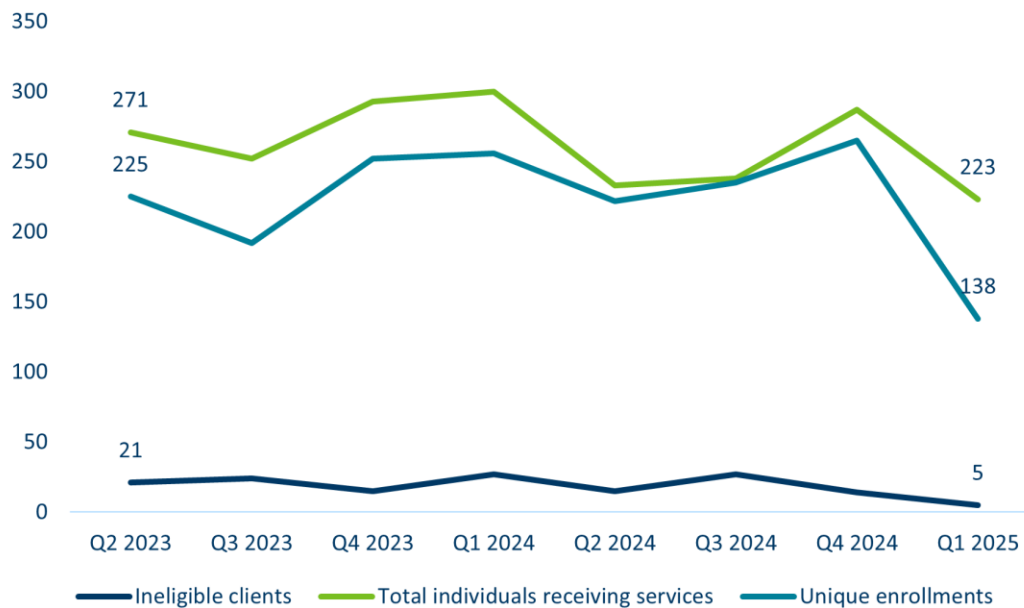
Age (REDCap)	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Ineligible	0	68	30.8
Eligible	0	59	16.6

Housing and supportive services provided

The number of unique enrollments, individuals receiving services, and ineligible clients fluctuated across the grant period from Quarter 2 of 2023 to Quarter 1 of 2025 (Figure 4). Added over time, the numbers account for more than 2,000 total youth served. Housing and supportive services decreased compared to the last grant period, from 225 unique enrollments in Quarter 2 of 2023 to 138 unique enrollments in Quarter 1 of 2025. There were 271 total individuals receiving services in Quarter 2 of 2023, compared to 223 total individuals receiving services in Quarter 1 of 2025. There were 21 ineligible clients in Quarter 2 of 2023, compared to five ineligible clients in Quarter 1 of 2025.

¹⁴ This information came from grantee reporting to MDH. The minimum age of less than 1 year may be an error, may be an actual case with a very young victim-survivor, or may represent the child of a victim-survivor.

¹⁵ This information came from grantee reporting to MDH. The maximum age of 59 may be an error, or it may be due to grantees processing individuals into their programming in anticipation of age eligibility for Safe Harbor expanding to a higher age range, which did not occur. Grantees are reminded that their Safe Harbor grants are for youth through age 24.

Figure 4. Housing and supportive services trends

Safe Harbor has different types of grantees. Safe Harbor Regional Navigators connect youth with services and serve as points of contact for their communities.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Safe Harbor Supportive Services grantees provide victim-centered services designed to heal the trauma experienced by Minnesota’s sexually exploited youth.¹⁷

Under the MDH Regional Navigator grant, grantees reported 458 unique enrollments and 656 total services to individuals across all quarters of this reporting period (Table 2). The MDH Supportive Services grant had 1,341 unique enrollments and provided 1,767 total services to individuals. There were 480 unique enrollments under the DHS Housing grant that provided 1,796 total services to individuals.

Table 2. Housing and supportive services by grant type

Grant type	Unique enrollments	Total services
MDH Regional Navigator	458	656
MDH Supportive Services	1,341	1,767
DHS Housing	480 (648 including re-enrollment)	1,796

¹⁶ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/safeharbor/navigators.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/safeharbor/services.html>

Table 3 shows that more youth are entering and exiting Safe Harbor services in the West Metro, East Metro, Southwest, and South Central navigator regions¹⁸ than in other regions. The East Central, West Central, and North Central 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.”

In all tables, a dash (“-”) indicates zero percent.

Table 3. Housing and supportive services frequencies by navigator region

Navigator region	Intakes (n=1,964)	Ineligible (n=132)	Enrollment (n=1,783)	Individuals receiving services (n=2,312)	Exits (n=1,019)
Northwest	-	-	-	-	-
Northeast	4%	-	5%	6%	10%
West Central	8%	18%	8%	3%	3%
East Central	6%	31%	4%	4%	6%
North Central	11%	17%	9%	9%	16%
East Metro	20%	18%	19%	19%	24%
West Metro	24%	11%	26%	27%	26%
Southwest	20%	5%	21%	22%	1%
South Central	1%	-	14%	2%	1%
Southeast	7%	-	7%	8%	11%
Tribal Partner	-	-	-	-	2%

¹⁸ Note: Northwest enrollment and service numbers were not shared as they were too low, and sharing would threaten confidentiality. The Northwest region became operational in early 2024 and significant time was needed for developing the response in the region and hiring a navigator. All cells with a dash (-) represent such low numbers or unreported totals.

Referral pathways into Safe Harbor services

Self-referrals and referrals from child protection/child welfare were most common, according to program data (Table 4). Youth self-referred 18% of the time, while **child protection/child welfare referred youth to services at about the same rate**. Youth were also often referred by police/law enforcement and school or education providers. While mental health needs of youth came up in this evaluation as they in the past, no mental health providers made referrals of youth for services, according to program data.

Table 4. Enrollment referral source by program data

Enrollment referral source	Program data (n=1,711)
Self-referral	18%
Child protection/child welfare	18%
Police/law enforcement	14%
School or education provider	12%
Social service agency	7%
Case manager/social worker	7%
Safe Harbor Regional Navigator, supportive services or housing provider	5%
Court/public defender/probation	4%
Friend or trusted adult	5%
Mental health provider	-
Other	9%

Most and least frequent housing and supportive services provided and referred

Forty agencies provided Safe Harbor services during the grant period. See a list of Safe Harbor agencies and what services they provide in the appendix (Appendix Tables 13 and 14).

Grantees **reported most often providing emotional support, case management, personal items, criminal justice advocacy, and transportation services** (Table 5). Across all regions, most services were provided in person.

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

Criminal justice advocacy, employment assistance, substance use treatment, dental care, and housing assistance were the least frequent service referrals that had reportable numbers by grantee agencies.

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

Service	Grantee program data (n=8,668) <u>provided</u>	Grantee program data (n=1,177) <u>referred</u>
Emotional support	20%	-
Case management	18%	-
Criminal justice advocacy	7%	2%
Personal items	8%	-
Education services	3%	13%
Housing advocacy	4%	5%
Mental health services	4%	26%
Financial assistance	3%	-
Legal services	3%	7%
Social services	3%	12%
Employment assistance	2%	3%
Housing assistance	3%	5%
Medical services	2%	18%
Culturally specific services	2%	-
Substance use treatment	1%	4%
Interpreter translation	-	-
Dental care	-	4%

Service	Grantee program data (n=8,668) <u>provided</u>	Grantee program data (n=1,177) <u>referred</u>
Childcare	-	-
Family support/ reunification	6%	-
Transportation	7%	-

Ineligibility and exiting services

Grantees reported various reasons they deemed people ineligible for Safe Harbor services—often, this decision is made on a case-by-case basis. One common reason for ineligibility reported by agencies was an **individual being over 24 years old**, the maximum age for eligibility. When agencies were unable to provide services to someone, they referred them to other programs and resources for help, such as when youth needed a higher level of care than what an agency could provide or if a program was full. Other reasons for ineligibility included:

- No connection to Minnesota.¹⁹
- History with agency that bars client from future services.
- Client’s needs are outside of the agency’s capacity.
- Not enough Safe Harbor funding or space.
- Individual is pregnant or parenting and the agency reporting ineligibility did not have the capacity to house pregnant or parenting youth.²⁰

Safe Harbor program data included reasons why people stopped accessing a program. Common reasons were losing contact with an individual; the individual voluntarily withdrawing from the program; the individual “running” from the program; or the client being referred to another program (Table 6).

Data shows **differences in why youth tended to exit programs depending on if they were in the metro region versus greater Minnesota**. Grantees in the metro reported more youth as having “lost contact” with Safe Harbor (25%). In greater Minnesota, program data shows 32% of youth as having voluntarily withdrawn from services as the primary reason for exit.

¹⁹ A person needs to either be physically in Minnesota, from Minnesota, or have some concrete connection to Minnesota (e.g., the harm happened in Minnesota) to be eligible for services.

²⁰ Safe Harbor funds a variety of housing and shelter options—some have the capacity to house pregnant or parenting youth, and others do not.

Focus groups elaborated on ineligibility and how clients exit services. Grantee agencies shared that **there is not always a clear exit for youth** from their programs and services. Grantees welcome and make themselves available to help youth, whether they stay with the program consistently or not. Additionally, it is important to note that youth may decide to leave a program, which may be logged in program data as “running away,” for many reasons, such as dissatisfaction with how they were treated or fear of an abuser/trafficker finding them.

Table 6. Reason for client exiting program in metro versus greater Minnesota

Reason for client exiting program	Metro (n=391)	Greater MN (n=403)
Youth ran from program	27%	2%
Non-compliance with program (non-violence related)	5%	4%
Non-compliance with program (violence related)	-	5%
Voluntarily withdrew	9%	32%
Lost contact	25%	13%
Reached maximum <i>age</i> allowed	-	10%
Reached maximum <i>time</i> allowed	-	-
Referred to other safe living situation	6%	8%
Client will continue to receive Safe Harbor services from this agency, but through another grant	4%	4%
Client was referred to another program	8%	11%
Client not eligible for specific program services/not available locally	-	-
Client passed away	-	-
Other	15%	11%

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 442**

trainings across all topics throughout the state, most often **on exploitation and human trafficking awareness and trafficking prevention**.

Agencies reported **at least 794 consultations with other disciplines**, the most being with child protection/child welfare, community members/groups, law enforcement/corrections, and K-12 schools (Appendix Table 11).

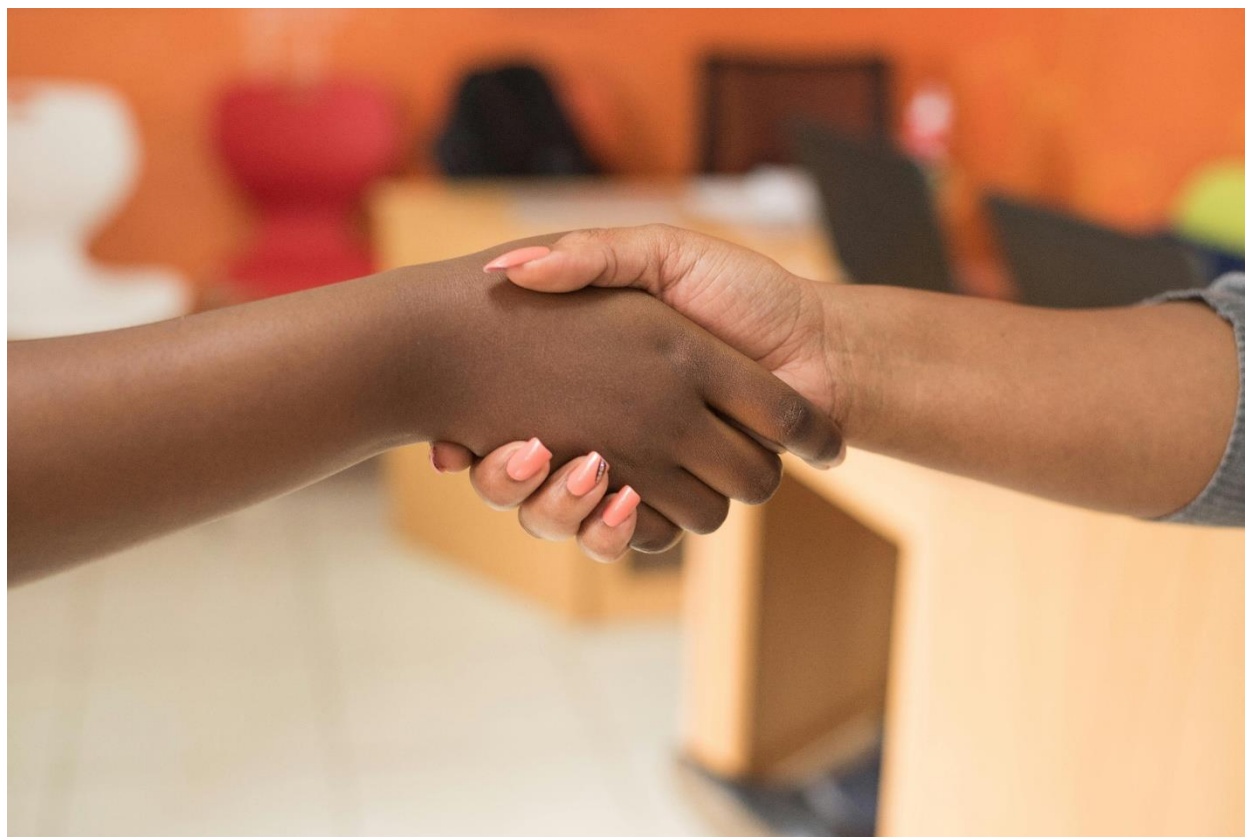


Photo by Cytonn Photography via Pexels

Key needs and how Safe Harbor responds

From analysis of grantee focus groups, youth survey data, and youth interviews, evaluators identified key needs facing youth and how Safe Harbor is doing in responding. Almost all youth survey respondents reported satisfaction with the services from Safe Harbor organizations.

Basic needs

As has come up in previous evaluations, participants emphasized the **importance of helping youth meet basic needs before moving onto additional needs**. Grantees are supporting youth to meet some basic needs—similar to what program data show above, youth survey

respondents most often reported receiving emotional support, housing assistance, case management, housing advocacy, and personal items services.²¹

In interviews, **youth said they sought help first for housing/shelter**; then additional basic needs like food, clothing, and hygiene products; then mental health services and therapy. Ninety-one percent of youth survey respondents said housing services are very important to successfully help youth who are at risk of or experience sexual exploitation; 85% said the same about shelter services (Appendix Table 15).

The **number of youth needing shelter vastly outpaces the number of available shelter beds**, participants said. Additionally, existing shelter options may not feel safe for youth (see below).

Permanent housing is a particularly critical basic need.

“I went home from the mental hospital. I ended up homeless, then my social worker referred me to a shelter.” – Youth participant

“I was homeless at 17, and I reached out to my therapist, who referred me [to Safe Harbor].” – Youth participant

The survey asked youth about their current living situation (Table 7). The most common living situations among youth surveyed were a rented apartment (38%) or supportive housing (20%).

Table 7. Current living situation reported in youth survey

Current living situation (n=93)	Percent
Rented apartment	38%
Supportive housing	20%
Shelter	12%
Family's home	11%
Friend's home	5%
Prefer not to answer	4%
Couch hopping/surfing	2%

²¹ 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.

Current living situation (n=93)	Percent
Unhoused/unsheltered	2%
Group home	1%
Treatment center	1%
Other	1%

Mental health

Most youth survey respondents (83%) said mental health support services are very important to successfully help youth who are at risk of or experience sexual exploitation (Appendix Table 15). However, **grantees who want to refer youth for mental health services say they find that there are long waiting lists and not enough providers.**

“I would say I still need mental health services.” – Youth participant

Sometimes, navigators ask for spiritual advisors and grief support services because they feel that these are services that might be missing in the community.

Culturally responsive services

Lacking culturally responsive services has been a recurring issue in the evaluation of Safe Harbor over the years.

“Some staff do not understand youth from reservations and their rural Native perspective versus a more urban Native perspective. Kids in the reservation are used to limited supervision, so youth feel self-contained. Kids want staff in their lives, look up to staff, but do not want it to be suffocating.” – Youth participant

Service agencies during this period described **varying levels of providing culturally responsive services**. Some examples of efforts to be culturally responsive included:

- Hiring diverse staff.
- Using language lines.
- Reaching out to partners from the youth’s culture, for example, Indigenous partners for Indigenous youth.

In the youth survey, 91% of respondents either agreed or somewhat agreed that Safe Harbor staff “understand or strive to understand and respect youth culture and language” (Appendix Table 16). A lower proportion, 89%, agreed or somewhat agreed that staff “provide me with services and resources that fit my culture” (Appendix Table 16).

Participants said they **refer youth for LGBTQIA support and culturally inclusive connections**. The majority of youth survey respondents agreed that staff who work for Safe Harbor

organizations respected their privacy and kept their information confidential whenever possible (87%), provided them with services and resources that fit their gender identity (85%), and respected their gender identity (83%) (Appendix Table 16).

“We refer youth to therapy services mostly at Wilder or a culturally specific provider, and LGBTQ+ youths to Transforming Generations for more support such as queer justice.” – Service provider

Grantees said they see a lot of **language barriers for immigrant youth**. Grantees are trying to partner with culturally specific organizations and trying to diversify their staff, for instance, hiring Karen-speaking staff, and utilizing refugee services.

“Hmong youths are not disclosing as much. We tell them they don’t have to explicitly use these terms to identify. Third- and fourth-generation Hmong students identify more with American culture and are often disconnected from their parents. We can meet at school if parents don’t want to work with us. There are a lot of gaps with [serving] Southeast Asian folks. We need more partners.” – Service provider

Services that support youth to grow toward independence

Youth expressed **joy in their ability to become more independent**, e.g., graduating from high school or obtaining their GED, getting housing, and gaining experience and skills.

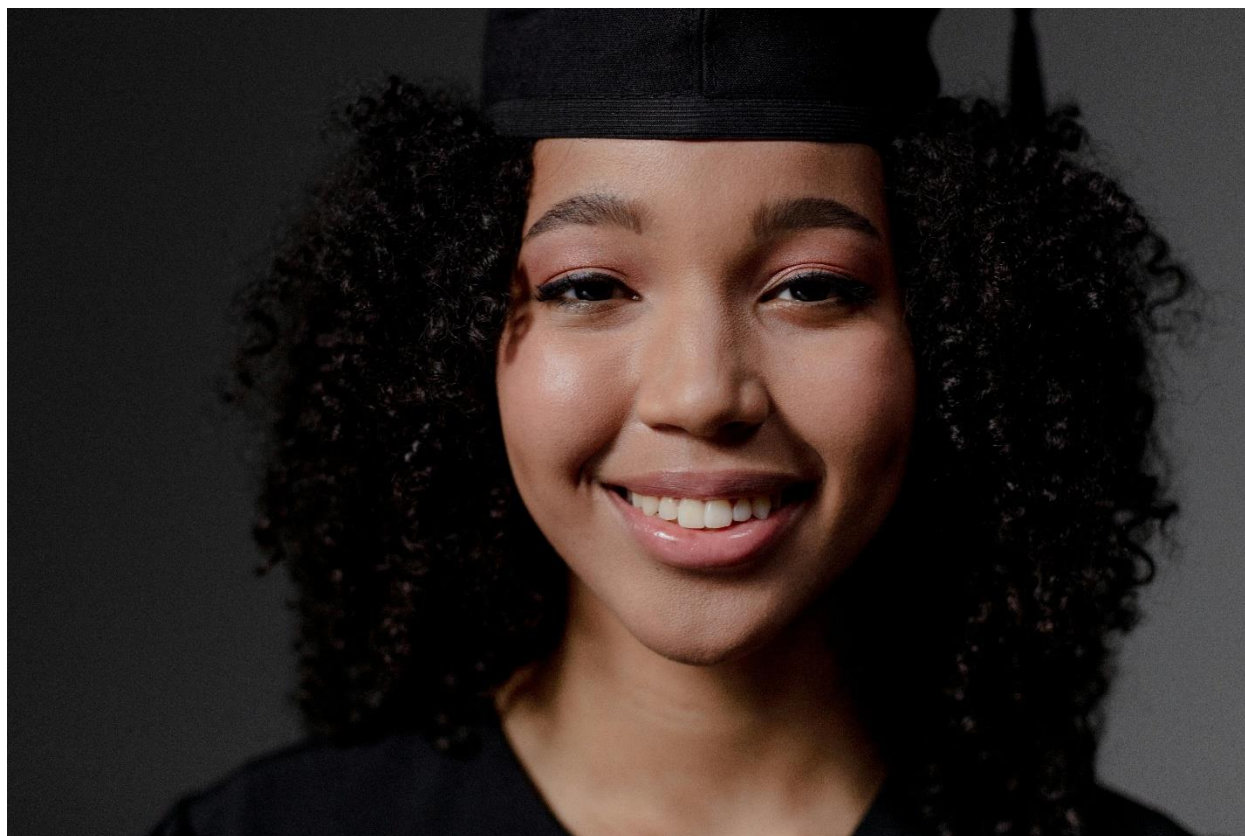


Photo by Ron Lach via Pexels

“Free childcare for participants. Or at least being able to pay for childcare through programs. Help youth go search for a job, be stable for 6-12 months and then they can afford it on their own. Vicious cycle to getting higher-paying position.” - Service provider

For youth, **independence means making their own choices while maintaining relationships with service providers, so that if needed, they are available** for help or questions. Youth who said they had a good experience credited that to the fact that they were allowed independence and had caring staff. Relatedly, grantees mentioned working on addressing “savior complexes,” described below.

“They provided support services and help navigating through life. I have been here for over a year now. When I turn 21, they will help me find my own apartment. Even after leaving, they will help me navigate through life with life skills and navigating challenges.” – Youth participant

In the youth survey, **just over half of respondents (54%) said they feel “very well prepared” to support themselves financially in a safe/healthy way** because of receiving Safe Harbor services (Appendix Table 18).

Grantees say they need **resources to refer to for youth who need driver’s licenses**. In rural areas, the lack of transportation or the inability to drive is a barrier to youth accessing services that require them to travel long distances. Driver education enables young people to access jobs and earn and save money, which is crucial for all youth, especially those aging out of foster care, to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Grantee and partner training and supports

In the youth survey, **almost all respondents said it is either very important (82%) or somewhat important (12) for youth to experience “well-trained staff** who can appropriately help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation” (Appendix Table 15).

Grantee and multidisciplinary partners said **some trainings are mandatory and some are not**. Safe Harbor training is mandatory for Safe Harbor grantee staff but voluntary for everyone else. Child welfare professionals said diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for some organizations, but not all. A few people have training on digital sexual exploitation, but said they could benefit from more training. Staff expressed support for ongoing trainings due to staff turnover, plus increased flexibility with training availability.

“Crisis de-escalation and socio-emotional support techniques would be super beneficial for all Safe Harbor grantees. I also think about working with youth with neurological impacts including traumatic brain injury and substance exposure in utero.” - Regional navigator

Grantees expressed a **desire for more training on online-based sexual abuse**. Some have had training on digital forms of exploitation, but not all staff have had training in, or know how to address, digital exploitation, which is growing and causes long-term trauma to youth.

“We have had some training on this. We could definitely benefit from more. We have also seen a lot of tech abuse recently.” – Grantee

Law enforcement wished for **mental health support for officers and for service providers**. In a focus group, officers said the work can be mentally draining, so they have to walk a fine line between supporting victims and not becoming overly involved. Officers, navigators, and service providers are exposed to secondary trauma, and addressing their mental health and providing support can address burnout and staff retention.

“I wish we had specialized support resources for sworn officers because they are experiencing different things than civilians who are also working.” – Law enforcement participant

“People should seek mental health support, that’s still there. Not only for law enforcement but service providers as well.” – Law enforcement participant

Factors contributing to Safe Harbor’s impact

Positive relationships and trust

Positive relationships between grantee staff and youth contribute to Safe Harbor’s Impact. In interviews, **youth reported having positive experiences and relationships with providers when they feel heard, and staff follow through on what they say they will do**. These positive experiences and relationships are often associated with contacts that are voluntary. Youth appreciated getting information about various resources and supports.

“They helped me overcome fears and things and they taught me a lot. They had taught me how to talk to cops and that things that happened to me are not my fault.” – Youth participant

In the youth survey, **almost all youth said “staff building positive relationships with youth (e.g., trust, respect, communication)” was either very important (87%) or somewhat important (9%)** to successfully help youth at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation (Appendix Table 15).

Trust is key for effective support of youth. Youth might not trust the system they are in, and **grantees should acknowledge that trust is earned**. Grantees shared ways they work to build trust with youth:

- Being genuine, non-judgmental, and responsive.
- Not thinking or acting like they are the expert in the room.
- Acknowledging that the young people they work with are experts in their lives, their experiences, and know what safety means to them personally.
- Showing up, being consistent, and following through with what they say they are going to do.
- Acknowledging privilege, including their own, and how the system reinforces disparities.

“Being genuine, having my own practice style. People in survival mode can tap into disingenuous approaches quickly. Just be yourself. Acknowledging that they may not trust the system. Transparency helps. A lot of distrust is sown by people who have harmed those we work with.” – Regional navigator, on how they build trust

Relatedly, provider staff expressed that they **wished that more staff with lived experience be hired** as they provide more context to programming and understand what youth are going through. They also said that big regional communities, either geographically and/or comprised of several counties, feel too large for regional navigators to do effective work. Some regional navigators spend a disproportionate amount of time driving, time that could be used more effectively providing supports.

An asset-based mindset

Grantee focus group participants said **youth are resourceful and know how to get what they need**. Youth support each other during bad times. They usually have a trusted peer they can call, vent to, ask for advice, or ask for basic resources, such as food. Law enforcement, however, cautioned that sometimes youth will resort to what they are comfortable with, even if that furthers exploitation.

Youth survey respondents indicated that **having many local resources and services available was one of the most important ways, compared to other reasons, to successfully help youth** who are at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation (Appendix Table 15).



Photo by cottonbro studio via Pexels

Advocates are **receiving specific training through their programs to address savior complexes**, as some may believe they are doing all the work to “save” the youth instead of the youth doing the work to help themselves. In the Tribal focus group, grantees urged service providers to equip the youth with knowledge to help themselves.

“We should be focusing on preparing, giving tools, teaching them how to use the tools, and having in depth training. Bring in elders and youth as teachers. Having a plan. I see advocates do quite a bit of damage because they feel good about helping someone, but they are doing more damage.” –Grantee

“Youth know the right services, how to get to a safe space, and collaborate among each other, and take care of each other.” – Grantee

Youth shared times they felt like they were with others who had shared experiences and felt like a family. Some youth in interviews mentioned **positive experiences with support/peer groups**, which help to build community with shared experiences and opportunities for new

positive experiences with others. Asked what they desire in a system of care, some responses from youth were:

“That everyone would have the support that I have had, and that people would be there for other people the same way they have stood by me.” – Youth participant

“Being there for the youth, and letting them know they will be supported, because a lot of youth do not have supportive family or anyone in their lives who is supportive. I know I do not. My parents say they love me, but they are the reasons why I am here.” – Youth participant

Provider partnerships

All types of providers may encounter youth. More than half of youth in the survey (61%) agreed or somewhat agreed they **went through multiple service providers before and after they got connected to Safe Harbor services** (Appendix Table 17). Many youth survey respondents reported that their first contact or referral to services was through case workers (30%), trusted adults (8%), friends (7%), service providers (6%), or law enforcement/police officers (6%) (Appendix Figure 7).

Long-term, consistent support to youth leads to success. In particular, cooperation between law enforcement and advocates, with both consistently being there for victims, results in success, participants said. Law enforcement officers collaborate with, rely on, and work with navigators, shelters, and service providers to keep youth safe.

“So recently, we had information that a trans female was being trafficked from New York through Minnesota and going to be going to North Dakota. So right away, we had, you know, a lot of just different jurisdictions including the central Safe Harbor navigator ” - Law enforcement participant

Additionally, when other organizations can provide public education about Safe Harbor, providers can have more time to focus on direct service.

Service providers also suggested **better coordinating referrals from one provider to another**.

Gaps and challenges

In addition to the gaps and challenges below, one Youth Adviser raised that recent budget cuts and ongoing political instability make it difficult for Safe Harbor organizations to actively support survivors. Safe Harbor could explore the impact of the current political climate, such as how changes are affecting resource allocation.

Lack of trauma-informed approaches

Despite most grantees reporting that they receive training on trauma-informed approaches to service provision, a **lack of trauma-informed approaches** persists in some parts of the Safe Harbor system. In interviews, youth have reported negative experiences when:

- Staff are negligent about client safety.

- Privacy and confidentiality are not respected (especially in small communities).
- Youth are dismissed and their experiences invalidated.
- Language is stigmatizing—some youth view the language of “at-risk youth” as a trigger. In addition, Youth Advisors added that labeling youth themselves as at risk puts the blame on them, when in reality it is the conditions and environments they are in that put them at risk.



Photo by Katrin Bolovtsova via Pexels

In the youth survey, **participants most often said that “having safety, privacy, and confidentiality whenever possible (e.g., location, space, personal information)” was very important** to successfully help youth who are at risk of or experience sexual exploitation (Appendix Table 15)

Frequent staff turnover can contribute to these challenges; when a new person takes a role, a youth may have to retell their story again. One youth shared how staff perpetuated trauma by making assumptions about their belongings:

“They lost all my clothes, and they told me I could get new clothes. They helped me get new clothes, but I lost all my memories and the attachment. The clothes were all I had from when I lost housing.” – Youth participant

Shelter-specific challenges

Some youth report experiencing **racism in shelter**. Youth reported experiencing racism and bullying from other youth, including one participant who said the shelter did not respond adequately:

“I wish [name redacted] could have said that nobody should be saying that. There are still kids bullying me, and [name redacted] was not that good at asserting that they need to stop and that this should be a safe place for everybody. They’re not completely ignoring the bullying, but they’re not that great about telling them to stop.” – Youth participant

In a shelter that does not receive Safe Harbor funds, a native youth reported **racism from staff and not having recourse** because staff were relatives of the shelter owner/founder. Although this shelter is most likely privately funded, youth do not know the funding mechanisms of the different shelters they seek help from. This situation is an example of how youth may experience programs operating outside of the Safe Harbor system.

“There was no accountability due to staff being family. I was removed from my original therapist to someone new whom I did not know. There were no helpful services, and I was being watched. Staff used racial slurs against me and other people.” – Youth Participant

Additionally, **shelter beds remain in short supply**, a long-standing issue for youth in Minnesota. In addition, youth who are still trying to finish school or get an education cannot afford or qualify for market-rate housing or what is deemed affordable housing. Subsidized housing is in short supply, with long waiting lists. Supportive youth housing also cannot keep up with demand.

Many grantees and informants reported **insufficient beds available**. Shelters are needed for youth aged 18-24 and older. There are many crisis calls for this age group, but shelters are often full due to limited resources in that age range.

“Grantees refer youth to adult shelters out of necessity because there were no youth shelter beds.” – Safe Harbor grantee

Lack of training and resources to serve diverse youth

The state has a **lack of training and resources to serve diverse youth with different needs**. Both grantee staff and youth have reported that additional training and resources are needed to fully meet the needs of the diverse youth in the Safe Harbor program. Importantly, one participant in grantee focus group said they perceive discrimination against Native youth.

“I have felt like there is outright discrimination against our Native youth to getting housing.” – Tribal focus group participant

In particular, participants noted a need for more:

- Anti-racism training.
- LGBTQIA+ housing.

- Provider training on LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit services.
- Training in crisis de-escalation skills, trauma-informed service provision, secondary trauma, cultural competency, and immigration and asylum processes.
- Racism and anti-LGBTQIA+ violence hurt youth in shelters.

Grantees also raised the value of **hiring people with lived experience**.

Hiring people with lived experience is particularly important due to their knowledge of systems of exploitation and what youth have gone through. People with lived experience can better relate to youth who have been sexually exploited, and youth may be more trusting of someone who has gone through a similar experience. However, there is a risk of secondary trauma, and supports are needed when staff have lived experiences that may be triggered.

Opportunities for improvement & recommendations

The above findings point to areas for growth in the Safe Harbor system and specific recommendations in each area. Evaluators and MDH identified these opportunities based on the above findings. Additionally, recommendations from Youth Advisors are included in the following section with minimal edits.

Again, findings echo much of what youth, grantees, and multidisciplinary partners raised in previous evaluations. Similar findings reinforce the need for continued systems change in the state.

Room to grow: Trauma-informed practices.

Youth bring deep trauma that manifests in different ways; providers and multidisciplinary partners engaging youth need to be trauma-informed to avoid further harm and provide more effective support. Being trauma-informed is an ongoing learning process, therefore providers and multidisciplinary partners should continue to receive training and develop their skills in this area. Being trauma-informed also means not taking a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, some youth participants mentioned positive experiences with support groups; however, other youth participants said these groups may be uncomfortable and feel forced.

Recommendation: Define what being trauma-informed means, what trauma-informed services are, and what they are not.

Recommendation: Provide more resources for centering youth voice as a trauma-informed practice.

Room to grow: Staff turnover.

Staff turnover results in lost experience and skills, while sometimes also requiring youth to start anew with relationships and trust.

Recommendation: Provide more time for collaboration among grantees and community organizations to foster stronger relationships and facilitate new introductions after turnover occurs.

Recommendation: Pay staff more to retain their expertise. Regional navigators experience pay disparities across different regions.

Recommendation: Increase staff retention rates. Turnover is an issue across various organizations, including MDH, which impacts technical assistance to navigators.

Room to grow: Mental health services.

Both youth and service providers cite the shortage of mental health providers, especially culturally diverse mental health providers, as a hindrance to youth recovery.

Recommendation: Work to increase the supply of and connections to mental health providers, especially culturally specific services.

Room to grow: Connecting cross-disciplinary partners.

System partners often experience information gaps, especially outside of traditional business hours (i.e., 9-5). Law enforcement, especially, reported information gaps at night and on weekends when they intercept a suspected trafficker and have to find a safe place for youth that is inaccessible to their trafficker. Cross-disciplinary professionals need immediate access to accurate information whenever they encounter youth.

Recommendation: Create a 24/7 resource portal for accessing navigators and finding trauma-informed services.

Recommendation: Develop a collaborative system that brings together schools and social services. Regional Navigators get a lot of referrals from schools, with lots of schools spread over wide areas to cover. They do not have time to develop relationships in all schools, or tabling at all events, which are spread over wide areas of Minnesota. Regional Navigators wish other systems of care could help spread awareness of trafficking, lessening the load and burnout they experience.

Room to grow: Training and partnerships to effectively serve all youth.

Current training options do not fully equip grantees with the necessary skills. Training could better equip grantees to address what trafficking/sexual exploitation looks like today, such as internet-based abuse.

In addition to training, grantees can partner more with organizations rooted in specific communities, as well as ensure their organizations know how to recruit and retain staff who reflect the communities they are serving. However, every youth is different, and some youth from small close-knit communities might be uncomfortable having their case discussed with someone from their community due to privacy reasons.

Recommendation: Provide training that goes beyond trafficking and diversity 101, addressing current challenges.

Recommendation: Increase partnerships with providers who are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other ways youth identify.

Room to grow: Institutionalizing best practices.

Institutionalizing and sharing best practices benefits everyone working with Safe Harbor, reduces training costs, and enhances partnerships, while improving services for youth. MDH, DHS, and funders play a role in facilitating collaboration with grantees to make this happen.

Recommendation: Institutionalize best practices and share them across all groups in all relevant forums.

Recommendations from Youth Advisors

Youth voice matters. Youth Advisors attended an Emerging Findings meeting and helped contextualize data in this year's report and make recommendations.

- Provide language assistance to youth who may not be aware of Safe Harbor services and whose primary language is not English.
- Change the language around sexual exploitation as the language itself may not resonate or could even deter some youth from seeking help. The phrase “human trafficking” is often used in advocacy/marketing efforts yet is such a loaded word that it may not resonate with those experiencing sexual exploitation. Make language about trafficking accessible to parents and youth who come from cultures where the subject holds a lot of stigma, so families with sexually exploited loved ones can seek services.
- Make public awareness campaigns with input from youth, in language youth understand, so that youth who currently do not view themselves as being sexually exploited or trafficked can be aware and seek services.
- Publicize additional community-based resources that help youth, and are not funded by Safe Harbor, such as [Black Butterfly \(https://www.blackbutterfly-ts.com/\)](https://www.blackbutterfly-ts.com/), a nonprofit that serves women. They provide a range of resources, including housing and employment opportunities. Their mission closely aligns with the need for a connection with the local diverse community and organizations.
- Provide more training and assistance on online sexual abuse for Safe Harbor grantees. For example, [Ines Marinho \(https://www.a-speakers.com/speakers/ines-b-marinho/\)](https://www.a-speakers.com/speakers/ines-b-marinho/) is a global leader who provides training on image-based sexual abuse. She has worked tirelessly on the Take It Down Act, runs her own nonprofit, provides training for various agencies, and is very well-versed in the subject. She is a survivor herself.
- Increase connections to accessible higher education. For example, the [TREC program at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College \(https://minneapolis.edu/news/transformation-and-re-entry-through-education-and-community-trec\)](https://minneapolis.edu/news/transformation-and-re-entry-through-education-and-community-trec) is amazing when it comes to helping people from difficult backgrounds obtain a higher education. They have ample resources and are very willing to assist anyone seeking further education.
- Create a pathway from Safe Harbor programming to meaningful employment. If Safe Harbor prioritized youth independence through opportunity, it would greatly assist youth in terms of not returning back to the situation that caused them much harm.

- Outreach is crucial in the functioning of these programs, especially outreach in rural communities throughout the state. Along with outreach, accessibility to Safe Harbor programming should be considered when it comes to overall improvement.

Conclusion

This report summarized the findings of an evaluation of Safe Harbor services provided April 2023-March 2024. The evaluation centered on youth experiences. 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. Additionally, findings in this report echo those of previous evaluations since the inception of Safe Harbor. Meeting basic needs, increasing access to housing, and serving youth of all racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation identities are recurrent needs. The continued focus on these needs shows the importance of long-term systemic change.

Appendix A: Supplementary data tables and charts

MDH housing and supportive services program data

Table 7. Physical and mental health status by region

Type of Disability	Metro (total enrollees=827)	Greater MN (total enrollees=1046)
ASD, ADHD, or Neurodivergent	5%	8%
Cognitive or learning disability	3%	9%
Depression	11%	30%
Anxiety	9%	25%
PTSD	9%	22%
Mental health pathology like BPD, DID, OCD, ODD	4%	9%
Substance use disorder	4%	11%
Self harm or suicidal ideation	4%	14%
Reactive attachment or disorganized attachment	-	3%
Any unseen disability	18%	37%

Table 8. Indicators of sexual exploitation reported by grantee agencies

Sexual exploitation indicators (n=3,218)	Percent
Client is a sexual assault victim	27%
Client is a runaway or runs away frequently	14%

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Sexual exploitation indicators (n=3,218)	Percent
Client is homeless	14%
Other	12%
Client is in a sexual/romantic relationship with an older person	10%
Client refuses to discuss or gives vague/misleading information about their relationships, age, whereabouts, etc.	9%
Client has access to unexplained money, credit cards, cell phones, or other items of value	6%
Client uses heroin/methamphetamines/cocaine	4%
Client requires frequent STI and/or pregnancy testing	2%
Client has unexplained scars/ brands/or tattoos	1%
Client has an STI	1%
Client has disclosed or showed signs of gang affiliation	1%

Table 9. Housing and supportive services provided and referred by race/ethnicity

Percentages over one-quarter (25%) are highlighted.

Service	American Indian or Alaska Native Provided (N=183)	American Indian or Alaska Native Referred (N=179)	Asian or Asian American Provided (N=57)	Asian or Asian American Referred	Black, African, or African American Provided (N=498)	Black, African, or African American Referred (N=267)	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin Provided (N=343)	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin Referred (N=116)	White Provided (N=750)	White Referred (N=593)	Biracial or Multiracial Provided (N=202)	Biracial or Multiracial Referred (N=119)	Undisclosed Provided (N=273)	Undisclosed Referred (N=39)
Mental Health Services	23%	18%	-	-	16%	20%	9%	41%	17%	20%	24%	34%	11%	56%
Medical Services	13%	16%	-	-	14%	15%	9%	16%	9%	14%	17%	20%	-	-
Culturally Specific Services	24%	8%	-	-	10%	-	12%	-	4%	-	11%	-	-	-
Financial Assistance	14%	-	-	-	18%	-	13%	-	12%	-	16%	-	12%	-
Personal Items	57%	-	28%	-	36%	-	18%	-	28%	-	41%	-	17%	-
Substance Use Treatment	17%	10%	-	-	-	6%	-	-	5%	7%	-	15%	-	-

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Service	American Indian or Alaska Native Provided (N=183)	American Indian or Alaska Native Referred (N=179)	Asian or Asian American Provided (N=57)	Asian or Asian American Referred	Black, African, or African American Provided (N=498)	Black, African, or African American Referred (N=267)	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin Provided (N=343)	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin Referred (N=116)	White Provided (N=750)	White Referred (N=593)	Biracial or Multiracial Provided (N=202)	Biracial or Multiracial Referred (N=119)	Undisclosed Provided (N=273)	Undisclosed Referred (N=39)
Interpreter Translation	-	-	-	-	-	-	14%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Housing Assistance	14%	-	-	-	18%	7%	8%	-	10%	6%	23%	-	11%	-
Education Services	10%	23%	-	-	13%	12%	14%	-	15%	12%	19%	15%	8%	44%
Dental Care	-	10%	-	-	-	-	-	-	2%	6%	-	-	-	-
Childcare	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Legal Services	-	-	-	-	16%	12%	24%	16%	14%	8%	10%	-	12%	-
Housing Advocacy	19%	-	-	-	22%	6%	9%	13%	13%	6%	23%	-	11%	-
Social Services	13%	14%	-	-	10%	13%	16%	13%	14%	11%	17%	16%	-	-
Case Management	79%	-	68%	-	66%	-	63%	-	68%	-	72%	-	55%	-

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Service	American Indian or Alaska Native Provided (N=183)	American Indian or Alaska Native Referred (N=179)	Asian or Asian American Provided (N=57)	Asian or Asian American Referred	Black, African, or African American Provided (N=498)	Black, African, or African American Referred (N=267)	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin Provided (N=343)	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin Referred (N=116)	White Provided (N=750)	White Referred (N=593)	Biracial or Multiracial Provided (N=202)	Biracial or Multiracial Referred (N=119)	Undisclosed Provided (N=273)	Undisclosed Referred (N=39)
Family Support	32%	-	26%	-	17%	-	30%	-	30%	-	29%	-	16%	-
Employment Assistance	17%	-	-	-	12%	8%	8%	-	10%	6%	14%	-	6%	-
Emotional Support	84%	-	68%	-	59%	-	78%	-	80%	-	73%	-	68%	-
Criminal Justice Advocacy	22%	-	26%	-	18%	-	35%	-	31%	5%	23%	-	28%	-
Transportation	50%	-	-	-	27%	-	21%	-	29%	-	36%	-	22%	-

Table 10. Service methods provided by navigator region

Service methods type (number of services) (n=8,843)	Percent
Total PIP: Provided, in Person	73%
Total RIP: Referred, in Person	8%
Total PVR: Provided, Virtually	15%
Total RVR: Referred, Virtually	4%

Table 11. Disciplines with which grantee agencies consulted

Disciplines (n=794)	Percent of total consultations
Child Protection System (CPS)/child welfare	7%
Community member/community group	7%
School (K-12)	7%
Law enforcement/corrections	6%
Social service agency/governmental	6%
Multidisciplinary team (MDT)	6%
Youth-centered organization	5%
DV/SA specific organization	5%
Health care provider	5%
Social service agency/non-governmental	5%
Shelter or drop-In center	5%
Culturally specific organization	5%

Disciplines (n=794)	Percent of total consultations
Sexually exploited adult	4%
Legal service provider	4%
Task force	4%
Policymakers	3%
Religious Organization	3%
Juvenile center	3%
University	3%
Tribal community organization	2%
Business	2%
Media	2%
Other	-

Table 12. Partnerships and relationship-building activities reported by grantee agencies

Partnerships & Relationship building activities (n=341)	Percent
Collaboration/project planning	19%
Referrals received	17%
Check-In	17%
Initial contact	17%
Referrals provided	16%

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Partnerships & Relationship building activities (n=341)	Percent
Capacity building	12%
Conflict resolution	3%
Other	-

Table 13. Grantee agency overview (grantees with contracts during the evaluation period 4/1/23 to 3/30/25)

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.

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Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
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 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.

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Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
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.
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,

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Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
				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 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.

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Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
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.
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,

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Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
				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, 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.

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Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
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.
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.

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Agency	Region	Navigator region	Grant type	Description
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, 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.

Table 14. Current housing service agencies, program, and number of beds

Housing agency	Region type	Housing program	Number of beds
180 Degrees	Metro	Emergency Shelter	8
180 Degrees	Metro	Congregate Transitional Housing	5
Ain Dah Yung Center	Metro	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	15
Evergreen Youth and Family Services	Greater MN	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	10
Face to Face	Metro	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	13
The Family Partnership	Metro	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	8
Heartland Girls Ranch	Greater MN	Congregate Transitional Housing	10
Life House	Greater MN	Congregate Transitional Housing	5
Life House	Greater MN	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	8
The Link	Metro	Emergency Shelter	6
The Link	Metro	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	10
Lutheran Social Services Central (Brainerd, St. Cloud, Willmar)	Greater MN	Emergency Shelter	2
Lutheran Social Services Central (Brainerd, St. Cloud, Willmar)	Greater MN	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	9

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Housing agency	Region type	Housing program	Number of beds
Lutheran Social Services (Mankato)	Greater MN	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	8
Lutheran Social Services Range (Virginia)	Greater MN	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	6
Lutheran Social Services Rochester	Greater MN	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	8
North Homes (Bemidji)	Greater MN	Congregate Housing	12
North Homes (Grand Rapids)	Greater MN	Congregate Housing	25
Women's Advocates	Metro	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	6
YMCA of the North	Metro	Site-based and Scattered-site Independent Housing	12
TOTAL	n/a	n/a	186 total daily bed capacity

Youth survey data

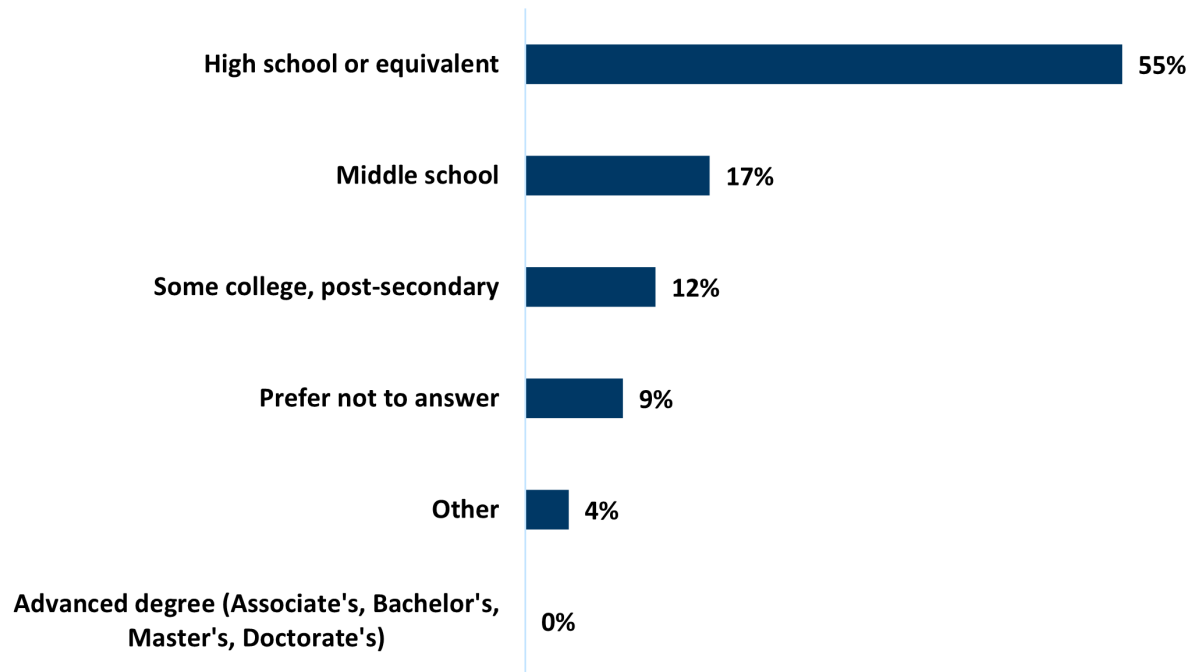
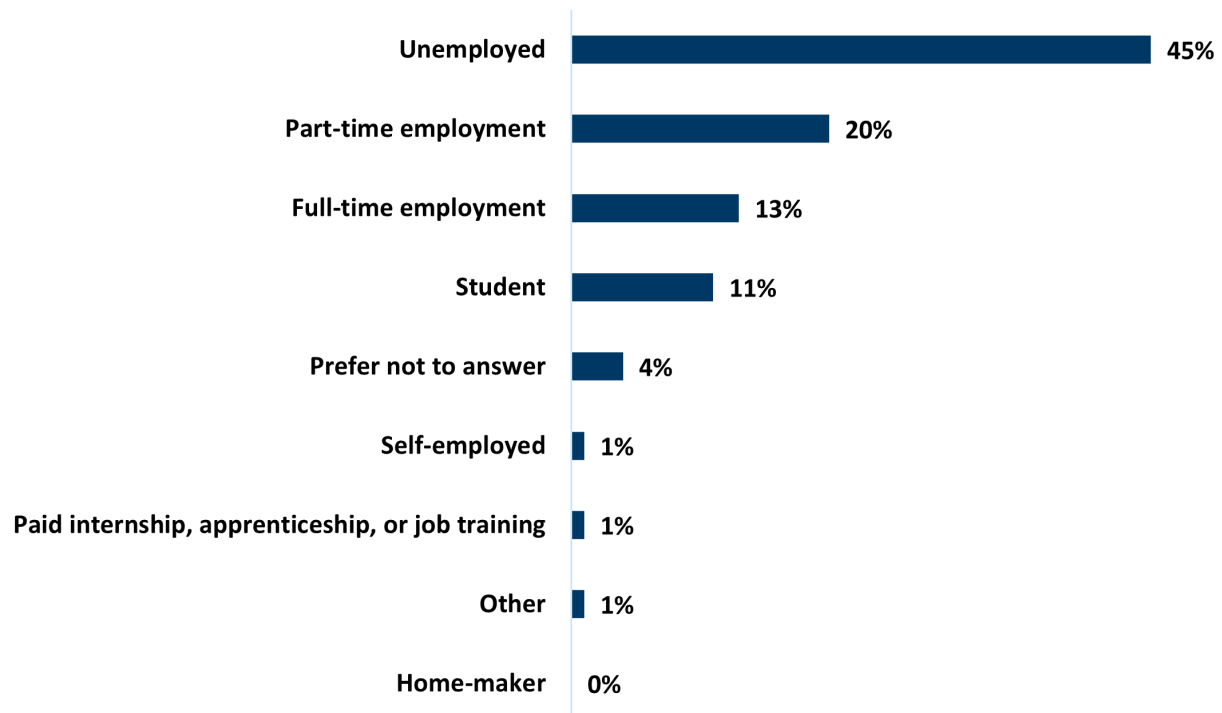
Figure 5. What is the highest level of education you've completed? (n=93)**Figure 6. What is your employment status? (n=93)**

Figure 7. Who did you reach out to first, or referred you to your first service when you started seeking support? (n=70)

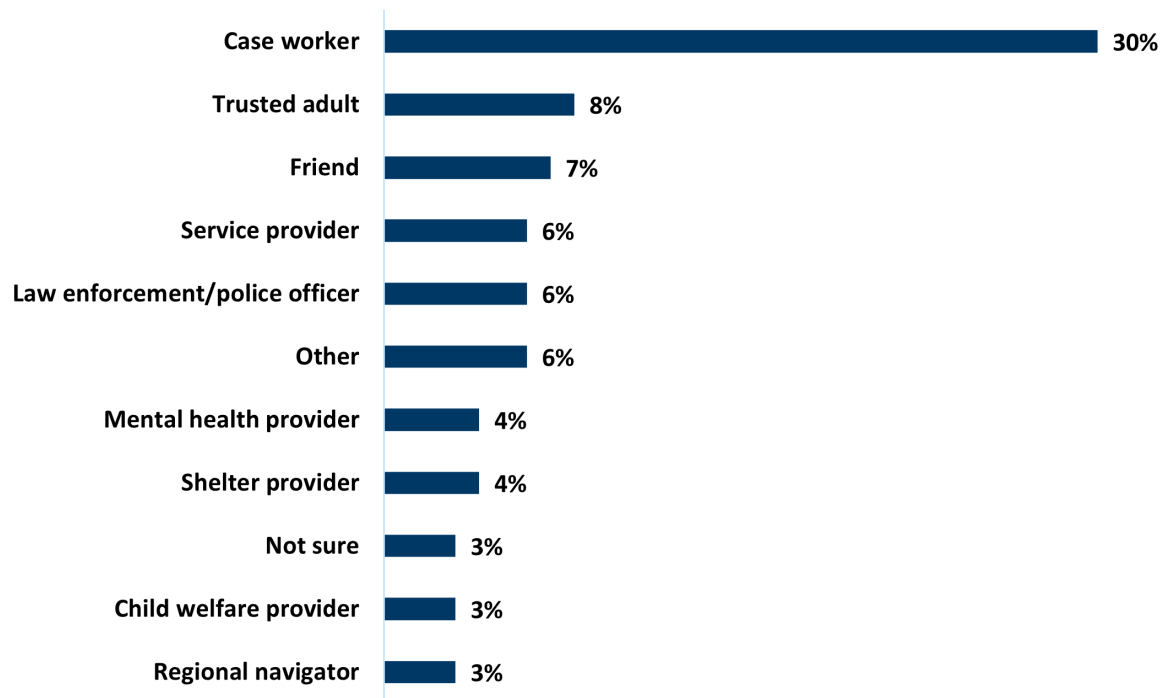


Figure 8. How important is each of the following to successfully help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation? (n=92)

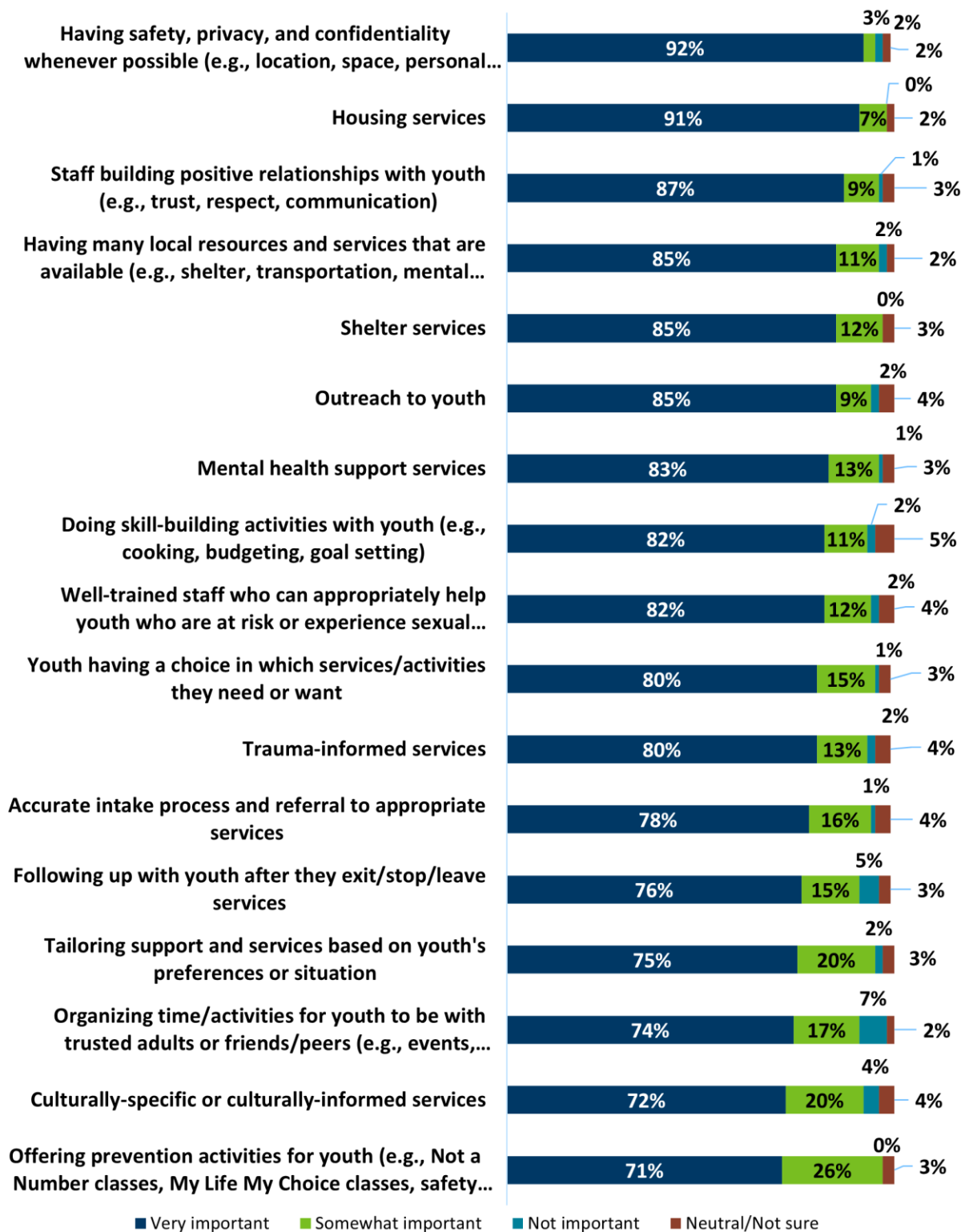


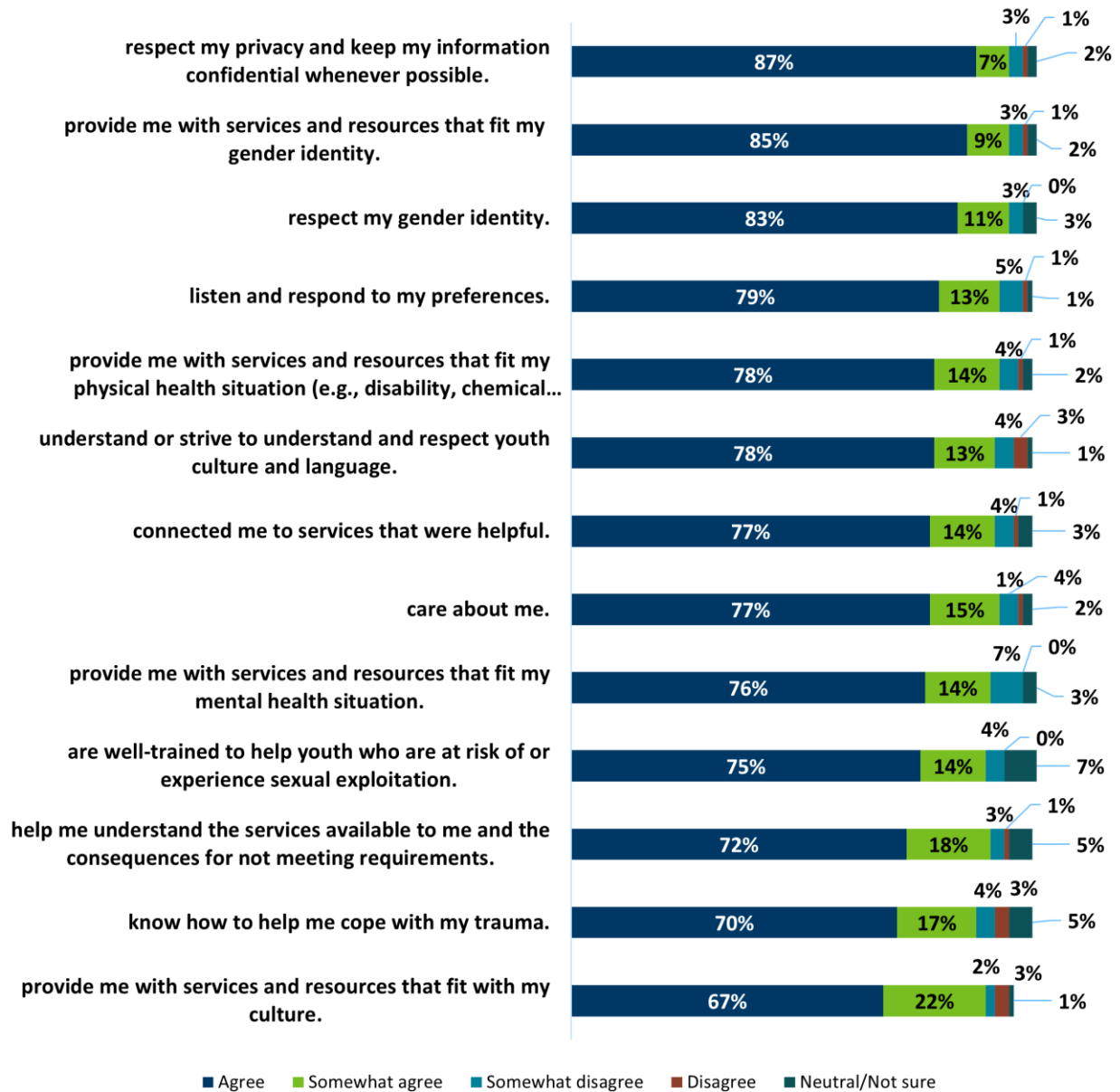
Table 15: How important is each of the following to successfully help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation? (n=92)

How important is each of the following to successfully help youth who are at risk of or experience sexual exploitation? (n=92)	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Neutral/ Not sure
Having safety, privacy, and confidentiality whenever possible (e.g., location, space, personal information)	92%	3%	2%	2%
Housing services	91%	7%	-	2%
Staff building positive relationships with youth (e.g., trust, respect, communication)	87%	9%	1%	3%
Having many local resources and services that are available (e.g., shelter, transportation, mental health)	85%	11%	2%	2%
Shelter services	85%	12%	-	3%
Outreach to youth	85%	9%	2%	4%
Mental health support services	83%	13%	1%	3%
Doing skill-building activities with youth (e.g., cooking, budgeting, goal setting)	82%	11%	2%	5%
Well-trained staff who can appropriately help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation	82%	12%	2%	4%
Youth having a choice in which services/activities they need or want	80%	15%	1%	3%

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How important is each of the following to successfully help youth who are at risk of or experience sexual exploitation? (n=92)	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Neutral/ Not sure
Trauma-informed services	80%	13%	2%	4%
Accurate intake process and referral to appropriate services	78%	16%	1%	4%
Following up with youth after they exit/stop/leave services	76%	15%	5%	3%
Tailoring support and services based on youth's preferences or situation	75%	20%	2%	3%
Organizing time/activities for youth to be with trusted adults or friends/peers	74%	17%	7%	2%
Culturally-specific or culturally-informed services	72%	20%	4%	4%
Offering prevention activities for youth (e.g., Not a Number classes, My Life My Choice classes, safety classes)	71%	26%	-	3%

**Figure 9. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Staff who work for Safe Harbor organizations: (n=92)**



**Table 16. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Staff who work for Safe Harbor organizations: (n=92)**

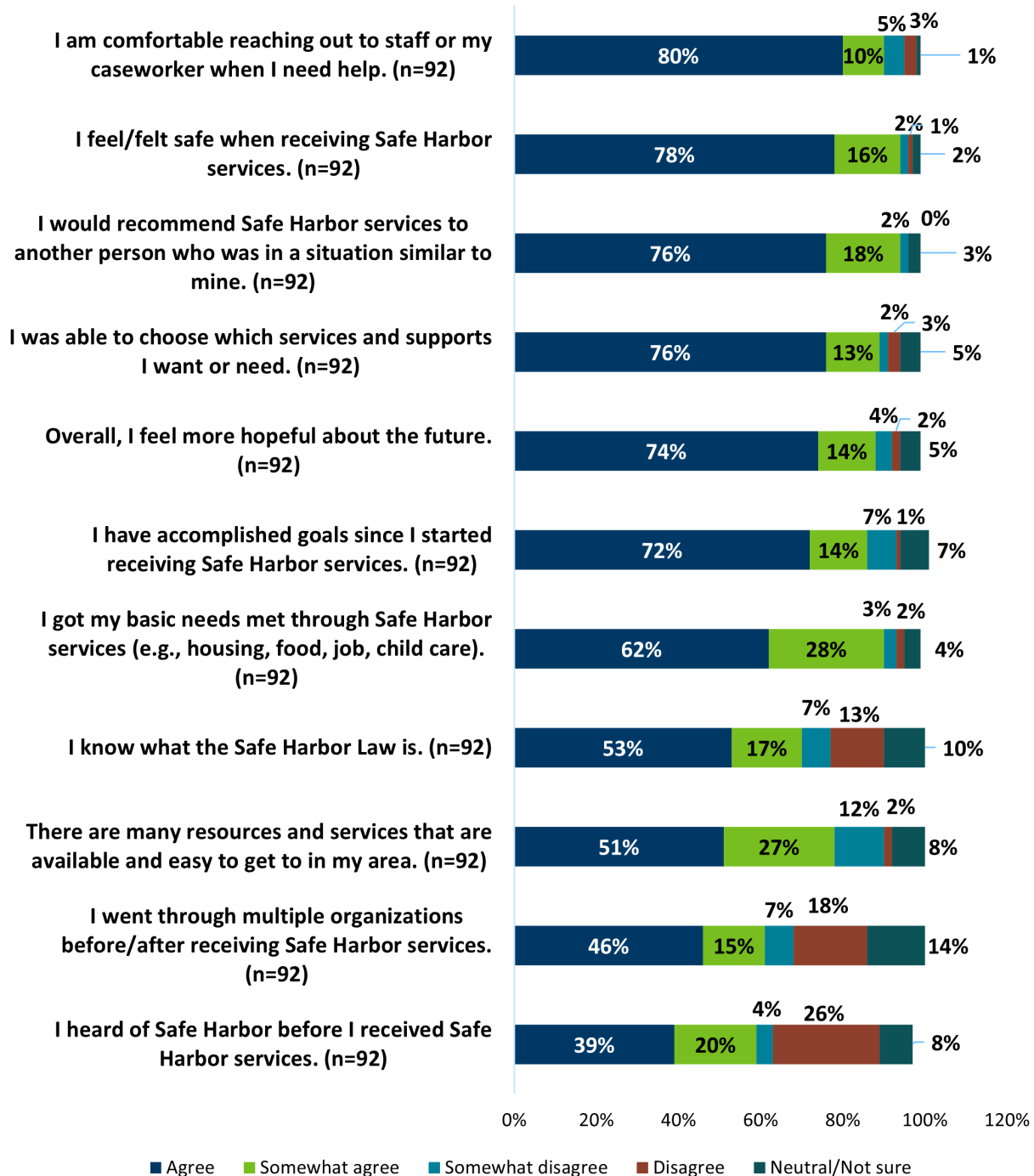
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Staff who work for Safe Harbor organizations: (n=92)	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure
Respect my privacy and keep my information confidential whenever possible	87%	7%	3%	1%	2%
Provide me with services and resources that fit my gender identity	85%	9%	3%	1%	2%
Respect my gender identity	83%	11%	3%	-	3%
Listen and respond to my preferences	75%	13%	5%	1%	1%
Provide me with services and resources that fit my physical health situation	78%	14%	4%	1%	2%
Understand or strive to understand and respect youth culture and language	78%	13%	4%	3%	1%
Connected me to services that were helpful	77%	14%	4%	1%	3%
Care about me	77%	15%	1%	4%	2%

SAFE HARBOR MINNESOTA PHASE 6 EVALUATION

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Staff who work for Safe Harbor organizations: (n=92)	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure
Provide me with services that fit my mental health situation	76%	14%	7%	-	3%
Are well-trained to help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation	75%	14%	4%	-	7%
Help me understand the services available to me and the consequences of not meeting requirements	72%	18%	3%	1%	5%
Know how to help me cope with my trauma	70%	17%	4%	3%	5%
Provide me with services and resources that fit my culture	67%	22%	2%	3%	1%

Figure 10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n=92)

The majority (80%) of youth agree that they are comfortable reaching out to staff or their caseworker when they need help.



**Table 17: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(n=92)**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n=92)	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure
I am comfortable reaching out to staff or my caseworker when I need help	80%	10%	5%	3%	1%
I felt safe when receiving Safe Harbor services	78%	16%	2%	1%	2%
I would recommend Safe Harbor services to another person in a situation similar to mine	76%	18%	2%	-	3%
I was able to choose which services and supports I want or need	76%	13%	2%	3%	5%
Overall, I feel more hopeful about the future	74%	14%	4%	2%	5%
I have accomplished goals since I started receiving Safe Harbor services	72%	14%	7%	1%	7%
I got my basic needs met through Safe Harbor services (e.g., housing, food, job, childcare)	62%	28%	3%	2%	4%
I know what the Safe Harbor law is	53%	17%	7%	13%	10%

SAFE HARBOR MINNESOTA PHASE 6 EVALUATION

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n=92)	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Not sure
There are many resources and services that are available and easy to get to in my area	51%	27%	12%	2%	8%
I went through multiple organizations before/after receiving Safe Harbor services	46%	15%	7%	18%	14%
I heard of Safe Harbor before I received Safe Harbor services	39%	20%	4%	26%	8%

Figure 11. How prepared do you feel to do each of the following because you received Safe Harbor services? (n=92)

The majority of youth survey respondents reported feeling very well or somewhat prepared to use social media and the internet safely and when knowing who to reach out to when they need help.

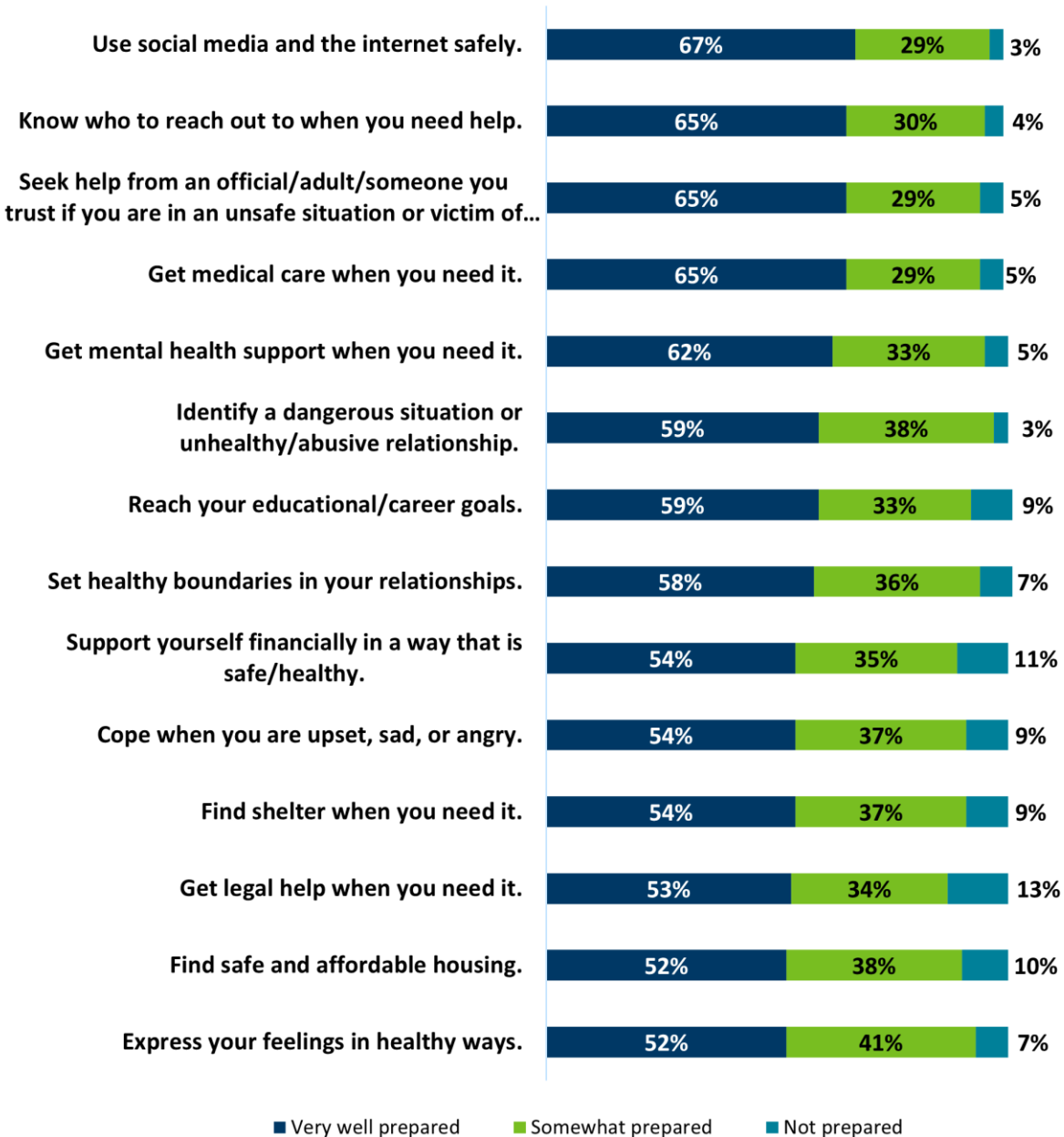


Table 18: How prepared do you feel to do each of the following because you received Safe Harbor services? (n=92)

How prepared do you feel to do each of the following because you received Safe Harbor services? (n=92)	Very well prepared	Somewhat prepared	Not prepared
Use social media and the internet safely	67%	29%	3%
Know who to reach out to when you need help	65%	30%	4%
Seek help from an official/adult/someone you trust if you are in an unsafe situation or are the victim of a crime	65%	29%	5%
Get medical care when you need it	65%	29%	5%
Get mental health support when you need it	62%	33%	5%
Identify a dangerous situation or unhealth/abusive relationship	59%	38%	3%
Reach your educational/career goals	55%	33%	9%
Set healthy boundaries in your relationship	58%	36%	7%
Support yourself financially in a way that is safe/healthy	54%	35%	11%
Cope when you are upset, sad, or angry	54%	37%	9%
Find shelter when you need it	54%	37%	9%
Get legal help when you need it	53%	34%	13%
Find safe and affordable housing	52%	38%	10%
Express your feelings in healthy ways	52%	41%	7%

Appendix B: Data collection protocols

Safe Harbor network: youth key informant interview protocol

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today and share your experiences as someone who is currently receiving, or has previously received, services designed for sexually exploited youth and young adults. My name is [name] and I am from The Improve Group, a research and evaluation firm in St. Paul. We are partnering with the Minnesota Department of Health to create a better understanding of experiences like yours receiving support services through organizations that are part of the Safe Harbor Network. What we learn will be used to improve the supports offered by Safe Harbor organizations that serve youth and young adults like you.

For this interview, I am going to ask you about your experiences with and insights into receiving services as you sought help from and navigated through various organizations. We are doing several interviews as part of this process, and your responses will be combined with everyone else's to uncover themes for opportunities for improvement. These findings will be shared with the Minnesota Department of Health - who oversees implementation of the state's Safe Harbor program, but they will not know who said what. Participating in this interview is completely voluntary and you may choose not to answer a question for any reason.

I am expecting this interview to take no more than 60 minutes but if for any reason you become uncomfortable and wish to stop, please let me know. I will be taking notes and recording during our conversation to help us remember what was said here. My recording will only be used to supplement my notes and will not be shared with anyone outside The Improve Group or with MDH or any organizations serving youth. The recording will be deleted once my notes and the project are complete. Do I have your permission to record? [Wait for response.] Is there anything you would like me to repeat? [Wait for response.] Do you have any questions before we begin? [Wait for response.]

I want to start by hearing a bit about you and your journey of receiving services through organizations that are part of the Safe Harbor Network.

- What race or ethnicity do you identify with?
 - Gender wise, how do you identify?
 - How old are you?
 - How old were you when you first started seeking or receiving support?
1. Now, please go back to the time you first sought or received help.
 - a. What happened? Who did you reach out to?
 - i. Prompt: Was there a specific person or organization that you first called when you were seeking help?
 - ii. Prompt: If there was not a specific person or organization, how did you receive help?
 2. Did [this organization or individual] provide you with any support services?
 - a. What services did they provide or help you access?
 - b. What was your experience with this organization like?
 - c. Which of the services were helpful and why?

- d. Who did you primarily work with? [For example, an advocate, case worker, counselor, other staff, etc.]
 - e. What could have made your experience with [this organization] better?
 - f. Did you receive referrals to other organizations from [this organization]?
 - i. prompt: Which organizations?
- 3. Are there other people or organizations that you went to for help?
 - a. Were you referred by another person or organization that you had previously been receiving support from?
 - b. What services did they provide or help you access?
 - c. What was your experience with this organization like?
 - d. Which of the services were helpful and why?
 - e. Who did you primarily work with? [For example, an advocate, case worker, counselor, other staff, etc.]
 - f. What could have made your experience with [this organization] better?
 - g. Did you receive referrals to other organizations from [this organization]?
 - i. prompt: Which organizations?
 - ii. Repeat question 4(a-g) to learn if there were other organizations.
- 4. Are there other services you still need that you have not received help with?
 - a. *Prompt:* Mental Health
 - b. *Prompt:* Legal Services
 - c. *Prompt:* Housing
 - d. *Prompt:* Employment
 - e. *Prompt:* Childcare
 - f. *Prompt:* Disability or accessibility
 - g. *Prompt:* Education
 - h. *Prompt:* Chemical Health
 - i. *Prompt:* Culturally Specific Services, (state type, could be cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity).
 - j. *Prompt:* Other, please describe
 - k. Could you share more about why you may not have received support for these areas yet?
 - i. Prompt: Were these services not offered by any of the organizations you were working with?
 - ii. Prompt: If they were offered, what prevented you from being able to use them to meet your needs?
- 5. Have you or your peers been victims of electronic sexual abuse through online images (real or deepfakes)?
 - a. Prompt: If so, were you able to get help or assistance in deleting the images online?

b. Prompt: Who supported you through this process?

6. If you could have the top three wishes for a system of care that could support youth who are sexually exploited or at risk of sexual exploitation, what would those priority three wishes be?

Now, onto my last question!

7. Is there anything else that we need to know and understand about the experiences of youth and young adults like yourself when looking for services and help?

Thank you so much! We will be sending your e-gift card via the email address you used for the interview.

Youth Survey Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences and insights to help improve [Safe Harbor Services](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/safeharbor/about.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/safeharbor/about.html>).

It can take up to 15 minutes to complete the survey. After completing the survey, you will receive a \$10 e-gift card as an appreciation for your time and input. You will be asked to enter your email address at the end of the survey to receive your gift card. You can only take the survey once and will only receive one gift card. This survey is only for eligible youth who have received or are currently receiving Safe Harbor services in Minnesota. If you are not eligible, you will not receive a gift card.

The survey asks about your experiences with and insights into receiving services as you sought or received help from and navigated through organizations that are part of the Safe Harbor network to better understand overall youth experiences. The Safe Harbor network is a group of organizations that received funding from the state of Minnesota through the Safe Harbor law to provide services, housing, and outreach for youth ages 24 and under who are at risk of or experienced sexual exploitation.

Taking this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. You may feel some distress or uneasiness throughout the survey. You are encouraged to take a pause in between questions and take as much time as you need to complete the survey or skip any questions as you'd like. If you need support while working on the survey or after you can find resources through Safe Harbor using the [Safe Harbor Services Map](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/documents/htmap.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/humantrafficking/documents/htmap.pdf>).

What we learn from all youth will be summarized and shared with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) but your name and individual responses will remain confidential.

The Improve Group is a research and evaluation firm in St. Paul, partnering with MDH to conduct this survey. If you have any questions, please contact Moira Gaidzanwa at moirag@theimprovegroup.com.

Your experience

- What is your current age?
- Are you currently receiving Safe Harbor Services?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure

[IF YES to Q2]

- How long have you received Safe Harbor services?
 - ☐ Less than a year
 - ☐ 1-2 years

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- ☐ 3-4 years
- ☐ 5 or more years
- How old were you when you FIRST started finding or receiving Safe Harbor services?
- Did you search for help and services on your own?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure
 - ☐ Prefer not to answer
 - [If NO to Q5] Were you required to participate in Safe Harbor services?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure
 - [If YES to Q5a] Who said you were required to participate, and what services were being required?
- What led you to decide to find help or start receiving services?
- Who did you reach out to first, or connected you to your first service?
 - ☐ Case worker
 - ☐ Regional navigator
 - ☐ Service provider
 - ☐ Shelter provider
 - ☐ Child Welfare provider
 - ☐ Law enforcement/police officer
 - ☐ Mental health provider
 - ☐ Trusted adult
 - ☐ Friend
 - ☐ Not sure
 - ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- Which Safe Harbor organization were you FIRST connected to?
 - ☐ 180 Degrees
 - ☐ Ain Dah Yung Center
 - ☐ Bois Forte
 - ☐ Breaking Free

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- ☐ Esperanza United
- ☐ Fond Du Lac
- ☐ Central MN Sexual Assault Center (CMSAC)
- ☐ Cornerstone
- ☐ The Enitan Story
- ☐ Evergreen Youth and Family Services (EYFS)
- ☐ The Family Partnership
- ☐ Heartland Girls Ranch
- ☐ Hmong American Partnership (HAP)
- ☐ International Institute of Minnesota (II)
- ☐ Leech Lake
- ☐ Life House
- ☐ The Link
- ☐ Lutheran Social Services (LSS)
- ☐ Lower Sioux Indian Community
- ☐ Midwest Children's Resource Center (MCRC)
- ☐ Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid
- ☐ Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC)
- ☐ Mille Lacs
- ☐ North Homes Children and Family Services
- ☐ Northwest Indian Community Development Center (NWICDC)
- ☐ Olmsted County
- ☐ OutFront Minnesota
- ☐ Prairie Island
- ☐ Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA)
- ☐ Rape and Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo-Moorhead (RACC)
- ☐ Rebound, Inc.
- ☐ Red Lake
- ☐ Someplace Safe
- ☐ Southwest Crisis Center (SWCC)
- ☐ Support Within Reach (SWR)

- ☐ Terebinth Refuge
- ☐ Upper Sioux Community
- ☐ White Earth Nation
- ☐ WoMen’s Rural Advocacy Programs (WRAP)
- ☐ YMCA of the North
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other, please specify:
- How satisfied are you with the help you received from [Answer to Q8]?
 - ☐ Very unsatisfied
 - ☐ Unsatisfied
 - ☐ Satisfied
 - ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☐ Not sure
- 1.
 - [IF SATISFIED/VERY SATISFIED TO Q9] What made your experience with [Answer to Q8] go well?
 - [IF VERY SATISFIED/UNSATISFIED TO Q9] What made your experience with [Answer to Q8] NOT go well?
- Were you referred to another organization after you stopped receiving services from [Answer to Q8]?
 - ☐ Yes [If YES, go to Q13]
 - ☐ No [If NO, go to Q18]
 - ☐ Not sure [If NOT SURE, go to Q13]
 - ☐ I’m still currently receiving services [If so, go to Q16]

[If NO to Q2]

1. Have you received Safe Harbor services in the past?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure
2.
 - [If YES to Q11] Go back to Q4-Q6 and then Q12

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- [If NO to Q11] What is preventing you from finding or accessing Safe Harbor services? Select all that apply.
 - ☐ Not interested in any services at this moment
 - ☐ No longer needed services
 - ☐ Aged out of services
 - ☐ No longer eligible for services
 - ☐ I was denied services
 - ☐ I was removed from services
 - ☐ Not sure
 - ☐ Prefer not to answer
 - ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- [If selected options 4, 5, and/or 6 to Q11b] Tell us more about why you are no longer eligible, were denied, or removed from services?
 - Would you like to get connected to Safe Harbor services?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure
- 2. Who was the LAST person you had contact with when you stopped receiving services?
 - ☐ Case worker
 - ☐ Regional navigator
 - ☐ Service provider
 - ☐ Shelter provider
 - ☐ Child Welfare
 - ☐ Law enforcement/police officer
 - ☐ Mental health worker/Therapist
 - ☐ Trusted adult
 - ☐ Friend
 - ☐ Not sure
 - ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- 3. Which Safe Harbor organization were you LAST connected to?
 - ☐ 180 Degrees
 - ☐ Ain Dah Yung Center

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- ☐ Bois Forte
- ☐ Breaking Free
- ☐ Esperanza United
- ☐ Fond Du Lac
- ☐ Central MN Sexual Assault Center (CMSAC)
- ☐ Cornerstone
- ☐ The Enitan Story
- ☐ Evergreen Youth and Family Services (EYFS)
- ☐ The Family Partnership
- ☐ Heartland Girls Ranch
- ☐ Hmong American Partnership (HAP)
- ☐ International Institute of Minnesota (II)
- ☐ Leech Lake
- ☐ Life House
- ☐ The Link
- ☐ Lutheran Social Services (LSS)
- ☐ Lower Sioux Indian Community
- ☐ Midwest Children's Resource Center (MCRC)
- ☐ Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid
- ☐ Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC)
- ☐ Mille Lacs
- ☐ North Homes Children and Family Services
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- ☐ Rape and Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo-Moorhead (RACC)
- ☐ Rebound, Inc.
- ☐ Red Lake
- ☐ Someplace Safe

- ☐ Southwest Crisis Center (SWCC)
- ☐ Support Within Reach (SWR)
- ☐ Terebinth Refuge
- ☐ Upper Sioux Community
- ☐ White Earth Nation
- ☐ WoMen's Rural Advocacy Programs (WRAP)
- ☐ YMCA of the North
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- ☐ None of the above

4. How satisfied are you with the help you received from [Answer to Q13]?

- ☐ Very unsatisfied
- ☐ Unsatisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ [IF SATISFIED/VERY SATISFIED TO Q13] What made your last experience go well with [Answer from Q13]?
- ☐ [IF VERY SATISFIED/UNSATISFIED TO Q13] What made your last experience NOT go well with [Answer from Q13]?

5. Were you referred to another organization after you stopped receiving services from [Answer to Q13]? If so, what organization?

Next, we'd like to get to know more about your experiences with other Safe Harbor organizations.

6. Which Safe Harbor organization have you received services from? Select all that apply.

- ☐ 180 Degrees
- ☐ Ain Dah Yung Center
- ☐ Bois Forte
- ☐ Breaking Free
- ☐ Esperanza United
- ☐ Fond Du Lac

SAFE HARBOR MINNESOTA PHASE 6 EVALUATION

- ☐ Central MN Sexual Assault Center (CMSAC)
- ☐ Cornerstone
- ☐ The Enitan Story
- ☐ Evergreen Youth and Family Services (EYFS)
- ☐ The Family Partnership
- ☐ Heartland Girls Ranch
- ☐ Hmong American Partnership (HAP)
- ☐ International Institute of Minnesota (II)
- ☐ Leech Lake
- ☐ Life House
- ☐ The Link
- ☐ Lutheran Social Services (LSS)
- ☐ Lower Sioux Indian Community
- ☐ Midwest Children's Resource Center (MCRC)
- ☐ Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid
- ☐ Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC)
- ☐ Mille Lacs
- ☐ North Homes Children and Family Services
- ☐ Northwest Indian Community Development Center (NWICDC)
- ☐ Olmsted County
- ☐ OutFront Minnesota
- ☐ Prairie Island
- ☐ Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA)
- ☐ Rape and Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo-Moorhead (RACC)
- ☐ Rebound, Inc.
- ☐ Red Lake
- ☐ Someplace Safe
- ☐ Southwest Crisis Center (SWCC)
- ☐ Support Within Reach (SWR)
- ☐ Terebinth Refuge
- ☐ Upper Sioux Community

- ☐ White Earth Nation
- ☐ WoMen's Rural Advocacy Programs (WRAP)
- ☐ YMCA of the North
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other, please specify:
- Overall, how satisfied are you with the organization you received services from (Extracted responses from Q16)?
 - ☐ Very unsatisfied
 - ☐ Unsatisfied
 - ☐ Satisfied
 - ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☐ Not sure
- What services have you received from Safe Harbor organizations? Select all that apply.
 - ☐ Criminal justice advocacy
 - ☐ Emotional support
 - ☐ Employment assistance
 - ☐ Family reunification
 - ☐ Case management
 - ☐ Social services
 - ☐ Housing advocacy
 - ☐ Legal services
 - ☐ Child care
 - ☐ Dental care
 - ☐ Education services
 - ☐ Housing assistance
 - ☐ Interpreter
 - ☐ Mental health
 - ☐ Substance use treatment/Chemical treatment
 - ☐ Transportation
 - ☐ Financial assistance

- ☐ Personal items
- ☐ Culturally responsive services
- ☐ Not a Number Group
- ☐ Support in the removal of online images (real or deepfakes) as a result of electronic sexual abuse
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other, please specify:
- Overall, how satisfied are you with the services you received, or are currently receiving (Extracted responses from Q18)?
 - ☐ Very unsatisfied
 - ☐ Unsatisfied
 - ☐ Satisfied
 - ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☐ Not sure
- 3.
- What else do you still want help with, or wanted help with but did not receive?

When answering the rest of the questions in this survey, please think about your OVERALL experience with ALL the Safe Harbor organizations you have received services from.

- How important is each of the following to successfully help youth who are at risk of or experience sexual exploitation? (Very important, Somewhat important, Not important, Neutral, Not sure)
 - Having many local resources and services that are available (e.g., shelter, transportation, mental health, chemical treatment)
 - Having safety, privacy, and confidentiality whenever possible (e.g., location, space, personal information)
 - Tailoring support and services based on youth's preferences or situation
 - Youth having a choice in which services/activities they need or want
 - Staff building positive relationships with youth (e.g., trust, respect, communication)
 - Doing skill-building activities with youth (e.g., cooking, budgeting, goal setting)
 - Offering prevention activities for youth (e.g., Not a Number classes, My Life My Choice classes, safety planning)
 - Organizing time/activities for youth to be with trusted adults or friends/peers (e.g., events, support groups)

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- Well-trained staff who can appropriately help youth who are at risk or experience sexual exploitation
 - Accurate intake process and referral to appropriate services
 - Following up with youth after they exit/stop/leave services
 - Culture-specific or culturally informed services
 - Trauma-informed services
 - Mental health support services
 - Shelter services
 - Housing services
 - Outreach to youth
- How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The staff who provide or provided Safe Harbor services to me: (Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Not sure)
 - understand or strive to understand and respect youth culture and language.
 - provide me with services and resources that fit with my culture.
 - respect my gender identity.
 - provide me with services and resources that fit my gender identity.
 - provide me with services and resources that fit my mental health situation.
 - provide me with services and resources that fit my physical health situation (e.g., disability, drug/alcohol/chemical addiction or abuse).
 - respect my privacy and keep my information confidential whenever possible.
 - care about me.
 - are well-trained to help youth who are at risk of or experience sexual exploitation.
 - help me understand the services available to me and the consequences for not meeting requirements.
 - listen and respond to my preferences.
 - connected me to services that were helpful.
 - know how to help me cope with my trauma.
- Tell us briefly about a time when you felt a staff, service, or organization **successfully** supported you. What did you like or worked well for you?
- Tell us briefly about a time when you felt a staff, service, or organization **did not successfully** support you. What could have been done differently or better to support you?
- How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Not sure)
 - I know what the Safe Harbor Law is.
 - I heard of Safe Harbor before I received Safe Harbor services.

- I would recommend Safe Harbor services to another person who was in a situation similar to mine.
- There are many resources and services that are available in my area.
- Resources and services in my area are easy to get to and access.
- I got my basic needs met through Safe Harbor services (e.g., housing, food, job, child care).
- I was able to choose which services and supports I want or need.
- I am comfortable reaching out to staff or my caseworker when I need help.
- I have accomplished goals since I started receiving Safe Harbor services.
- I went through multiple organizations before/after receiving Safe Harbor services.
- I feel/felt safe when receiving Safe Harbor services.
- Overall, I feel more hopeful about the future.
- As a result of receiving Safe Harbor services, how prepared do you feel to do each of the following? (Very well prepared, Somewhat prepared, Not prepared)
 - Identify a dangerous situation or unhealthy/abusive relationship.
 - Set healthy boundaries in your relationships.
 - Seek help from an official/adult/someone you trust if you are in an unsafe situation or victim of a crime.
 - Find safe and affordable housing.
 - Find shelter when you need it.
 - Get medical care when you need it.
 - Get mental health support when you need it.
 - Get legal help when you need it.
 - Reach your educational/career goals.
 - Cope when you are upset, sad, or angry.
 - Express your feelings in healthy ways.
 - Use social media and the internet safely.
 - Support yourself financially in a way that is safe/healthy.
 - Know who to reach out to when you need help.
- What was the most important thing you accomplished with help from Safe Harbor services?

About You

Thank you for your survey responses so far! The following demographic questions will help us know a little more about the group of youth who completed this survey and do more in-depth analysis.

- If you had to choose, which race, ethnicity, or origin best describes you? Select all that apply.

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- ☐ Indigenous, American Indian or Alaska Native – For example, Navajo Nation, Anishinaabe, Dakota, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec
- ☐ Asian or Asian American – For example, Hmong, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese
- ☐ Black, African, or African American – For example, Jamaican, Haitian, Liberian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, Kenyan
- ☐ Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin - For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Columbian
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African – For example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – For example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan
- ☐ White – For example, German, Irish, English, Italian
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- If you had to choose a category for your gender identity, which would you want to be in? Select all that apply.
 - ☐ Cisgender male (Cisgender means you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth)
 - ☐ Cisgender female (cisgender means you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth)
 - ☐ Gender expansive, non-binary
 - ☐ Gender fluid
 - ☐ Two spirit
 - ☐ Transgender male
 - ☐ Transgender female
 - ☐ Prefer not to answer
 - ☐ Not sure
 - ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- If you had to choose a category for your sexual orientation, which would you want to be in? Select all that apply.
 - ☐ Two spirit
 - ☐ Heterosexual
 - ☐ Pansexual (pansexual means sexual, romantic, or emotional attraction to someone regardless of their sex or gender identity)
 - ☐ Bisexual (bisexual means you are sexually attracted men and women)
 - ☐ Asexual or ace (this means complete or lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others)
 - ☐ Gay or Lesbian

- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Questioning
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- Have you been diagnosed with or suspect you may have any of the following? Select all that apply.
 - ☐ Physical disability (e.g., blind, deaf or hard of hearing)
 - ☐ Behavioral or emotional disability (e.g., depression, anxiety, Post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD which is a mental health condition that sometimes follows after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event – symptoms include flashbacks, night terrors, or anxiety, among others)
 - ☐ Developmental disability (e.g., ADHD, learning disorder, autism, down syndrome)
 - ☐ Substance use disorder
 - ☐ Not sure
 - ☐ None
 - ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- What is your employment status?
 - ☐ Full-time employment
 - ☐ Part-time employment
 - ☐ Unemployed
 - ☐ Self-employed (like a contract worker, or freelancer)
 - ☐ Home-maker
 - ☐ Student
 - ☐ Paid internship, apprenticeship, or job training
 - ☐ Prefer not to answer
 - ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- What is the highest level of education you've completed?
 - ☐ Middle school
 - ☐ High school or equivalent
 - ☐ Some college, post-secondary
 - ☐ Advanced degree (e.g., associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctorate's)
 - ☐ Prefer not to answer
 - ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- What is your current living situation?
 - ☐ Shelter
 - ☐ Group home
 - ☐ Treatment center
 - ☐ Supportive housing
 - ☐ Rented apartment

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- ☐ Family's home (e.g., adopted/biological parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, sibling, cousin, etc.)
- ☐ Friend's home
- ☐ Foster home
- ☐ Couch hopping/surfing
- ☐ Unhoused/unsheltered (e.g., public spaces, encampments, car/vehicle)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

Your gift card

Thank you for taking the Safe Harbor Youth Survey! You will receive a \$10 e-gift card as an appreciation for your time and input. Please provide your email address below so we can email your gift card to you. It may take up to 3-5 business days for you to receive an email with your gift card. You will be able to choose from either Walmart, Target, or Amazon. Please check your email inbox and claim your gift card once you receive it as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about your e-gift card, please contact Kia Her with The Improve Group at kiah@theimprovementgroup.com or 651-315-8926.

Email address:

Safe Harbor Network Evaluation: Focus Group for Law Enforcement and Child Welfare

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today and share your experiences with administering and working with Safe Harbor Programs. My name is Moira, and I am from The Improve Group, a research and evaluation firm in St. Paul. We are partnering with the Minnesota Department of Health to develop a better understanding of the Safe Harbor network, in particular the experiences of youth and young adults who have been or are at risk of being sexually exploited and have utilized Safe Harbor services. Our aim is to identify what's working well, in addition to where there may be opportunities for improvement. Our findings will be used to improve the experiences of Safe Harbor grantees and for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation.

For this focus group, I am going to ask you about your experiences with and insights into Safe Harbor Network and the supports available for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation. Please know that we will not be reporting individual responses and your answers will be recorded as a group. These combined responses will then be analyzed together to uncover themes for what's working well and areas for improvement. These findings will be shared with the Minnesota Department of Health - who oversees implementation of the state's Safe Harbor program -, but they will not know who said what. If you say anything that you do not want me to share, please let me know and we will not include it in the findings. Additionally, participating in this focus group is completely voluntary and you may choose not to answer a question for any reason. However, we would like to hear from everyone, so please share when you feel comfortable doing so.

Before we get started, I also want to share a few pieces of information for you to keep in mind during the discussion:

- There are no right or wrong answers—everyone's ideas will be heard.
- To make sure we hear from everyone in your group, I may ask someone who is talking a lot to give others a chance to talk, or I may ask someone who has been quiet to share their thoughts.
- Please respect everyone's privacy—do not share what was said outside this group.

I'm expecting this focus group to take no more than 120 minutes – but if for any reason you wish to stop, please let me know I will be recording and taking notes during our conversation to help us remember what was said here. The recording will be used to supplement my notes, will not be shared with MDH or any other organization and destroyed after the project is complete. Do I have your permission to record? [Wait for response.] Is there anything you'd like me to repeat? [Wait for response.] Do you have any questions before we begin? [Wait for response.]

Protocol

Since I've been talking for a while now, let's get a chance to hear from you all!

1. Let's go around and have everyone take turns coming off mute to share, or type in the chat...
 - a. Your name, title, and organization
 - b. How long you have been working with Safe Harbor
 - c. The city where your organization is located and the areas you serve.

2. Safe Harbor programs are a part of the larger Safe Harbor Network. I would like to hear more about referrals and partnerships.
 - a. What types of organizations are you getting youth referrals from?
 - i. Prompt: Please share what those interactions with those organizations have looked like in general.
 - b. What criteria are you using when deciding where to refer youth?
 - c. What types of organizations are you referring youth to?
 - d. Are there service gaps you have noticed where you are not able to provide referrals for organizations that might help youth?
 - e. What services have you referred youth to out of necessity, but you knew that there would be barriers to accessing those services because resources were severely limited?
 - i. Prompt: How did you work around the barriers or find creative solutions to ensure that youth receive the services.
 - f. Do you ever partner with other Safe Harbor grantee organizations? What is an example of successful partnership?
 - g. In your interactions with Safe Harbor programs, what improvements to Safe Harbor programs have you noticed that would make your job easier?
3. Now, I'd like to hear a little bit about your interactions with youth who use Safe Harbor programs which provide services for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation.
 - a. How are you helping and serving youth?
 - b. How is trust built and maintained with youth?
 - c. What are your experiences supporting youth from different backgrounds from you like? (including race, ethnicity, gender identity, and other cultures)
 - i. What self-reflection practices do you engage in to assess your own biases and experiences?
 - d. From your perspective, what are youth already doing to ensure safety for themselves?
 - e. Do you have care plans to ensure that youth do not resort to survival mode?
4. Next, please take a minute to reflect on some of the times when providing services to youth has gone well and some of the times when it has not gone as well.
 - a. What do the times that go well have in common?
 - b. What about the times that don't go so well?
 - c. What could have helped those experiences go better (e.g., information/training, resources, other supports)?
5. Finally, we'd like to hear more about staff training and supports in your organization.

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- a. What trainings or supports would help you be more prepared for providing quality and timely services and counseling to youth?
- b. What resources does your organization most need but does not have or are underutilized?
- c. What types of programming or services do you wish you could provide, or improve, if resources were available?
- d. What types of training have you or your staff completed? (Including formal education such as a bachelor's or master's program.) How have these impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - i. Prompt: Mandated training on respect, dignity, and human rights?
 - ii. Prompt: Mandated training in Safe Harbor, trafficking, and sexual exploitation?
 - iii. Prompt: Have you or your staff had mandated training in mental health and trauma informed care? What does it mean to be trauma informed? How has this impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - iv. Prompt: Have you or your staff have training in diversity, equity, and inclusion?
 - v. Have you and your staff had training on or self-assessments related to bias or cultural competency?
 - vi. How has this impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - vii. Prompt: Have you and your staff have training on service LGBTQ and trans youth? How has this impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - viii. Prompt: Have you and your staff had training in sexual abuse through electronic images (which may be real or through deepfakes) based on artificial intelligence (AI) and other technological advances?
 - ix. Prompt: Has your organization considered hiring staff with lived experience?
6. What recommendations do you have to improve the effectiveness of Safe Harbor programs?
7. What else is important to know or understand about serving youth at risk of sex or labor trafficking?

Safe Harbor Network Evaluation: Focus Group for Grantee Organizations and Multi-Disciplinary Partners

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today and share your experiences with administering and working with Safe Harbor Programs. My name is Moira, and I am from The Improve Group, a research and evaluation firm in St. Paul. We are partnering with the Minnesota Department of Health to develop a better understanding of the Safe Harbor network, in particular the experiences of youth and young adults who have been or are at risk of being sexually exploited and have utilized Safe Harbor services. Our aim is to identify what's working well, in addition to where there may be opportunities for improvement. Our findings will be used to improve the experiences of Safe Harbor grantees and for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation.

For this focus group, I am going to ask you about your experiences with and insights into Safe Harbor Network and the supports available for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation. Please know that we will not be reporting individual responses and your answers will be recorded as a group. These combined responses will then be analyzed together to uncover themes for what's working well and areas for improvement. These findings will be shared with the Minnesota Department of Health - who oversees implementation of the state's Safe Harbor program -, but they will not know who said what. If you say anything that you do not want me to share, please let me know and we will not include it in the findings. Additionally, participating in this interview is completely voluntary and you may choose not to answer a question for any reason. However, we would like to hear from everyone, so please share when you feel comfortable doing so.

Before we get started, I also want to share a few pieces of information for you to keep in mind during the discussion:

- There are no right or wrong answers—everyone's ideas will be heard.
- To make sure we hear from everyone in your group, I may ask someone who is talking a lot to give others a chance to talk, or I may ask someone who has been quiet to share their thoughts.
- Please respect everyone's privacy—do not share what was said outside this group.

I'm expecting this focus group to take no more than 90 minutes – but if for any reason you wish to stop, please let me know I will be recording and taking notes during our conversation to help us remember what was said here. The recording will be used to supplement my notes, will not be shared with MDH or any other organization and destroyed after the project is complete. Do I have your permission to record? [Wait for response.] Is there anything you'd like me to repeat? [Wait for response.] Do you have any questions before we begin? [Wait for response.]

Protocol

Since I've been talking for a while now, let's get a chance to hear from you all!

1. Let's go around and have everyone take turns coming off mute to share, or type in the chat...
 - a. Your name, title, and organization
 - b. How long you have been working with Safe Harbor
 - c. The city where your organization is located and the areas you serve.

2. Now, I'd like to hear a little bit about what providing services for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation looks like from your perspective.
 - a. Please share what the general process looks like when a youth or young adult is seeking your services.
 - i. *Prompt:* how do youth and young adults access you? Are they referred?
 - ii. *Prompt:* Do you refer youth and young adults out? to who and why?
 - b. Based on your experience, what do Safe Harbor grantees or their partners want to accomplish? What kind of goals do they have for youth and young adults seeking their services?
 - c. What does program completion entail?
 - i. *Prompt:* How do youth generally leave the program?
 - ii. *Prompt:* Are there formal processes?
 - iii. *Why do youth leave the program?* Do you have a way of keeping in touch with youth who leave?
 - d. How do you measure success in your program?
 - e. How is trust built and maintained with youth?
 - f. What are your experiences supporting youth from different backgrounds from you like? (including race, ethnicity, gender identity, and other cultures)
 - i. *Prompt:* How are you reaching out to immigrant youth?
 - ii. *Prompt:* What is being done to improve access to services by immigrant youth?
 - g. From your perspective, what are youth already doing to ensure safety for themselves?
 - h. Do you have care plans to ensure that youth do not resort to survival mode?
3. Next, please take a minute to reflect on some of the times when providing services to youth has gone well and some of the times when it has not gone as well.
 - a. What do the times that go well have in common?
 - b. What about the times that don't go so well?
 - c. What could have helped those experiences go better (e.g., information/training, resources, other supports)?
4. Safe Harbor programs are a part of the larger Safe Harbor Network. I would like to hear more about referrals and partnerships.
 - a. What types of organizations are you getting youth referrals from?
 - b. What types of organizations are you referring youth to?
 - c. Are there service gaps you have noticed where you are not able to provide referrals for organizations that might help youth?
 - d. What services have you referred youth to out of necessity, but you understood that resources were severely limited?
 - e. Do you ever partner with other Safe Harbor grantee organizations? What is an example of successful partnership?

5. Finally, we'd like to hear more about staff training and supports in your organization.
 - a. What trainings or supports would help you be more prepared for providing quality and timely services and counseling to youth?
 - b. What resources does your organization most need but does not have or are underutilized?
 - c. What types of programming or services do you wish you could provide, or improve, if resources were available?
 - d. What types of training have you or your staff completed? (Including formal education such as a bachelor's or master's program.) How have these impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - i. Prompt: Have you or your staff had training on trauma informed care? What does it mean to be trauma informed? How has this impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - ii. Prompt: Have you or your staff have training in diversity, equity, and inclusion? How has this impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - iii. Prompt: Have you and your staff have training on serving LGBTQ and trans youth? How has this impacted your ability to support youth and young adults?
 - iv. *Prompt: Have you and your staff had training in de-escalation or violence prevention?*
 - v. *Prompt: Have you and your staff had training in labor trafficking, sexual exploitation, and image-based exploitation?*
 - vi. Prompt: Has your staff considered hiring staff with lived experience?
6. What recommendations do you have to improve the effectiveness of Safe Harbor programs?
7. What else is important to know or understand about serving youth at risk of sex or labor trafficking?