

“

... Americans suffer from a profound misunderstanding of how [child] prostitution actually works — and fail to appreciate that it's one of our country's biggest human rights problems.”

— *Nicholas D. Kristof,*
The New York Times

WOMEN
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION
OF
MINNESOTA

MN GIRLS ARE NOT FOR SALE

Help end the sex trafficking of Minnesota girls

A campaign of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota

Minnesotans care deeply about issues that impact our communities. We stay informed, we get involved, and we take great pride in helping to make our state a better place for all people and families. When we see injustice, we take action.

But one issue is so hidden from our public consciousness that the mere mention of it results in denial and shock: **Minnesota girls are being bought and sold for sex.**

The truth is that so many of us believe that the sex trafficking of girls is something that happens only in distant nations. Or if such exploitation occurs at all in our state, it only involves girls smuggled in from those faraway countries.

We think: “Not here. Not in the state of ‘Minnesota Nice.’ Not to Minnesota girls.”



THE REALITY

- The Department of Justice has identified the Twin Cities as one of the nation’s 15 largest centers for child sex trafficking — a vast majority of them girls.
- Minnesota law enforcement says that the sex trafficking of girls is happening in cities and counties across the state — and advocates agree.
- Between 2008 and 2010, 83 percent of girls in confirmed sex trafficking incidents in the U.S. were American citizens.
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children conservatively estimates that 100,000 children are sexually exploited each year in the United States.
- Girls of all races, ethnicities, and classes are sex trafficked.

Bottom line? The sex trafficking of girls is happening here, right now, in Minnesota — and it’s on the rise.

As is true for any hidden illegal activity, determining the prevalence of child sex trafficking in Minnesota is nearly impossible. But research is emerging that provides an early but critical sketch of what's happening in our state.

By very conservative measures, research conducted in 2010 determined that approximately 213 girls are sold an average of four to six times per day each month in Minnesota through the Internet and escort services. This number does not include hotel, street or gang activity. This data may seem extraordinary, but in this digital age, the ease and anonymity of the Internet has made it the primary way to sell and buy girls. Buyers are literally one click away from purchasing a girl for sex.

Advocates and law enforcement officials agree that we're seeing only the tip of the iceberg — the actual numbers are much, much higher.

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Here's what I know:
The number of girls being trafficked here is high and increasing, and the girls are getting younger.

And here's the good news: The **Safe Harbor funding*** secured last legislative session (May 2013) fell far short of what is needed, but was a good start. It enables Minnesota to go from **four specialized shelter beds for sex-trafficked youth up to 22, statewide.**”

*Vednita Carter —
founder & executive director,
Breaking Free*

**See page 6, Goal 1, Achieved,
for more details.*

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Law enforcement says that the sex trafficking of girls is happening in

CITIES AND COUNTIES

across Minnesota — and advocates agree.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?
WFMN.ORG**

The sex trafficking of girls is one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises in the world, ranking second in illegal profits, right behind the drug trade and right above the illegal arms trade. For example in the United States, the Polaris Project conservatively estimates that a pimp (trafficker) with a “stable” of three girls often enforces an average nightly quota of \$500, or \$1,500 per night. If these quotas are met consistently, the pimp can make as much as \$547,500 (or more) per year ($\$1,500 \text{ per night} \times 365 \text{ nights per year} = \$547,500$).

Yet when this issue makes headline news, it’s the victim — the girl who was exploited and brutalized — who is most often portrayed as the criminal. We learn details about the young girl’s arrest for prostitution, while the predator who enslaved and sold her, and the men who bought and further victimized her, are rarely arrested or prosecuted and remain hidden from the public eye.

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To end child sex trafficking in Minnesota, we must **decrease the demand, hold people accountable who buy and sell our children for sex, and help victims escape exploitation.**

As a state, we must **fully fund Safe Harbor**, our state’s comprehensive model to provide specialized housing and trauma treatment for sex-trafficked children.”

*John J. Choi –
Ramsey County Attorney*

We also don't hear about the circumstances that preceded the girl's victimization — what rendered her vulnerable and easy prey for traffickers. Nor is there a focus on the "demand" side of the issue, largely because of the cultural acceptance that prostitution is a victimless crime rather than a horrific crime of violence. The headlines don't report the fact that the average age a Minnesota girl is first trafficked is 13, many as young as 11.

And we don't often hear about the increasing sexualization of our children and how this alarming trend contributes to the problem of sexual exploitation. Cultural acceptance of such sexualization, researchers say, contributes to a society in which the sex trafficking of girls is allowed to not just exist, but flourish.

That acceptance also allows us to put the blame on these sexually exploited girls for "making bad choices."

Let's be clear: prostitution is NEVER a choice girls make.

Common threads that render girls vulnerable to pimps include neglect, physical and sexual abuse, poverty and homelessness. And because they are children, they do not yet possess the maturity, confidence and ability to defend themselves against sexual predators.

The New York Times' columnist Nicholas D. Kristof calls the sex trafficking of domestic girls "...one of our country's biggest human rights problems."

He's right, and we need it to stop. Now.

**Pimps make
an estimated
\$547,500
per year by selling
girls they control
for sex.**



**Common threads
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**NEGLECT,
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HOMELESSNESS.**

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?
WFMN.ORG**



Since 1983, the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota has invested in social change to achieve equality for all women and girls. Our work to advance safety and security – our largest area of grantmaking – and stories from our grantee-partners and colleagues in the state’s criminal justice system informed our growing concern about the sex trafficking of Minnesota girls.

In 2010, we took action on our concern by partnering with the Women’s Funding Network in the national rollout of “A Future, Not a Past,” a program modeled on Georgia’s successful campaign to stop the sex trafficking of girls in that state. Minnesota is one of several states implementing this model that will yield national strategies to end domestic minor sex trafficking.

At the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, we have an ethos of listening and responding to community concerns. We believe that problems and solutions are found in the same place, and to create a statewide solution, you need statewide partners.

So we convened over 100 stakeholders – donors, elected officials, state agencies, philanthropies, advocates, corporations, law enforcement, judges, faith communities, and many others – to create a strategic, multi-sector blueprint to combat the prostitution of Minnesota girls.

The result? MN Girls Are Not For Sale – a five year, \$5 million campaign launched in November 2011 to galvanize resources to end the sex trafficking of Minnesota girls through grantmaking, research, public education and convening.

OUR GOALS:

1. We'll **redefine** trafficked girls under 18 as victims of a crime and ensure access to specialized housing and treatment.

✓ **ACHIEVED** In May 2013, the Safe Harbor 2013 bill was signed into law by Gov. Mark Dayton, decriminalizing children under 18 who have been sexually exploited. It also secured \$2.8 million in partial funding (\$13.5 million requested) for housing, training, a state director, and statewide navigators. *Learn more at WFMN.ORG.*

2. We'll **decrease the demand**.

3. We'll **raise awareness** and **engage the public** until there is zero tolerance for the sex trafficking of girls.



And how are we continuing to move these campaign goals forward?

To date, we've invested over \$3 million to change state laws to recognize girls under 18 who've been trafficked as victims of a crime, not the criminals; ensure that advocates can create and sustain housing and treatment for survivors; develop a statewide intervention model of safety that connects law enforcement, prosecutors, investigators, and advocates; train youth outreach service professionals; educate youth about sex trafficking prevention; and decrease the demand.

We've commissioned groundbreaking research that will measure the scope of this issue and the demand for sex with adolescent Minnesota girls.

We're educating, engaging, and mobilizing the public to prevent the sex trafficking of girls, and decrease the demand.

We'll continue to convene our stakeholders to inform our work, deepen the network, and develop the best strategies to end the sex trafficking of Minnesota girls.

FUNDING MN GIRLS ARE NOT FOR SALE

The Women's Foundation of Minnesota relies on philanthropists with a sense of fairness and justice to fund and create safety and security for all girls in our state.

Help us ensure that every girl can experience the world as a place of safety, and thrive.

Through the MN Girls Are Not For Sale campaign, Minnesota has become a national leader in the movement to end the sex trafficking of children. We have the resources, know-how and partners in place to make it happen.

Please join us! Learn more, act, donate: WFMN.ORG.



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