WHAT IS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?
The exchange of sexual activity for money, shelter, drugs, or something else of value. Includes (but is not limited to) prostitution, sex trafficking, survival sex, stripping or pornography.

WHAT MAY CAUSE SOMEONE TO BE VULNERABLE TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?
- Homeless/Runaway
- History of sexual abuse
- Involvement in child welfare system
- Truancy
- Drug addiction
- Disabilities, mental illness

NATIVE COMMUNITIES ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE:
- In 2013, 31% of American Indian 9th grade girls in MN reported running away from home, compared to 8% of all girls in ninth grade.¹
- One in three Native women will be sexually assaulted at least once in their lifetime, a rate 2.5 times higher than the general population.²
- American Indian children represent less than 2% of Minnesota’s population but comprise 11.1% of the state’s out-of-home placements.³

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:
- Older boyfriend or girlfriend
- New possessions, unexplained income
- Cash, prepaid credit cards, burner phones
- Frequent calls to cell phone
- Truancy and running away from home
- Withdrawn or guarded behavior

“Women like myself need someone they feel they can trust without being judged by how they lived their life. We didn’t wake up and choose to become a whore or a hooker or a ‘ho’ as they call us. We need someone to understand where we came from and how we lived and that half us were raped, beat, and made to sell our bodies. We need people with hearts.”

– Native survivor of sex trafficking

KEY FACTS
In a study of Native women in prostitution in Minnesota:⁴

98 percent were or had been homeless

92 percent wanted to escape prostitution

79 percent had been sexually abused as children
SAFE HARBOR

The state of Minnesota’s law and response to sexually exploited youth

- Youth under the age of 18 may not be arrested or charged with prostitution.
- Sexually exploited youth now fall under the state’s child protection code.
- Regional navigators can help assist victims and coordinate community response.
- Training is being provided to systems professionals and law enforcement.

For more information about Safe Harbor, visit health.state.mn.us/injury/topic/safeharbor

ENDNOTES

5. Ibid.

For more information, see Shattered Hearts: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation Of American Indian Women And Girls In Minnesota, Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center (2009).