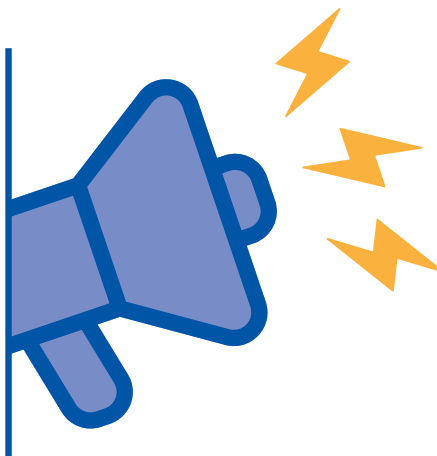


SAFE HARBOR TOOLKIT



Greater Milwaukee
& Waukesha County



HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS AN INVISIBLE EPIDEMIC IN WISCONSIN

The U.S. Department of Justice defines human trafficking (also known as trafficking in persons or modern-day slavery) as, “a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological. Exploitation of a minor for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud, or coercion was used.” ([U.S. Dept. of Justice](#)).

Wisconsin has a reputation [for being in the top five states for sex trafficking](#) and human trafficking has been reported in all 72 counties across Wisconsin. Often, victims of trafficking are under the age of 18, “hidden in plain sight”, they may not display outward signs of being captive or trafficked, and may appear to pass as a typical participant in society. However, they are bound by their trauma, fear, manipulation, and other tactics used to remove their autonomy and free will. As a result, they may not recognize their exploitation, be too afraid, or not know who to trust and often do not seek help. Most people do not know or recognize the warning signs of trafficking; therefore, these victims often go undetected and do not receive the help they need.

WISCONSIN'S CURRENT PROSTITUTION LAWS FAIL TO RECOGNIZE MINORS AS VICTIMS IN NEED OF SUPPORT

According to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' most recent report, there were 422 allegations of child sex trafficking in Wisconsin between June 2017 and August 2018. More than 42% of these allegations were in Milwaukee County. Nearly 82 percent of allegations statewide involved a child between the ages of 14-17. In Milwaukee, this age group represented 89% of all allegations ([Department of Children and Families, 2018](#)).

While federal law clearly recognizes individuals under the age of 18 performing commercial acts as victims of trafficking, Wisconsin law currently allows persons under the age of 18 to be charged with prostitution. Instead of being treated as victims, trafficked minors are treated as criminals and are prosecuted accordingly. Arrest and prosecution can further traumatize the victim and sow the distrust of law enforcement which is then used by traffickers to prevent victims from seeking help. Additionally, the victims receive a criminal record, which limits their future access to employment and other opportunities, leaving them trapped in the cycle of abuse.

SAFE HARBOR LAWS CAN HELP TRAFFICKED MINORS GET THE SUPPORTS THEY NEED



Greater Milwaukee
& Waukesha County

A recent brief by the [Polaris Project](#) highlights Safe Harbor laws. Safe Harbor laws were developed to fix a gap between federal and state trafficking laws. Through statutory rape laws, the state criminalizes adults that have sex with children. However, these laws are inconsistently applied when the sex was purchased. The result is children, recognized under both state and federal law as victims of a crime, are arrested and convicted of prostitution.

Safe Harbor laws, such as the proposed Wisconsin Senate Bill 245/Assembly Bill 185, help disrupt the cycle of human trafficking. They prevent minors from being charged with prostitution and instead connects them with the supportive resources they need to recover, such as healthcare, economic supports, mental health services, and foster care. According to the [Polaris Project](#), 34 states have enacted Safe Harbor laws as of 2019. After passing Safe Harbor legislation in 2011, Minnesota saw the convictions of traffickers quadruple in 2012.

The ask to Wisconsin's Legislature:

Will you help protect victims of human trafficking by supporting or co-sponsoring Senate Bill 245/Assembly Bill 185?

SAMPLE PHONE AND EMAIL SCRIPT

EMAIL

"I am [first and last name], a constituent who lives in your district. It is deeply important to me that we protect and support all victims of human trafficking, especially minors. Therefore, I support passage of Safe Harbor legislation to protect the victims of human trafficking in Wisconsin.

Human trafficking is a significant problem in Wisconsin. Our state has a reputation [for being in the top five states for sex trafficking](#), and human trafficking has been reported in all 72 counties across Wisconsin. Data from the [Wisconsin Department of Children and Families](#) show that nearly 82% of these allegations in Wisconsin involved a child between the ages of 14-17. Child victims of trafficking are forced or coerced into providing labor, services, or commercial sex. Often, victims of trafficking are "hidden in plain sight," and are bound to traffickers by trauma, fear, manipulation, and other tactics used to remove their autonomy and free will.


Wisconsin law currently allows children under the age of 18 to be charged with prostitution. Instead of providing these victims with support, trafficked minors are treated as criminals and are prosecuted accordingly. Arrest and prosecution can further traumatize the victim, and sow distrust of law enforcement which is used by traffickers to prevent victims from seeking help.

Safe Harbor laws, such as the proposed Wisconsin [Senate Bill 245/Assembly Bill 185](#), help disrupt the cycle of human trafficking. They prevent minors from being charged with prostitution and instead connect them with the supportive resources they need, such as healthcare, economic supports, mental health services, and foster care. According to the [Polaris Project](#), 34 states have enacted Safe Harbor laws as of 2019.


I ask that you support Wisconsin Senate Bill 245/Assembly Bill 185 to advocate on behalf of trafficked children."

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS




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Safe Harbor laws recognize that trafficked children are victims, not criminals. Contact your Wisconsin State Senator and ask them to support SB245.
[#EndSexTrafficking](#) [#WomenUnited](#)

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Wisconsin's laws allow for trafficked children to be charged with prostitution. For no other crime do we charge individuals for an abuse committed against them. Tell Wisconsin's Legislature to pass Safe Harbor laws like SB245 and AB185.
[#EndSexTrafficking](#) [#WomenUnited](#)

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Safe Harbor laws recognize that trafficked children are victims, not criminals. Contact your Wisconsin State Representative and ask them to support AB185.
[#EndSexTrafficking](#) [#WomenUnited](#)

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Survivors of [#sextrafficking](#) need social, legal, & emotional support –not jail time. Tell Wisconsin's Legislature to pass Safe Harbor laws like SB245 and AB185.
[#EndSexTrafficking](#) [#WomenUnited](#)
