

*The Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth Team determined a set of values and an overarching philosophy of service that informs all aspects of the No Wrong Door Model. These values and philosophies should be understood and incorporated into trainings, services and system response provided to sexually exploited and at-risk youth.*

### Underlying Values and Philosophy

1. Sexual exploitation of youth is pervasive in Minnesota and affects youth from across the state. Youth who are sexually exploited and victims of trafficking often don't identify as such. Therefore, those who come into contact with youth should be **trained to identify sexual exploitation**. This training will provide Minnesota youth with no wrong door to receiving services and support.
2. Youth who are sexually exploited are **victims of a crime** and should be treated as victims, not perpetrators.
3. Victims should not feel afraid, isolated or trapped.
4. Sexual exploitation is traumatic. These types of traumatic experiences, especially when compounded over time, can result in youth who are mistrustful of adults and authority. It can result in feelings of depression, shame, hopelessness and post-traumatic stress, and can harm relationships with others. Traumatic experiences, especially sexual exploitation, also can impact physical health, including reproductive health. Trauma impacts drug and alcohol use as well. While trauma harms one's sense of self and connection to community, youth can and will heal from the exploitation they have experienced. Comprehensive victim-centered services for youth should be based in **trauma-informed care**.

5. Services also should be **responsive to the needs of individual youth**. This includes making services available that are gender-responsive, culturally competent, age-appropriate and supportive for youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (GLBTQ).
6. Services should be offered **statewide**, with services designed to reflect the specific regional needs of different areas.
7. Youth have a right to **privacy** and **self-determination**, including the right to understand and consent to the data that is collected and shared about them.
8. While minimizing the risks youth have for sexual exploitation is vital to the safety and recovery of sexually exploited youth, ensuring that services are based in **positive youth development principles** is equally important. Positive youth development builds on the strength and resiliency of youth, ensuring they have the support needed to become successful in life.
9. Sexual exploitation can be **prevented**. While this model is designed to intervene and work with youth who have been or are at risk of being a victim of sexual exploitation, it is equally important that efforts be undertaken to change the culture and environment that allows for and accepts the sexual exploitation of children.

*The Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth Team also developed a set of basic assumptions that guided the development of model specifics. The assumptions, while not mentioned throughout the report, are integral to each aspect of the model and should be considered essential in the development of any training, services or system response to sexually exploited youth and youth at risk for sexual exploitation.*

### **Basic Model Assumptions**

1. The child protection system is not designed, nor is adequate to address the needs of sexually exploited youth, especially when that youth is a teenager and has not experienced familial abuse.
2. The juvenile delinquency system is not designed, nor is adequate, to address the needs of sexually exploited youth who are victims of a crime.
3. Whenever possible, existing services should be used to provide services to sexually exploited youth. These services should be based in the community. Organizations that work with youth should be adept at identifying sexual exploitation. When appropriate, these organizations also should incorporate trauma-informed methods to their services.
4. When possible, peer models and supports should be made available to sexually exploited youth.
5. Services should be multidisciplinary and coordinated. These services should be available to youth for an open-ended amount of time, as best fits the needs of the youth.

6. Law enforcement and service providers should work together to identify victims, provide appropriate services and prosecute traffickers and commercial sexual abusers.
7. Holding youth in juvenile detention is undesirable. However, keeping youth safe from traffickers and commercial sexual abusers is paramount. Access to a comprehensive needs assessment and services is vital when there are no other options and youth must be securely held for personal safety reasons.
8. Addressing the complex needs of sexually exploited youth is difficult, particularly when youth have difficulty establishing trusting relationships. This model assumes those working with sexually exploited youth have the proper experience, training and skills needed to effectively establish relationships with this population. The model also assumes those working with this vulnerable population of children have been screened thoroughly.