



Report on Labor Trafficking Services Grant Program

VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS UNIT

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Labor Trafficking Services Grant Program

The Minnesota State Legislature provided state funding to support services for victims and survivors of labor trafficking and exploitation during the 2023 session. This is the first appropriation of its kind by the legislature. Chapter 70 of the Minnesota Session Laws, Regular Session, established a new statutory section, 144.3885, setting forth a labor trafficking services grant program in the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). The program must provide “comprehensive, trauma-informed, and culturally specific services for victims of labor trafficking and exploitation.” MDH must submit a report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees over health policy and finance by January 15 of each year. The report must include the names of the grant recipients, how the grant funds were spent, and how many individuals were served. MDH executed the first grant contracts in the fall of 2023 after a competitive request for proposal process; therefore, this initial report summarizes the grantee agencies, their service areas, project descriptions, and amounts awarded.

Background

Labor trafficking occurs when one person manipulates or controls another to provide labor. Tactics may include intimidation, coercion and threats, debt bondage, withholding documents, and other methods of control. Labor exploitation occurs when workers are subjected to unfair labor practices and can include refusing pay or being underpaid for labor, or wage theft (withholding legally or contractually promised wages, including overtime). Labor trafficking and exploitation occur in many settings, including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, domestic service, and others. Sometimes, labor trafficking and exploitation involve forced criminality, when someone forces another to commit a crime, such as selling or transporting drugs.

Labor trafficking and exploitation are public health issues. Victims and survivors suffer short- and long-term health effects stemming from working in unsafe conditions for long hours, lack of access to food or water, or exposure to harmful chemicals without protective or safety gear. Workers may be deprived of wages and cannot support their basic needs. Traffickers and exploiters may use threats, intimidation, force, unresolved debts, and other tools of manipulation to control workers in these situations.

Over the past decade, Minnesota has developed an effective response to the sexual exploitation of youth through the Safe Harbor program. However, human trafficking and exploitation affect more than just one population group and take several forms. There is growing national recognition that a more holistic response to human trafficking is necessary, one that encompasses sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, labor trafficking, and labor exploitation. This new alignment was advanced when President Biden signed the latest reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in December 2022, which highlighted the need for a more robust response to all forms of human trafficking, including labor trafficking, which is defined as a severe form of trafficking in persons under 22 USC § 7102(11). Various systems, including child welfare and law enforcement, are developing more robust responses to labor trafficking and exploitation as a result.

Since 2016, MDH has funded labor trafficking services, protocol development, and support for law enforcement response through three Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Trafficking grants from the Office for Victims of Crime in the United States Department of Justice. This federal funding has laid the groundwork for a statewide response to labor trafficking and exploitation by supporting the development of protocol guidelines

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and protocols for law enforcement through the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's Human Trafficking Investigators Task Force and supporting some direct services. Still, this funding is insufficient for ongoing services and is time limited.

During the 2023 Minnesota state legislative session, crucial services funding was appropriated in response to joint advocacy by survivor subject matter experts, victim services coalitions, labor unions, and human rights organizations. At the same time, the legislature made significant updates to the labor trafficking criminal statute (Minn. Stat. § 609.282). These critical events, tied to new wage theft laws passed in recent years, place Minnesota in a stronger position to address labor trafficking and exploitation. For additional information about the response to labor trafficking and exploitation in Minnesota visit [Safe Harbor - MN Dept. of Health](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/index.html>)

Grantees

MDH received \$500,000 per year as base funding to be used for grants to organizations providing services to victims of labor trafficking and exploitation including case management, supportive services, shelter, housing, and other needs. MDH initiated a competitive Request for Proposals organizing funds into three-year grants offering a total of \$1,500,000. MDH received seven applications requesting a total amount of \$2,170,622.06. The review panel included a labor trafficking survivor subject matter expert and state agency representatives familiar with labor trafficking and exploitation service needs. MDH awarded six grants, listed in the chart below, to non-profit and government-based organizations providing various services statewide or regionally. The start date for the grant date is an estimate; contracts begin when all parties have signed.

Organization Name	Grant Period	Description	Grant Amount
The Advocates for Human Rights Minneapolis Service area: Statewide	January 9, 2024, through June 30, 2026 (FY24-FY26)	Grantee will provide pro bono representation for individuals seeking humanitarian protection in the United States related to labor trafficking and exploitation, including trafficking-related visas and legal protections for unaccompanied minors who are at risk of child labor violations. Grantee will also provide training and technical assistance.	\$270,000

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Organization Name	Grant Period	Description	Grant Amount
<p>The Enitan Story Fridley</p> <p>Service area: Statewide</p>	<p>December 26, 2023, through June 30, 2026</p> <p>(FY24-FY26)</p>	<p>Grantee will provide case management services statewide to victims and survivors of labor trafficking and exploitation by assessing their needs, providing trauma-informed, culturally relevant services, incorporating their voices, and coordinating referrals. Grantee will also offer training, technical assistance, and life skills education for survivors.</p>	<p>\$50,000*</p>
<p>Refugee Services, Lutheran Social Services</p> <p>Minneapolis/St. Cloud</p> <p>Service area: Central Minnesota (Benton, Kandiyohi, Sherburne, and Stearns counties)</p>	<p>December 18, 2023, through June 30, 2026</p> <p>(FY24-FY26)</p>	<p>Grantee will provide trauma-informed and culturally relevant case management services and referrals to refugee and immigrant victims and survivors of labor trafficking and exploitation to help meet their basic needs, address the harm caused by trafficking and exploitation, and move them towards healing. Grantee will also provide training with a focus on prevention.</p>	<p>\$350,000</p>
<p>Dodge & Olmsted Victim Services, Olmsted County</p> <p>Rochester</p> <p>Service area: Southeastern Minnesota (Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona counties)</p>	<p>December 8, 2023, through June 30, 2026</p> <p>(FY24-FY26)</p>	<p>Grantee will provide advocacy, case management, and supportive services specially designed to meet the needs of victims and survivors of labor trafficking and labor exploitation, as well as those who are at risk. Services will be victim-centered, trauma-informed, strengths-based, age-appropriate, and culturally responsive.</p>	<p>\$350,000</p>

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Organization Name	Grant Period	Description	Grant Amount
Someplace Safe Fergus Falls Service area: West Central Minnesota (Becker, Big Stone, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin counties)	December 13, 2023, through June 30, 2026 (FY24-FY26)	Grantee will provide ongoing trauma-informed, victim-led, and culturally responsive case management and services to victims and survivors of labor trafficking and exploitation. A full-time Regional Labor Trafficking Advocate will provide services, build partnerships, give referrals and trainings, and work to strengthen system responses.	\$325,000
Standpoint Minneapolis Service area: Statewide	December 14, 2023, through June 30, 2026 (FY24-FY26)	Grantee will enhance services and support to domestic and sexual violence survivors who have experienced labor trafficking or exploitation. Services will include pro bono representation of victims who qualify for trafficking-related immigration relief. Grantee will also update its screening tool, recruit volunteer attorneys, and provide outreach and training.	\$155,000**

Total amount awarded: \$1,500,000

* The Enitan Story received an additional \$50,000 from federal funds managed by the Safe Harbor program for a total grant of \$100,000.

** Standpoint received an additional \$15,000 from penalty funds managed by the Safe Harbor program for a total grant of \$170,000.

Conclusion

The labor trafficking services grants offer an array of services in the state. Several systems will benefit from partnerships with these grantees, including child welfare, criminal justice, health care, and social services. MDH anticipates that the grantees' experiences, coupled with their service data, will inform future efforts to expand Minnesota's response to labor trafficking and exploitation. Future legislative reports from MDH on the labor trafficking services grant program will include additional information about grant fund spending, how many individuals were served (including aggregated demographic data), and the types of services provided.