

## **MONROE COUNTY SAFE HARBOUR PLAN**

As prepared by The Center for Youth Services, Inc.

### **FINAL DRAFT**

Responding to the six required elements as provided, Monroe County and The Center for Youth Services submit the following Monroe County Safe Harbour Plan to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services for its review and approval:

**a) A brief analysis identifying the communities within the targeted district that potentially have the greatest number of sexually exploited children**

Throughout the United States, advocacy groups, domestic violence agencies, and even a public movement called One Billion Rising have attempted to bring the pain and suffering associated with sexual exploitation, rape and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of young people to light. With an estimated one-third, or 33% of women, in our country believed to be victims of these crimes, the opportunity to form a community coalition and to work collaboratively with a county plan to reduce and potentially eliminate these crimes against our children is timely and necessary.

Federal studies conducted by the Administration of Children & Families have long shown that 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth were sexually abused prior to becoming homeless.<sup>1</sup> Runaway and homeless youth (RHY) are at great risk for sexual exploitation and human trafficking due to their disconnection from supportive and healthy adults. Many homeless youth “couch surf” from house to house, relying on anyone who will give them a place to sleep, RHY who do not access shelters are 3 times more likely to engage in “survival sex” in order to secure a place to stay.<sup>2</sup> For minors, “survival sex” is sexual exploitation and trafficking, in that it is trading sex for food, shelter or other items needed to survive.

Other youth at high risk for sexual exploitation are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth who are rejected by their families and made unwelcome in LGBT-uninformed programs. These young people also face higher rates of homelessness.<sup>3</sup> Youth with disabilities, language and cultural barriers as well citizenship status face additional vulnerabilities when sexually exploited. An effective community response will need to be informed and ensure accesses to services for those victims with disabilities, language and cultural barriers, as well as refugees by including community advocates and other knowledgeable service providers at the table.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/sex\\_abuse\\_hmless.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/sex_abuse_hmless.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10474560>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/lgbtq-youth>

The data presented nationally is reflective of what we see in our local community and particularly in the targeted districts for the purpose of the county plan and the associated positive response; we expect that our community's success will rely on a coordinated effort.

In 2010, Monroe County placed over 800 youth ages 16 -20 in emergency shelters. That same year, the Center for Youth served 260 RHY in its emergency shelter; 99 RHY 12 – 15 years old and an additional 90 16 – 18 years old not placed by the County. The Center has experienced an increase in the number of RHY served each year as youth and families struggle in our community.

Reviewing the past three years, the period of 2010 through 2012, Rochester and Monroe County have been faced with very public and troublesome incidents of sexual exploitation and particularly trafficking and CSE of young women. While these incidents have primarily been located in the City of Rochester, and even more specifically in the Northwest quadrant of our city, there is growing evidence that the issue of CSE and sexual exploitation is present throughout Monroe County and perhaps in more rural areas as well. These highly publicized cases put a spotlight on an issue that the community has struggled with privately and that now received much needed attention.

This public exposure revealed the seriousness of the problem and acknowledged that the issue of CSE and sex trafficking has been on the rise since 2010. More specifically, in April of 2011, the Lyell Avenue area of the City of Rochester, located in the Northwest quadrant of the city, was the subject of a sweep by the Rochester Police Department and eleven (11) prostitutes were arrested. While no purchasers of the services were arrested at the time, there was a clear indication of an active CSE ring in place. This incident was followed by the March 2012 arrest of two people who were indicated for forcing minors into CSE. These arrests triggered a response by the Monroe County District Attorney who confirmed that sexual exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation was on the rise in our community. Soon after, in August of 2012, another high profile case of commercial sexual exploitation was reported and a 26 year old male was arrested for prostituting a 15 year old that he had met in a youth services facility. To further reveal the growing concern in our community, it is important to note that over the past two years, a local community organization has been established that operates with the mission and goal of eradicating sex trafficking in our city's downtown area. Billboards are commonplace on the neighborhoods near Lyell Avenue and the Rochester Police Department's vice unit is more engaged than ever in an attempt to identify and arrest perpetrators.

During this same time period, the reports from The Center for Youth's emergency shelter for youth ages 12 – 18 years and those in transitional housing ages 16 – 21 years revealed troubling self-reported data from the young women who accessed services. In addition, their reports were nearly identical to the national statistics. All the services and programs in The Center for Youth' runaway and homeless continuum are voluntarily accessed and therefore, self-reports are likely to be more accurate and more meaningful. At the height of the reports in 2010, nearly 32% of the 175 young women

accessing residential services reported that they were victims of sexual abuse, rape or exploitation, and 6 young women, ages 12 – 18 years reported engaging in “survival sex” or CSE. In 2011 and 2012, the numbers dropped slightly from those reported in 2010, yet still presented very troubling data, of 21% and 23% respectively for these two years. While the self-reported numbers have proven to be accurate, we also recognize that there is an under reporting for sexual abuse and exploitation and certainly for CSE given the illegality of the actions and the shame and fear that often accompanies the sexual abuse and rape of young women. To that end, it is widely agreed that the numbers of young women reporting sexual abuse, rape and exploitation is underreported nationally and may be even further underreported by those girls and young women seeking emergency shelter. Therefore, we believe that the estimates measure closer to 40% of all girls and young women accessing our programs; all of these voluntarily and without criminal charges or mandatory placements.

For purposes of this proposed work and the community/county plan that will drive our work, we have targeted the districts that mirror the location of our emergency shelters and our street outreach work. As far as reported statistics, The Center for Youth statistics for young women accessing housing and are also the victims of sexual abuse, exploitation and abuse, and victims of trafficking are likely to overlap and reflect the same challenged neighborhoods in our city. As noted earlier, victims of commercial sexual exploitation are likely to be those youth living in poverty and facing other lack of supports. Therefore, it is not surprising that youth living in the Northwest section of our city, where the Center House, our emergency shelter for 12 – 18 year olds is located as well and those youth living in the 14609 and 14621 zip codes in the Northeast section of Rochester may be most vulnerable for commercial sexual exploitation. It is useful that The Center’s wide and broad reach covers the areas of our community most likely to be subjected to sexual exploitation, abuse, and commercial sex trade and trafficking.

**b) The name of each service and program proposed for funding with these funds that the county plans to use for services for sexually exploited children, its provider, the communities and types of children targeted for the services or program, and the projected number of children that will be served.**

Working closely with the Monroe County Department of Human Services and its Commissioner Kelly Reed, The Center for Youth Services, an experienced runaway and homeless provider, will serve as lead agency to implement the county plan once approved by the Office of Children and Family Services. The Center’s relationship with both the County and OCFS over many years will support our collaboration and will position us to bring to the community table other service providers and professional staff who are playing an active and effective role with children, youth and young adults who are sexually exploited. Every required element from case planning to health care to mental health and immigration relief services will be included in the county plan, as well an active emergency and longer term housing plan.

Beginning immediately with the establishment of a multi-disciplinary Steering Committee as noted in #5, under Allowable Use of Funds, The Center will assemble a team of county professionals and other service providers to meet the goals set forth in the county plan, as jointly developed by The Center for Youth and the Monroe County Department of Human Services.

- 1) The Department of Human Services and the Monroe County Children's Center will be an integral part of the Steering Committee, with Kim Hare, Linda Oinen and Mike Marinen, as essential partners. With the county leadership provided by Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks, Commissioner of the Department of Human Services Kelly Reed and Monroe County Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn, the county leadership will be significant. While there will not be a funding relationship, their expertise and referrals will be important. As noted in the New York State Anti-Trafficking legislation, placement services and services that assist the individual and other family members are requirements if we expect to achieve a safe and effective permanent residence. Referrals for mental health counseling as well job training can be facilitated through these county partners.
- 2) **Catholic Family Center Refugee Services** provides supports and services to those who are immigrant, non-English speaking and often without family connections and resources, and who may be more likely to be exploited sexually and mistreated. Therefore the language interpretation and translation services provided by CFC Refugee program, as well as the opportunity for case management, immigration relief services and health care will support the needs of this population. A strong referral relationship will be established between The Center for Youth's lead coordinator and the professional staff at CFC in the Refugee area, led by Sally Partner, an excellent community advocate. Incentive funding will be provided to offer supportive services directly to victims and families. A list of such incentives and the goals to be achieved will be provided.
- 3) **Mt. Hope Family Center** is experienced at providing mental health counseling, case management and positive intervention and is well equipped to assist with the targeted population. Mt. Hope Family Center under the leadership of Sheree Toth and her staff has received external grant funding and is positioned to expand their services to include our targeted population. Their in-kind support will be essential.
- 4) **Crestwood Children's Center** is a community resource that has served children and families for many decades and will be included to provide family intervention and counseling, mental health and residential services, and will act as a referral source.

- 5) **Susan B Anthony Leadership Center at the University of Rochester** has re-directed its resources and its attention to meeting the needs of girls and young women in our community, especially those who are victims of violence and abuse. The recent appointment of Dr. Catherine Cerulli marks a renewed commitment to addressing the needs of this targeted population, those who are victims of sexual exploitation, domestic sexual abuse, prostitution, and trafficking. Research as well as active leadership and support for coordinating services will be provided by this significant university connection.
- 6) **The Center for Youth Services** is a multi-faceted youth-centered agency that has provided leadership for the Runaway and Homeless service providers across Monroe County for nearly 4 decades. As the lead agency for the Safe Harbour project and the facilitator of the county plan, The Center for Youth, led by Dr. Elaine Spaul, PhD; JD, and a City Councilmember, will provide access to emergency housing, case management, family reunification, and advocacy so that all the providers including law enforcement, school districts, and other community stakeholders will be at the table. As is well-established in the literature, homeless youth are more likely to be victims of sexual predators and are more likely to engage in survival sex and CSE as a condition and result of their homelessness and lack of resources. While The Center has its expertise in trauma-informed care to homeless and runaway youth, its strong connections to other providers including medical and mental health providers and those involved in drug treatment and legal services positions this project to be well-coordinated and effective.
- 7) **Community stakeholders** who will join the team include: Legal Aid Society, the Monroe County District Attorney, the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, the Rochester-Monroe County Domestic Violence Consortium, including community based groups such as Stand Up Guys, the Rochester Police Department, the Bivona Child Advocacy Center, the Court system, The MOCHA Center, advocacy groups, and local hospitals and universities.

Program/Provider	Services Targeting Sexually Exploited Youth Ages 12 – 17	# Served
<b>Safe Short &amp; Long-Term Housing</b>	Utilize existing beds in Monroe County Continuum of Runaway & Homeless Youth Providers – training and support from MCSH Advocate will increase the identification of sexually exploited youth	<b>50</b>
<b>Street Outreach</b>  The Center for Youth Services	Outreach, information and referral and connection with safe, healthy adults: <b>100:</b> contacted and provided information & referral, of which; - <b>25</b> will be provided on-going street-based services and case management	<b>100</b>

Program/Provider	Services Targeting Sexually Exploited Youth Ages 12 – 17	# Served
<p><b>Monroe County Safe Harbour Advocate</b></p> <p>The Center for Youth Services</p>	<p>Intensive case management and advocacy for sexually exploited youth in Monroe County, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Tracking (case files, demographics, goals)</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Referral (counseling, health, education, employment, childcare, stable housing)</li> <li>• Coordination across agencies and services</li> <li>• Follow-up (30, 60, 90 days and 6 months through project period)</li> <li>• Aftercare as needed for duration of project</li> </ul>	<p><b>70</b></p>
<p><b>Monroe County Safe Harbour Coordinator</b></p> <p>The Center for Youth Services</p>	<p>Coordination of multi-disciplinary team across agencies and service providers</p> <p>Provide information for the county website about resources in the community</p> <p>Promote community awareness about sexual exploitation of children, including identification and referral</p> <p>Provide administrative and staffing support to the Safe Harbour Steering Committee &amp; Community Task Force</p> <p>Coordinate Safe Harbour trainings and technical assistance through IOFA* for Monroe County stakeholders</p>	
<p><b>Monroe County Safe Harbour Community (MCSF) Task Force &amp; Steering Committee</b></p>	<p>Address the issue of the sexual exploitation of children on a community-wide basis</p> <p>Create strategic plan for Monroe County to continue to provide a coordinated response to child victims of sexual exploitation</p> <p>Develop liaisons between the local department of social services and the family court; legal aid society; and district attorney's office</p> <p>Develop programs to help transition sexually exploited youth back to their families and communities</p>	

\*IOFA: The International Organization for Adolescents was awarded Safe Harbour funding by OCFS to provide training to agencies across New York State.

The essential tasks of the Monroe County Safe Harbour (MCSH) Task Force & Steering Committee will be to oversee the funded immediate services and to create a Safe Harbour strategic plan to determine how the county will continue to serve sexually exploited children beyond this initial funding.

In order for the MCSH Task Force to create a coordinated plan, it is critical that the targeted and intensive services provided to youth identified as being sexually exploited be tracked and assessed for efficacy and duplication. The Monroe County Safe Harbour Coordinator will quantify the services provided and provide the MCSH Task Force with monthly reports that include number of youth served, what types of services, community awareness efforts, and updates on cross-agency coordination efforts.

**c) A description of how each service or program will meet the needs of sexually exploited children, state if it is at all family-focused, and detail whether it is capable of being replicated in multiple sites.**

As noted above, the Monroe County Department of Human Services will be the umbrella entity for the Safe Harbour initiative and will play an essential role as a referral source and connector to all other stakeholders. Monroe County DHS is a family-focused department whose Commissioner Kelly Reed has many years in leadership roles in the non-profit sector as well as in county government.

The other non-profit agencies, particularly The Center for Youth, will meet the needs of sexually exploited children and youth by delivering the programs and services that are best suited to the needs of these victims. The majority of minors who access The Center's short-term emergency shelter return home to parents or guardians. RHY staff from each agency are experienced at working with families to ensure a safe and permanent return home.

Each identified partner has a specific skill or approach that addresses the identified multi-faceted needs of those who have been sexually exploited. For example, the Mt Hope Family Center has expertise in the delivery of clinic services to children, youth and families who have experienced trauma and who need supports and assistance in addressed these traumatic experiences.

The intensive case assessment and planning will be made available at any agency or site that is serving the sexually exploited youth instead of requiring the identified youth to move to any particular agency. Additionally, one of the essential goals of the Monroe County Safe Harbour Steering Committee, with the assistance of the MCSH Task Force, will be to develop on on-going strategic response to the needs of sexually exploited youth beyond the award of this funding.

**d) A description of the demonstrated effectiveness of the proposed service/program, or other justification of why it is proposed for funding**

It is estimated that 60% of the victims of sexual exploitation are homeless or runaway youth.<sup>4</sup> By building upon Monroe County's existing runaway and homeless youth (RHY) continuum, the proposed use of NY State Safe Harbour funding can be effectively maximized in Monroe County.

For many years, in partnership with the Monroe County Youth Bureau, RHY Providers have worked together to ensure the best services are provided with the fewest barriers possible across agencies. To accomplish this, the RHY Providers meet monthly, collaborate on trainings and sign off on a 24-Hour Agreement each year that includes the following statements;

*"This integrated continuum of service responds to youth through crisis counseling, street outreach, counseling, case management provision of safe shelter, transitional living services, life skills training, discharge planning, and aftercare, where;*

- youths' needs are recognized and seen as a priority by all systems; sensitivity to how youth operate is evident*
- the importance of working as a team and complementing one another in the services we provide is recognized as essential to responding to an increase in need*
- a proactive approach is taken, with earlier identification of needs*
- immediate consults are available, despite the complexity of cases, so that response to every request is timely and appropriate*
- there is broader community recognition and confidence in the services we provide*
- we have increased ability to access educational services, mental health and substance abuse services for youth*
- we have a commitment and an ability to enhance our services to respond to the needs of youth"*

Plans for serving sexually exploited youth from communities all across the country identify the need for a collaborative response from multiple disciplines and multiple providers in order to ensure a truly safe and effective response to a child in crisis. Monroe County's RHY Continuum has the foundation of collaboration that can be the foundation of our communities coordinated response.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docs/pdf/SexualExploitedHomelessYouthIssueBrief.pdf>

**e) Projected performance outcomes, including estimates of anticipated increase in the ability to identify and serve child victims of sexual exploitation, and other positive outcomes for the children participating in each service/program.**

Youth Served Outcomes - The following outcomes are based on experience with RHY and may need to be amended as the project is implemented:

Intensive case management and advocacy for 70 youth identified as sexually exploited;

- 100% will be assessed for service needs
- 100% of youth who access intensive case management will participate in their own goal setting
- 80% will stabilize their housing
- 60% will access health/mental health services
- 60% will utilize aftercare supports
- 50 will be provided housing;
  - 80% will exit to stable housing
  - 70% will participate in living skills training, either group or one-on-one

MCSH Coordinator & Task Force Outcomes

- Increased identification of sexually exploited youth through
  - Training for service providers
  - Community awareness activities
- Implementation of coordinated approach to serving CSE that can be replicated
- Create strategic plan for Monroe County to continue to provide a coordinated response to child victims of sexual exploitation

The primary goal of the Safe Harbour project in Monroe County will be to implement and fine-tune a multi-dimensional approach that includes excellent direct service to youth to relieve dangerous and sexually exploitive situations, including safe housing and case management, while also providing a community wide education campaign and advocacy. Therefore, the projected outcomes will include primarily the measuring of effective services provided directly to youth and will also include an expected increase in the number of youth identified and served as well as an expected reduction in those victims who remain outside the system and without resources. A community action plan will be developed that will include performance outcomes for direct service to youth, both male and female as well as transgendered, as well as the measuring of community awareness and positive referrals.

While currently the data collection on minors presenting as sexually exploited or victims of trafficking or CSE is thin and lacking, there is information about the number of youth, primarily female youth and young adults, who are presenting as sexually exploited or abused, and that can create the basis for our expected increase in numbers identified and served. If the number self-reporting hovers between 35 and 40 on average, then

our expected increase can be estimated at 60. (These numbers reflect only female reports). We will also begin collecting county-wide data on our male victims as well as those who are transgendered. In total, the expectation is that we will serve 70 victims with intensive case assessment, planning and coordination.

The creation of a community strategic plan to address the issues of sexual exploitation, CSE and trafficking will be a second major objective. With the establishment of the Safe Harbour legislation and the understanding that victims who are being sexually exploited or who may be subjected to trafficking and survival sex are not criminally charged or treated, the numbers may increase but even as important, is the creation of the community strategic approach. This will plan will be a significant element of the performance measurements for Monroe County and the participating agencies.

**f) A description of how your county will address the needs of all sexually exploited minors – females, males and transgender victims.**

For more than 40 years, The Center for Youth has served runaway and homeless youth, street youth, transgendered youth and those without any connections to families or resources. The services and programs are voluntary, confidential, and free and are delivered without discrimination or barriers. In our emergency shelter, The Center House, access for all youth has been the hallmark of our success. Barrier-free services are our priority and will be the priority of the Steering Committee on the Safe Harbour project. Transgendered youth can access one private bedroom at the emergency shelter and our longer term transitional housing is single occupancy for utmost privacy and confidentiality. The shelter serves males and females in equal numbers and provides counseling and case management by a diverse staff including a transgendered professional counseling, those who are bi-lingual, and those who are well-trained in trauma and its impact on youth.

In addition to this exceptional access and barrier-free approach at The Center for Youth, the partner agencies identified as stakeholders will be expected to provide all services and programs to the targeted population – sexually exploited minors – and will include the Gay Alliance, MOCHA, AIDS Care and the Advocacy Center. These organizations currently partner with The Center for Youth and will be included in the formation of the MCSH Task Force to ensure the needs of GLTB victims of sexual exploitation are being best served.