

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking in Central Minnesota

## Did you know?

- St. Cloud has been identified by survivors and local law enforcement as a **“training hub”** for prostitution.
- Historically, St. Cloud has the **2<sup>nd</sup> highest** number of escort/prostitution ads on Backpage.com (the Twin Cities ranks 1<sup>st</sup>).
- The Central MN Sexual Assault Center serves an average of **70-100 victims** of commercial sexual exploitation/trafficking each year.


A person experiences **COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION** when they trade sexual activity with another person for survival or for basic needs, (e.g., money, bills, housing, transportation, drugs, alcohol, protection, medication, etc.).

A **SEX TRAFFICKER** is someone who recruits, facilitates, or profits from the commercial sexual exploitation of another person (e.g., a “pimp”).

The Central MN Sexual Assault Center (CMSAC) offers free counseling, support groups, safety planning, and medical and criminal justice advocacy for survivors of sexual violence (including all legal and illegal forms of CSET such as survival sex, prostitution, stripping, escorting, pornography, exotic dancing, or erotic massage).

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking Trends in Central Minnesota

***Although local and national data on trafficking trends remain consistent, the following trends seen at CMSAC are not necessarily representative of all experiences of CSET:***



**Most traffickers are known to the victim and are often boyfriends, husbands, peers, and relatives!**

- Trafficking rarely involves random abduction or stranger kidnappings.
- Homeless adults and runaway youth are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation, because exploiters take advantage of their economic desperation and survival needs for sexual/monetary gain.
- CMSAC has found 3 out of 4 people who are in chemical/behavioral treatment centers or group homes have been sexually-exploited.
- CSET happens in all cities, towns, and both rural and metropolitan areas.

- Children, youth, and adults of all ages and gender identities can be trafficked! Although the average age of first exploitation is 13 years old, CMSAC sees many adult victims-- often between ages 18-45.
- Traffickers use grooming tactics, verbal and emotional abuse, violence, and methods of psychological coercion and control.
- Most victims do not self-identify as victims and some may not reach out for help.
- Youth and adults are often recruited online and groomed into prostitution through social networking, employment, and dating websites/apps.
- Most victims who have been sexually-exploited were sexually abused as children.
- *Anyone* can be an exploiter. CMSAC has dealt with cases wherein pastors, doctors, therapists, school teachers, law enforcement, and public officials have been both traffickers and sex buyers!
- Most men who buy women/children in prostitution are white, middle-aged, married, have children, have a middle-to-upper class income, and have no criminal background.
- All large events and tourist destinations may attract increased demand for prostitution, (e.g., conventions, concerts, sporting events, and openers).