

Minnesota law makes sex trafficking of minors a crime without requiring proof of force, fraud, or coercion, but that law does not apply to buyers. Protective statutory provisions help victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) offenses avoid a punitive response in the criminal justice system.

Final Score	89
Final Grade	B

					
10	19	15	7.5	22.5	15
10	25	15	10	27.5	15

Criminalization of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

Minnesota's sex trafficking of minors law clearly defines a minor under the age of 18 used in a commercial sex act as a sex trafficking victim without regard to use of force, fraud, or coercion. The state CSEC laws include: "engaging in, hiring or agreeing to hire a minor to engage in prostitution," "housing a prostituted minor," and "use of minors in sexual performance." The state prostitution law refers to the sex trafficking statute for purposes of sentencing enhancement, and defenses applicable to prostitution charges refer to the trafficking law to provide adult sex trafficking victims with an affirmative defense to prostitution charges. The state racketeering law enumerates sex trafficking as a predicate offense.

Criminal Provisions for Demand

The sex trafficking law specifically excludes the conduct of buyers of sex acts with a minor. The CSEC offense of "engaging in, hiring or agreeing to hire a minor to engage in prostitution" makes it a crime to purchase sex with a minor or someone the buyer believes to be a minor and distinguishes purchasing commercial sex acts with a minor versus an adult. Buyers convicted of CSEC offenses face penalties ranging from imprisonment between 1 and 30 years and fines of \$5,000–\$40,000. Buyers may not assert a mistake of age defense in a prosecution for "engaging in, hiring or agreeing to hire a minor to engage in prostitution." Penalties are staggered by age and the lowest penalties do not reflect the seriousness of the offense. The offense of "solicitation of children to engage in sexual conduct" provides for heightened penalties when buyers use the Internet to commit illegal sex acts. Possession of images of child sexual exploitation (ICSE) is a felony. Buyers could face asset forfeiture if convicted of CSEC or ICSE offenses. Buyers convicted of "soliciting a minor to engage in prostitution" are also subject to civil asset forfeiture. A trafficking victim has a right to restitution for losses from convicted offenders. Buyers will be required to register as sex offenders if convicted of CSEC or ICSE offenses.

Criminal Provisions for Traffickers

A trafficker convicted of sex trafficking faces up to 20 years imprisonment and a fine up to \$50,000, enhanced to 25 years and up to \$60,000 if an aggravating factor is proven, such as the commission of the crime when more than one victim is involved. Convicted traffickers face possible asset forfeiture and victim restitution. "Use of minors in a sexual performance" for the purpose of producing ICSE is punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment and a fine up to \$20,000. The "solicitation of children to engage in sexual conduct" statute provides a sentence enhancement that could reach traffickers who use the Internet to recruit minors for illegal sex acts. If also convicted of racketeering for trafficking activities rising to a pattern of criminal activity, a trafficker faces 20 years imprisonment and a fine up to \$1 million. Traffickers are subject to civil asset forfeiture, and traffickers convicted of "solicitation of children to engage in sexual conduct" or "use of minors in sexual performance" are subject to criminal asset forfeiture. Traffickers must register as sex offenders if convicted of child sex trafficking, "solicitation of children to engage in sexual conduct," or "use of a minor in a sexual performance"; however, convictions for these offenses do not establish grounds for termination of parental rights.



Criminal Provisions for Facilitators

Facilitators are subject to prosecution for benefitting financially from sex trafficking, punishable by imprisonment for up to 20 years and a fine up to \$50,000. A court may order victim restitution in a sex trafficking case. If convicted of CSEC or ICSE offenses, such as “use of minors in a sexual performance,” facilitators

face asset forfeiture. Disseminating ICSE or owning a business to disseminate ICSE is punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment and a fine up to \$20,000 and \$40,000 for any subsequent offense. No laws in Minnesota make sex tourism a crime.

Protective Provisions for the Child Victims



Not all commercially sexually exploited children are defined as juvenile sex trafficking victims, as the sex trafficking law does not apply to buyers, thus requiring third party control. Sex trafficking and “soliciting a minor for prostitution” laws expressly prohibit a defense based on the minor’s willingness to engage in the commercial sex act. The state prostitution law does not exclude minors, but the definitions of “delinquent child” and “juvenile petty offender” specifically do not apply to juvenile sex trafficking victims. Instead, victims “alleged to have engaged in conduct which would, if committed by an adult, violate any federal, state, or local law relating to being hired, offering to be hired, or agreeing to be hired by another individual to engage in sexual penetration or sexual conduct” are included in the definitions of “sexually exploited youth” and of a “child in need of protection or service” who receive a child protective response. For purposes of child welfare intervention, the definition of abuse expressly includes sex trafficking and CSEC offenses, and the definition of “child in need of protection or services” and “child endangerment” does not appear to require that the perpetrator of abuse be a parent or caregiver, allowing for child welfare intervention in non-familial trafficking cases. Further, regional navigators are tasked with providing both preventative and specialized services to victims of CSEC and sex trafficking. If identified as a victim and suffering economic loss, sex trafficking and CSEC victims are eligible for crime victims’ compensation, although several criteria may limit

their eligibility, including a bar to recovery if the victim participated or assisted in a criminal act, committed a crime at the time the injury occurred, or did not fully cooperate with law enforcement. Also, the crime must be reported within 30 days of when the report could reasonably have been made. Minnesota’s “rape shield” law only applies to testifying victims in sex offense cases and not specifically in sex trafficking cases; however, a child victim witness may provide testimony via closed-circuit television outside the presence of the defendant, and trafficking victims’ identities are protected from public disclosure. Child victims of CSEC or trafficking are eligible to participate in an address confidentiality program, preventing their address from being disclosed in courtroom procedures. Minnesota law does not provide a mechanism for minors to vacate delinquency adjudications related to trafficking victimization, but juvenile records may be expunged without a waiting period. The court may award criminal restitution, and civil remedies are also provided for sex trafficking victims. The statute of limitations for criminal prosecutions of child sex trafficking offenses is 9 years after commission of the offense or 3 years after the crime is reported to law enforcement, whichever is later. Prosecutions of CSEC offenses must be commenced within 3 years. For civil claims based on damages from being trafficked, a 6 year statute of limitations begins to run after the victim knows or should know of the injury but is tolled until age 18 and may be tolled while the coercion continues.

Criminal Justice Tools for Investigation and Prosecution



Training for law enforcement on child sex trafficking is authorized by law. Single party consent to audiotaping is permitted, and wiretapping is allowed in investigations for sex trafficking and “soliciting a minor for prostitution.” The sex trafficking law and several CSEC laws specifically prohibit a defense based on the use of a decoy to investigate violations. The Internet may be used in sex trafficking investigations, and it is a crime to use the

Internet to solicit a child or decoy for sexual conduct or communication or to distribute ICSE. Minnesota has established a state-wide reporting and response system for missing children and requires the reporting of located children; additionally, the local social services agency is required to report children believed to be at risk for sex trafficking to law enforcement within 24 hours.

The Report Card is based on the Protected Innocence Challenge Legislative Framework, an analysis of state laws performed by Shared Hope International, and sets a national standard of protection against domestic minor sex trafficking. To access the Protected Innocence Challenge Legislative Framework Methodology, all state Report Cards, and foundational analysis and recommendations, please visit: www.sharedhope.org/reportcards.