



# Sex Trafficking Awareness & Prevention in Lodging Facilities

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## INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH QUESTION

**What is the level of interest that hotels and bed & breakfasts in Winona have in expanding their knowledge about sex trafficking?**

Throughout the process of this project, I have been collaborating with the Winona County Primary Prevention Project (WCPPP) in an effort to prevent sex trafficking in Winona, MN, specifically within hotels & bed and breakfasts. As part of this effort, I conducted a survey in order to gauge how much lodging facilities in Winona currently know about sex trafficking and if they are “clean”, meaning that they do not provide access to pay-per-view-pornography.

Since the survey has been completed, the WCPPP plans to use these results to design a free training on how different lodging staff can recognize the signs of sex trafficking and how to report it. This training will be provided to facilities that have indicated interest in it.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Definition of Sex Trafficking

- A type of human trafficking
- Sexual exploitation that is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, which also includes the exploitation of minors (Mletzko et al., 2018)

### Signs & Indicators

- Physical injury & restraint *are less common than* psychological control & isolation-leading to mental health symptoms (Gerassi et al., 2021)

### Hotel Training

- Multiple hotel companies in the U.S. have collaborated with EPCAT and Polaris to implement training programs. However, despite having annual training, employees often do not have high engagement or motivation into putting their training into practice. This would increase with more frequent training (Zhang et al., 2022)

### Prevalence in Minnesota- Findings from 2017

- Law enforcement agencies identified about 400 victims & Service providers identified over 2,100 victims
- 5% of victims identified within the Southern region of MN
- 68% of law enforcement agencies & 78% of service providers identified victims that were trafficked in hotels- this is higher than all other venues

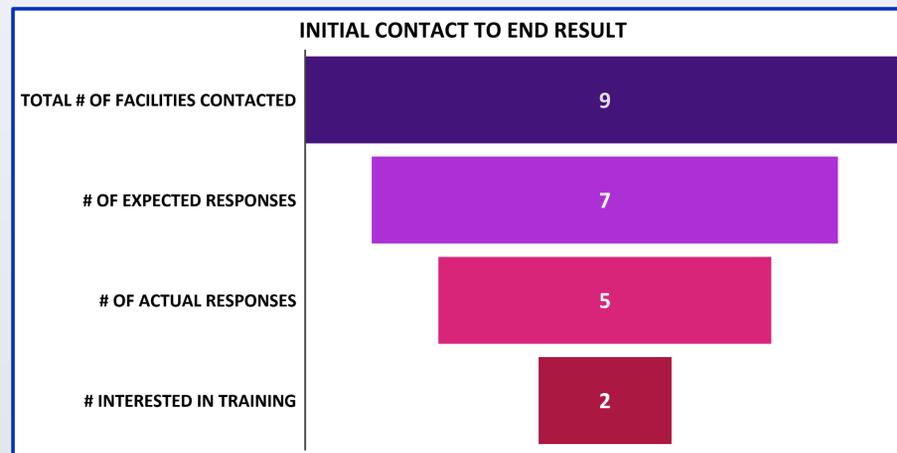
**“If those most likely to encounter victims lack knowledge of the crime and the ability to recognize when it occurs, it is impossible to provide proper victim services and hold traffickers accountable”**

(Minnesota Office of Justice Programs & Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center, 2019)

## RESULTS

Out of the 9 facilities contacted, 7 facilities agreed to participate in the survey but only 5 responses were received. This makes the response rate to be 55%

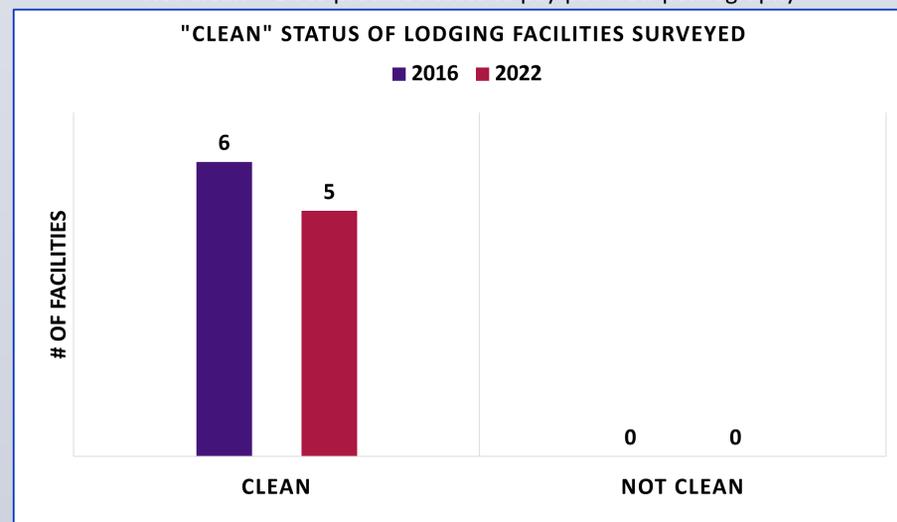
- During initial contact, one facility claimed that sex trafficking was not an issue of theirs
  - Another facility expressed interest in the survey, but declined due to short-staffing
- Only 2 facilities indicated interest in training



My survey was based on a similar survey conducted in 2016 by Winona State University social work students, also in collaboration with the WCPPP, to reduce sexual and domestic violence within the community (Herold et al., 2016)

- 2016- Asked hotels if they provided access to pay-per-view pornography, due to the correlation between domestic and sexual violence and the accessibility of pornography
  - 2022- Included same question within survey to see if results since changed
- Comparison: Winona facilities have maintained their “clean” status! This is **good**

“Clean”= *Does not* provide access to pay-per-view pornography  
 “Not Clean”= *Does* provide access to pay-per-view pornography



## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

- A small sample size of 9 lodging facilities were contacted, composed of 7 hotels & 2 bed and breakfasts. This sample was found using the Visit Winona website

### Method of Contact

- Each initial contact was via phone call with a manager. If they agreed to participate, I sent them a link to the survey via email

### Survey

- This was a 5-question, multiple-choice survey that was created and distributed through Qualtrics. Participants and their results were anonymous, apart from having the option to provide their contact information if interested in the free training created by the WCPPP
- Before distribution, a few members of the WCPPP pre-tested the survey and offered feedback. I revised the survey using their feedback before distributing to lodging facilities

## CONCLUSION & REFLECTION

- Only 2 out of the 9 lodging facilities contacted were interested in receiving training. Lack of interest for training may also be due to short-staffing or not believing that sex trafficking is an issue
- Sex trafficking as a serious problem must be brought to the forefront of the community’s attention in order to encourage lodging facilities, as well as community members, to increase their awareness
- Considering that hotels are popular venues for sex trafficking to occur, raising awareness about this issue within these facilities will be highly beneficial as a preventative measure for the city of Winona.

## REFERENCES

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