



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Criminal Justice Services

The Honorable Jackson H. Miller
Director

Tracy Louise Winn Banks, Esq.
Chief Deputy Director

October 1, 2024

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Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-4000
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The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Jason S. Miyares
Attorney General
202 North Ninth Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Terrance C. Cole
Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Re: Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth – Pilot Program

During the 2023 Session of the Virginia General Assembly, policymakers directed the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to establish a new two-year pilot program titled *Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth*. The legislation directed DCJS, in consultation with the Virginia State Crime Commission, to identify a suitable locality to administer a two-year pilot program and requires that DCJS, in consultation with the Virginia State Crime Commission, report annually to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Attorney General no later than October 1, 2024, and October 1, 2025, on the progress of the pilot program.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jackson H. Miller".

Jackson H. Miller
Director

Attachment



A Collaboration to Eradicate
Human Trafficking in Virginia

Pilot Program: Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth

October 1, 2024



Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
www.dcjs.virginia.gov

Pilot Program: Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth

Background

During the 2023 Session of the Virginia General Assembly, policymakers directed the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to establish a new two-year pilot program titled *Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth*. The legislation directed DCJS, in consultation with the Virginia State Crime Commission, to identify a suitable locality to administer a two-year pilot program:

(i) implementing proactive reverse sting operations that target buyers of sex services, with priority given to cases involving sex trafficked youth; (ii) utilizing a multidisciplinary response team to coordinate assessment and treatment for victims of sex trafficking; and (iii) designing an alternative to an arrest protocol that includes a 48–72 hour holding mechanism for youth either in partnership with a local department of social services, a local department of child protective services, or a local hospital or through court services. The stated goal of the pilot program shall be to reduce the arrest of sex trafficking victims, reduce demand for commercial sex exploitation by focusing on buyers, and establish high-quality education, alternative employment opportunities, and life skills for victims.¹

The legislation also requires that DCJS, in consultation with the Virginia State Crime Commission, report annually to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Attorney General no later than October 1, 2024, and October 1, 2025, on the progress of the pilot program.

In accordance with the legislation, the location of the pilot program will remain confidential until the conclusion of the program in 2025.

Activities

During the first half of state fiscal year 2024, DCJS explored possible locations for the pilot project. In early-2024, a locality was identified, and several meetings were held with the anticipated lead pilot agency. On June 28, 2024, a fully executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by three parties including the lead pilot agency, the Virginia State Crime Commission, and DCJS. The MOU describes the goals, roles, responsibilities, and duties related to the pilot program.

Since the MOU was not fully executed until the end of June, the lead pilot agency has not yet submitted a written report due July 1, 2024, to DCJS; however, staff are working with the lead pilot agency to provide this. Information to be provided in the report includes written policies and procedures for implementing the pilot program, as well as all state and local laws, ordinances, and regulations relating to sex trafficking that were initially identified for elimination, amendment, or streamlining.

Virginia's 2024–2026 biennium budget, finalized in May 2024, includes \$200,000 the first year and \$400,000 the second year from the general fund to support costs associated with the pilot program. DCJS is currently working with the pilot locality and lead agency on a method to distribute these funds.

¹ 2023 General Assembly Uncodified Acts, Chapter 556 (SB1292).

Pilot Program: Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth

CHAPTER 556

An Act to require the Department of Criminal Justice Services to administer a two-year pilot program to provide a safe harbor for sex trafficked youth.

[S 1292]

Approved March 26, 2023

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *As used in this act, unless the context requires a different meaning:*

"Department" means the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

"Pilot agency" means the lead agency in the locality chosen by the Department to conduct the pilot program required by § 2 of this act.

§ 2. A. *The Department, in consultation with the Virginia State Crime Commission, shall identify a suitable locality to administer a two-year Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth pilot program beginning July 1, 2023, and ending July 1, 2025. Such program shall consist of the following elements:*

- 1. The pilot agency shall focus on (i) implementing proactive reverse sting operations that target buyers of sex services, with priority given to cases involving sex trafficked youth; (ii) utilizing a multidisciplinary response team to coordinate assessment and treatment for victims of sex trafficking; and (iii) designing an alternative to an arrest protocol that includes a 48–72 hour holding mechanism for youth either in partnership with a local department of social services, a local department of child protective services, or a local hospital or through court services. The stated goal of the pilot program shall be to reduce the arrest of sex trafficking victims, reduce demand for commercial sex exploitation by focusing on buyers, and establish high-quality education, alternative employment opportunities, and life skills for victims;*
- 2. The pilot agency shall report by July 1, 2024, to the Department all state and local laws, ordinances, and regulations initially identified for elimination, amendment, or streamlining. The pilot agency shall identify any law, ordinance, or regulation proposed for elimination or modification that requires a change in state or local law. If the pilot agency is unable to reach this goal, it shall provide a separate report to the Department stating the reasons for not meeting the goal.*

B. *The Department, in consultation with the Virginia State Crime Commission, shall report annually to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Attorney General no later than October 1, 2024, and October 1, 2025, on the progress of the pilot program established pursuant to this act.*

C. *The location of the pilot program shall remain confidential until conclusion of the program. Any reference to location shall be anonymized in published documents.*