



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Criminal Justice Services

The Honorable Jackson H. Miller
Director

Tracy Louise Winn Banks, Esq.
Chief Deputy Director

October 3, 2025

Washington Building
1100 Bank Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-4000
www.dcjs.virginia.gov

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 Marcus Anderson
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, 2025



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

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Background

During the 2023 Session of the Virginia General Assembly, policymakers directed the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to establish a 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

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.

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.

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, 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 2026.

Activities

State fiscal year (SFY) 2025 activities related to the pilot program are described below.

1. Implement proactive reverse sting operations that target buyers of sex services, with priority given to cases involving sex trafficked youth.

The pilot agency implemented four types of sex trafficking related operations in SFY 2025: 1) “John Operations” target buyers of sex services and typically take place in hotels; 2) “To Catch a Predator Operations” also target solicitors of sex services, specifically identifying those seeking sex with minors; 3) “Massage Operations” focus on both sex and labor trafficking in illicit massage businesses; and 4) “Knock and Talk Operations” involve locating online advertisements for sex services and arranging meetings to interview potential offenders and victims.

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

Pilot Program: Demand Reduction and Safe Harbor for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficked Youth – 2025

Twenty total sex trafficking operations were implemented in SFY 2025 that resulted in 68 arrests. Of those arrests, 45 individuals were arrested for solicitation of sex services. At least 26 arrests involved solicitation of a minor for sex acts.

SFY 2025 Arrests for Solicitation of Sex Services	
Solicitation of commercial sex services from a minor	4
Solicitation of sex acts from a minor	14
Use of communication device to solicit a minor	8
Solicitation of prostitution	19
Total Arrests Targeting Solicitation of Sex Services	45

The other 23 arrests were for charges such as commercial sex trafficking, prostitution, keeping a bawdy place, and possession of a controlled substance.

The pilot agency assisted other local law enforcement agencies with sex trafficking related operations. The pilot agency also collaborated with federal law enforcement to target adults soliciting sex acts from minors via the internet. In one operation, evidence was not sufficient for the cases to be prosecuted at the federal level; however, since several state statutes were violated, the cases can be investigated and prosecuted in Virginia. This is one example of how Virginia's laws can be utilized to fill the gaps in federal law.

2. Utilize a multidisciplinary response team to coordinate assessment and treatment for victims of sex trafficking.

Throughout SFY 2025, the pilot agency utilized a multidisciplinary approach to coordinate the assessment and treatment for victims of sex trafficking. The pilot agency collaborated with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, the Commonwealth's Attorney's office, victim witness program staff, medical and mental health providers, and service providers for victims of sex trafficking.

One challenge in treatment for victims of sex trafficking is that they frequently run away from residential programs. This can happen for a multitude of reasons. In SFY 2025, multijurisdictional collaboration was utilized to locate minor victims of sex trafficking who absconded from care. Multidisciplinary response team partners assisted with assessment and placement of victims into other treatment programs.

Jurisdictional boundaries can be an obstacle to locating and recovering sex trafficked youth. The pilot agency identified regional task force membership as a solution when working cases across multiple jurisdictions. They also recognized numerous other advantages of regional task forces, including access to trained and qualified personnel, sharing of best practices, and connection to public and private resources.

Along with coordination of treatment for victims, utilizing a multidisciplinary approach can also improve criminal sex trafficking investigations. In one example, a minor was identified as a potential sex trafficking victim by the court system. As a result, an advocate conducted a human trafficking assessment with the minor and reported that the minor had been sex trafficked. Due to the multidisciplinary collaboration, the pilot agency arrested two suspects involved in sex trafficking and the victim was offered services.

3. **Design an alternative to 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.**

In SFY 2025, four minor victims of sex trafficking were recovered by the pilot agency. Many victims of sex trafficking do not see themselves as victims and either believe they are working on their own accord or are compliant out of perceived love for their traffickers. Because of this, it was difficult to place minors in treatment programs without court intervention. In the upcoming year, the pilot agency plans to explore court ordered treatment and non-law enforcement interventions in lieu of arrests. The pilot agency will continue to collaborate with sex trafficking treatment programs.

The pilot agency is building coordinated human trafficking responses at the local level focusing on building capacity, implementing state mandates, and sustaining efforts to identify, intervene, and support recovery while also prioritizing arrest and prosecution of offenders. In SFY 2026, the pilot agency will grow its partnerships with other local agencies, including the Commonwealth's Attorney's office, the local department of social services, local mental health and medical providers, court services, community corrections, fire and rescue, and the local schools. The pilot agency recognizes that a multidisciplinary approach is crucial for effectively addressing human trafficking cases by ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive response that prioritizes victim safety and wellbeing. The pilot agency met with a consultant to discuss multidisciplinary responses to human trafficking.

4. **Promote education, training, and awareness of human trafficking within the pilot agency and with external partners.**

Although not required by the pilot program, in SFY 2025, the pilot agency facilitated and participated in activities to promote the education, training, and awareness of human trafficking. Pilot agency staff attended four training courses and conferences to enhance their knowledge. Pilot agency staff facilitated six presentations and taught two classes on human trafficking. Along with training, they also provided technical assistance to a neighboring locality requesting support to enhance their response to human trafficking.

Future Activities

Planned activities for SFY 2026 related to the pilot program are described below.

1. To strengthen the multidisciplinary response to human trafficking, the pilot agency will:
 - a. Establish a law enforcement led multidisciplinary team (MDT) with a defined mission and objectives; organizational structure with defined leadership roles; and protocols for identification, investigation, and response to human trafficking cases.
 - b. Complete an assessment of the understanding of human trafficking and current practices of each local agency involved in the MDT that will inform the development of MDT protocols and training on those protocols.
 - c. Determine systems for evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of the MDT as well as data collection to track human trafficking trends and identify service gaps.

2. To strengthen the identification and response to victims of human trafficking, as well as the investigation and prosecution of offenders, the pilot agency will:
 - a. Provide Sexual Exploitation Treatment and Training Services (SETTS) training for service providers and stakeholders in the pilot locality.
 - b. Provide training for law enforcement and prosecutors in the pilot locality on human trafficking victim identification, investigation, and prosecution.

Recommendations

In addition to the pilot program activities, the pilot agency was required to report on all state and local laws, ordinances, and regulations relating to sex trafficking that were identified for elimination, amendment, or streamlining. The pilot agency recommends:

1. Amending *Code of Virginia* [§ 18.2-346.01](#) regarding solicitation of prostitution by adding the following language:

*Any person who offers money or its equivalent to another for the purpose of engaging in sexual acts enumerated in § 18.2-346 and thereafter does any substantial act in furtherance thereof is guilty of solicitation of prostitution, which is punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor. However, any person who solicits prostitution from a minor (i) 16 years of age or older **or has reason to believe is 16 years of age or older** is guilty of a Class 6 felony or (ii) younger than 16 years of age **or has reason to believe is younger than 16 years of age** is guilty of a Class 5 felony.*

“To Catch a Predator Operations” utilize undercover law enforcement officers who pose as minors to target adults soliciting sex from minors. The current language fails to cover these cases because the undercover officers are adults who are believed to be minors. In court, defense attorneys have successfully argued that although the defendants believed that they were soliciting minors, the undercover officers were in fact adults. With the addition of this language, law enforcement can more effectively target offenders who solicit sex services from minors.

2. Amending *Code of Virginia* [§ 19.2-215.1](#) which governs the functions of a multi-jurisdictional grand jury. This Code section provides a list of criminal violations that a multi-jurisdictional grand jury is to investigate. In this listing, paragraph U includes statutes related to prostitution, solicitation, and commercial sex trafficking. The pilot agency recommends adding *Code of Virginia* [§ 18.2-374.3](#) to paragraph U. This statute is on the use of communications systems to facilitate certain offenses involving children. The addition of this of this statute would allow investigators to utilize multi-jurisdictional grand juries for records, subpoenas, witness subpoenas, and charging.