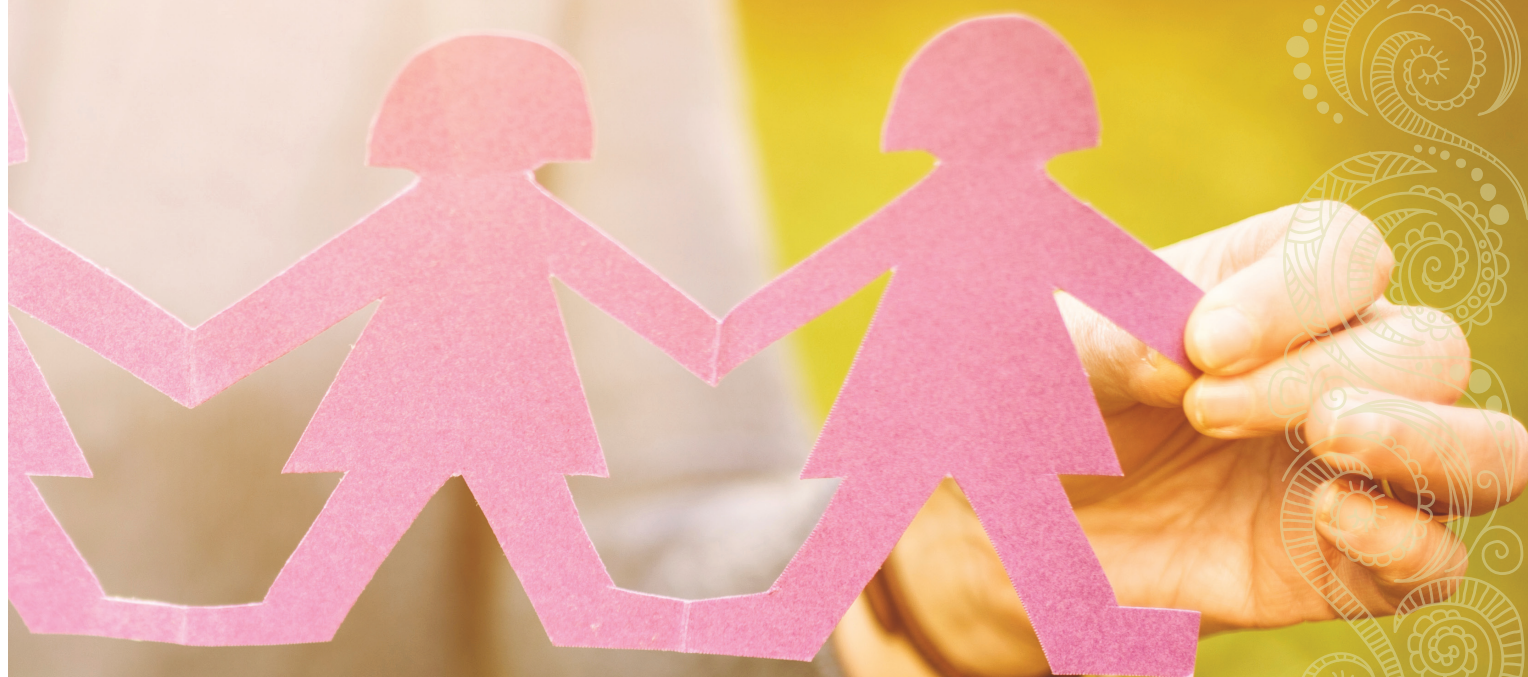


INTERIM REPORT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND SEX TRAFFICKING



PRODUCED BY
The Women's Fund of the
Stateline Community Foundation

IN COOPERATION WITH
Beloit College

STATUS REPORT

Of Women and Girls In Beloit, Wisconsin

Interim Status Report on Women and Girls in Beloit, Wisconsin: Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, and Sex Trafficking

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Interim Status Report on Women and Girls in Beloit, Wisconsin: Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, and Sex Trafficking

By Dr. Kendra S. Schiffman

The purpose of this document is to provide an evidence-based report on the extent to which women and girls in Beloit, Wisconsin experience domestic violence, sexual violence, and sex trafficking or sexual exploitation. The report also shows women's and girls' experiences relative to men and boys and in comparison to the state of Wisconsin as a whole. This report is also meant to be a tool for area organizations and institutions to understand the needs of women and girls in these three areas and to identify where efforts are succeeding or where more services and resources may be needed.

We know that official reports of domestic violence, sexual violence, and sex-trafficking underestimate the extent to which these forms of abuse occur. Also, because publicly available data on domestic violence and sexual assault usually only exists at the county or state level, it is difficult to get a clear picture of what is happening at the local level. Finding any accurate data on sex-trafficking is difficult simply because organized and consistent data collection efforts have only recently begun. For these reasons, in addition to official reports from the Beloit police department, Rock County Human Services, and agencies of the State of Wisconsin, some of the information included in this report is drawn from ten interviews with lead staff of seven local social service agencies and advocacy organizations in Beloit and other neighboring areas that provide support for survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and sex trafficking who are from Beloit. This report would not have been possible without their time and effort, generosity, support, and commitment. We are indebted to all who contributed to this effort, for the work that they do for those in our community who are survivors of such intimate and traumatic forms of violence.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- **There were 1,166 reported domestic violence incidents in Beloit from 2014 to 2016 and 75% of the victims are women.**
- Although people from all backgrounds and statuses experience domestic violence, it is **more than 3 times more likely to occur under high levels of financial strain.**
- In the last 3 years, there has been **30% more foster care cases in Rock County due to having to remove children from their homes**—often removing them from their mother who is a victim of domestic violence.
- All service providers that were interviewed said **finding housing was the biggest challenge for the survivors of domestic violence they serve**; provision of safe housing for youth is also one of the biggest challenges in local sex-trafficking prevention and response efforts.
- **There were 523 reported sexual assaults in Beloit from 2014 to 2016; 86% involved women and girls.**
- **Girls in Rock County are three-and-a-half times more likely to experience sexual abuse than boys.**
- **70% of all sexual assault victims in Beloit from 2014-2016 are younger than 18 years old.**
- Many times, service providers are the only people who believe sexual assault survivors are telling the truth about what they experienced.
- **Sex trafficking occurs in Wisconsin, Rock County, and Beloit.**
- **The average age of children being groomed and sold for sex is between 11 and 14.**

UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence occurs within a systematic pattern of power and control that includes intentional intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, or other abusive behavior by one intimate partner against another; this behavior is often accompanied by verbal, psychological, and emotional attacks on a person's self-worth and independence. The frequency and severity of domestic violence also varies a great deal, however, it occurs among all races/ethnicities and socio-economic classes.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **1 in 3 women (and 1 in 4 men) in the United States** have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner (Black et al. 2011).
- **Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime** in the U.S. (Truman and Morgan 2014).
- **72% of all murder-suicides** in the U.S. involved an intimate partner and **94% of the victims are female** (Violence Policy Center 2012).
- **Women between the ages of 18-24 are the group most likely to experience abuse from an intimate partner** (Truman and Morgan 2014).
- Experiencing domestic violence is also related to higher rates of depression and suicidal behavior (Truman and Morgan 2014).
- Although people from all backgrounds and statuses experience domestic violence, it is **more than 3 times more likely to occur under high levels of financial strain** (when unemployed or underemployed, for example) than when financial stress is low (Benson and Fox 2002).
- In the U.S., **1 in 15 children witness intimate partner violence each year** (Hamby et al. 2011).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN WISCONSIN AND BELOIT

Table 1 reports the number of all domestic violence incidents reported to the police in Beloit, and the number referred to district attorneys for prosecution in Wisconsin and Rock County, as well as arrests.

- In 2012, **55 people died in Wisconsin as a result of domestic violence**, and in over 24% of those homicides a gun was involved (End Domestic Abuse WI 2012).
- The most common charge made in domestic violence cases of arrest in Wisconsin is disorderly conduct (Wisconsin Dept. of Justice 2014).
- Roughly 30% of reported domestic violence incidents in Rock County occur in Beloit, and **the rate of occurrence** (based on population) **is higher in Beloit than Rock County and Wisconsin overall**: a rate of 9 for every 1,000 people in Beloit compared to 7 per 1,000 in Rock County and 5 per 1,000 in WI.
- About **75% of the victims of reported domestic violence incidents in Beloit are women**, which is consistent with broader trends.
- According to Beloit police reports, **the average age of victims of reported domestic violence in Beloit is just over 33 years old, and about 70% of reported domestic violence survivors in Beloit are women under the age of 40; just over 25% are from 18 to 24 years old.**
- From 2014 to 2016, **5% of domestic violence incidents in Beloit involved a repeat abuser** (Beloit Police Department Domestic Violence Report with Victim Information).
- **These numbers are still conservative estimates because not all incidents are reported to criminal justice officials.**
- However, this is still a **high number of women domestic violence survivors in Beloit: over 250 in 2014, over 275 in 2015, and nearly 350 in 2016, which shows a continuing rise in reported domestic violence incidents between 2014 and 2016.**

Table 1. Reported Domestic Violence Incidents, Arrests, and Domestic Violence-Related Homicides

	Wisconsin (pop. 5.7 million)	Rock County (pop. 160,331)	BELOIT ⁴ (pop. 36,966 in 2010)		
	2012 ¹	2012 ¹	2014	2015	2016
Number of Reported Domestic Violence Incidents	28,729 ²	1,251 ²	335 75% women victims	368 77% women victims	463 75% women victims
% of Reported Incidents Where An Arrest Was Made	71% ²	88.4% ²	84%	84%	85%
Number of Domestic Violence-Related Homicides	55 ³	2 ³			

¹ 2012 is the most recent publicly available data we have for Wisconsin and Rock County. The number of incidents for Wisconsin and Rock County include those that were referred to district attorneys. These counts do not include unreported incidents, reported incidents that were not referred for prosecution, and dating abuse incidents (WI Dept. of Justice 2014).

² Wisconsin Department of Justice (2014).

³ End Domestic Abuse WI (2012). Includes victim and perpetrator deaths, 4 of which were perpetrator suicides. A more recent 2015 report shows 58 deaths in Wisconsin, 9 of which are perpetrator suicides; 2 of which were in Rock County. The 2012 data was used in this table for consistency with other data.

⁴ Beloit Police Dept., Domestic Violence Report with Victim Information (Aug. 29, 2017), with arrest rates (Sept. 29, 2017).

Domestic Violence Incidents Involving Weapons

In the U.S., 19% of domestic violence incidents involve a weapon (Truman and Morgan 2014). The proportion involving a weapon is much lower in Beloit, but there are still about **9% of domestic violence incidents (103 incidents) from 2014 to 2016 in Beloit involving a weapon** (shown in Table 2 below).

Table 2. Reported Domestic Violence Incidents With and Without a Weapon in Beloit, Wisconsin

	335 Incidents In 2014		368 Incidents in 2015		463 Incidents in 2016	
	92% with NO Weapon	8% WITH Weapon	92% with NO Weapon	8% WITH Weapon	90% with NO Weapon	10% WITH Weapon
Involving Women Victims ¹	238	15	265	17	318	28
Involving Men Victims	69	13	75	11	98	19
Totals	307	28	340	28	416	47

Source: Beloit Police Department, Domestic Violence Report with Victim Information (August 29, 2017).

¹ When gender was unknown, usually report was missing other victim characteristics, so included in women victims counts because there is a high chance they are women; this applies to 5 in 2014, 6 in 2015, and 3 in 2016.

The Intersections of Racism, Sexism, and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence occurs among all races/ethnicities. However, racism and discrimination, language barriers, and immigration status shape how women of color, in particular, experience and respond to domestic violence. These challenges can also create barriers to finding help and support services, which are often lacking in culturally and linguistically appropriate services or staff that share similar

racial/ethnic identities and experiences (The Women of Color Network; Nnawulezi and Sullivan 2013). Table 3 shows the racial demographics of Beloit, Rock County, and Wisconsin compared to the racial identity of domestic violence survivors reporting to law enforcement as well as clients served by the local domestic violence service providers. The service provider data could not be accurately broken down by place and race, so the total clients served is reported even though these totals include clients outside of Rock County to provide a rough estimate.

Table 3. Local Population and Reported Domestic Violence Victims by Race

	Unknown	White	African American	Multi-Racial	Other	Hispanic or Latino (any race)
Beloit		69%	15%	4.4%	11.6%	17.1%
All Reported DV Victims (2014)	1.5% (5)	67.5% (226)	31% (104)			
All Reported DV Victims (2015)	2% (9)	66% (244)	31% (115)			
All Reported DV Victims (2016)	2% (9)	63% (293)	35% (161)			
Rock County		87.6%	5.0%	2.3%	5.1%	7.6%
All Clients, DV Service Provider 1 (2016)	3% (5)	45.7% (75)	41% (67)	9.7% 16	0	0.6% 1
All Clients, DV Service Provider 2 (2016)	1% (5)	54% (170)	28% (87)	7% (21)	3% (10)	7% (21)
Wisconsin		86.2%	6.3%	1.8%	5.7%	5.9%
All Reported DV Victims (2010)		72% (19,882)	26% (7,630)		3% (991)	3% (970)

Sources: Population data for Beloit and Rock County from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census—**data will not add up to 100% due to the overlap between Hispanic and other races**; Beloit Police Department, Domestic Violence Report with Victim Information (August 29, 2017); Service Providers Internal Data from Interviews (June 2017); WI Dept. of Justice Domestic Abuse Incident Report 2012; the 2010 data is the most recent state-level data.

This data reveals three important patterns.

- First, **the large majority of reported domestic violence victims in Beloit are white and there are a disproportionate number of African American domestic violence victims reporting to law enforcement.**
- Second, **there are few, if any, Hispanic or Latino victims reporting to law enforcement** (i.e., some may be in the “unknown” category).
- Third, **there is a larger proportion of African American clients seeking help from local service providers than African American victims reporting to law enforcement.** However, there are so few Hispanic or Latino victims seeking services from local service providers.

Other research provides some understanding about possible explanations or common factors and considerations of women of color in particular that may affect under-reporting of domestic violence and/or a failure to seek help from service providers (The Women of Color Network[a]; Nnawulezi and Sullivan 2013):

- Women of color have reason to distrust law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and/or social services based on the history of racism in the United States and their own previous experiences with racism in relationship to these types of systems/organizations.

- Women of color may not come forward because they fear that their experiences will reflect on or confirm general stereotypes placed on their ethnicity or race or reinforce negative attitudes and stereotypes about the prevalence of domestic violence in communities of color.
- Women of color may be concerned about providers making inaccurate or negative assumptions about them based on their ethnicity or race, which creates a barrier to accessing support.
- For immigrant women of color, concern about the legal status of the survivor and/or the abuser significantly affects whether they seek help or report to law enforcement.
- **According to one of the local domestic violence service providers, the data we have does not accurately reflect the number of Hispanic or Latino women experiencing domestic violence because many are deeply afraid of coming forward to any law enforcement officials** in the current context of restrictive immigration policies and widespread anti-immigrant sentiment largely directed at the Latino community; that same fear keeps them from seeking services from any agency that may collect personal information. In addition, some are not aware of services available or have difficulty accessing them due to language and cultural barriers (Interview with service provider, July 2016).

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In addition to adults' experience of domestic violence, there is a large number of children who are physically abused or witness domestic violence in the home; 1 in 15 children in the U.S. are exposed to intimate partner violence each year (Hamby et al. 2011). Table 4 shows that in Rock County, Wisconsin, domestic violence is second only to mental illness as a risk factor for child abuse.

Table 4. Percentage of Child Protective Services Reports by Top Three Risk Factors in Rock County, Wisconsin (2014-2016)¹

Year	Total Reports	Mental Illness	Domestic Violence	Alcohol or Drug Abuse
2014	1262	14%	11%	8%
2015	1227	15%	11%	9%
2016	1149	12%	10%	8%

Source: Rock County Human Services Children, Youth, and Families Division (data request received August 15, 2017 from Lance Horozewski, Division Manager).

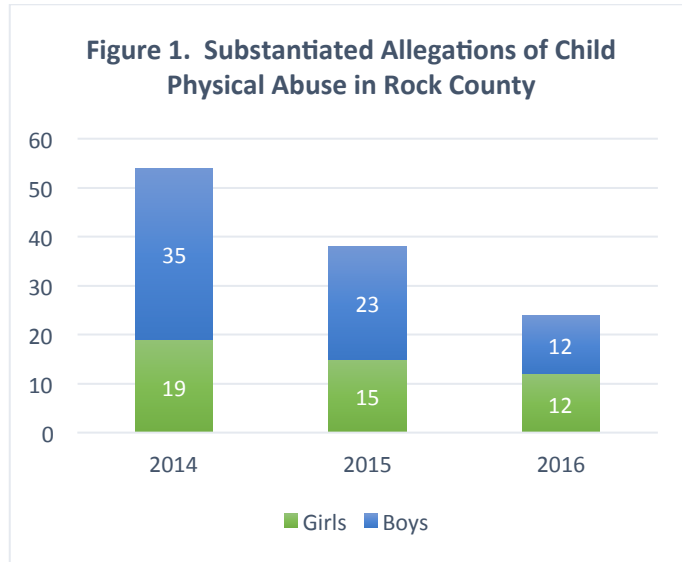
¹Data could not be broken down by city and town.

According to Lance Horozewski, Manager of Rock County Human Services Children, Youth, and Families Division (Interview, August 2017).

- Out all counties in Wisconsin, only Milwaukee has a higher number of child abuse cases than Rock County.
- Rock County also has the highest arrest rates for child abuse in Wisconsin.
- In the last 3 years, there has been **30% more foster care cases in Rock County due to having to remove children from their homes**—often removing them from a parent (usually their mother) who is a victim of domestic violence.

Cases of **physical abuse represents 12% (or 116) of all substantiated child abuse allegations in Rock County** from 2014 to 2016; **40% of these 116 children are girls** (shown in Figure 1). In contrast to the reported domestic violence incidents survived by women in Beloit, the number of substantiated cases of physical abuse of girls has slightly decreased since 2014 from 19 to 12. However, there are a much larger and **increasing number of cases of child neglect, representing 75% of cases of child abuse in**

Rock County (a total number of 189 in 2014; 261 in 2015, and 262 in 2016); about half of these neglected children are girls (Data from Rock County Human Services Children, Youth, and Families Division Manager, August 15, 2017).



Source: Rock County Human Services Children, Youth, and Families Division (data request received August 16, 2017 from Lance Horozewski, Division Manager).

To estimate how many of these cases of abuse occurred in Beloit, we can turn to data from CARE House of Rock County YWCA, which provides a child-centered approach to investigating, treating, and preventing child abuse. All forensic interviews of children in child abuse cases in Rock County are conducted there.

- All children that come to CARE House have been abused and are connected to Child Protective Services (CPS); however, most of these are cases of either physical abuse (22%) or sexual abuse (68%) because they require a forensic interview that needs to be conducted at CARE House; so CARE House data does not reflect the number of neglect cases in Rock County.
- Table 5 shows that from 2012 to 2016, of children in Rock County who experience abuse AND are served by CARE House, **22% have experienced physical abuse**; unfortunately, there was a significant rise in number of cases in 2014 and the number of cases has remained above 30.
- **About 59% of the children served by the CARE House have been abused by a family member**; however, we cannot break that down further by type of abuse.
- Because CARE House serves all of Rock County and a little over 40% of children who are interviewed or receive support there are from Beloit, we can **roughly estimate** that of the substantiated cases of child physical abuse in Rock County, **22 cases of physical abuse in 2014, 15 cases in 2015, and 10 cases in 2016 represent children in Beloit.**

Table 5. Number of Children in Rock County Served by CARE House (YWCA) and Percentage Experiencing Physical Abuse, 2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Number Served	127	126	187	194	174
% Experiencing Physical Abuse (N)	17% (21)	17% (22)	30% (56)	23% (45)	18% (32)

Source: CARE House data provided by Rock County YWCA.

The rise of physical abuse may be partly related to local economic conditions. As stated earlier, **financial stress** contributes to domestic violence, and **conditions of poverty** contribute to child neglect in the home due to a lack of childcare options, inadequate housing, and lack of basic resources to meet children's needs (Interviews with service providers).

- **Of the children in Rock County who experience abuse AND are served by the CARE House, a majority are below the poverty line**, and that proportion has significantly increased since 2012 (CARE House data provided by Rocky County YWCA).

Poverty may also leave children more vulnerable to others outside their family who are more likely to prey on children whose basic needs are not being met or who live in highly stressed households (Interviews with service providers); **over 40% of children served by CARE House are abused by someone outside their family.**

- **First**, the level of poverty among children who are abused demonstrates the significant economic challenges that exist locally.
- **Second**, this demonstrates **the necessity of providing more resources to those taking care of children** so that **a)** their children's needs are met, which makes them less vulnerable to adults that would take advantage of them because of unmet needs or **b)** families have fewer economic stresses that may contribute to abuse or neglect within the home.
- **Third**, **service organizations are providing a vital resource to those without any other options due to their limited economic resources.**

MEETING THE NEEDS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

There are multiple local organizations meeting the needs of adults and children who have experienced domestic violence. Service providers perform a critical role by providing emergency shelter and transitional housing, assistance in finding permanent housing, assistance in obtaining restraining orders against abusers, regular support groups, and individual advocacy and support with overall case management. However, the local domestic violence shelters have limited housing capacity (10 rooms available in one and 33 beds in another), and most of the time they are either full or beyond their total capacity, with clients needing to stay for an average of 2-3 months (Interviews with service providers).

- **On a typical day in the U.S., domestic violence hotlines receive approximately 20,239 calls**, an average of close to **15 calls every minute** (National Network to End Domestic Violence 2016).
- In a single day in 2016, **Wisconsin domestic violence programs provided services to 1,716 victims**. On that same day, **243 requests for services went unmet due to lack of resources** (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2016).
- Table 6 shows that **domestic violence programs in or near Beloit provided shelter, counseling, advocacy and support services to 99 individuals from Beloit in 2016 and 57 so far in 2017.**
- **Out of all clients served** by one local service provider in the last two years, **nearly 80% used the emergency shelter while 67% of those served by another service provider used emergency shelter** (internal data provided by service providers); one provider shared that **last year was the highest number of people they housed in their shelter in 22 years of recorded data** (Interview, June 2017).
- One service provider director also shared that "the physical abuse we're seeing is more severe" and "we're seeing a lot more people being threatened with guns or assaulted with guns." She also shared that, compared to the last five years, "we've seen a lot more threats, emotional abuse, financial abuse, isolation" (Interview, 2017).
- The local service providers also support many children: of those served by the 2 local domestic violence shelters, **about 30% are under age 18.**

- **When asked what was necessary to prevent abuse**, all providers interviewed immediately said that it is essential to partner with schools to **begin education on healthy relationships and friendships early** in elementary school, along with a **more in-depth curriculum to educate teens to recognize when abuse occurs in their romantic relationships so they get help sooner**.
- All providers do an exceptional job with the resources they have, but **they all cited the need for more resources to meet needs of survivors**, including the need for more full time staff, more bilingual staff, and more youth advocates.

Table 6: Estimated Number of Individuals from Beloit and Rock County, Wisconsin Assisted by Domestic Violence Service Providers, 2016-2017¹

	Individuals Served in BELOIT² (% women and girls)	Individuals Served in Rock C. (% women and girls)
2016	99 (78%)	323 (81%)
2017 (Jan-July)	57 (82%)	200 (82%)

¹ Estimates based on percentages of total numbers (served by local domestic violence service providers) that are female and are from Beloit or that are in Rock County. These percentages were also applied to the missing data in the city and county categories because a number of cases did not have location information.

² This total only includes one of the service provider totals (that is located in Beloit) because the other service provider data is not broken down by town and city.

Survivors seeking services frequently report significant economic needs. Financial pressures (from lack of employment or insufficient employment) are often cited by providers as factors that contribute to increases in the number of survivors seeking shelter (Lyon and Lane, 2009; Interviews with providers).

- In 2016 and 2017, **over a third of clients served by one local domestic violence service provider were unemployed or homeless, or both**; fleeing violence requires many to leave their home in order to find safety, which also puts them in an economically precarious position.
- So, as one service provider director shared, when survivors are trying to create a “new and independent stable life, jobs and housing can be very difficult” (Interview, June 2017).
- All service providers that were interviewed said **finding housing was the biggest challenge for the survivors of domestic violence they serve**. They cite both a lack of available and affordable housing in the area and barriers to renting from domestic violence itself; having ANY record of police calls or property damage due to domestic violence creates significant obstacles.
- These difficult economic and housing challenges create an increase in demand for services, just as domestic violence service providers have fewer resources and limited staff.
- **Finding affordable childcare, steady employment or jobs with hours that align with children’s schedules, and reliable transportation are some of the other main challenges survivors face**, which is also consistent with state and national trends. One of the local domestic violence service providers has extensive on-site childcare services to help meet those critical needs.

The need for bilingual staff is evident across all social service agencies according to all service providers interviewed; there is not enough staff to meet the demand.

- **Whether or not a service provider has enough bilingual staff often determines whether non-English speakers experiencing domestic violence are able to get help at all.**
- Those who cannot communicate with staff of service providers face huge language and cultural barrier to access, which heightens the vulnerability and trauma they already experience from

abuse; when they do not have knowledge of resources that are available to help them, or they cannot access the help, their situation is even more serious.

- As discussed above, many immigrant survivors face these language barriers in addition to greater isolation and fear in a context of high anti-immigrant sentiment and restrictive immigration policies, which may also prevent them from seeking help.

To examine the effectiveness of one of the local service providers that gives assistance to survivors of domestic violence, Maren Hawkins and Kayla Syrocki (2016) conducted an in-depth assessment.

Examining outcomes from 2012-2015, Hawkins and Syrocki found that

- From 2012 to 2015, none of the residents that received help with a restraining order returned to their abusers.
- 92% of clients who received a hotel voucher did not return to their abuser.
- 91% of clients who received a donation of services from the shelter exited to locations other than going back to their abusers.
- If clients received more than 7 one-on-one sessions, their chance of returning to their abuser or exiting to a “not preferred venue” drops by 40%.
- Of clients who attend support groups, 60% have favorable outcomes, and only 8% returned to their abusers.
- When following up with clients, most said they were happy with how the service provider connected them to services and they always had advocates there to talk to when they needed.
- Finally, of the clients served, the rate that they experienced abuse again was very low, at 9%.

Leaving an abusive relationship is not easy. Some people do not recognize they are being abused; others may not be able to leave due to lack of resources or fear of homelessness; others hope the partner will change or lack support from family, friends, or community; but many are justifiably afraid of violent retaliation from their abuser.

- The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that domestic violence advocacy services are protective and perform an essential role by providing survivors of domestic violence with assistance and safe living options in the midst of fear and trauma.
- For many experiencing domestic violence, concerns about their ability to provide for themselves and their children are a primary reason they stay in or return to an abusive relationship (Interviews with service providers); **this is why resources that increase economic stability are critical for reestablishing a life after domestic violence.**
- Without these services, women and children experiencing domestic violence, especially those without the necessary economic resources, would have no safe place to stay or no where to turn to for support.
- It is also important to point out the sobering reality that **those who may be at the greatest risk of death from domestic violence are not reaching out for help**; research shows that **only 4% of abuse victims used a domestic violence hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner** (End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, 2016 Report).
- **In 2016, over one third of the victims of intimate partner-related homicides in Wisconsin were killed after the relationship ended or when one person in the relationship was taking steps to leave the relationship** (End Abuse Wisconsin, 2016 Report).

Leaving an abusive relationship does not equal safety, and no victim should ever have to take the sometimes life-threatening step of leaving an abusive relationship without the safety and support provided by domestic violence advocates, and without the benefit of a coordinated community

response that is designed to protect survivors and hold their abusers accountable. This only confirms that community awareness and collaboration, early and widespread education, and community investment and support combined with strong service providers/advocates are essential to avoid devastating impacts of domestic violence.

FOR HELP OR MORE INFORMATION

- **Beloit Domestic Violence Survivor Center**
Beloit Domestic Violence 24/7 hotline: 1-608-365-1119
www.statelinefamilyservices.org/beloit-domestic-violence-survivor-center-1
- **Rock County YWCA**
1735 South Washington Street, Janesville, WI 53546
Phone: (608) 752-5445 or 1-800-750-7990
www.ywcarockcounty.org
- **YWCA CARE House** for child victims of abuse
- 1126 Conde Street, Janesville, WI 53546
Phone: (608) 755-4750
www.ywcarockcounty.org
- **Room to Be Safe** (Wisconsin program addressing violence in LGBTQ relationships)
www.roomtobesafe.org
- **Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
www.wcadv.org
- **The National Center for Victims of Crime—Teen Victim Project**
www.ncvc.org/tvp
- **Women of Color Network (WOCN, Inc.)**
<http://www.wocninc.org/>
- **The National Domestic Violence Hotline** 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Or, online go to DomesticShelters.org

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UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence may be the most personal and invasive expression of violence that a person (or a group) can enact against someone else; it includes an actual or attempted act that is sexual in nature where consent is not freely obtained or given and is primarily motivated by a need to control, dominate, or humiliate the victim. Sexual violence includes rape and other forms of sexual assault, incest, child sexual abuse, sex trafficking, sexual contact, sexual harassment, or unwanted sexual experiences that do not involve contact (such as indecent exposure, forced viewing of or participation in sexual photos or movies, etc.). **Although it affects people of all backgrounds and statuses, women and girls are affected the most.** Sexual assault is also **the most under-reported violent crime in the U.S.** (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012). Therefore, we can only provide an incomplete picture because most of the available data only reflects the number of assaults reported to law enforcement officials.

Because of the traumatic and intimate nature of sexual violence and the prevalence of victim blaming, many survivors are not reporting. They may feel ashamed, believe the assault was somehow their fault, fear that no one will believe them, view what happened to them as “normal” rather than criminal, or worry about consequences to their perpetrator (who is often someone they know or an intimate partner) (WCASA.org). Even though many different agencies collect data, they are only capturing the small proportion of victims who report or seek help, and they use a wide range of definitions, which also affects data consistency. Despite these limitations, this report provides key information that can be used to heighten awareness and encourage community support for all those who have experienced sexual violence or provide essential services that make survivors’ recovery possible.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The majority of sexual assault survivors are female, while the majority of perpetrators are male (Black et al. 2011) and 99% of perpetrators in the U.S. will walk free (U.S. Dept. of Justice 2012).
- **Nearly 1 in 5 women (and 1 in 71 men) in the U.S. have been raped** at some time in their lives (Black et al. 2011); 1 in 6 female victims of rape reported 2 perpetrators in her lifetime and 1 in 8 reported 3 perpetrators (Black et al. 2011).
- **Over half of female victims of rape report being raped by an intimate partner** and 41% by an acquaintance (Black et al. 2011).
- An estimated **13% of women (and 6% of men) have experienced sexual coercion in their lifetime** (“unwanted sexual penetration after being pressured in a nonphysical way”) and **27.2% of women (and 11.7% of men) have experienced unwanted sexual contact** (Black et al. 2011).
- In the U.S., **42.2% of female victims of rape were raped the first time before the age of 18** and 79.6% before the age of 25 (Black et al. 2011).
- Even though a large number of those experiencing sexual violence are in their teens or early 20s, **34% of reported sexual assaults in the U.S. involve victims under age 12** (Snyder 2000).
- **Victim blaming** is a huge problem society-wide and directly contributes to the underreporting of sexual assaults, survivors’ withdrawal of complaints, and the low conviction rates or weak sentencing of rapists (Greeson, Campbell, and Fehler-Cabral 2015). Victim blaming, especially when it comes from law enforcement, encourages and reinforces victimization and takes the focus off of those who are actually committing the violence (Greeson et al. 2015).

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN WISCONSIN AND BELOIT

Table 7 reports the number of all sexual assaults reported to police or campus security in Beloit, and the number reported in uniform crime reports (along with convictions) in Wisconsin and Rock County. The most recent publicly available data for Rock County and Wisconsin is from 2010. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2012), **65% of rapes/sexual assaults are never reported to law enforcement**, so

we can assume that **the reported assaults presented below represent about a third of the actual number that occur**. Although the information presented below provides an incomplete picture, we can still make comparisons and identify patterns that can inform prevention and advocacy efforts in Beloit.

- **In Wisconsin as a whole, nearly 90% of all reported sexual assaults in 2010 were committed by someone known by the victim** (this does not include instances where the relationship is not known); 37% of all reported sexual assaults in Wisconsin were committed by family or household members or dating partners of the victim (WI Office of Justice Assistance 2010:10).
- **Conviction rates in Wisconsin are low at 24%, and even lower in Rock County at 13%.**
- Based on 2010 data, **about 25% of reported assaults in Rock County occur in Beloit** and the rate of occurrence in Wisconsin, Rock County, and Beloit (based on population) is about the same.
- Of all reported sexual assaults in Beloit, approximately **86% involve women or girls**; this is consistent with Wisconsin as a whole in 2010, where 85% of sexual assault victims were women and girls (WI Office of Justice Assistance 2010).

Table 7. Reported Sexual Assaults and Convictions in Wisconsin, Rock County, and Beloit.

	Wisconsin ¹ (pop. 5.7 million)	Rock County ¹ (pop. 160,331)	BELOIT ² (pop. 36,966 in 2010)			
	2010	2010	2010 ⁴	2014	2015	2016
Number of Reported, Unduplicated Sexual Assault Victims	4,856 85% female victims	215 gender not available	59 gender not available	152 86% female victims	206 84% female victims	165 87% female victims
Convictions	1,188 (24%)	28 (13%)				

¹ Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, "The Burden of Sexual Violence in Wisconsin Report," 2010. The most recent publicly available data we have for Wisconsin and Rock County is from 2010. Convictions include sexual assault, child sexual assault, and repeated sexual assault of the same child. Convictions were only included if person was in custody of or being supervised by Department of Corrections. Offenders who were sentenced while in the county jail with no term of probation were not included, so felony assault convictions may be missing from the report.

² Beloit Police Department, Sexual Offenses Report with Victim Information, 2014-2016 (received August 29, 2017) and Beloit College Annual Crime Statistics (2014-2016). Values for percent women victims are only estimates because gender of victims reporting to Beloit College security is unknown. Because the college data does not include information about whether the student reported to police and research shows that fewer than 5% of rapes on campus are reported to law enforcement (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2014; Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2000), assaults reported on campus are treated as unduplicated cases.

⁴ WI Office of Justice Assistance, "Sexual Assaults in Wisconsin, 2010" combined with Beloit College Crime Statistics, 2010.

Types of Sexual Assault Occurring in Wisconsin, Rock County, and Beloit

Table 8 shows that the **most common types of sexual assault reported in 2010** at the state, county, and city levels are **forcible fondling and rape**. There are also a high number of statutory rape offenses determined by the **legal age of consent, which is 18 in Wisconsin**. Individuals who are younger than 18 years old are not legally able to consent to sexual activity; when a person has "consensual" sexual intercourse with someone under the age of 18, they can be prosecuted for statutory rape.

Table 8. All Reported Sexual Assaults in Wisconsin, Rock County, and Beloit, 2010

Type of Offense	Wisconsin	Rock County	BELOIT
Forcible Fondling	2,168	88	19 ¹
Forcible Rape	1,180	53	20 ¹
Forcible Sodomy/Oral sex	446	21	2
Sexual Assault with Object	118	17	7
Statutory Rape	931	36	11
Ejac/Excrete on victim	14	0	0
Total	4,857	215	59

Source: Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, "Sexual Assaults in Wisconsin, 2010" and Beloit College Crime Statistics, 2010.

¹Because Beloit College data only reported "forcible sex offenses" in 2010, the total forcible offenses on campus was divided across these 2 types of offenses according to the average ratio between number of forcible rape and forcible fondling reports from 2014-2016 Beloit College data; thus, the numbers reported in those 2 categories represent an estimated total.

Types of Sexual Assault Endured by Survivors Under the Age of 18 in Beloit

When we compare types of reported sexual offenses against **victims under the age of 18 in Beloit** (in Table 9) to offenses against adults age 18 and above (in Table 10), important patterns emerge.

Table 9. All Reported Sexual Assaults in Beloit, WI, Against Children and Youth Under Age 18, 2014-2016¹

	2014	2015	2016	2014-2016
Average age of victim	12	11	11.6	11.5
Sex Offense Against Child	75² (14 boys: 19%)	66 (14 boys: 21%)	37 (9 boys: 24%)	79% girls
Forcible Fondling	3	37 (6 boys: 16%)	30 (4 boys: 13%)	86% girls
Forcible Rape	14	13	6	100% girls
Forced Sodomy/oral	0	3 (2 boys: 67%)	5 (1 boy: 20%)	63% girls
Forced Attempted Sodomy	0	1	0	100% girls
Porn/obscene material	1	2 (1 boy: 50%)	6 (1 boy: 17%)	78% girls
Indecent Exposure	5	0	0	100% girls
Statutory Rape	19 (5 boys: 26%)	21 (7 boys: 33%)	11 (2 boys: 18%)	73% girls
Other Sex Offenses	9 (2 boys: 22%)	14 (4 boys: 29%)	18 (3 boys: 17%)	78% girls
Total Assaults	126 (105 girls: 83%)	157 (123 girls: 78%)	113 (93 girls: 82%)	81% girls

Source: Beloit Police Department, Sexual Offenses Report with Victim Information, 2014-2016 (received August 29, 2017).

¹Some victims experienced two types of assaults: 2 victims in 2014, 20 victims in 2015, and 17 victims in 2016. **So these total numbers will be higher than number of victims.** Usually it was a sex offense against a child in addition to forcible fondling or forcible rape. Also, 2 cases of statutory rape (in 2015) and 2 cases of sex offense against a child (in 2016) with 18-year-old victims were included here because those classifications are more consistent with experience of those age 17 and below.

²One of the 75 was an additional soliciting charge.

Among sexual assault **victims under the age of 18 in Beloit:**

- The **average age is between 11 and 12 years old.**
- **The most common type of reported sexual offense children in Beloit experience is “sex offense against a child” that does not involve unwanted touching or a forced sexual act.** Other offenses that do not involve unwanted touching or a forced sexual act (involving sexual intercourse, oral or anal sex, or some sort of physical penetration) include forcing a child to view porn or obscene material, indecent exposure and “other sex offenses” (Jillian Peterson, Beloit Police Department). However, **these are still serious offenses, especially when they involve children.**
- Of the reported sexual offenses that do involve unwanted touching or a forced sexual act, incidents of **forcible fondling are significantly higher than other forms of assault for youth and children in Beloit.** This is similar to Wisconsin as a whole in 2010 (WI Office of Justice Assistance 2010:20).

As shown in Table 9 above, **the large majority (81%) of sexual assault survivors under age 18 in Beloit are girls** and, in the case of **forcible rape, all reported victims are girls.** However, in the U.S. as a whole, more than 25% of male victims of rape were 10 years old or younger when they were first raped (Black et al. 2011).

- In all of Wisconsin in 2010, 85% of sexual assault victims were female, who were most often victims of forcible fondling and forcible rape (WI Office of Justice Assistance 2011).
- Reported sexual offenses against boys are also identified in Table 8 to show types of assaults that boys experience in comparison to girls; **in Beloit, over 20% of the victims of reported sex offenses against children are boys.**
- in addition, **14% of those reporting forcible fondling and 37% of those reporting forced sodomy/oral sex are boys.**

Types of Sexual Assault Endured by Survivors Age 18 and Older in Beloit

When we compare reported sexual assaults against children and youth under age 18 to those against adults age 18 and above, there are some important differences.

- Table 10 shows that **the number of forcible rapes is significantly higher than all other types of reported sexual offenses for victims age 18 and older in Beloit.**
- In Beloit from 2014 to 2016, **7% of the reported sexual assaults of adults also occurred in the context of domestic violence** and all of the victims in these cases were women. One of the domestic violence service providers explained that domestic violence survivors often take more time to recognize that they were also experiencing sexual violence within the abusive relationship because the power and control the abuser exerts through physical violence and/or psychological intimidation fundamentally shapes their sexual interactions. So more survivors of domestic violence also experience sexual violence than is realized, acknowledged, or reported (Interview, June 2017).
- **Intimate partner violence** is a major public issue among adult women and often includes sexual violence; **nearly 1 in 10 women in the U.S. has been raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime**, and an estimated 16.9% of women (and 8.0% of men) have experienced sexual violence other than rape by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al. 2011).
- **Most victims of intimate partner violence** (69% of female victims; 53% of male victims) **experienced some form of intimate partner violence for the first time before 25 years of age** (Black et al. 2011).

Table 10. All Reported Sexual Assaults in Beloit, WI, Where Victim is Age 18+, 2014-2016¹

Type of Offense	2014	2015	2016
Forcible Fondling	4	9*	19*
Forcible Rape	19	34	27*
Forced Attempted Rape	0	2*	1
Forced Sodomy/Oral	0	1	0
Sexual Assault with Object	1*	0	0
Other Sex Offenses	2	3**	5 ²
Total Assaults	26	49	52

Source: Beloit Police Department, Sexual Offenses Report with Victim Information, 2014-2016 (received August 29, 2017) and Beloit College Annual Crime Statistics, 2014-2016.

*One of the assaults occurred in the context of domestic violence.

** Two of the assaults occurred in the context of domestic violence.

¹ Age of victim was unavailable for the Beloit College Crime Statistics; this means that there is a possibility that a small number of those include in this total were age 17. There are no incidents with multiple types of assaults.

² Only one male above the age of 18 reported a sexual offense to the Beloit police 2014-2016; the victim was 19 years old.

Age at Which Women and Youth Are More Likely to Experience Sexual Assault

There are some important patterns in terms of the age at which sexual assaults occur, which is important to recognize when developing prevention efforts and support services, especially for teenagers and young adults who are more likely to experience sexual assault.

- From 1995 to 2013 **in the U.S., women ages 18 to 24 had the highest rate of rape and sexual assault victimizations** compared to women and girls in other age groups (Dept. of Justice 2014).
- **In the U.S., youth age 12 to 17 make up one-third of all sexual assault and rape victims** (Snyder 2000); in a 2015 survey, **6.7% of high school students in the U.S.** reported having been **physically forced** to have sexual intercourse (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016).
- About **50% of adolescents in the U.S. experience some type of sexual coercion** (being pressured in a nonphysical way to engage in a sexual act) (Struckman-Johnson et al. 2003).
- **About 35% of women in the U.S. who were raped under the age of 18 were also raped as adults** compared to 14% of women without an early rape history (Black et al. 2011).

When we look at the **age of survivors of sexual assault in Beloit from 2014 to 2016** in Table 11, **most are in their mid-teens**. It is important to point out that age of victim is not reported in Beloit College campus crime statistics, so it is assumed that the Beloit College students reporting sexual assault to campus security are age 18 to 24 and they are added to the Beloit police report data in Table 11 below.

- **Of all 489 sexual assault survivors in Beloit reporting to police or campus security from 2014 to 2016, 70% are younger than 18 years old, and youth age 12 to 17 make up 43% of all reported sexual assault survivors.**
- In Wisconsin in 2010, youth age 15 years and younger represented 61% of all sexual assault victims (WI Office of Justice Assistance 2011); similarly, **from 2014 to 2016 in Beloit, 58% of all reported sexual assault victims were 15 years and younger** (Beloit Police Department report).
- In Beloit, **the highest number of sexual assault survivors reporting to police are 15 year olds** (representing 13% of all reported assaults).
- Further, **over 21% of all survivors of sexual assault in Beloit who report to police or campus security are between the ages of 18 and 24**, which represents a high number of young adults experiencing sexual assault, compared to about 8% above age 24.

Table 11. Unduplicated Sexual Assault Survivors Reporting to Police or Campus Security in Beloit, Wisconsin, by Age of Victim, 2014-2016

Age of Victim	Number of Victims	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0-3 years	19	4%	4%
4-5 years	30	6%	10%
6-7 years	30	6%	16%
8-9 years	21	4%	20%
10-11 years	32	6.5%	26.5%
12-13 years	48	10%	36.5%
14-17 years	162	33%	69.5%
14 years (39)		(8%)	
15 years (63)		(13%)	
16 years (40)		(8%)	
17 years (20)		(4%)	
18-24 years	105	21.5%	91%
25-35 years	19	4%	95%
36-50 years	14	3%	98%
51-85 years	5	1%	99%
Age unknown	4	1%	100%
Total	489	100%	100%

Source: Beloit Police Department, Sexual Offenses Report with Victim Information, 2014-2016 (received August 29, 2017) and Beloit College Annual Crime Statistics, 2014-2016.

The data presented above shows that there are a significantly large number of young women in their teens and early twenties experiencing sexual violence in Beloit; **even more sexual assault is experienced by teenagers than young adults. Adolescents' experience of sexual assault in Beloit appears to be even more pronounced than adolescents in the U.S. as a whole**, but similar to those in Wisconsin overall. However, there are a large number of children experiencing sexual violence in Beloit.

The Intersections of Racism, Sexism, and Sexual Violence

Table 12 shows the racial demographics of Beloit compared to the racial identity of sexual violence survivors reporting to law enforcement.

- Similar to domestic violence victims reporting to police, **the large majority of reported sexual violence victims in Beloit are white and there are a disproportionate number of African American sexual violence victims under the age of 18 reporting to law enforcement.**
- This is consistent with other research that shows that women of color are impacted disproportionately by sexual assault due to the intersection of sexism and racism (The Women of Color Network).
- However, when we examine reported sexual assault victims in Beloit that are **age 18 and older, there is a disproportionate number of white sexual assault victims.** This may indicate that white women experiencing sexual assault are more likely to report than women of color based on the research cited above. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions from this data alone when evidence cited earlier from the U.S. Department of Justice suggests that about two-thirds of sexual assaults go unreported.

Table 12. Local Population and Reported Female Sexual Assault Victims by Race

	Unknown	White	African American	Multi-racial	Other	Hispanic or Latino (any race)
Beloit¹		69%	15%	4.4%	11.6%	17.1%
Reported SV Victims Under Age 18 (2014-2016)	2.6% (9)	69% (237)	28.4% (98)			
Reported SV Victims Age 18 and older (2014-2016) ²	2%	82%	16%			

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census—**data will not add up to 100% due to the overlap between Hispanic and other races.**

² Race of victim not reported in Beloit College crime statistics, so those cases are not included and, therefore, can only report overall percentages of the remaining victims reporting to the Beloit Police Department.

The fact that few, if any, Latino/Hispanic sexual assault victims report to law enforcement in Beloit despite having a large Latino/Hispanic population, suggests other difficult issues in addition to facing their experience of sexual violence.

- Women of color may have to confront other challenges with respect to protecting family (honor) or community, confronting the effects of a history of racism and discrimination or mistreatment by law enforcement, and conforming to cultural values and norms that discourage reporting or acknowledging incidents as sexual assault (The Women of Color Network).
- **Immigrant women of color also face greater vulnerability to sexual assault.** For example, the Southern Poverty Law Center researchers (Bauer and Ramírez 2010) interviewed approximately 150 women who were either currently undocumented or spent time in the U.S. as undocumented immigrants. A majority of the women interviewed said they experienced some sort of sexual harassment that sometimes rose to the level of sexual assault while working in the fields, packinghouses or processing plants in the U.S. However, few of the women farmworkers ever come forward to seek justice for the sexual harassment and assault that they have suffered because of their fear of being deported, even as crime victims.

It is clearly important that we recognize and address the needs and experiences of women and girls of color in our community in prevention and recovery efforts.

CHILDREN AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse can be emotionally confusing and traumatic for children because the **abuser is most often a family member or someone that the child knows and trusts** (Lev-Wiesel 2012). There may be a single occurrence, but most likely the abuse will continue over a period of time, often for years, because the abuser manipulates and coerces the child into remaining silent. Children experiencing sexual abuse are also afraid of telling someone about the abuse because of confusion, guilt, and fear of being blamed, punished, or not believed (WCASA.org).

- **Roughly 30% of girls in the U.S. (and 15% of boys) are sexually abused as children** (Baker 2002); 27% of the perpetrators are parents, 29% are another relative, and 9% are a dating partner of the parent (these are also the three most common types of perpetrators) (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services 2008).
- Although we do not have the data that can accurately identify the racial identity of sexual abuse victims, Table 13 reports national data on child sexual abuse victims by race, which show some similar overall patterns as those for victims of sexual assault.

- About half the victims of child sexual abuse in the U.S. are white and a disproportionate number are African American and Hispanic or Latino.

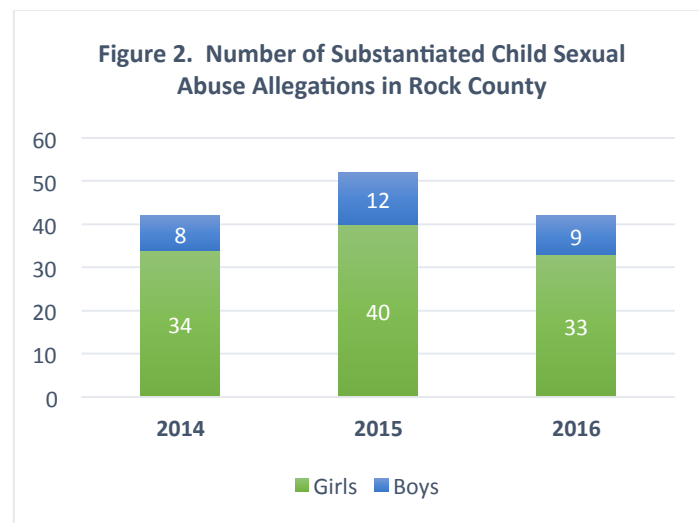
Table 13. U.S. Child Sexual Abuse Victims by Race, 2008

	Unknown	White	African American	Multi-Racial	Other	Hispanic or Latino (any race)
U.S. Population		72.4%	12.6%	2.9%	12.1%	16.3%
Child Sexual Abuse Victims in the U.S.	21% (7,174)	50% (33,959)	16% (10,953)	2% (1,164)	1.5% (1,024)	20% (13,728)

Source: Population data for the United States from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census—data will not add up to 100% due to the overlap between Hispanic and other races; Child sexual abuse data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008).

In Wisconsin, there were 1,091 substantiated cases of child sexual abuse in 2015 (WI Dept. of Children and Families 2016) compared to 42 to 52 cases a year in Rock County from 2014-2016.

- In Rock County, cases of sexual abuse represent 14% of all substantiated child abuse allegations from 2014 to 2016; 79% of the 136 children in Rock County experiencing child sexual abuse from 2014-2016 are girls (Rock County Human Services Children, Youth, Families).
- Figure 2 shows the number of sexual abuse cases in Rock County by gender; girls in Rock County are three-and-a-half times more likely than boys to experience sexual abuse.
- In Beloit, 24% of all reported victims of sexual assault are 10 years old and younger (compared to 22% for Wisconsin as a whole in 2010 [WI Office of Justice Assistance 2011]).



Source: Rock County Human Services Children, Youth, and Families Division (data request received August 16, 2017 from Lance Horozewski, Division Manager).

As discussed earlier, there is a significant rise in the number of child abuse cases where foster care is necessary, which means that finding foster homes is becoming more difficult. In an interview with Amanda Isunza, Director of the Sexual Assault Recovery Program (SARP) for Rock and Green County, she explained that because it is difficult to find foster homes, “sometimes the safest person they [CPS] can place the children with is the one that actually [gives] the perpetrator access to the children. We see a lot of that and it’s very unfortunate” (Interview, June 2017).

To estimate how many of the child sexual abuse cases in Rock County occur in Beloit, we can turn to data from the CARE House of Rock County. To reiterate, all forensic interviews of children in child sexual abuse cases in Rock County are conducted there, which is why most of the cases at CARE House are cases of sexual abuse.

- Table 10 shows that from 2012 to 2016, **close to 100 or more of the children in Rock County who experience abuse AND are served by CARE House experience sexual abuse each year.**
- Because CARE House serves all of Rock County and a little over 40% of children who are interviewed or receive support there are from Beloit, we can roughly estimate that of the substantiated cases of child sexual abuse in Rock County, **an estimated 17 cases of sexual abuse in 2014, 21 cases in 2015, and 17 cases in 2016 represent children in Beloit.**

Table 14. Number Children in Rock County Served by CARE House (YWCA) and Percentage Experiencing Sexual Abuse, 2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Number Served	127	126	187	194	174
% Experiencing Sexual Abuse	76% (96)	72% (91)	60% (112)	67% (130)	71% (123)

Source: CARE House data provided by Rock County YWCA.

- It is also important to note again that **69% of all child abuse victims served by CARE House are girls.** This is also because the most common form of abuse experienced by children coming to the CARE House is sexual abuse, which affects significantly more girls than boys (as shown in Figure 2) and **59% of children going to CARE House are abused by a family member.**
- SARP Director, Amanda Isunza also explained that a lot of households include different family members, which means that a lot more people who may not be part of the immediate family (including some who “do not have good intentions”) have access to the children because they have access to the home (Interview, June 2017).
- Director Isunza shared that because the abuser is most often someone known to the victim and is very close to the victim most of the time, her and her staff see a lot of cases where “it’s happening at home and maybe the parents are not believing the [child’s] story.”
- According to Director Isunza, most of the adult clients that her program serves were victims of sexual assault when they were children or adolescents. She explained that “sometimes we’ll have people that come and they’re like, ‘I want to talk to someone because this is something I’ve been carrying with me for many years’ and when they open up about the abuse, it’s like opening up a Pandora’s box and they have such a hard time” (Interview, June 2017).
- This reinforces **how crucial it is to identify sexual abuse early and believe victims when they come forward in order for them to get immediate assistance and support for recovery** so they do not have to carry the traumatic effects into adulthood.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

The physical and mental health effects of sexual assault are significant.

- Those who experience sexual assault are more likely to experience physical, emotional, and social concerns than those who are not, which includes unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, missing school or work, injury, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, fear and concern for safety (Black et al. 2011).

- Men and women who experience rape in their lifetime are also more likely to report asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, frequent headaches, chronic pain, difficulty sleeping, activity limitations, and poor physical and mental health than those who have not experienced sexual violence (Black et al. 2011).
- The experience of sexual violence in adolescence is also connected to multiple negative side effects, including poor academic performance, unintended pregnancy, substance abuse, continued or new sexual risk taking behavior, sexually transmitted infections, depression, or contemplated or attempted suicide (Freeman and Temple 2010; Howard, Wang, and Yan 2007).
- Adolescents who have experienced sexual violence are also at an increased risk of experiencing it again at some other time in their lives (Black et al. 2011).
- When communities do not understand sexual assault, and disbelieve victims' reports of sexual assault or blame them for the assault, there is a lack of support for survivors which may cause further isolation and trauma (Black et al. 2011).
- Speaking about sexual assault victims in general, the Sexual Assault Recovery Program Director Amanda Isunza explained that "one of their major concerns is whether people are going to believe them or not. . . Every time we encounter a victim, regardless of their race and education, they are always feeling guilty and that's a first feeling that we see." She continued that victims are afraid for their safety because the perpetrator may come back, which is compounded by the fact that our culture normalizes or trivializes sexual assault and abuse, which "shuts down victims . . . and it makes them believe they shouldn't come forward because no one's going to believe them" (Interview, June 2017).
- **Advocacy organizations provide a critical source of immediate response and support for recovery from sexual assault.** Advocates represent a critical point of access for sexual assault victims because they offer confidential support services regardless of whether the individual wishes to report to medical or criminal justice systems.

Advocacy organizations provide comprehensive services for survivors of sexual violence that include crisis intervention and response, medical and criminal justice advocacy, support groups, therapy, education and training, and prevention efforts.

- A relatively recent study found that **having the support of an advocate after a sexual assault provides survivors with more helpful information, referrals, and services, and they experience less secondary trauma or re-victimization by medical and legal systems.** Survivors with advocate support do better in the short *and* long term and are more likely to file a police report than those without the support (Campbell 2006).
- **The Sexual Assault Recovery Program (SARP) is the only local organization in Beloit focused on meeting the needs of survivors of sexual violence;** specially trained advocates provide free, confidential services to men, women, and children survivors (and their families) who have experienced all forms of sexual violence and harassment through a 24-hour crisis hotline, immediate crisis intervention and support, support groups, free therapy through Family Services of Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois, medical/legal advocacy, and community education.
- **The entire staff at the Beloit Domestic Violence Survivor Center has also been specially trained** to provide sexual assault support and advocacy because sexual violence often occurs within the context of domestic violence (Interview, June 2017).
- **The primary role of a sexual assault advocate from SARP is to give support and comfort to sexual assault survivors and their loved ones** and they are not directly affiliated with medical or law enforcement agencies.
- Director Isunza shared that she has heard many clients tell her "that they've been in

professional counseling and the counselor they were seeing was not familiar with trauma at all. So you do encounter those type of people that, regardless of their education, they may not be familiar with trauma, they may not understand . . . sexual assault or domestic violence. So in terms of that, that's what we specialize in and that's what we are trained to do. We're trained to work with survivors of sexual assault" (Interview, June 2017).

- **In 2016, SARP's 24-hour hotline received 370 calls from victims and the general public needing sexual assault services and information** (SARP internal data summary, 2016).
- **SARP served 129 sexual assault survivors in Rock County in 2016, and an estimated 98% of them were women or girls; of those 129 survivors, most (70.5%) were adults, but close to a fifth (18.6%) were teens from ages 13 to 17, and 11% were children age 12 and younger** (SARP internal data summary, 2016). Although most of the adult clients experienced sexual assault as children or teens, many did not seek help until they were adults.
- **Yet SARP only has 3 full time staff and 4 part-time staff to serve two counties**, which requires every staff person to be on call for 4 to 5, 12 hour shifts a week. Director Isunza said they rely heavily on Beloit College student volunteers as a result: "However, it's always a challenge because, of course, when summer break comes we are left with no volunteers. And we've been trying to reach out and get more community volunteers, but it's really hard. . . . so we're on call a lot, especially during the summer break with Beloit College students being gone" (Interview).
- **The limited human resources means less availability of sexual assault advocacy services.**
- **In 2016, SARP's individual personal advocacy services were used the most**, which provides one-on-one emotional and informational support to sexual assault survivors as well as intervening with other agencies on their behalf; information and referrals to other appropriate community resources was the second most frequently used service. And therapy and support/advocacy for survivors going through the criminal justice process to report the assault are the third most frequently used services (SARP internal data summary, 2016).
- **Most of SARP's clients have been victims of rape** because, as Director Isunza explains, "There's a lot of people that think if there wasn't penetration there is not sexual assault" (Interview, June 2017). However, sexual violence encompasses more than rape, as discussed above.
- **Some marginalized groups in the community may face added barriers when trying to access support services, which is why Director Isunza has intentionally diversified staff and directed outreach efforts to better serve Latino and African American survivors in the local community.**
- Isunza shared that before SARP had a more racially diverse staff, it was very hard to provide those services because "they're not going to come if they can't identify with someone who's going to offer them services" (Interview, June 2017).
- SARP has two bilingual staff that speak Spanish, two African-American staff (hired over a year ago), and one staff member from Pakistan who speaks four different languages. There were no bilingual services being offered prior to Isunza joining SARP as staff 6 years ago, and under her leadership, SARP has built relationships with Latino service providers. Referring to those in the Latino community, Isunza explained that "once they come here and they realize that there is someone that can help them and can understand them and is not going to judge them, they see it as a resource and they will use that; and they will stick to the program for as long as they need to, and we work very hard to meet their needs" (Interview, June 2017).
- Director Isunza shared that the **greatest unmet needs were for legal and housing assistance**. According to Isunza, many clients cannot afford to pay for needed legal services, but it is difficult to find funding for legal support and there are not a lot of attorneys in the area that provide those services pro bono. Many clients are also "on the housing waiting lists and sometimes we have to send them to Rockford because there is not enough room here in Beloit or Janesville."

The healthcare system represents another important access point and survivors have options related to their medical care, including having a forensic exam for the collection of evidence. **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE)** are registered nurses who have completed specialized education and clinical preparation in the medical forensic care of a patient who has experienced sexual assault or abuse. A SANE Nurse program has been in place at Beloit Memorial Hospital for about a year and for ten or more years at Mercy Hospital. SARP also works very closely with SANE nurses.

Reporting to law enforcement officials can be very difficult, so police behavior and actions are a crucial part of reporting sexual assaults and rapes. In cases involving adolescents and even adults, police officer's reactions to the story survivors tell them will significantly influence their overall well-being, their feelings toward their case, and if or how the case will proceed (Greeson et al. 2015).

- When making reports, survivors are often not believed or are often blamed for not properly protecting themselves against their rapist/abuser (Greeson et al. 2015).
- If an officer gives this kind of negative feedback to the survivor and questions if they are telling the truth, it hurts the overall law enforcement system because fewer people trust that they will help them when they are sexually assaulted (Greeson et al. 2015).
- Amanda Isunza shared that "it's always important to make [survivors] feel like we believe them and we're here to help them because **we may be the only person that said that to them.**" So "I always tell my advocates our agenda is to be the main support, our agenda is to say 'I believe you' and 'I'm here to help you'" (Interview, June 2017).
- This is why sexual assault advocates provide such an essential source of support by being with the victim as they go through the reporting process, but they leave the decision of whether or not to report up to the victim experiencing sexual assault.

For the prevention of sexual violence, SARP Director Isunza shared that **the most important thing to help prevent sexual violence in Beloit is to enlist the schools' help in educating young people about sexual assault** "because that's where we see a lot of the victims" and the information about sexual assault is not always shared at home (Interview, June 2017).

- Director Isunza explained that some schools are very open and some teachers will contact SARP directly, such as health teachers that ask SARP advocates to talk to their classes about consent and sexual assault.
- However, schools have eliminated some of those health classes with budget cuts, so SARP has been invited into schools less and less as a result (Interview).
- **Research shows that early education** that includes teaching and modeling healthy relationship behaviors, challenging gender stereotypes, increasing youth's abilities to engage in bystander intervention, and empowering youth to create solutions or design and lead community-based campaigns and activities **is critical to sexual assault prevention** (Cook-Craig 2012).
- **Addressing the trauma and abuse that young people witness and experience at home or economic insecurity is also critical in prevention efforts.** Director Isunza shared that "a lot of our victims come from very unstable homes" where "parents have to work a lot to support the household, so there's a lot of freedom; teens witness domestic violence going on at home, so there's trauma going on at home" or abuse is normalized (Interview, June 2017).
- Director Isunza also shared that not all parents are willing to step up and end the abuse due to financial needs because, a lot of the time, "the parent who may be the abuser is the one providing most of the resources in that home" (Interview, June 2017).
- **Thus, having alternative sources of economic support is key in preventing further abuse and getting sexually abused children the help and support they need early is critical.**

The experience of sexual violence is deeply traumatizing, especially when people do not believe survivors or do not respond with sensitivity and compassion. Lack of community understanding and support also causes further isolation and trauma, especially when it exists in a culture that normalizes or trivializes sexual assault and abuse. The information presented demonstrates that sexual violence in our community is high, especially for youth and children, and the support services available, although effective, are too limited. Our service providers perform an essential role in providing advocacy, support, and recovery services for many survivors of sexual assault and, many times, are the only people who believe the survivor is telling the truth about the sexual assault they experienced. Without these advocates, those experiencing sexual violence, especially those without the economic resources to pay for expensive therapy, continue to carry their trauma for years to come.

FOR HELP OR MORE INFORMATION

- **Sexual Assault Recovery Program (SARP)**
24 Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-866-666-4576
<https://www.sarpwi.com/>
Beloit Office, 416 College Street, Beloit, WI; phone: (608) 365-1244
Green County Office, 2809 Sixth Street, Monroe, WI; phone: (608) 325-3142
- **Family Services of Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois**
Provides Counseling Services
416 College Street, Beloit, WI 53511
Phone: (608) 365-1244
<https://www.statelinefamilyservices.org/>
- **YWCA CARE House** for child victims of abuse
- 1126 Conde Street, Janesville, WI 53546
Phone: (608) 755-4750
www.ywcarockcounty.org
- **Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault**
www.wcasa.org
- **Wisconsin Office of Crime Victim Services**
<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs>
- **Women of Color Network (WOCN, Inc.)**
<http://www.wocninc.org/>
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**: 1-800-799-SAFE
- **The National Child Abuse Hotline**
1-800.4.A.CHILD (422-4453).
- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center**
<https://www.nsvrc.org/resources>
- **RAINN**—a national anti-sexual violence organization
www.rainn.org

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UNDERSTANDING SEX-TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking is a growing concern in the U.S. and **occurs in Wisconsin, Rock County, and Beloit.**

- **Sex trafficking** occurs when an adult is coerced, forced, or deceived into prostitution—or maintained in prostitution through these means (U.S. Dept. of State 2013). Anyone who is held in service through psychological manipulation or physical force is being trafficked (U.S. Dept. of State 2013).
- According to federal law in the U.S., **child sex trafficking** occurs when a child (under 18 years of age) is convinced to perform a commercial sex act—regardless of whether or not the trafficker used force, fraud, or coercion (U.S. Dept. of State 2013).
- **Almost one-third (32%) of sex trafficking cases in the United States involve youth and children under the age of 18** (Kyckelhahn, Beck, and Cohen 2009).
- **Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of children are both forms of child abuse**, even if the perpetrator is unrelated to the child. **Sex trafficking of a child** clearly involves another person benefitting from forcing, defrauding, or coercing a child into a commercial sex act (s.948.051 Wis. Stat.) (WI Child Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Indicator and Response Guide, 2017).
- In contrast, **sexual exploitation of a child** involves forcing, defrauding, or coercing a child to engage in a sexually explicit way for the purposes of recording, displaying, and/or distributing the recording (s.948.05 Wis. Stat.) (WI Child Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Indicator and Response Guide, 2017).
- Using these legal definitions, trafficking is also interchangeable with the “pimping” or “prostituting” of children or youth, since most pimps use “force, fraud, or coercion,” and minors cannot legally consent—thus “pimps” are traffickers (Hunt 2013; Kotrla 2010); **The average age of children being groomed and sold for sex is between 11 and 14** (U.S. Dept. of Justice 2007), and a large number of girls in the commercial sex trade are under the age of 18 (Hunt 2013).
- Clearly, children and youth under the age of 18 are at particularly high risk (Clawson et al. 2009).
- **One of the greatest challenges is that many youth being trafficked do not recognize they are being trafficked** (WI Dept. of Children and Families 2015).
- **Sex traffickers maintain control** through violence and coercion, psychological and emotional controls, threats of harm to the victim or their families, false promises of future pay for work already done, threats of arrest with no pay and crippling debt, and manipulation of an individual’s disability or alcohol or drug dependency (U.S. Department of State 2013; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services). As a result, **young people who are being trafficked are most often controlled without being physically restrained or held captive** by their trafficker and may attend school, participate in other social activities, or have contact with neighbors and community members (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services).

DID YOU KNOW?

- Human trafficking is the world’s second most profitable enterprise (behind drugs); some estimate that sex trafficking brings in about \$9.5 billion a year in the U.S. alone (Hunt 2013:226).
- **About 63% of sex trafficking cases in the United States involve U.S. citizens** (Kyckelhahn, Beck, and Cohen 2009).
- Current estimates suggest **the majority of trafficking victims are women and girls**; we also know a substantial percentage of those being trafficked are men and boys (U.S. Dept. of State).
- **In 2016, 1 out of 6 runaways reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children have likely been trafficked** (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children 2017).
- **Often, child sex trafficking victims are also forced to provide labor** or services such as domestic work, and **child labor trafficking victims also experience sexual violence and abuse** (U.S. Dept. of State 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

HOW ARE CHILDREN AND YOUTH RECRUITED?

According to Hay (2006) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, recruitment of young people for trafficking commonly takes place

- **in public places** (e.g., around shopping malls, bus stops, or fast-food restaurants)
- around **youth shelters** where runaway and homeless youth are easily targeted (or are also enlisted to help traffickers recruit others)
- **in the vicinity of schools** and **group homes** where children served by the child welfare system can be found
- through pimp-controlled prostitution (street, escort, strip clubs, pornography, truck stops)
- through gangs
- from intimate partner relationships and families
- **The use of the internet as a recruitment strategy of children and youth is also common**, through online apps, Facebook, legal websites such as Backpage, or ads on Craigslist (which was confirmed in multiple interviews with agency and service provider staff).
- In an interview with Penny Nevicosi (Rock County Youth Justice Supervisor and co-chair of the Prevention and Public Awareness Subcommittee of the Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force), she shared that “Most of what we see, are kids [who have] run away. And they are having what some people call survival sex--so [someone tells them] ‘you can stay with me as long as you give me something’—is what it kind of starts out as. . . . So it's kind of that, ‘I'm gonna take care of you’ thing” that often begins the relationship of exploitation (July 2017).

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH MOST AT RISK?

While there is no one common profile for those who are trafficked, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, along with other researchers and advocacy groups, have identified **some factors that heighten the risk or create additional vulnerabilities**, including

- **Current or past involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system**, which often indicates or is related to experiences of abuse, neglect, or trauma.
- **Current or past experience of child abuse, neglect and mistreatment.** Some research shows that a large number of commercially sexually exploited youth have a **history of child sexual abuse** (Bagley and Young 1987); children who experience sexual abuse are also 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution at some point in their lives than children who did not experience sexual abuse as a child (Sherman and Grace 2011).
- **Being homeless, runaway or “disconnected”** (i.e., not in school or work).
- Traffickers prey on **excluded populations**, for example, those that come from backgrounds that make them reluctant to seek help from authorities or are vulnerable in other ways, such as marginalized ethnic minorities, undocumented immigrants, those in poverty, persons with disabilities (U.S. Department of State 2013).
- Some evidence suggests that **LGBTQ+ youth can be up to five times more likely than heterosexual youth to be victims of trafficking, due to increased vulnerability that comes with the rejection and alienation they often experience** (Yates, Pennbridge, and Swofford 1991); for the same reasons, LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented among runaway, homeless, and child welfare populations (Clawson et al. 2009).
- In addition, **youth who have experienced dating violence and rape** are also at higher-risk for trafficking (Clawson et al. 2009).
- **Traffickers prey on children and youth with low self-esteem and minimal social support** (Clawson et al. 2009). These characteristics are widespread among young people experiencing

homelessness or those in foster care, due to their histories of abuse, neglect, and trauma (Unger et al. 1997; Burns et al. 2004; Hay 2006).

- Penny Nevicosi shared that “The individuals who are out there doing this are really smart and know how to pick up on cues from kids that are very vulnerable.” So most of what staff at Rock County Youth Services see is that youth have had personal interactions with traffickers and they are lured in because “this is where they can get their needs met” (Interview, July 2017).
- These examples reinforce **how vulnerable abused, neglected, and mistreated youth are to the recruitment and control tactics of human traffickers.**
- They also demonstrate the critical role child protection professionals and youth advocates have in preventing, identifying, and protecting youth who are targeted by human traffickers.

SEX-TRAFFICKING OF MINORS IN WISCONSIN AND BELOIT

In 2008, Wisconsin enacted legislation that is intended to increase the prosecution of child traffickers, improve protection provided to those who have been trafficked, and develop and expand prevention efforts (2007 WI Act 116). Current advocacy efforts at the state level are also largely focused on sex-trafficking of minors, however, extensive, accurate data is not currently available. According to Dr. Joy Ippolito, Wisconsin Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (in the Division of Safety and Permanence of the Department of Children and Families), the earliest there will be a data report for the state is the summer of 2018.

- The limited research that does exist, as well as the experience of service providers and law enforcement personnel, confirms that **sex trafficking occurs throughout Wisconsin, in cities, suburbs, and rural areas** (WI Department of Children and Families 2015; WI Office of Justice Assistance 2012).
- In 2007, the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance surveyed 1,300 relevant agencies about their interactions with victims of human trafficking **between 2000 and 2007; responders identified more than 200 individuals as potential victims of trafficking in Wisconsin**, but there were only 2 state prosecutions and 4 federal convictions (Wisconsin Office of Justice 2008).
- **150 out of the over 200 identified were victims of sex-trafficking.**
- **15% of the over 200 identified were children.**
- Results also show that trafficking occurred in over half the counties in Wisconsin.
- In 2008, a second study (Kleinfeld 2008) found similar results and also found that **75% of trafficking victims were women or girls.**
- Milwaukee provides a city-level example of data collection in Wisconsin; the Milwaukee Human Trafficking Task Force Identified 10-19 cases of human trafficking between 2007 and 2008, according to Bureau of Justice Statistics (2009).
- **These numbers should be used with caution** because training efforts on identification are still ongoing, and in-depth research along with annual data collection efforts (which are currently being organized) are still needed to fully understand the scope of sex-trafficking in Wisconsin.

What Do We Know About Sex-Trafficking in Rock County, Wisconsin?

In addition to youth’s experience of abuse and neglect (which has been discussed a great deal in the previous two sections of this report), **the research cited above also identified two of the other factors that heighten the risk of being trafficked: being homeless or a “runaway.”** This is one of the ways we can very roughly estimate risk-level for youth in Rock County.

- In the 2016 academic year, **Rock County school districts identified 299 youth** who met the criteria of being **both homeless** (not having an overnight residence that is fixed, regular, or adequate) **and unaccompanied** (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) **compared**

to a total of 2,165 unaccompanied homeless youth identified by Wisconsin school districts statewide (so Rock County's unaccompanied youth comprise 14% of the Wisconsin total). This represents the number of unaccompanied homeless youth identified and reported by local school districts to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

- **From 2014-2016, there were a total of 364 youth referred to Rock County Youth Services that had been identified by law enforcement as "runaways."** The age range is from 10 to 18, but most are between ages 13 and 16 (Interview with Jeremy Brown, Rock County Youth Justice Supervisor in Beloit, August 2017).
- Penny Nevicosi (Rock County Youth Justice Supervisor) also compiled a count of youth from information shared at Rock County Coalition Against Juvenile Sex Trafficking meetings; these meetings are for the purposes of case management and information sharing between Child Protective Services/Youth Justice Services and law enforcement to identify those who are being trafficked or are at higher risk of being trafficked.
- Using information shared in these meetings (while keeping the identity of the youth confidential), Penny Nevicosi identified about **135 youth in Rock County (age 18 and younger) at higher risk of being trafficked from February 2016 to May 2017**; these are unduplicated youth submitted by law enforcement and Rock County Human Services who are reported as "runaways," OR have been sexually assaulted, OR demonstrate other high risk behaviors that are commonly identified in association with sex-trafficking (such as sudden change in attire, relationships, and possessions; a controlling significant other; references to traveling to other cities; access to money and cell phones; drug or alcohol use; scars, bruises, tattoos; etc.).
- It is important to note that Janesville is the only law enforcement jurisdiction that has a system in place to collect and share this data, so they have a large representation even though this total includes youth from all of Rock County (Interview, email correspondence with Penny Nevicosi).

What Do We Know About Sex-Trafficking in Beloit, Wisconsin?

Finding information and data on sex-trafficking for the city of Beloit is even more difficult.

- Because homeless youth are often targets of sex traffickers, looking more closely at homeless youth, who are often running away from experiences of domestic and/or sexual violence, may provide some important information about sex-trafficking in Beloit.
- According to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction data, the School District of Beloit identified **149 unaccompanied homeless youth in Beloit in 2016**.
- One of the non-profit organizations that serves homeless or unaccompanied youth in Rock County is **Project 16:49**, which began in 2014; the number 16:49 refers to the number of hours and minutes between the end of the school day and the beginning of the next school day, which is the time period that the program provides assistance (www.Project1649.org).
- Tammy DeGarmo, the executive director of Project 16:49, recently shared in an interview that **about 28% of the girls that Project 16:49 has worked with in Rock County have been victims of human trafficking** (Dayton 2017).
- Project 16:49 also provides transitional living for up to 18 months at the **Robin House in Beloit** for up to seven young women ages 18 and 19 who are still in school.
- Table 15 below presents summary information about the 43 young women who have been residents of Robin House from the time of its opening in February 2014 to August 2017.
- Of the 43 young women who have been residents at Robin House, **60% have experienced sex trafficking—that is 26 young women in the last 3 years**.
- **Most of the residents of Robin House (over 90%) have experienced multiple forms of abuse.**

- **Over half of the young women have experienced both sex-trafficking and sexual assault/abuse**, which is one of the factors that heightens vulnerability to sex-traffickers.
- Director DeGarmo also shared that **a huge majority of the youth she sees who have experienced sex trafficking are being exploited by someone they know**, such as a family member or friend of the family, or “boyfriends” that are grooming them (Interview, July 2017).

Table 15. Abuse Experienced by Young Women Residents of Robin House, 2014-2017

Experiences of Trauma	Domestic Violence	Sexual Assault	Sex Trafficking	Both Sexual Assault and Sex Trafficking
Number of Residents	21	28	26	23
% of total (43)	48%	65%	60%	53%

Source: Data report provided by 16:49 Director, Tammy De Garmo (August, 2017).

According to Tammy DeGarmo, there are a variety of reasons these young women are homeless or unaccompanied, including family conflict, abuse or neglect, domestic violence, parental incarceration or criminal activity, untreated parental addictions or mental health problems, and/or poverty. All these experiences increase their vulnerability to sex traffickers, **which is why having a safe place to live through the Robin House is so vitally important.**

PREVENTION EFFORTS AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN TRAFFICKED

In efforts to combat domestic violence and sexual abuse over the last few decades, we have learned a great deal about the effect of long-term victimization and dependency, and those lessons help us understand the needs of trafficking victims and how **to incorporate survivors into the process.**

- **No single system can successfully combat sex trafficking or meet survivors needs.** Preventing, identifying, and serving those who have been trafficked **requires a multi-system, coordinated approach** within and across local, state, and federal levels and across multiple agencies (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; Sherman and Grace 2011; Edinburgh et al. 2012).
- At the local level, it is essential for runaway and homeless youth service providers and child welfare staff to work with law enforcement, juvenile corrections, courts, schools, medical and mental health professionals, Child Advocacy Centers, legal service providers, crime victim service providers, as well as community and faith-based organizations to understand the problem of trafficking as it relates to their community and develop a comprehensive response (Sherman and Grace 2011; Edinburgh et al. 2012).
- Significant, coordinated efforts that follow this approach are in place at the state level through the **Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (WAHTTF)** and at the local level through the **Rock County Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (RCAHTTF).**
- According to **Dr. Joy Ippolito, Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator** (in the Division of Safety and Permanence of the Department of Children and Families), “Addressing the issue of sex trafficking of children and youth will not be successful if we expect only one or two systems to carry the load. . . . Thus, what is most critical is bringing together the key stakeholders in each of the systems . . . including doctors, nurses, teachers, advocates, other service providers, and community members. While each system may speak a different language or have a different set of priorities, **we are all united in our concern for the well-being of children and youth.** Finding the common ground where we converge, and **selecting responses that can be easily embedded within existing structures and protocols in those other systems,** are what will allow us to be

most effective in addressing sex trafficking in Wisconsin.” Since the Task Force was created in December, 2015, it “has worked together remarkably well” according to Dr. Ippolito.

- According to Erica Frey, a member of the Rock County Task Force, the mission of the **Rock County Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force** is also to “develop and maintain a community network that serves to educate, prevent, and respond to youth who have been or are at risk of being trafficked” through a collaborative effort that includes school districts, law enforcement agencies, health care systems, homeless shelters, community and legal advocates, Rock County Human Services, and Victim Advocate Agencies.
- The response efforts of both coalitions generally address the areas of **prevention, identification and immediate shelter, and recovery.**

Prevention Efforts

Prevention efforts include raising public awareness, increasing agency awareness, and identifying those experiencing sex-trafficking or those at high risk. While **public awareness campaigns** alone are not a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy, increased awareness can prevent some people from becoming victims and build community support for government and community efforts seeking to address it. Raising public awareness about human trafficking also helps with victim identification (U.S. Department of State 2013).

According to Dr. Joy Ippolito, **Wisconsin Anti-Trafficking Coordinator**, the current **priorities at the state level** are threefold: **1) training people to identify cases of sex trafficking, 2) raising public awareness, and 3) educating youth in order to prevent their exploitation** (Interview, June 2017).

- She explains, “Human trafficking is not a new phenomenon; with the ease of the internet and social media though, it is becoming a growing problem. In order to effectively reduce and prevent youth sex trafficking cases in Wisconsin, we need to focus on three components.
- “First, we need to train professional stakeholders who may encounter youth in the course of their work, so that they can make a report to child welfare or law enforcement if they suspect trafficking.
- “Second, we need to raise public awareness that sex trafficking is occurring, so that people know what to look for in their communities and can intervene early.
- “Last, and probably most important, we need to educate young people about healthy relationships, internet safety, and whom they can talk to if they are feeling concerned for themselves or others” (Email correspondence, August, 2017).
- She also adds that **right now, “our biggest gaps are awareness of the issue of sex trafficking in Wisconsin and training professionals on how to identify sex trafficking. . . We are addressing these gaps** with a variety of efforts at the state level, including a statewide prevention and awareness campaign [that will be launched at the beginning of 2018], a prevention-based video, and training key stakeholders, such as child welfare workers, law enforcement, health professionals, educators, and other service providers.”

Current efforts of the **Rock County Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force** are focused on **public education and outreach to raise awareness, strengthening and maintaining a network to adequately identify those at risk, providing training to professionals in agencies coming in contact with or providing services to local youth, and reviewing and organizing local data** (Interviews with Penny Nevicosi and Erica Frey).

- Tammy DeGarmo (Director of Project 16:49 and Robin House) shared that “awareness is key” in local efforts because if people become aware, they start recognizing and reporting; then “it’s a deterrent because traffickers know we’re watching and paying attention” (Interview, July 2017).
- Director DeGarmo continued, “Awareness among kids is also really important because young kids are being targeted, so it’s important that they know what the signs are and how to recognize it. . . So we should focus on prevention and then move toward trauma informed care.”
- When asked what she thought was **most important for prevention**, Penny Nevicosi immediately responded without hesitation: “Connections for kids. They need to have healthy relationships with responsible, nurturing adults. It doesn't necessarily need to be their parent. We've researched—it could be a school teacher, it could be the next door neighbor, it could be an aunt or an uncle, it could even be one of us, but they need a healthy relationship with caring adults. Because what we know about some of these youth that we're losing to human trafficking is they're getting that need met by an individual who takes advantage of them, and exploits [them]. So, it seems very simplistic for me to say that, but our youth need to be connected to good people” (Interview, July 2017).

Ensuring that children and youth have healthy relationships with caring adults and receive effective services to heal and recover from abuse and other traumatic events is likely to decrease young people’s vulnerability to trafficking in the first place. Educating the community at large and young people in particular in addition to training service professionals is also crucial to advocacy efforts.

Identification and Immediate Shelter

“Rescue” efforts include agency training to identify those who are being trafficked and developing coordinated efforts to provide immediate shelter.

- **Identification** of a person as someone who has experienced sex trafficking must begin with a process that provides them with protection and helps them to access services to recover from trauma (U.S. Department of State 2013).
- Since the federal mandate, when youth are identified as being trafficked, they are “screened in” the system so that both Children Protective Services (CPS) and law enforcement now have a responsibility to respond (rather than just being the responsibility of law enforcement); prior to this change, trafficked youth were not the responsibility of CPS because it was viewed as a non-caregiver sexual assault. This change is to ensure that trafficked youth can receive support services (Interview with Penny Nevicosi, July 2017).
- **Agency training is critical** because when authorities misidentify trafficking victims as criminals, they can be unfairly subjecting them to additional harm, trauma, and even punishment such as arrest, detention, or prosecution. When these failures occur they reinforce what traffickers commonly say to threaten their victims: that law enforcement will incarcerate them if they seek help (U.S. Department of State 2013).
- **The area of greatest need in Rock County is a temporary shelter that is just for youth** (Interviews with multiple service providers). There are shelters in place, but not very many that house youth or that have staff with training specific to supporting those who have been trafficked. Currently there is only one residential facility in the state (near Milwaukee) that has the specific level of training required by the state to provide 24/7 care to trafficked, female youth (Interview, email correspondence with Penny Nevicosi, 2017).
- According to Penny Nevicosi, the Rock County Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force has “A placement subcommittee that has their charge to try and either find or develop temporary housing for youth that are at risk or have been involved in human trafficking” (Interview, 2017).

Providing safe, temporary housing is a need that continues to emerge when we examine the needs of those who are being abused or exploited, and multiple service providers raised this issue in discussions about the most important needs to effectively assist trafficked youth. However, existing shelters for young people are even more scarce than they are for adults who are homeless or escaping domestic violence and even fewer have the capacity to meet the unique needs of trafficked youth. In addition to those who have been trafficked, there are clearly a great number of young people, such as the large number of homeless and unaccompanied youth, who would also benefit from having more safe housing options, which would also decrease their vulnerability to sex traffickers in the first place. This is an area that clearly requires widespread community commitment and resource investment.

Supporting the Recovery of Trafficked Youth

Recovery efforts include providing safe transitional housing and long-term treatment and support. According to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (2015), trafficking victims also need specialized services “that are trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, individualized and developmentally appropriate, address physical and mental health needs, provide social/emotional supports, and support preparation for and entry into the workforce.” **Responding to these needs requires provision of housing or shelter assistance, food assistance, income assistance, employment assistance, health care assistance, and mental health services.**

- The **serious physical and mental health consequences** of sex trafficking that need to be addressed include post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, disease (including HIV/AIDS), drug addiction, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, malnutrition, chronic pain, and other physical and emotional symptoms that result from extensive trauma (WI Department of Children and Families 2015; U.S. Dept. of State 2013; Clawson and Grace 2007).
- Penny Nevicosi’s shared that the greatest needs for those who have been trafficked are **mental health services, employment support, and housing**: “I know our mental health community isn’t fully educated about what their needs are, and how they’re trauma victims, certainly. They’re sexual assault victims certainly, maybe domestic violence victims. But it’s very unique, and . . . I don’t think our mental health community is fully prepared for what that looks like, or how to manage that” (Interview, July 2017).
- In terms of employment support, Penny Nevicosi continued “I think there’s a really important part about not just education but vocation. It’s very important for them to earn their own money and have that. But how can they do that in a safe way. So, whether it’s job training or job coaching or some kind of employment support, I think that’s an important piece that some folks kinda forget” and “I think there are existing organizations that can make adjustments to their service delivery model to do that” (Interview, July 2017).
- Project 16:49 Director, Tammy DeGarmo, also shared that the greatest needs in the area are counseling services and safe housing. She also recognizes that there’s already not enough mental health professionals to meet the needs in the area and they need additional training to meet the needs of trafficked youth. She also explained that the biggest obstacle with housing is the funding it (Interview, July 2017).
- **Having time to recover in a safe, comfortable place is clearly essential** (U.S. Dept. of State 2013). Marc Perry, Program Director of Community Action in Beloit (which serves many local youth), also shared that the most effective way to meet the needs of those who have been trafficked is to have a group home—somewhere to go that is safe and provides long-term support and education and life-skills training, “like a prep school” (Interview, July 2017).

- However, providing safe, temporary and longer term housing for youth who have been trafficked or who are extremely vulnerable to traffickers appears to be one of the greatest challenges going forward.
- Director DeGarmo explained that in terms of where youth in Rock County go now when they have been identified as being trafficked, “they are often sent to youth services, but then they’re housed in the same building as those who are in detention for doing something wrong—and the housing looks the same. So it’s not the most welcoming environment and the kids say it feels like prison. Safe Families in Rock County house some youth—there’s about 10 to 12 families that are willing to house homeless youth. But that is not a permanent housing situation and this organization typically works with young children” (Interview, July 2017).
- **Meeting such varied recovery needs clearly requires a comprehensive and long-term approach**, which is possible given the commitment and the existing agency and organization collaborations that are currently in place.
- **Yet support for comprehensive recovery efforts is essential because the traumatic effects of being trafficked can endure over a lifetime if left untreated** (Hay 2006).

Advocacy efforts to address sex trafficking of children and youth are closely connected to efforts aimed at addressing other forms of abuse young people experience. Preventing child abuse and neglect, providing a safe place for them to run to when they are escaping abuse and mistreatment, and ensuring that children and youth receive effective services to heal and recover from abuse and other traumatic events can decrease their vulnerability to trafficking in the first place. Raising community awareness and enlisting community support while equipping systems and services with the training and resources to identify trafficked youth and intervene early to address their needs is also critical.

FOR HELP OR MORE INFORMATION

Rock County Human Services

Call 608-757-5401 (during office hours) 608-757-2244 (after office hours)

To report suspected sex trafficking of a child or sexual exploitation of a child

Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ)

Human Trafficking Resource Page: www.BeFreeWisconsin.com

Office of Crime Victim Services (DOJ-OCVS): www.doj.state.wi.us/cvs DOJ-OCVS

Victim Resource Center: 1-800-446-656

Crime Victims’ Compensation Program: 608-264-9497

Division of Criminal Investigation (DOJ-DCI): www.doj.state.wi.us/dci/tech

WI Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children: www.missingpersons.doj.wi.gov

Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance (OJA)

<http://oja.wi.gov/>

OJAWA@wisconsin.gov or trafficking@wcasa.org

National Human Trafficking Resource Center

24-hour hotline: 1-888-373-7888

www.traffickingresourcecenter.org

Polaris Project

Phone: 202-745-1119

www.polarisproject.org

The “Blue Campaign” videos providing information about human trafficking at <http://www.dhs.gov/gallery/blue-campaign-video>

The Child Welfare Information Gateway, page on “Responding to Human Trafficking of Children,” at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/trafficking/pir/>

Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers (RHYTTAC), page “Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation Resources,” at <http://rhyttac.ou.edu/topic-specific-resources/trafficking-and-sexualexploitation-resources>

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Series of reports and issue briefs in 2007 to inform several aspects of serving those who have been trafficked at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/HumanTrafficking/>

SAMHSA’s National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

<http://www.nctsn.org>

For useful training, technical assistance, and information on trauma-informed care and specific screening and assessment tools and interventions to help address behavioral health needs of victims.

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