

The WATCH Chronicle



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WATCH is a court monitoring and judicial policy non-profit located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. WATCH works to make the justice system more responsive to crimes of violence against women and children, focusing on greater safety for victims of violence and greater accountability for violent offenders.

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WATCH FEATURE

“We do it on the youth’s time line, not law enforcement’s”

Second in a two-part series

As executive director of The Link, Beth Holger-Ambrose had a hand in shaping Minnesota’s “No Wrong Door” policy—a comprehensive model for addressing the needs of underage victims of sex trafficking, launched as part of the state’s Safe Harbor law.

[Newly released numbers indicate that more than 150 children have sought help in the law’s first year from regional navigators, the state Health Department’s front-line workers.](#)

[The Link](#), based in Minneapolis, hosts the state’s West Metro Regional Navigator, Kristy Collier, and also runs a shelter and housing program, Passageways, that has served more than 50 youths since opening last year.

In Part 2 of our interview with Holger-Ambrose, we learn how The Link walks a fine line between working with law enforcement and protecting victims of trafficking from further harm.

Q: I know law enforcement wants to hold traffickers accountable, but it’s got to be hard for youth to cooperate for many reasons. What role do you play in that?

A: We definitely partner with law enforcement. There are some officers with philosophies like The Link has—they don’t talk to youth until [the youth] are ready. We give all who come into Passageways the option of talking to law enforcement and filing a police report. Sometimes that’s done for them if there’s cross-reporting—if their case made it into child protection, and child protection reports it to police. Otherwise, we like to give the youth an option.



Beth Holger-Ambrose, executive director of The Link – West Metro Regional Navigator for No Wrong Door.

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We let them decide. Some police officers are great about that. Some call and yell at me. But we don't force youth to talk to police unless they have a subpoena.

Q: It sounds like law enforcement can sometimes be at cross purposes with what you're trying to do. They want to get the bad guys off the streets, but to do that they need these kids' cooperation.

A: Right. But what's super positive is sometimes youth don't want to talk to law enforcement right away, but after they've had some stability and safety and support from us and others, they're likely to be OK with talking to cops. So it might take them awhile. And we've had youth turn in all sorts of information, like cell phone numbers, addresses, identifying the people involved. But we do it on the youth's time line, not law enforcement's.

Q: Even if kids decide to cooperate, they need to be protected. And they might be legitimately scared of retribution. It sounds like a fine line.

A: There are definitely youth who are more scared to talk to police. They're more afraid of what would happen from their trafficker than any other thing. We should honor and listen to that.

Q: Can you talk about the process of gaining the trust of an exploited youth?

A: Sometimes social service providers get really freaked out when there's a trafficking situation. It is horrifying – I get it. But we have to put that aside and not let it show in our emotions. What works best is meeting youth where they feel safe – McDonald's or a coffee shop – or having you come into an emergency room. What Kristy does a lot of is asking youth immediately: 'You don't know me, but I'm here to listen and help you. If you don't want to talk to me, that's cool. Here's my card and if you want to call me you can.' So, not forcing it. And sometimes the youth will call later. Or they'll say, 'I'm starving. Get me some food.' A lot of it is about, how can I meet an immediate need? Is it food? Shelter? Sometimes it's finding a place where they can take a shower. That goes a long way.

Q: So it's planting a seed, showing them you can be trusted?

A: And also being non-judgmental, which can be super hard. To hear a 13-year-old say 'I want to go back to X,' who you know is their trafficker ... or when they say, 'I hate the rules here,' it's hard to hear. But you have to keep a straight face and ask: 'What are the reasons you want to go back? You want to get your nails done? Let's do a nail night.' Of course it's not always that simple.

Q: What's the most rewarding part of the work for you?

A: Definitely the youth. Seeing them empowered to do things in their life and have it be their own choice. ... They can do a lot. They have amazing skills.

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“Sometimes social service providers get really freaked out when there's a trafficking situation. It is horrifying—I get it. But we have to put that aside and not let it show in our emotions.”



IN THE NEWS

Study finds Safe Harbor law has helped many exploited kids so far

Minnesota's Safe Harbor law has raised awareness about the sexual exploitation and trafficking of Minnesota kids and connected more than 150 children with "regional navigators"—the state health department's front-line workers—a new report has found.

Since the law's implementation in September 2014, more than 200 requests were made by children for housing or other assistance. [In a Nov. 17 report](#), Minnesota Public Radio cited [an independent review published by Wilder Research](#) that laid out demographic information on the youth served while also recommending improvements.

According to the report, Minnesota has spent \$8 million this biennium to build a statewide response for juvenile sex trafficking victims—more than any other state.

- Read the *Minnesota Public Radio* story [here](#).
- Read the Wilder Research report in its entirety [here](#).

- What does Minnesota's Safe Harbor director point to as the law's greatest accomplishments so far?
- What are the most common risk factors for vulnerable or sexually exploited minors, according to the report?

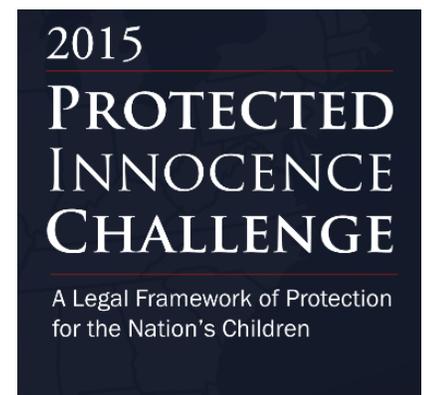
Read the [Minnesota Public Radio](#) article to find out.

States overall doing better at combatting child trafficking; MN ranks sixth

A new report finds that many U.S. states are doing a better job of halting juvenile sex trafficking.

When [Shared Hope](#), a nonprofit that fights sex trafficking, put out its first assessment of the nation's response to its youngest victims in 2011, 26 states received failing grades. Not only did [no states fail](#) this year, but half earned an A or B on their report card. Minnesota ranked sixth, receiving 90 out of a possible 102 points. The state received the highest marks for criminalization of juvenile sex trafficking; criminal provisions for traffickers and criminal justice tools for investigation and prosecution.

- Read the Shared Hope report [here](#).
- Read the *Huffington Post's* summary of the report [here](#).
- Read an *NPR* interview with Shared Hope's policy director [here](#).



Tempers fly over domestic violence question in shooting death of Jamar Clark

A heated Twitter exchange between two prominent members of Minnesota's DFL party highlights a thorny question: How domestic violence fit into the narrative of the Nov. 16 shooting death of Jamar Clark by Minneapolis police?

Carly Melin, DFL-Hibbing, requested information on Nov. 20 about the status of the woman who had allegedly been assaulted by Clark on the night Clark was shot by police. His subsequent death has led to ongoing protests.

[According to a statement from Minneapolis police](#), officers were answering a domestic-assault when Clark began "confronting paramedics and disrupting their ability to render aid" to the victim.

[On her Twitter account](#), Melin asked for an update on the victim's well-being. This sparked a heated days'-long exchange with Javier Morillo-Alicia, President of the SEIU Local 26 and a prominent DFL activist. Among other things, he told Melin to "keep quiet" as she doesn't understand "cities and people of color and our community issues."

- Read the *Star Tribune's* account of the Twitter exchange [here](#).

NFL faces new scrutiny over Greg Hardy domestic violence case

How could the Dallas Cowboys sign defensive end Greg Hardy in light of his history of domestic abuse? And why didn't he face stronger punishment by the NFL? That's what some are asking after photos were released last month showing Hardy's bruised and battered ex-girlfriend.

Hardy was convicted of domestic violence charges in 2014, but the case was later dismissed after his ex-girlfriend, Nicole Holder, stopped cooperating with authorities. The NFL suspended Hardy for four games and he later signed with the Cowboys, who stood by him despite his lack of outward remorse. Last month, the sports site [Deadspin released disturbing photos and documents](#) from the investigation. That prompted outrage in some quarters, including [a call by U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess \(R-Texas\)](#) for a review the NFL's domestic violence policies.

- Read NPR's story on the photo release [here](#). ♦♦♦



- What does the Greg Hardy saga have in common with the NFL's treatment of Baltimore Ravens Ray Rice after his domestic violence arrest last year?
- A judge has granted Hardy's request to expunge his domestic-violence arrest from the record. True or false?

Read the NPR story [here](#) to learn the answers.

COURT MONITORING BULLETIN

Kudos corner: Judge Jay M. Quam



Hennepin County Judge Jay M. Quam

“Judge Quam dealt well with touchy subjects. He didn’t press too hard and tried to make it as comfortable as possible.”

In October, we singled out Hennepin County District Judge William Koch for praise after our volunteers cited his professionalism and respectful manner on the bench. This month, we’re pleased to turn the spotlight to his colleague, Hennepin County District Judge Jay M. Quam.

Judge Quam, a 1988 graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School, was an attorney at the Minneapolis law firm of Fredrikson and Byron before his appointment to 4th Judicial Circuit bench in 2006. His current term expires in 2021.

Over and over, monitors remarked on Judge Quam’s respectful and patient demeanor in the courtroom. Below is a sampling of their comments:

- Judge Quam was one of the most respectful and courteous judges I have ever seen in court.
- The judge apologized to the defendant and to others in the courtroom for the long delays, just saying that it was a very busy day but that he was sorry they had to waste so much time. ... It was nice to see him acknowledge it specifically.
- The judge gave the defendant quite a bit of time to speak. His face and actions didn't give any indication of what he thought about what the defendant (or others) said. The judge was kind to the defendant even though he didn't really give what the defendant wanted.
- Judge Quam, his clerk, and his staff were very impressive and respectful at all times.
- This judge does a very good job of explaining things.
- Judge made sure defendant knew and understood that the state had made an offer, but was respectful of her decision to go to trial.
- This case was a really good example of the judge, and lawyers from both sides working together. It was cool to see it progress throughout the morning.
- I had a very positive experience and was able to talk with Judge Quam before the trial. He gave me some background and his thoughts on the case. He felt yesterday was difficult because when the victim gave her testimony she refused to answer questions and was basically saying she made the whole thing up. The victim even said "I love you" to the defendant as she was finishing. ... He said this was a difficult case for jurors [because] the victim is so uncooperative.
- Judge Quam dealt well with touchy subjects. He didn't press too hard and tried to make it as comfortable as possible.
- The judge thanked me for stopping in today and watching the court and urged me to ask the court clerk if I ever have any questions about cases. ♦♦♦

SEX TRAFFICKING UPDATE



Sen. Amy Klobuchar, left, with author Louise Erdrich

Sen. Klobuchar discusses federal anti-trafficking law, lauds WATCH for making ‘such a big difference’

As Hennepin County Attorney, Amy Klobuchar appreciated how WATCH monitors influenced courtroom proceedings through their consistent presence. Now that she’s a U.S. Senator, Sen. Klobuchar has championed some of the same issues that WATCH holds dear.

In May, President Obama signed legislation co-sponsored by Klobuchar (D-Minn.) that will help law enforcement crack down on human traffickers while giving added restitution to victims. At a Nov. 21 gathering in Minneapolis, she told WATCH supporters that a provision she authored, which ensures that trafficked minors aren’t prosecuted, was modeled after Minnesota’s Safe Harbor law.

“The judges were afraid every time [WATCH] came out with a report,” she said. “Thanks for that, and for taking on the issue of sex trafficking.”

“This is one area in Washington where we’ve gotten a few things done—the area of sex trafficking,” Klobuchar told guests. “I really got into it because of my work as Hennepin County Attorney, and WATCH was a big part of that work. WATCH made such a difference.”

Klobuchar recalled that when she was elected county attorney in 1998, WATCH had recently started monitoring child protection cases. She credited WATCH with speeding up cases and bringing about conditions so that “things were no longer hidden behind closed doors.

“The judges were afraid every time [WATCH] came out with a report,” she said. “Thanks for that, and for taking on the issue of sex trafficking.”

Under the legislation co-authored by Klobuchar, all states are encouraged to have a “safe harbor” law like Minnesota’s to ensure that trafficked minors are treated as victims. The law also creates a national strategy to fight human trafficking, helps victims seek financial restitution and strengthens the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

Klobuchar said the law also allows tribal courts to go after traffickers without needing to rely on the U.S. Attorney’s office. “Many victims of sex trafficking come off our tribal lands, and also from the Hmong community,” she said. “No community is immune.”

Minnesota author Louise Erdrich also spoke at the WATCH event. She shared her sister’s experience working with residents of the Little Earth community in

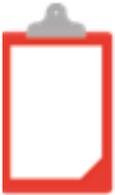


WATCH founder Susan Lenfestey, left, with Sen. Amy Klobuchar

Minneapolis, and discussed the ways in which trafficking and drugs—especially heroin—go hand in hand. Lately, children have been increasingly used by traffickers against victims. “Children are held hostage,” Erdrich said. They’re the most powerful weapon besides drugs that traffickers have to control women.”

Although trafficking seems like an intractable problem at Little Earth and elsewhere, the work of WATCH in Minnesota and Klobuchar in the Senate is helping to make a difference, Erdrich said. “All of these things contribute and feed into a better life for the men and children and young people there—so thank you,” she said.

Olivencia prostitution case ends with stayed sentence



A 25-year-old Coon Rapids man who pleaded guilty to a felony count of promoting prostitution will not have to serve time in prison if he follows the conditions of his release.

In July 2014, Luis Reinaldo Olivencia was charged in Hennepin County District Court with two felony counts of promoting prostitution, including one count involving a minor. According to a criminal complaint, he was arrested after driving a 17-year-old victim to meet an undercover officer who was posing as a “john.” Olivencia later claimed he thought the victim was 20; according to multiple other accounts, however, he knew her true age. Later, Olivencia was also charged with promoting prostitution of an individual over the age of 18, referred to as “L.P.” in the criminal complaint.

In exchange for his guilty plea to the charge involving “L.P.,” Olivencia’s charge involving prostitution of a minor was dismissed. Under sentencing guidelines, Olivencia could have received a prison sentence up to 15 years. However, on Nov. 18 the judge granted a downward departure, citing the defendant’s remorse, responsibility for his actions and amenability to probation. Olivencia’s sentence of nine years in prison was stayed for three years, meaning it will not be served unless he violates any of the conditions of his release. He also must serve 365 days at the workhouse.

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