

# The WATCH Chronicle

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

### Sexual exploitation: “All kids are susceptible to this.”

By Pamela Schmid

Aliyah grew up with a single mom in an impoverished, urban neighborhood. Kaitlyn was raised in a small, Midwestern city, the child of drug-addicted parents. Justine is the product of a middle-class family in the suburbs. What do these girls have in common? All three were sexually exploited as teen-agers.

Their stories were discussed in detail last month at a three-hour panel on sexually exploited youth, part of the Children’s Justice Initiative Permanency conference held in Bloomington.

Because any child who walks to school or the store alone or has access to a computer or cell phone is at risk of being exploited, “all kids are susceptible to this,” said Jennifer Fox, West Central regional navigator for Minnesota’s Safe Harbor Law, which was enacted in 2011 and fully implemented last year.

Risk of exploitation goes up, she said, when there is a history of sexual abuse or neglect, homelessness, poverty or substance abuse. Kids who’ve been part of the criminal justice system and those with low self-esteem or lack of social support also are at higher risk.

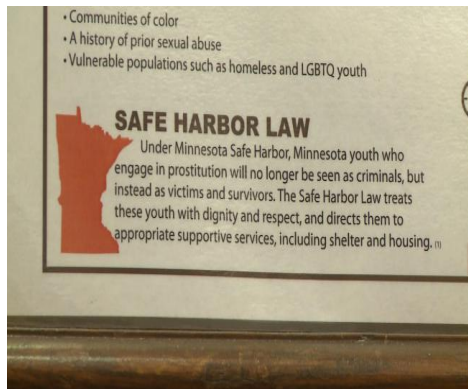
Over and over, Safe Harbor navigators—the main points of contact for sexually exploited youth—spoke of the importance of digging beneath the surface to find the truth. Ashley Zurn, a navigator for the state’s Native American youth, said trafficked kids will lie about their age to prevent questions. Often, they have trust issues and are reluctant to cooperate. Many abuse drugs—one way traffickers try to control their victims.



Lauren Ryan, Director of Safe Harbor/No Wrong Door, MN Dept. of Health

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“Everything has to be trauma-informed. It’s not, ‘Why are you a bad kid?’ but ‘What happened to make you this way?’”

“Almost all the girls I work with have some sort of chemical dependency issues,” Zurn said. “A lot of people don’t look past that and see only see a drug-addicted person. You need to dig further to find out what’s really going on.”

Zurn said trafficked youth are often “very, very scared”—looking over their shoulders, checking cell phones constantly, terrified that the people they work for are keeping track of them. Although it might appear they are simply in controlling or dominant relationships, “again, dig a little further,” she advised. “Maybe it’s not just domestic violence. ... Maybe this is a pimp or trafficker because that’s a very controlling relationship.”

Three case studies exemplified how easily exploited youth can slip through the cracks. Justine, for example, displayed a host of red flags but key system players repeatedly failed to pick up on them. After running away from a group home at 14, she soon met a man named “Mike” who gained her trust before selling her to other men for sex. She ran away from her trafficker at age 15 but was arrested for loitering while begging for money and held in juvenile hall. After being sent to a delinquency home, she received no counseling or mental health services despite frequent outbursts caused by flashbacks. Eventually, she was placed in solitary confinement.

“Think about how many encounters she had with an adult or professional; there were so many missed opportunities,” said Lauren Ryan, who directs Minnesota’s Safe Harbor Program for the state Department of Health. Justine’s story, Ryan said, shows how “everything has to be trauma-informed. It’s not, ‘Why are you a bad kid?’ but ‘What happened to make you this way?’”

Among the panel’s other takeaways:

- **The average age of somebody entering into prostitution in the U.S. is 12-14 years old.** “If they started working in the industry when they were 12,” Fox said, “what happens when they’re 18 or 19 and want to get out of this life? Our laws right now don’t protect people over 18. These young people don’t have life skills to get out and stay out.”
- **Homeless youth are at extremely high risk of being trafficked.** Nearly half of youth are approached by somebody who wants to exploit them within 48 hours of being on the run, studies show.
- **Human trafficking is the second-largest criminal activity in the world.** “If we think of people as a reusable commodity, that makes sense,” Fox said. “If I were a drug dealer, I’d have to buy a drug and once I sell it, the product is gone. But you can obtain a person and they don’t cost a whole lot to keep around and you can sell them over and over many times a day.”



## IN THE NEWS

### Stings result from ads by police posing as teen-age girls

An undercover sting known as [Operation Guardian Angel](#) led to felony charges late last month against 21 men who allegedly responded to online ads selling sex with teen-age girls. Another 50 cases were pending. Minneapolis Police Sgt. Grant Snyder, who coordinated the operation, says [authorities are targeting the demand side of juvenile sex trafficking](#). The ads were crafted specifically to target men looking to purchase sex from a juvenile.

According to Ramsey County Attorney John Choi, more people have been charged in recent years for soliciting a minor for prostitution. He attributes the rise, in part, to the “Safe Harbor” laws that boost penalties against traffickers.

Read the *Star Tribune* news article [here](#).

- How many suspects have been charged in recent years under the statute criminalizing the solicitation of a child under 15 for sex acts?
- How are faith-based organizations getting in on the effort to combat sex trafficking?

Read the [Star Tribune article](#) to find out.

### Study finds 1 in 4 women experience sex assault on campus

More than a quarter of undergraduate women at a large number of universities reported that they were sexually assaulted by force or when they were incapacitated, [according to new, sweeping study released last month](#).

The survey, commissioned by the Association of American Universities, found that 27.2 percent of females had experienced unwanted sexual contact since entering college.

[In a Sept. 21 article](#), *The New York Times* called the study one of the largest of its kind. It surveyed 150,000 students at 27 colleges and universities, including nearly all Ivy Leagues.

- Nearly three-fourths of victims of assault did not report the episode to authorities. What reasons did they give for this?
- How are university officials responding to the survey?

Read the *New York Times* article [here](#) to learn more.

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## Advocacy groups: Short family killing debunks myths about domestic violence

Once the horrific details came to light about [the deaths of a Minnetonka family of five at the hands of the husband-father](#), advocacy groups voiced frustration that the numbers of domestic violence killings stay so consistent year in and year out.

The shooting deaths of Karen Short and her children, Cole, Madison and Brooklyn, by Brian Short brought to 20 the number of “intimate partner” family killings in Minnesota so far this year. The [Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women](#) started a public awareness campaign last year to recognize the lives of victims.

In a [Sept. 16 report on Minnesota Public Radio](#), the coalition’s executive director, Liz Richards, said she’s disturbed by the public’s astonishment when domestic violence homicides happen in their own communities. “It says to me that there is a disconnect,” she said.

- Read the MPR report [here](#).

## Two more states under fire for handling of so-called “rape kits”

Kentucky and North Carolina are the latest states in the spotlight for failing to handle examinations in alleged rape cases.

[CNN reported on Sept. 22](#) that more than 3,000 “rape kits” were never tested in Kentucky. DNA from those kits can be used to help identify suspects and bolster criminal cases against them.

In Fayetteville, N.C., an audit found that 333 kits from unsolved cases were destroyed to make room for evidence.

- Read and watch the CNN report [here](#).



- What does the “Live Free Without Violence” campaign by the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women advocate?
- What is common theme in most domestic violence homicide cases?
- What changes in the law are being explored by advocacy groups to try to stem the number of domestic violence homicides?

Read the [MPR report](#) find out.

- What reason did Kentucky give for letting more than 3,000 rape kits go untested?
- How many rape kits nationwide are sitting untested in labs around the country? What’s being done to reduce those numbers?

See the CNN report [here](#) to learn more.

## COURT MONITORING BULLETIN

### Kudos corner: Judge William Koch



“Judge Koch is the only judge I’ve watched so far that recognizes that spectators are present and deserve respect.”

WATCH has long recognized the powerful role judicial demeanor and decorum play in the courtroom, especially in cases of domestic violence. In 2001, a report prepared for WATCH noted that “...judges’ demeanor and conduct set the tone for the demeanor and conduct of other criminal justice personnel, the defendant, and the general court atmosphere.”

As such, WATCH likes to bring attention to judges whose demeanor consistently draws praise from our volunteers. This month, that distinction goes to Hennepin County District Judge William Koch. Judge Koch spent seven years as an assistant U.S. District Attorney in Minnesota before being appointed to the 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit bench in 2007. He was re-elected in 2008 and 2014.

Below is a sampling of volunteer comments regarding Judge Koch:

- “This was my first time in this court so you can imagine my surprise when the court clerk, upon noticing my red clipboard, asked the prosecutor to hand the ‘woman from WATCH’ the packet describing the cases. It made following the cases very easy.”
- “The judge made great announcements regarding when they were going to start and what case we were hearing, giving both the case number and the defendant’s name.”
- “Judge Koch had come prepared with documents regarding defendant’s progress, and it was evident that he had already reviewed them.”
- “Every person had their chance to speak and was encouraged to do so by the judge.”
- “Judge communicates directly with the defendants and family members in the court room about the conditions of release.”
- “Judge Koch was very descriptive and gave everyone an equal opportunity”
- “I thought this judge did a great job of following along with the testimony, taking notes, and interjecting when necessary. There were several dates that came up during testimony, and the judge played an important role in helping keep the dates straight, based on the notes he had been taking throughout the trial. The defense attorney kept screwing up the dates and confusing the witnesses.”
- I was pleased with how the court addressed the victim’s needs while tailoring the sentence to accommodate the Defendant’s conditions and try to get him some help. Judge Koch, as always, was very calm and easy to understand, even in the face of a difficult Defendant.”
- Judge Koch is the only judge I’ve watched so far that recognizes that spectators are present and deserve respect. Most of the others focus on the individuals involved in the cases.”



## SEX TRAFFICKING UPDATE



The women were allegedly driven to an apartment, where the men told them they could stay, acquire money and cars and “live the dream.”



### Three await trial on trafficking charges

WATCH is closely monitoring the cases of two St. Paul men and a woman charged for their alleged involvement in a sex-trafficking ring that involved a juvenile. **Rashad Ramon Ivy**, 34, faces seven felony charges, including conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of a minor, criminal sexual conduct and domestic assault by strangulation. **Tarris Tarize Trapps**, 25, and **Danika Sterling Johnson**, 19, face related charges.

According to a complaint filed in Ramsey County District Court, Ivy prostituted a 23-year-old woman who moved in with him after meeting him on Facebook. Ivy allegedly used the woman’s three-year-old son “as hostage to compel cooperation” while she met with “johns” for sex in deals arranged by Ivy. On June 12, Ivy allegedly beat the woman severely and left her at United Hospital. According to the complaint, Ivy instructed her to tell hospital staff she had been in a car accident; instead, she reported that Ivy assaulted her. A day later, Ivy was arrested while driving in the company of an underage female. In Ivy’s car, officers found several cell phones, condoms and Vanilla Visa cards—all commonly used in sex trafficking operations.

The case expanded further with the Sept. 4 arrest of Trapps. A criminal complaint alleges that Trapps and Ivy were driving on Summit Avenue in St. Paul last May when they convinced two 20-year-old women to get in their car. The women were allegedly driven to an apartment, where the men told them they could stay, acquire money and new cars and “live the dream.” Later, Ivy allegedly forced one woman to perform oral sex, while Trapps took the other woman into a different room, asked her if she wanted to work for him as a prostitute, and when she declined, sexually assaulted her.

Johnson is accused of telling the women that she had a Mercedes and nice clothes as a result of working as a prostitute for Trapps and Ivy. Although she allegedly suggested they could also have nice things if they stayed and worked as prostitutes, the women declined and left the apartment. Later, they reported the incident to police.

Earlier this month, Trapps pleaded not guilty to all five felony counts against him, including two engaging in sex trafficking charges. He awaits trial.

Ivy has pleaded not guilty to all seven charges against him and also awaits trial. Johnson pleaded not guilty to all four charges against her, including conspiracy to commit sex trafficking, aiding and abetting sex trafficking and two counts of solicitation to practice prostitution.