



OFFICE OF THE SAINT LOUIS COUNTY ATTORNEY

MARK S. RUBIN COUNTY ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

May 5, 2011

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**ST. LOUIS COUNTY ATTORNEY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TO TREAT
JUVENILES INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION AS CRIME VICTIMS, NOT
DELINQUENTS**

St. Louis County Attorney Mark Rubin, along with local law enforcement and elected officials, held a press conference today to announce new policies and procedures to ensure that children trafficked as prostitutes are treated as victims in need of protection and services, not as juvenile delinquents.

The new policies and procedures are necessary because current state law is contradictory and defines these children both as delinquents and victims of sex trafficking. An effort is currently underway in the Minnesota State Legislature to remove this conflict.

“We need to recognize that children involved in prostitution are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and abuse, not perpetrators of delinquent acts. The sexual violence and torture these children suffer at the hands of pimps and traffickers has devastating mental and physical consequences, and we must do our utmost to help them,” said County Attorney Rubin.

Mayor Don Ness hailed the change as an important step in keeping Duluth’s children safe: “I am pleased to support the proposed changes by our prosecuting and law enforcement partners that advocates for children victimized by trafficking and sexual exploitation. We are joining efforts around this issue not only as officials but also as parents and concerned citizens working for the best interest and protection of our children.”

Advocates and service providers also welcomed today’s announcement. “Finally, this will officially recognize the victims as victims and not as criminals and we, service providers, are grateful to the Mayor, the Chief, the Sheriff, and the St. Louis County Attorney for taking this step. We are very hopeful that this initiative will help us to better serve the victims and mobilize our resources effectively to reach out to this vulnerable population,” said Candy Harshner, Executive Director of PAVSA.

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218-726-2034

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VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA 55792
218-749-7101

HIBBING COURTHOUSE
1810 TWELFTH AVE. E., #107
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The system's response historically has been arrest, detention, and juvenile court proceedings. The new approach will, in no way, diminish the county attorney's or law enforcement's commitment and ability to vigorously prosecute all persons, including juveniles, who engage in the sexual exploitation and abuse of prostituted children.

Among those joining County Attorney Rubin on Thursday were:

- St. Louis County Sheriff Ross Litman
- Candy Harshner, Executive Director, PAVSA
- Sherry Sanchez-Tibbets, Executive Director, American Indian Community Housing Organization
- Anna Donnelly, The Advocates for Human Rights
- Mayor Don Ness
- Sharla Gardner, President-Duluth City Council
- Jeff Bauer, Director of Public Policy, The Family Partnership
- Peg Sweeney, St. Louis County Commissioner