



The Sisters Project:

A Milwaukee Partnership to Address Prostitution

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Partners

- Benedict Center
- Medical College of Wisconsin
- Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
- Milwaukee Police Department, 3rd District
- Lutheran Church of the Reformation

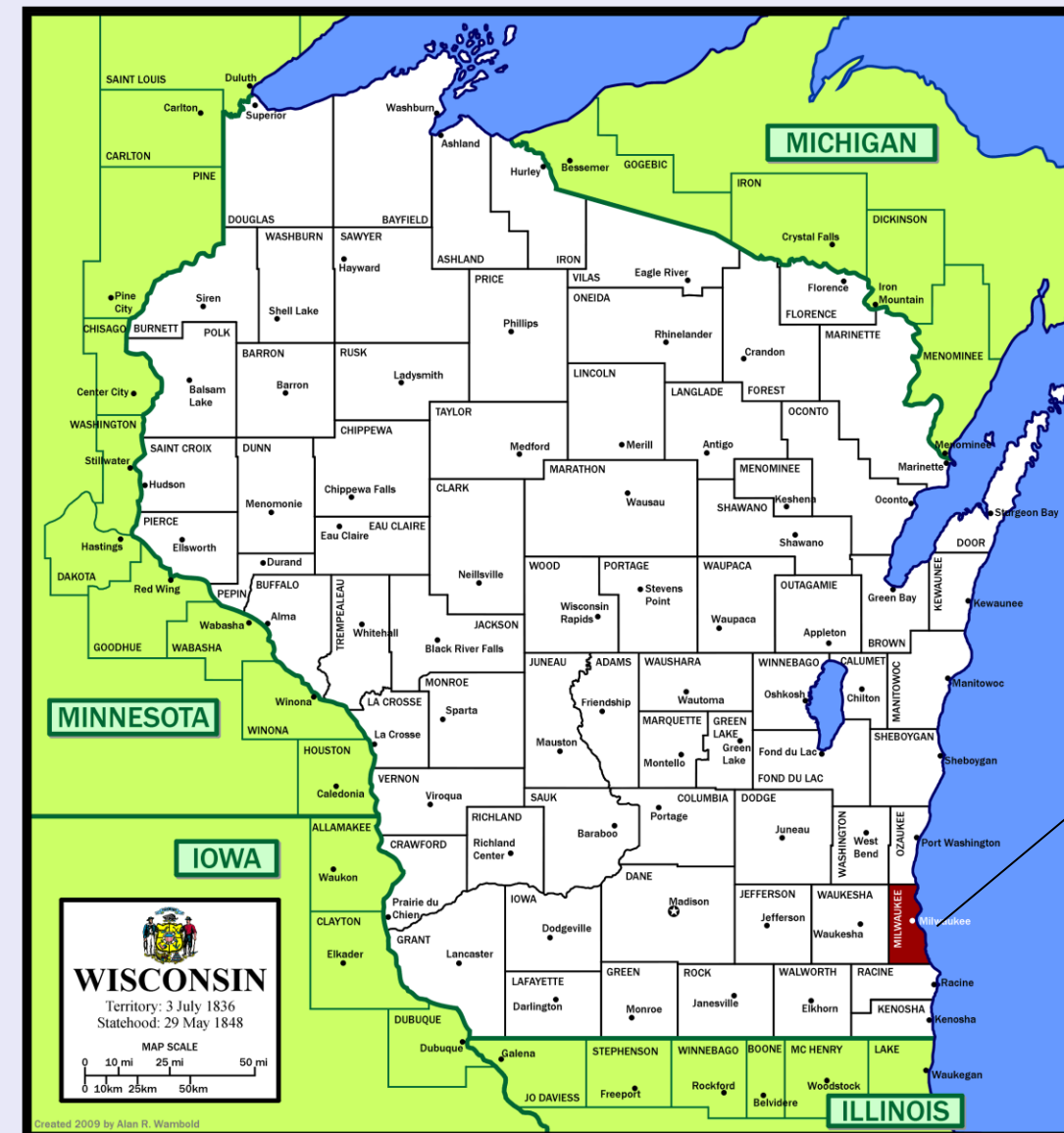
Background

- Trading sex for money is illegal in most of the United States and is challenging for laws to address
- Many women are coerced into trading sex as minors and use the income to prevent homelessness and as a general means of survival.
- They suffer extremely high rates of victimization on the streets, including sexual assault, abuse drug addiction and isolation from positive social support.
- The economic and personal costs of prostitution activity are significant, and the journey out of prostitution is complex and incredibly challenging.
- Milwaukee's 3rd District Police and its Community Prosecution Unit adopted an innovative approach: a municipal diversion program.

Sisters Outreach workers help women with resources and offer services at the drop-in center



The Sisters Project is a community based program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin designed to help women engaged in street prostitution begin a journey toward a healthier, safer life. The program is a collaborative effort in the Washington Park neighborhood and surrounding areas which have a high incidence of poverty and prostitution.



From 2011-2013, 749 women were arrested in the city of Milwaukee for street prostitution; 75% of arrests were in police districts on the near north and near south sides of the city.



Sisters Project Components

Women arrested for prostitution have a choice: a ticket and a fine OR a minimum of 6-months in the Sisters Project.

- **Outreach:** focuses on building trusting relationships, offering respect, food, hygiene products, condom distribution, and other referrals if needed
- **Support Groups:** group classes to help women deal with violence they have faced as children and adults
- **Case Management:** continued relationships to connect women with resources to access needed services
- **Safety Plans:** development of action plans to assist women in ensuring their safety

This partnership project is funded by the Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program, a component of the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin endowment at the Medical College of Wisconsin

Results to Date

- Since January 2013, approximately 75 women received services from the Sisters drop-in center, and 187 women were seen a total of 868 times by project outreach workers.



Women package condoms and information about STI testing for distribution at youth centers and clinics

- Of the 88 women referred to our program through police contact since 2011, 66% already have or are currently successfully completing 6 months of programming and case management.
- 48% of women participated in gender-responsive and trauma-informed programs.
- 31% of drop-in participants developed personal safety plans.
- 21% self-report exiting prostitution for at least one month or more.
- Successful collaborations with neighborhood partners including Safe & Sound, Progressive Community Health, Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), and Washington Park Partners