

Selah Freedom

Safeguarding our Youth – See The Signs

Selah Freedom's mission is to end sex trafficking and bring freedom to the exploited. The ***Safeguarding our Youth – See The Signs*** initiative would further this mission by educating and empowering middle school and high school students in Sarasota County with the expansion of its prevention programming. First, the creation of a new, age-appropriate educational video shown in middle schools would equip students with tools to recognize grooming tactics, personal vulnerabilities, healthy boundaries, online safety, and more.

Second, a new Advocate would provide sessions designed to raise detection skills to Sarasota County high school students with curriculum that equips students with the tools to recognize, resist, and report exploitation. This Advocate would also work to develop local partnerships and training opportunities in related organizations and offer training to leaders and counselors. Grooming in unhealthy relationships accounts for 90% of those led into trafficking, and the average age for the start of this process is 12-16.

The total initiative budget is \$135,500 with the additional funding committed. Our grant would fund \$85,321 for the new Sarasota County School Prevention Advocate position's salary and benefits for two years, \$15,000 of the total \$40,000 for video production, and \$7,679 for technology, marketing and supplies.

In 2025, Sarasota County schools formally invited Selah Freedom to conduct awareness and prevention training beginning in 2026. To meet this expansion, this initiative would bring instructional information to an estimated 12,750 middle school students and 12,250 high school students annually, the Sarasota County school enrollment. All services are new, as this marks its first time delivering prevention education within Sarasota County Public Schools.

The content of the video would be developed by experienced staff and survivors. Selah Freedom estimates a month for the actual production of the video.

Regarding sustainability, the video production costs are a one-time fixed expense, and other future needs of the program would be funded by a combination of donated goods, contributions, and additional grants.

Florida ranks third in the country for sex trafficking, and the geographical area served by Selah Freedom is a top location for trafficking in our state. This prevention initiative would meaningfully expand its ability to reach children in time to help them identify the unhealthy relationship behaviors that lead to trafficking.