



# Safe at Home

Minnesota's Address Confidentiality Program

# PROGRAM PARTICIPATION ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY 2023

*Reporting Period: January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022*



OFFICE OF THE MINNESOTA  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
STEVE SIMON

## *Cost of Report Preparation*

The total cost for the Office of the Secretary of State to prepare this report was approximately \$5,527.34. Most of these costs involved staff time in analyzing data and preparing the written report. Incidental costs include paper, copying, and other office supplies.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 2016, Section 3.197, requiring the cost for preparing a report to be provided at the beginning of a report to the legislature.

## *Safe at Home Program Overview*

Safe at Home is the address confidentiality services division of the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. It began September 1, 2007 and is open to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and those who otherwise fear for their safety, including law enforcement and judicial personnel. The most common reason for enrollment is domestic violence.

Participants in Safe at Home are assigned a designated address (a PO Box in Saint Paul) that can legally be used for all of their interactions with others. The designated address allows the participant to go about their daily life without disclosing their actual home, employment, or school address. All private and public entities in the state of Minnesota must accept the Safe at Home address as a participant's actual address per Minn. Stat. § 5B.05(a).

Safe at Home receives participants' mail, forwards their First-Class Mail to them, helps them understand the use of their Safe at Home address, and assists them with their interactions with third parties should problems arise when giving the Safe at Home address to others. Staff also work with third party stakeholders, such as county offices, utility companies, banks, and schools, to ensure legal compliance and to make sure their business practices accommodate the safety needs of Safe at Home participants.

## 2022 Program Participation and Number Served

Current participation numbers are indicated below in Table 1.

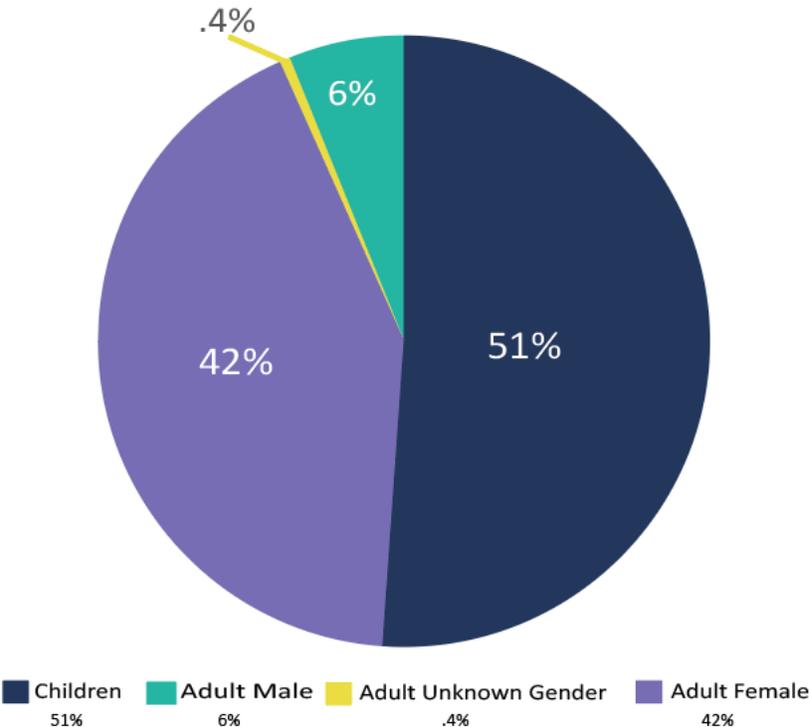
**Table 1**  
*2022 Safe at Home Participation*

Participant households December 31, 2022	1,837
Individual participants December 31, 2022	3,992

### Demographic Makeup

Historically, the demographic breakdown has remained consistent. As shown in Figure 1, most Safe at Home participants are children. A child is enrolled simultaneously with one of their parents. Most commonly, that parent was their mother. It is not uncommon for an adult female to enroll with numerous children.

**Figure 1**  
*Household Demographics*



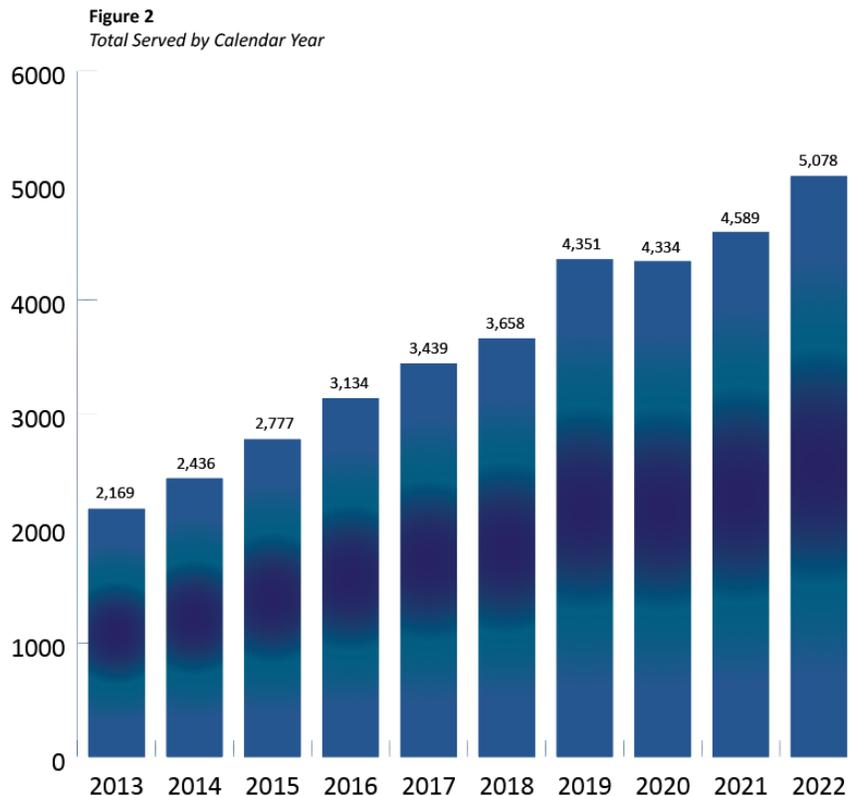
## People Served Annually

Most of the people Safe at Home serves are considered to have the state’s most serious public safety threat or experience. Sometimes referred to as “the worst of the worst” situations, many applicants apply to Safe at Home as a last resort after exhausting many other safety tactics that proved to be unsuccessful.

Since Safe at Home began in September of 2007, the number of Minnesotans served by Safe at Home has steadily increased each year. A person “served” is defined as someone who was either an active participant at some time during the calendar year or someone who applied for enrollment but failed to respond to subsequent requests for additional information required to certify their application. “Total Served” does not include other services Safe at Home provides to the public on a daily basis, such as in-depth discussions with victims who ultimately choose not to apply for enrollment and discussions with third party stakeholders who need a better understanding of Safe at Home laws and how they should develop safe procedures for program participants. Therefore, “Total Served” has a limited scope.

5,078 participants and applicants were served in 2022.

The annual number of participants and applicants served has risen by 134% over the past ten years. Figure 2 shows the number of people served annually since 2013.



## Applications Received

There are four types of applications received. The first type is a new application from someone who has never previously applied. The second type is a reinstatement from a former Safe at Home participant whose status became inactive and they wish to re-enroll. The third type is a Renewal Application from a current active Safe at Home participant who wishes to re-certify their participation for another four years. The fourth application type is called a Certification Continuance Form. This is received from an 18-year-old who still resides with the parent or guardian who enrolled them and by submitting the Certification Continuance Form they indicate they still reside with that person, still want to remain in Safe at Home, and indicate they understand it is now their legal responsibility, as the subject of their data, to communicate with the Safe at Home office directly and submit their own changes of information (address or otherwise).

Table 2 shows the number of each type of application received in 2022. An application often contains multiple people in a household that are enrolling. In 2022, the number of people who requested initial certification or who requested to re-apply or remain certified totaled 1,931. This figure is in addition to the number of program participants who remained active all through 2022 and did not need to renew their participation, re-apply, or express that they wish to continue their certification.

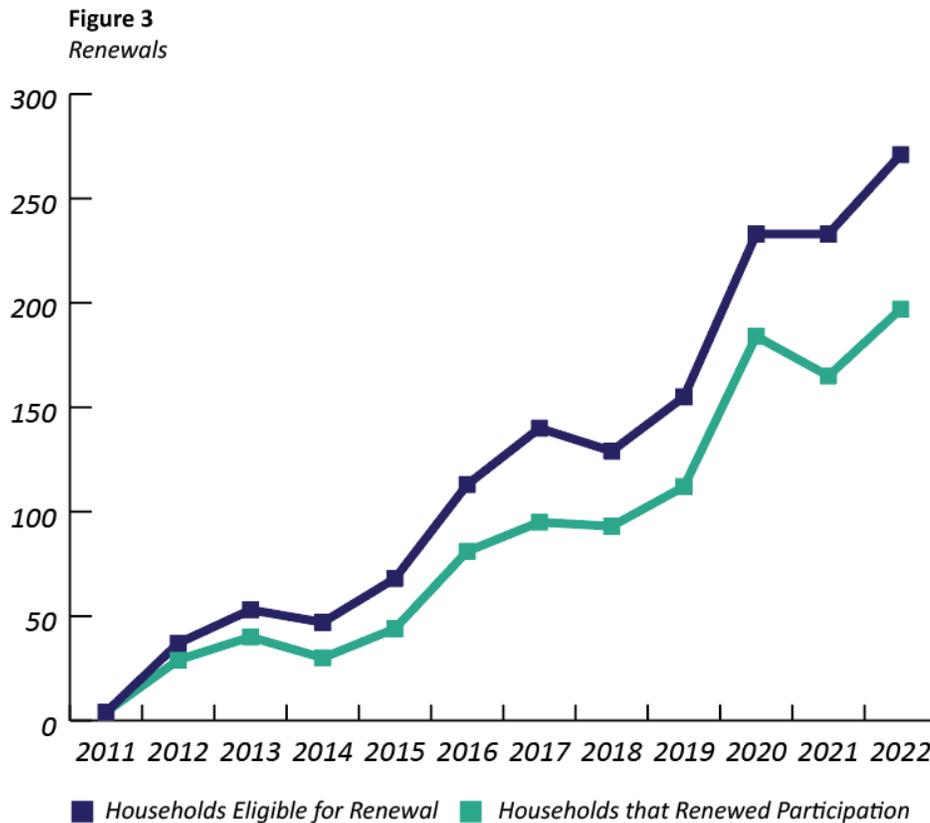
**Table 2**  
*Types of Applications Received*

New applications received in 2022	570
Reinstatement applications received in 2022	165
Renewal applications received in 2022	197
Certifications of continuance received in 2022	29
<b>Total applications received in 2022</b>	<b>961</b>

### Renewals

Safe at Home enrollment is valid for four years. A participant may choose to withdraw at any time. Under certain circumstances, a person’s program participation may be cancelled. The most common reason for cancellation is the participant’s failure to update the Safe at Home office by providing their new physical address.

If a participant’s program participation is still active four years after certification, the participant is given the opportunity to renew their participation. The participant is sent a Renewal Application form that they complete and return to the Safe at Home office if they desire to continue their household’s participation. In 2022, 73% of eligible households chose to renew their Safe at Home participation. 197 Renewal Applications were received in 2022. 74 households did not submit a Renewal Application by the expiration date and were cancelled. Of those 74 households, 20% submitted a Reinstatement Application requesting re-enrollment. Over the last four years, Renewal Applications received has increased by 110%. Figure 3 shows the increase of Renewal Applications received since 2011, the first year of eligible renewals.



### Safe at Home Application Assistants

Safe at Home is a successful private sector–government partnership that utilizes limited state resources to recruit, train, and monitor application assistants. Application assistants are victim advocates who are employed by community-based organizations throughout Minnesota. As of December 31, 2022, Safe at Home had partnerships with 89 different community-based organizations and 337 individual application assistants.

The role of the application assistant is vital. The Safe at Home Application Assistant meets one-on-one with a potential applicant to discuss their situation and help them determine whether applying to Safe at Home is an appropriate safety step for them to take. During this process, the application assistant helps them understand the program basics, performs individualized safety planning, and guides the application process.

To ensure enough application assistants are always available throughout the state, Safe at Home provides initial trainings to advocates several times a year. Continuing education is provided on an as-needed basis to teach application assistants about legislative changes, to train victim advocates about the unique safety needs of Safe at Home participants, and to keep application skills up to date. Beyond this training and ongoing support, the community-based organizations and individual staff are not compensated by Safe at Home. In 2022, the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State provided training to 218 victim advocates so that they could assist eligible Minnesotans.

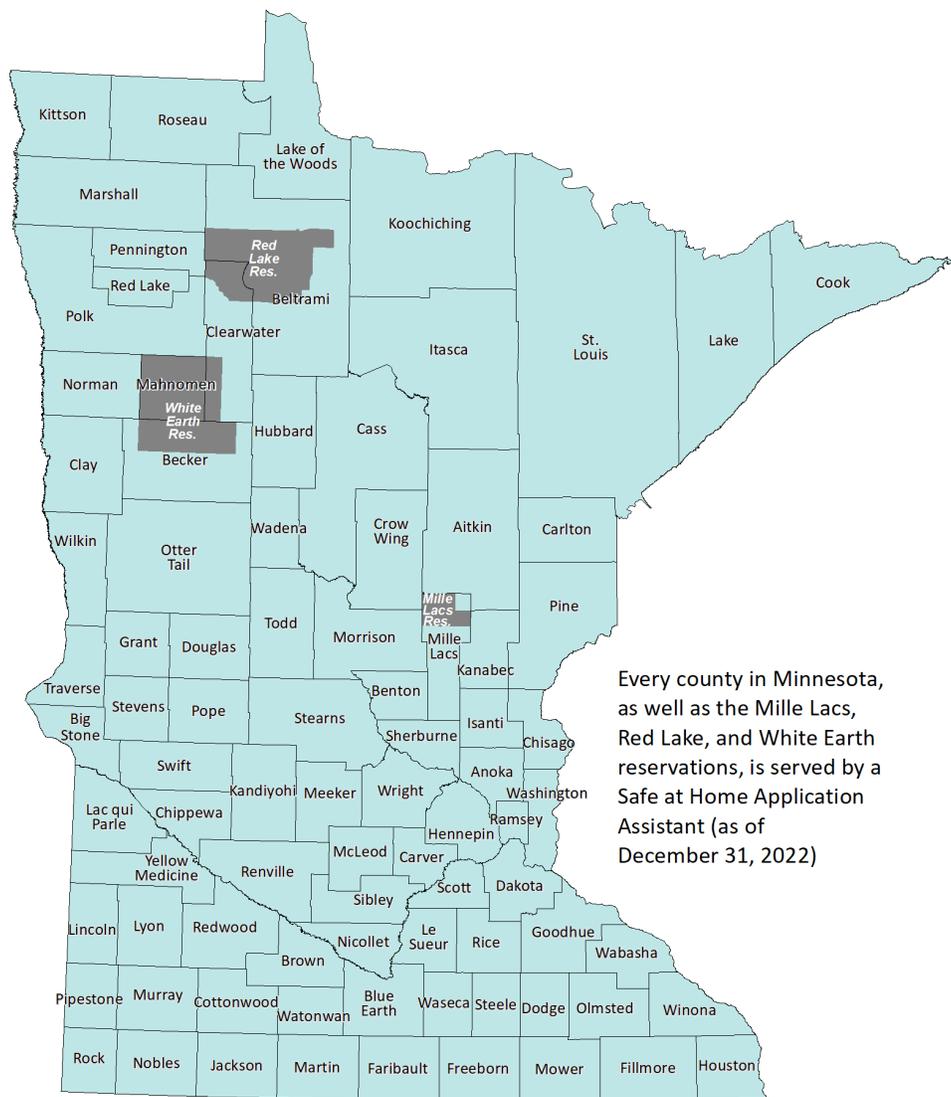
Table 3, Safe at Home Application Assistant Activity 2022, shows the number of application assistants accredited to assist with the Safe at Home application process as of December 31, 2022, as well as the number of victim advocates who were either initially trained to be partners or who were provided with continuing education during the 2022 calendar year in order to keep their application assistant skills up to date.

**Table 3**  
*Safe at Home Application Assistant Activity*

<p>Total application assistants December 31, 2022</p> <p><small>Application assistants are employees of community-based organizations</small></p>	<p>337</p>
<p>Application assistants provided initial training or continued education, January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022</p>	<p>218</p>

The map shows the geographical coverage of counties and tribal governments served by community-based organizations where application assistants were able to assist victims with the application process as of December 31, 2022. Comprehensive state coverage continued. Every county and three tribal nations in Minnesota were served by at least one partnering community-based organization.

**Figure 4**  
*State Map of Counties and Lands Served*

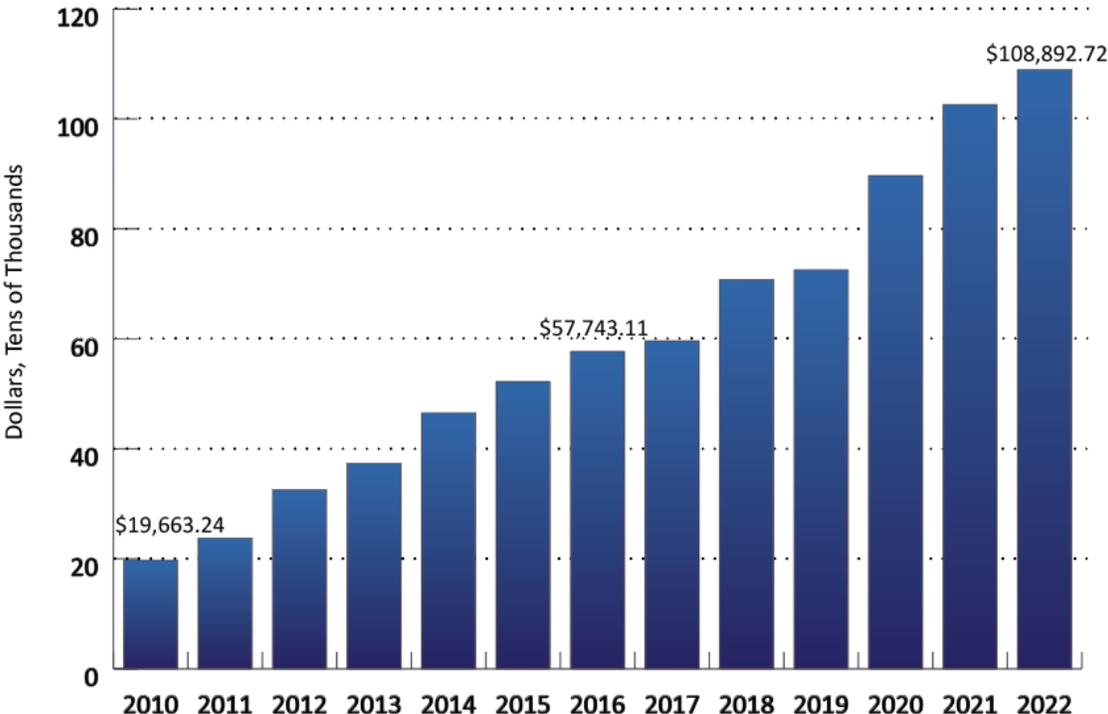


### Postage Costs

In accordance with Minn. Stat. § 5B.05(a), when another party learns that someone is a Safe at Home participant they are required to mail correspondence to the participant’s Safe at Home address. As the agent to receive mail for all participants, the Office of the Secretary of State pays for and manages the post office box where all Safe at Home mail is sent. Therefore, one of the main functions of the Safe at Home Division is to process all participant mail. The office is required to forward to participants their properly addressed First-Class Mail, identifiable pharmaceuticals, and packages that are sent by a federal, state, or county government agency. Other mail is either refused at the post office, returned to sender, or in cases of bulk advertisement or junk mail, shredded or recycled.

Each year, the mail volume as well as the program’s postage expenses continue to climb. Over the past four years, the division has experienced a 54% increase in postage costs. In calendar year 2022, postage costs totaled \$108,892.72. Figure 5 shows yearly postage costs 2010 – 2022.

**Figure 5**  
*Postage Costs*



Beginning in 2023, the United States Postal Service (USPS) will change from implementing annual rate increases (with very few exceptions during the last 20 years) to biannual rate increases. The rate increases are part of the USPS’s Delivering for America 10-year plan. Rate increases will now occur in January and July. Some rate increases are expected to be higher than the average three percent rate increases experienced in the past. This will directly impact all Safe at Home outgoing mail, including but not limited to, pharmaceuticals (which are sent to a participant by Priority Mail), enrollment materials, absentee ballots and voting materials, and participants’ personal First-Class Mail.

### *Increases Since 2018*

During the last four years, Safe at Home has experienced significant growth. Table 4 shows growth of some of the main services performed by the division’s Participant Administration Unit and the Mail Services Unit. Staffing has not kept up to growth. The last position added to the Participant Administration Unit was in 2018. The last position added to the Mail Services Unit was in 2016. Adding staff to accommodate growth and meet statutory obligations is a priority in 2023.

**Table 4**  
*Comparison of 2018 to 2022*

	2018	2022	% Increase
Number of applications received	626	961	54%
Number of renewal applications received	94	197	110%
Number of active participants as of December 31st	2,758	3,992	45%
Number of active households as of December 31st	1,228	1,837	50%
Number of applicants and participants served	3,568	5,078	42%
postage costs	\$71,000	\$109,000	54%
Number of outgoing envelopes*	86,988	111,535	28%
Number of staff to perform this work	5	5	0%

*\*Note.* “Number Outgoing Envelopes” means all Safe at Home mail, including outreach, voting, enrollment materials, Safe at Home correspondence to participants and applicants, and all participant mail that is being forwarded to a participant. Envelopes of participants’ First-Class Mail typically contain multiple pieces of mail being forwarded. Processing this mail in addition to non-First-Class Mail, the estimated number of mail pieces processed in 2022 was almost one million.

Questions about this report can be directed to:

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