



**Safe at Home**

*Minnesota's Address Confidentiality Program*

# PROGRAM PARTICIPATION ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY 2024

*Reporting Period: January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023*



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 \$2,727.48. 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, 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 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 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 Minnesota Statutes § 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.

## 2023 Program Participation and Number Served

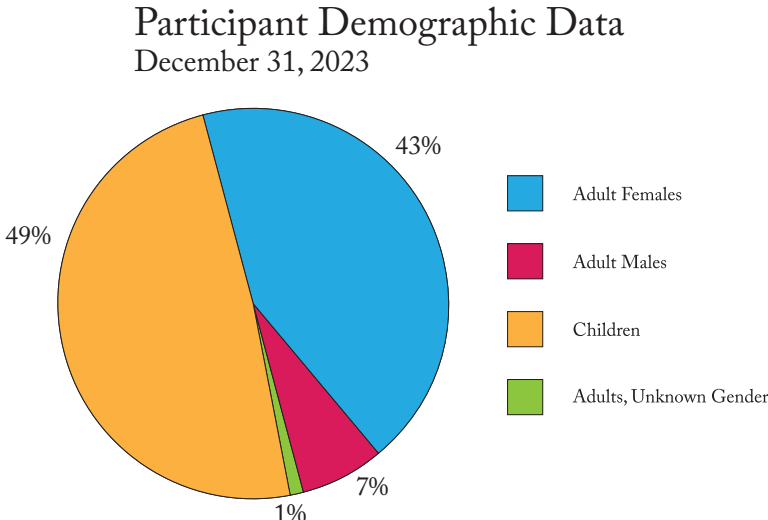
Current participation numbers are indicated below in Table 1.

<i>2023 Program Participation</i>	
Number of Individual Program Participants as of December 31, 2023	4,181
Number of Participant Households as of December 31, 2023	1,947

## Demographic Makeup

Historically, the demographic breakdown of Safe at Home participants has remained consistent. Typically, just over 50% are children. However, December 31, 2023 data showed that number fell below 50% for the first time. Figure 1 shows the demographic breakdown of active Safe at Home participants on December 31, 2023.

Figure 1  
2023 Demographic Data



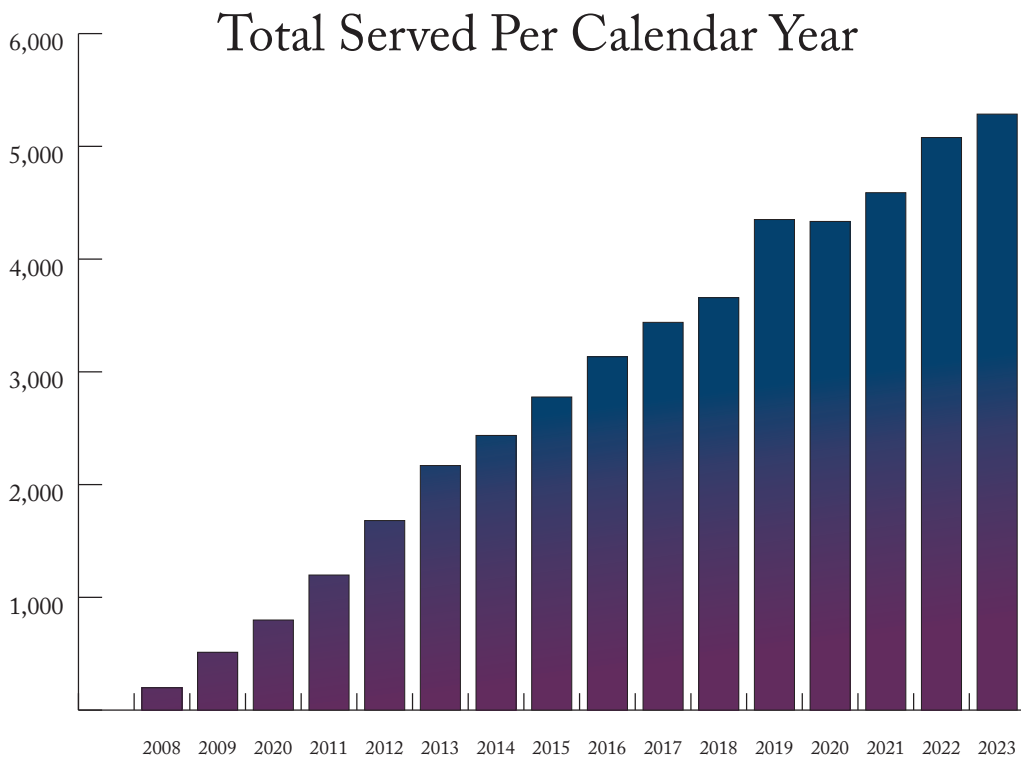
## Participants and Applicants Served Annually

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, assistance provided to current Safe at Home participants, 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.

*5,286 participants and applicants were served in 2023.*

Figure 2  
Total Served by Calendar Year



## Applications Received

There are four types of Safe at Home applications. 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 because either they withdrew voluntarily or they were cancelled, 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 Certificate of Continuance. This is received from an 18-year-old who still resides with the parent or guardian who enrolled them and by submitting the Certificate of Continuance Application 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 2023. An application is for a household. It often contains multiple people in a household who are requesting enrollment.

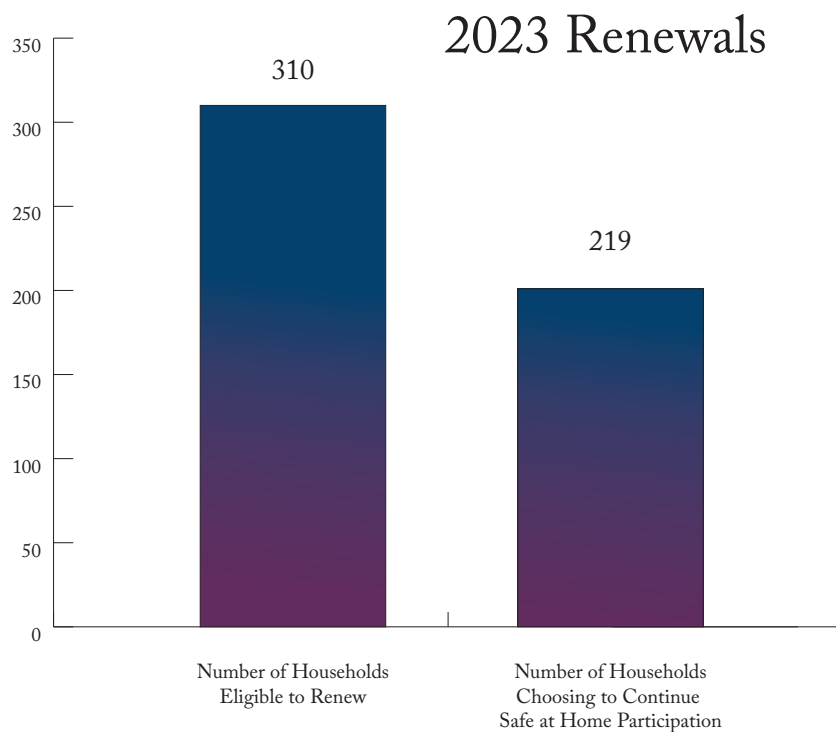
<i>Applications Received 2023</i>	
New Applications	500
Reinstatement Applications	165
Renewal Applications	201
Certificate of Continuance Applications	40
Total	906

## 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 Safe at Home participation may be cancelled. The most common reason for cancellation is the participant's failure to update Safe at Home by providing their new physical address.

If a participant's Safe at Home 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. There is no limit to how many times a household can renew its participation. There are people that have been enrolled in Safe at Home for more than a decade.

In 2023, 71% of eligible households chose to continue their Safe at Home participation. 310 households were eligible for renewal. Five households chose to voluntarily withdraw. 201 Renewal Applications were received by the expiration date. 104 households did not submit a Renewal Application by the expiration date and were cancelled. Of those 104 households, 18 submitted a Reinstatement Application requesting re-enrollment thereby continuing their Safe at Home participation.



## 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 the application work of application assistants. Application assistants are victim advocates who are employed by community-based organizations throughout Minnesota. As of December 31, 2023, Safe at Home had partnerships with 91 different community-based organizations and 340 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.

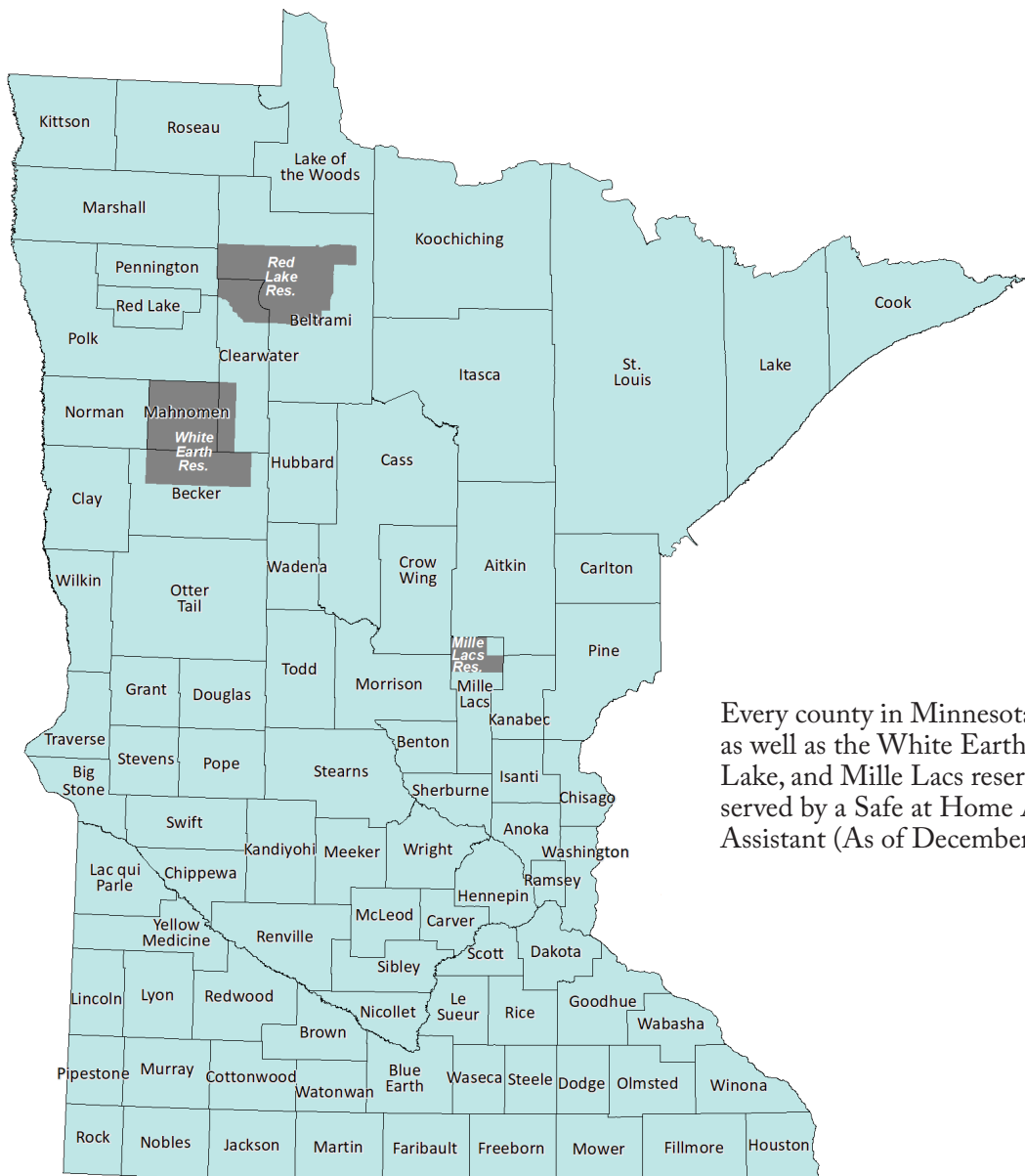
To ensure enough application assistants are always available throughout the state, Safe at Home provides initial trainings to advocates several times a year. Continuing education is provided on an as-needed basis to teach application assistants about legislative changes, to train victim advocates about 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 2023, the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State provided training to 89 victim advocates in order to maintain an adequate number available to assist eligible Minnesotans.

Table 3, Safe at Home Application Assistant Activity 2023, shows the number of application assistants accredited to assist with the Safe at Home application process as of December 31, 2023, 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 2023 calendar year.

<i>Safe at Home Application Assistant Activity 2023</i>	
<b>Number of Application Assistants as of December 31, 2023</b> Note: Application assistants are employees of community-based organizations.	340
<b>Number of Application Assistants Who Were Provided Initial Training or Continued Education</b> January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023	89

The map below 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, 2023. Comprehensive state coverage continued. Every county and three tribal nations in Minnesota were served by at least one partnering community-based organization.

### 90 Geographical Areas Served by Minnesota Safe at Home Application Assistants (as of December 31, 2023)



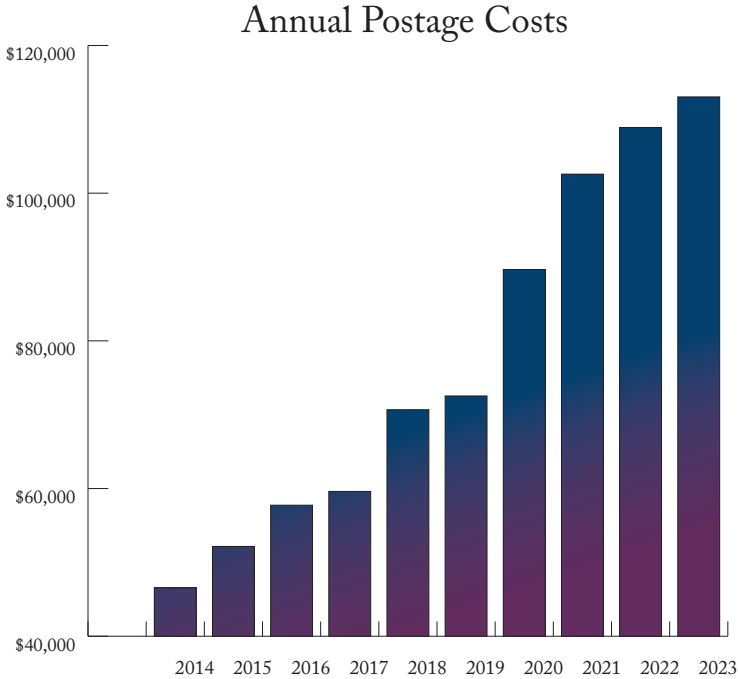
Every county in Minnesota, as well as the White Earth, Red Lake, and Mille Lacs reservations, is served by a Safe at Home Application Assistant (As of December 31, 2023)



# Postage Costs

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes § 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, returned to sender, or in cases of bulk advertisement or junk mail, shredded or recycled.

Each year, mail volume as well as postage expense continues to climb. In calendar year 2014, postage costs were \$46,544.52. In calendar year 2023, postage costs totaled \$113,034.36. Graph 3 shows yearly postage costs 2014 – 2023.



Beginning in 2023, the United States Postal Service (USPS) changed 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 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 directly impacts 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.

Questions about this report can be directed to:

The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, Safe at Home  
PO Box 17370  
Saint Paul MN 55117-0370

651-201-1399

[Safe.athome@state.mn.us](mailto:Safe.athome@state.mn.us)



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