

My Life My Choice

Public Policy and Advocacy Department

Program Evaluation Plan



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Background and Context

My Life My Choice (MLMC) is a nonprofit organization that started in 2002 after the death of seventeen-year-old Latasha. Latasha, a victim of commercial sexual exploitation, was brutally murdered while living in a Department of Children and Families group home. Latasha's death evoked members of her community to come together and determine the nature of her death. Since then, MLMC has established a survivor-led team whose mission is to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children. MLMC reports that in the United States alone, commercial sexual exploitation of children and illegal sex trade is more than a \$32 billion industry. According to My Life My Choice, commercial sexual exploitation includes "any sexual activity involving a child for which something of value is given, exchanged, or promised" (My Life My Choice, 2021). Marginalized youth, including BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth, are disproportionately affected by the commercial sexual exploitation industry.

MLMC currently serves cisgender girls and boys, trans- and non-binary youth survivors of commercial sexual exploitation throughout Eastern Massachusetts. MLMC offers survivor mentorship, case management, mental health services, and group work to survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. MLMC has provided educational services and advocacy nationwide. As reported on JRI's website, "Since 2002, My Life My Choice has mentored over 900 youth, trained over 21,900 providers across the country, and provided education groups to 3,800 girls" (Justice Resource Institute). The organization has established a national footprint in empowering and strengthening survivors through education and mentorship.

MLMC values social justice, empowerment, unconditional love, community, equity, opportunity, allyship, and resilience. Their values are aligned with the belief that everyone is entitled to human rights, thus influencing the nature and structure of the organization. Guided by their core values, My Life My Choice envisions a future in which no one is bought or sold (My Life My Choice, 2021).

MLMC has recently established a Public Policy and Advocacy Department. This department is devoted to developing and implementing policy and advocacy strategies to prevent and respond to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, increase access to services for survivors, and lead work in systems change. Given that the department is in its early stages, MLMC has requested an evaluation plan to determine how successful the department has been in 1) increasing staff engagement in advocacy efforts and 2) passing legislation that aims to protect survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. MLMC has yet to develop a precise measure of success in the areas above. Therefore, this evaluation plan will help MLMC identify and establish the necessary tools to implement an effective and efficient Public Policy and Advocacy Department.

The recipients of this evaluation plan include MLMC's Public Policy and Advocacy Department management team and staff, including Indigo Kirsh, the Outcome and Evaluation Manager of My Life My Choice. MLMC plans to conduct an internal evaluation led by Indigo Kirsh. This evaluation plan will serve as a primary resource to inform the evaluation. Current MLMC staff will also devote time to becoming involved in the advocacy efforts as later described.

My Life My Choice has several stakeholders involved in, affected by, or are the intended users of the evaluation's results (refer to [Table 1](#) below for a complete list of program stakeholders).

Table 1: My Life My Choice Program Stakeholders

Involved in program operations	Served or affected by the Public Policy and Advocacy Department	Primary users of the evaluation results
Public Policy and Advocacy Manager	Youth who have been commercially sexually exploited	Current and potential funders
Survivor Mentor and Policy Specialist	Youth at-risk of being commercial sexually exploited	MLMC’s Advisory Board Public Policy and Advocacy Management Staff
Co-Executive Directors	Massachusetts residents	Community Partnerships (i.e., established through the EMMA Coalition)
MLMC Assistant Director	MLMC staff (including survivors of commercial exploitation)	

The MLMC stakeholders involved in the program operations will headline and conduct the evaluation this plan aims to inform. In 2019, MLMC conducted its first comprehensive evaluation of its curriculum program offered to its youth (Rothman et al., 2019). Boston University's School of Public Health and the Northeastern School of Criminology and Criminal Justice Department conducted the evaluation. Since then, MLMC’s management team has become familiar with conducting an evaluation of its program operations. Therefore, the MLMC staff noted above are prepared to conduct an internal evaluation, using this evaluation plan as a resource to guide its evaluation.

Those affected by the department include several populations: 1) MLMC youth, 2) Massachusetts residents, and 3) MLMC staff. The lobbying efforts strive to pass laws that protect survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, thus impacting MLMC's youth. Secondly, the passage of state laws will directly impact Massachusetts residents. As mentioned, MLMC strives to pass laws offering additional protections to all Massachusetts residents affected by commercial sexual exploitation. Lastly, MLMC staff, including survivor staff, will first handily become involved in the lobbying and advocacy efforts. Thus, MLMC staff will be given leadership opportunities, establish a connection to survivor led work, and demonstrate to the MLMC’s mentees that change is possible.

MLMC's staff will use the evaluation results to acquire additional funding and inform current funders of its efforts to achieve systemic change. MLMC's advisory board and management staff also plan to utilize the results to improve its program operations. Community organizations serving comparable populations could also benefit from the evaluation results and refer to MLMC's best practices to enhance their program operations.

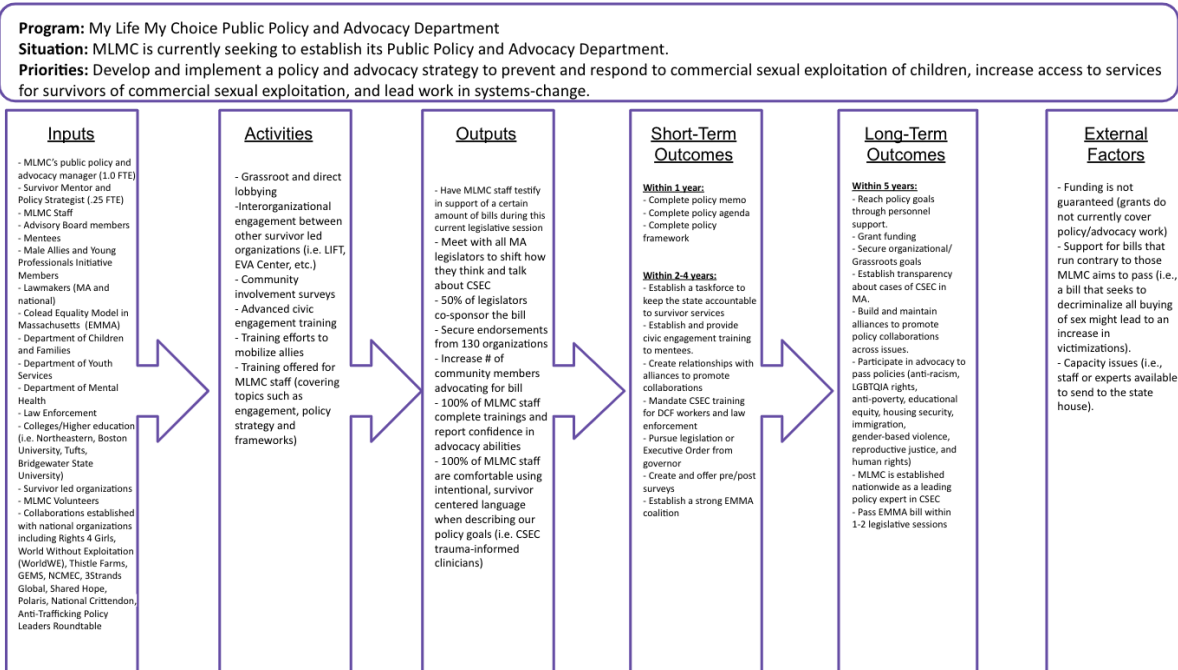
Program Description and Logic Model

MLMC is a program that empowers youth to build skills and help establish a society that does not tolerate the commercial buying and selling of people. The program's mentors include survivors who use their personal expertise to build trusting mentorship with children who have experienced similar situations. MLMC offers survivor impact, prevention, advocacy, and resources to its mentors and mentees.

MLMC's Public Policy and Advocacy department will help respond to and prevent the exploitation of children. The department's advocacy and lobbying efforts seek to protect those disproportionately affected by the commercial sexual exploitation industry. Engaging in this work will help increase the resources and services offered to the survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. Leveraging more resources for this population will also help MLMC lead in systems change.

MLMC's overall mission is that no one is bought or sold. However, their Public Policy and Advocacy Department's goal is to advance policy that prevents and responds to commercial sexual exploitation of children, increase access to services for survivors, and lead work in systems change. This department has been actively training professionals in the field and plans to change legislation by leveraging those in power in the Commonwealth. This department hopes to become a national advocate for policies and advocacy to protect survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. However, the department is currently prioritizing legislators within the state of Massachusetts. Ultimately, the Public Policy and Advocacy Department aims to pass legislation that 1) ensures youth can thrive, 2) supports survivors, and 3) change systems that have failed youth and survivors.

Figure 1: Public Policy and Advocacy Logic Model



The logic model shown above displays the steps and actors involved in developing MLMC's Public Policy and Advocacy Department. The model helps show the developmental stages, strategies that will be implemented, activities the department will offer, and the ideal outcomes.

As shown in the inputs category, MLMC seeks to leverage a number of relationships they have established with its community to achieve change. My Life My Choice has established relationships with community organizations involved in the EMMA Coalition. This coalition is led by survivors of commercial sexual exploitation that are also founders of exit programs and leaders throughout the state, along with advocates, key stakeholders, and organizations advocating for An Act To Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors (H.1761/S.940).

MLMC has several milestones they seek to reach within the next year. Some of the following include completing a policy memo, policy agenda, and policy framework. Upon passing the EMMA bill, MLMC will dedicate a task force to hold the state accountable for survivor services and provide civic engagement training to mentees. MLMC will have created

relationships with alliances to promote collaborations. MLMC also plans to assess civic engagement training among staff and mentees. This will be measured via pre and post-surveys.

Within five years, MLMC will reach policy goals through personnel support, sufficient grant funding, and they will secure their organization/grassroot goals from the bill. In 5 years, MLMC will also establish transparency about CSEC in Massachusetts. The organization will have enough support to maintain alliances to promote policy collaborations across issues regarding exploited children. MLMC will also prepare to pass policies (anti-racism, LGBTQIA rights, anti-poverty, educational equity, housing security, immigration, gender-based violence, reproductive justice, and human rights). Overall, MLMC will become established nationwide as a leading policy expert in CSEC.

The target population of this evaluation is legislators in the state of Massachusetts. However, many other groups may benefit, specifically survivors of sexual exploitation in Massachusetts. Results will also be shared with relevant staff and board members at monthly staff meetings.

Evaluation Purpose and Questions

This evaluation is intended to assess the success of My Life My Choice's public policy and advocacy program. To assess this, the evaluation has been split into two key areas: 1.) Staff Engagement in Advocacy Efforts and 2.) Organizational Success in Lobbying Efforts. In future evaluations, there may be an additional area of public awareness of sexual exploitation and related policies, but that is out of the scope of this evaluation. The following evaluation questions were determined:

1. How engaged are MLMC Staff in public policy and advocacy efforts?
2. How successful has MLMC's Public Policy and Advocacy Department in passing bills that seek to prevent and respond to survivors of commercial sexual exploitation?

Question one will be evaluated annually to assess how frequently staff members participate in public policy advocacy efforts and how comfortable they are with advocacy work. This will be a mixed-methods survey. The second question will be evaluated quarterly through site visits and reports, evaluation of progress towards passing bills.

As this is a new department, My Life My Choice hopes to consistently evaluate its Public Policy and Advocacy efforts from the beginning. The organization will use these continuous evaluations to secure grant funding, and more support and to inform its future evaluations.

Evaluation Design

Evaluation 1: Staff Engagement in Advocacy Efforts

Our evaluation design is centered around two evaluations that will be conducted concurrently. The first objective is to determine how engaged the staff of MLMC are in the Public Policy and Advocacy Department. This question will indicate the staff's comfort level and knowledge of engaging in advocacy efforts as well as help increase involvement in the department. All MLMC staff will participate in the evaluation alongside a subset of staff survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. We will be using mixed-method pre-surveys and post-surveys to gauge the level of participation, and it will also serve as a performance measure for the staff. There will also be one-on-one meetings between staff members and a vital leadership team member to check in during staff training, which will take place every few months. All staff members will be surveyed, and a group of staff survivors will be interviewed. MLMC will conduct the evaluation based on the organization's training schedule; at the beginning and the end of the training schedule. This method allows for more insight into staff engagement within this program and what changes from year to year.

Evaluation 2: Organizational Success in Lobbying Efforts

The second evaluation question aims to discover the effectiveness of MLMC's Public Policy and Advocacy Department. Furthermore, the goal is to see how successful the organization has been in passing legislation to prevent and respond to survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. This will be indicated through semi and/or annual updates on the progress of

bills (i.e., EMMA bill) as well as an assessment of opinion changes of state legislators. This assessment will allow MLMC to maintain a track record of the current and in-progress bills about this issue and any past bills that may need more attention or awareness.

Field First currently maintains one legislative tracker, and their main purpose is to provide consulting to the EMMA coalition. The tracker includes information regarding each legislator, their current position as co-sponsor, and any related bills, which could be a very useful tool for other bills MLMC would like to support in the future. This evaluation will include staff members and state legislators. The data source for this will be a checklist or review of the Excel sheet of bills that the organization is looking to pass.

The evaluation will be conducted quarterly to match the legislative time frame. MLMC staff and state legislators will be involved in assessing the progress toward passing bills and changes in the opinions of state legislators. To better determine the effectiveness, reports and site visits to the state house or to Congress will be conducted regarding the various bills MLMC has been in support of. MLMC staff will be expected to complete surveys after direct lobbying or grassroots coalition meetings that discuss legislation and policy. The surveys will ask MLMC staff to state what legislation and policy were discussed and whom they met with. Staff members will also write reports to go into further detail about the meetings held with legislators and coalition meetings. (Please refer to Appendix A for a sample of the survey that will be distributed to MLMC's staff). In addition, reports will include information from an evaluative survey conducted by staff with the state legislators to better understand their reasoning for supporting or being against these bills. Supportive responses could later be used as external quotes in letters of support to other legislators, and opposing responses can provide information about their ultimate decision or what may need to be done to convince them to change their vote.

Plan for Dissemination and Use of Findings

The evaluation results will be shared with MLMC's Public Policy and Advocacy management team, MLMC staff, current and future funders, MLMC's advisory board, and community partnerships. Sharing the evaluation findings will allow the Public Policy and Advocacy Department staff to determine its effectiveness (increasing staff comfortability and/or

passing laws that protect survivors), increase involvement in advocacy efforts, and inform its community partners of their successes.

MLMC plans to share its evaluation findings internally initially. First, MLMC's management and advisory board will assess the results. These staff will then determine what information it plans to share with MLMC's staff members. Findings will be shared during monthly meetings via presentations and newsletters. MLMC will also establish a report they plan to share with its funders to help leverage additional funding. Lastly, MLMC intends to share information regarding what bills they helped to pass and current advocacy work to their followers via social media platforms.

To ensure the evaluation findings are translated into its program operations, MLMC has decided to conduct a continuous evaluation. Doing so will put MLMC in a position to incorporate its feedback and results into the department's operations and lobbying efforts. Consistent communication with MLMC staff and stakeholders will ensure the evaluation results are presented most efficiently and practically.

Conclusion

MLMC's Public Policy and Advocacy Department is currently in its developing stages. Considering this, there are other avenues of evaluation that MLMC plans to conduct in the future. In a later assessment stage, MLMC intends to evaluate its success in improving public awareness of advocacy and policy efforts that prevent and respond to survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. MLMC had initially planned to include this in the first phase of evaluation. However, it is currently out of the scope of this evaluation plan. Instead, MLMC focused its current evaluation efforts on assessing change within the organization and state house before assessing its impact on the general public.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this evaluation plan is the transferability of findings. This evaluation plan is intended to apply specifically to My Life My Choice's Public Policy and Advocacy Department. When replicated, it might not produce comparable results within a

similar organization. It is suggested that other organizations that plan to evaluate their advocacy department formulate their own evaluation plan. However, the logic model above could be a valuable reference for other organizations developing a Public Policy and Advocacy Department that plans to engage in lobbying efforts.

References

Justice Resource Institute, “My Life My Choice” Retrieved from <https://jri.org/services/community/mlmc>

My Life My Choice (2021) “Why it Matters” Retrieved from <https://www.mylifemychoice.org/why-it-matters>

The EMMA Coalition (2021) Action Network <https://actionnetwork.org/groups/equality-model-massachusetts>

Rothman, E.F., Farrell, A., Paruk, J., Bright, K.T., Bair-Merritt, M., Preis, S.R. (2019). Evaluation of a Multi-Session Group Designed to Prevent Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors: The “My Life My Choice” Curriculum. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*

Appendix

Appendix A: Sample of staff survey to measure engagement in policy and advocacy

1. What is your name?
2. Did you speak with the legislator or staff? (If no, finish here)
 - a. Who is the legislator or staff member you met with?
 - b. How long did you meet with this person?
 - c. What was discussed? (Check the appropriate boxes below)
 - Prevention
 - Legislation
 - Systems change
 - d. What was the outcome of this meeting?
3. What are the next steps?