



Safe at Home

Minnesota's Address Confidentiality Program

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION
ANNUAL REPORT
JANUARY 2019

Reporting Period: January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2018



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 \$1,612.99. 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 Minn. Stat. § 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

The Safe at Home address confidentiality program is managed by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. The program, which began September 1, 2007, is open to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and those who otherwise fear for their safety, including law enforcement and judicial personnel.

Participants in Safe at Home are assigned a designated address (a post office 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).

Chart 1

Participants and Applicants Served in 2018	3,568
Participant Households, December 31, 2018	1,228
Individual Program Participants, December 31, 2018	2,758

Safe at Home receives participants’ mail, forwards their First Class Mail to them, and assists them with their interactions with third parties should problems arise when giving the Safe at Home address to others. Staff also works 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. Since the program’s inception, more than 8,600 different participants and applicants have received multiple services. Some participants have been in the program for more than 10 years. Current participation numbers are indicated in Chart 1.

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, 2018, Safe at Home had partnerships with 82 different community-based organizations and 271 individual application assistants. Overall, since the inception of the program in 2007, the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State provided training to nearly 900 victim advocates in Minnesota.

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, performs individualized safety planning, and guides the application process.

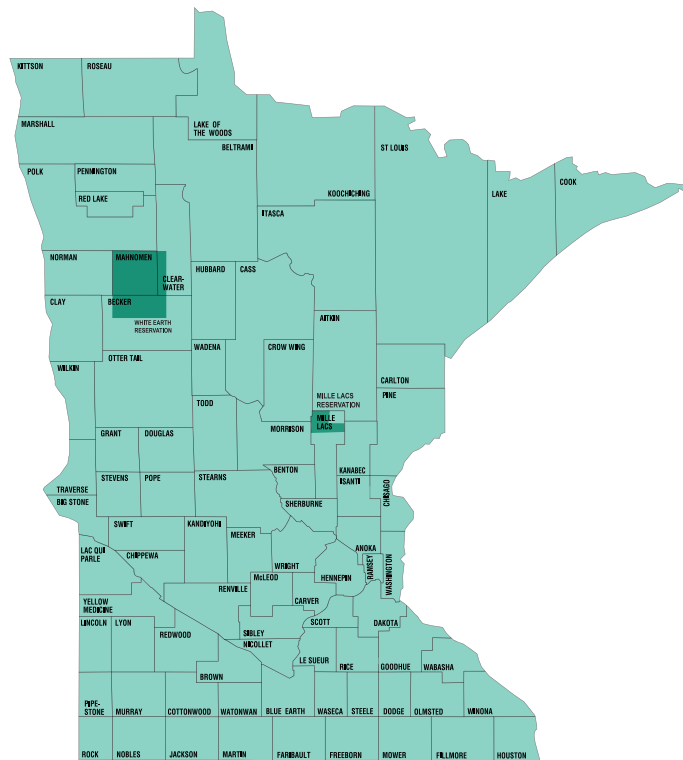
In order to ensure enough application assistants are available throughout the state at all times, Safe at Home provides initial trainings to advocates several times a year. Continuing education is provided on an as-needed basis to teach application assistants about legislative changes to the program, 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.

Chart 2

Chart 2, Safe at Home Application Assistant Activity, shows the number of application assistants accredited to assist with the Safe at Home application process as of December 31, 2018, 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 2018 calendar year in order to keep their application assistant skills up to date.



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, 2018. Comprehensive state coverage continued. Every county in Minnesota was served by at least one partnering community-based organization.

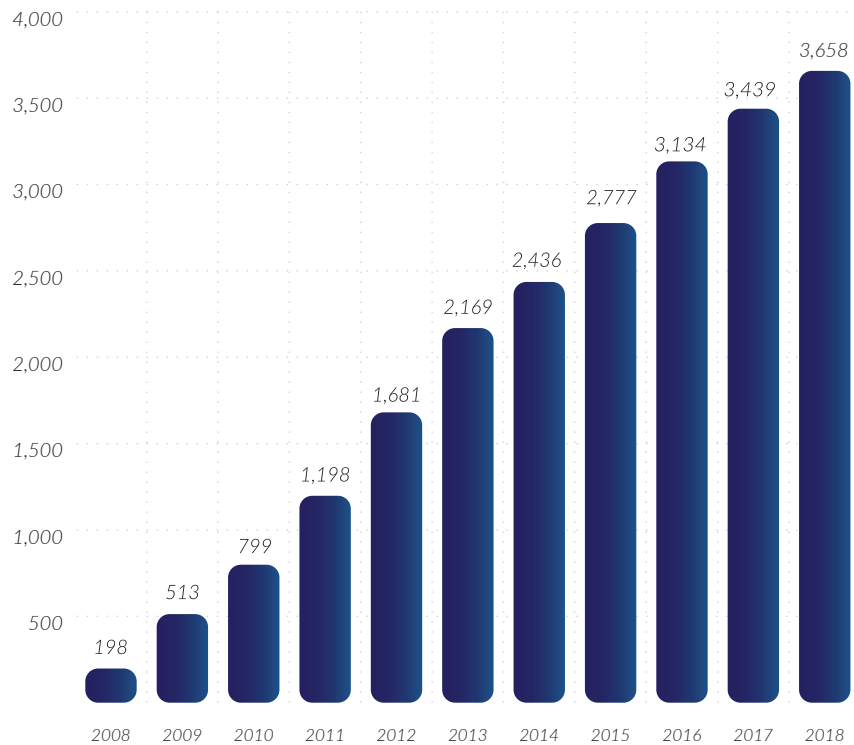


Every county in Minnesota, as well as the White Earth and Mille Lacs reservations, is served by a Safe at Home Application Assistant. (December 31, 2018)

Total People Served by Year

As shown by Graph 1 below, the number of Minnesotans served by Safe at Home has steadily increased every year since the program began September 1, 2007. 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 provide the required information 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.

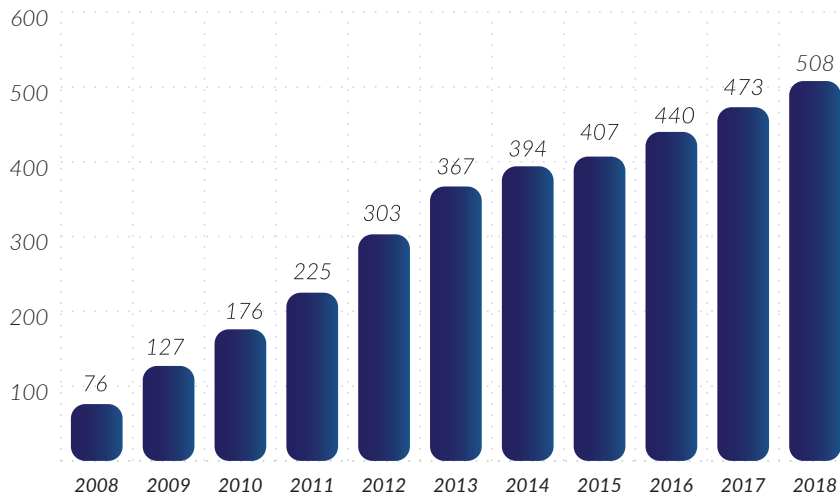
Graph 1 Total Served by Calendar Year



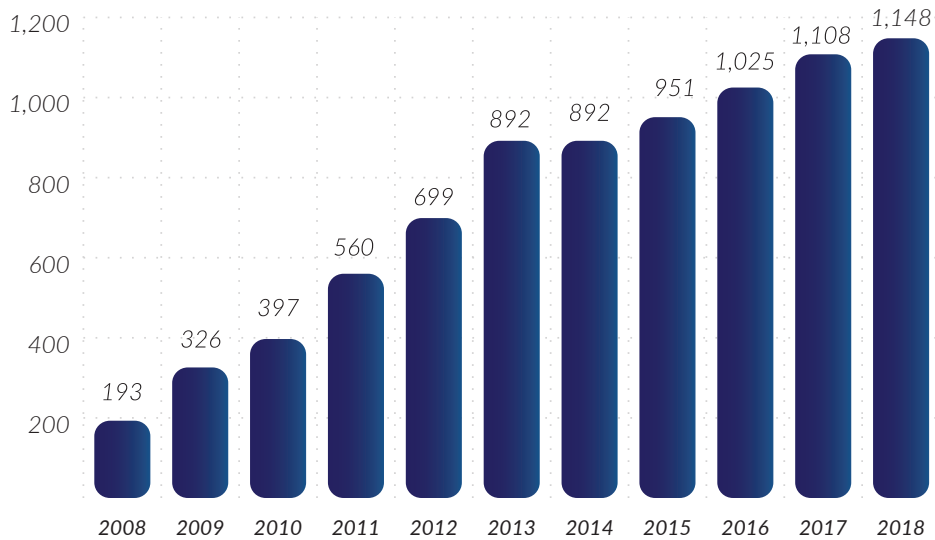
Enrollment During the Last Decade

As shown by Graphs 2 and 3 below, the number of people enrolling in Safe at Home has steadily increased every year since the program began September 1, 2007. “Enrollment” is defined as a newly certified application. It does not include an application submitted for renewal. The information provided is broken down by year, showing the number of individuals who enrolled and the number of households that enrolled.

Graph 2 New Households Enrolled



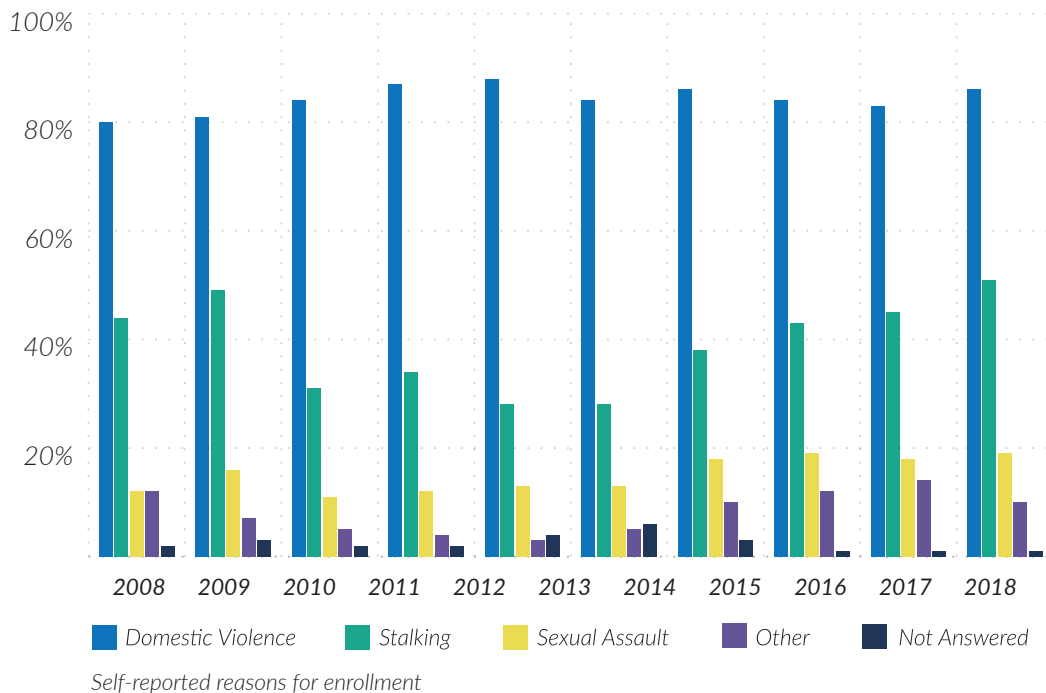
Graph 3 New Individuals Enrolled



Reasons for Enrollment 2009-2018

Although an applicant discusses the specifics of their safety concerns with a Safe at Home Application Assistant, a person who applies for enrollment is not required to disclose to Safe at Home the reason they are applying. However, in 2009, the application form was changed to include the opportunity for applicants to self-disclose the reason for enrollment. On the application form the applicant can check one or more types of victimization they feel warrant their need for participation in an address confidentiality program. Applicants can choose from domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other. Self-reporting is optional. It is not required for certification. Graph 4 shows self-reported victimization data from 2009 through 2018. Consistently, domestic violence was the number one reason for enrollment in Safe at Home—80% or more of applicants each year indicated this reason.

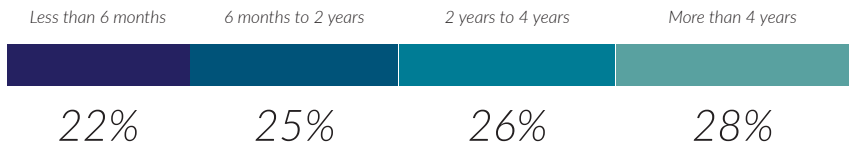
Graph 4 Self-reported Reason for Enrollment



Renewals, 2011-2018

Enrollment in Safe at Home is valid for up to four years. The participant may choose to withdraw at any time or, under certain circumstances, the participant’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. Most participants are enrolled for less than four years. Graph 5 shows the share of participants enrolled by length of time.

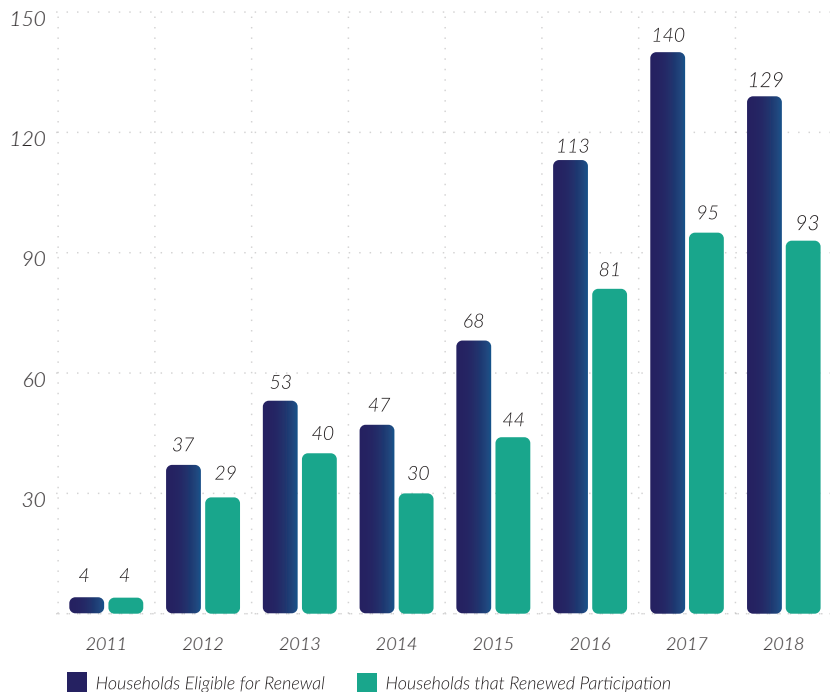
Graph 5 Length of Enrollment



December 2018

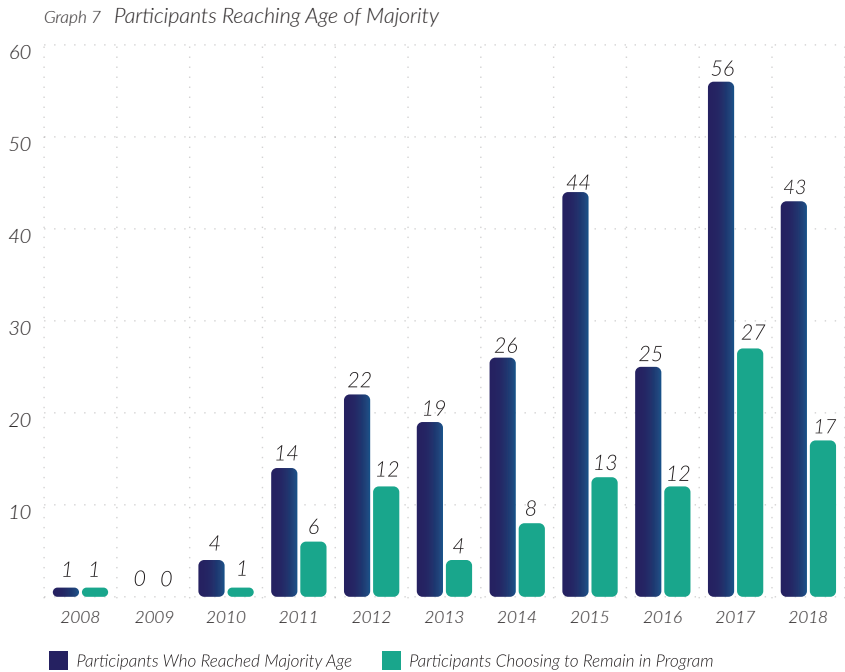
If a participant’s program participation is still active four years after certification, the participant is given the opportunity to renew their participation. The participant is sent a Renewal Application form that they complete and return to the Safe at Home office if they desire to remain in the program. The Renewal Application submitted indicates the names of all parties in the household who will continue their Safe at Home program participation. Graph 6 shows the number of households that, between September 2011 and December 2018, were eligible for renewal and the number that chose to renew their program participation. Consistently, more than 64% of households that are eligible to continue their program participation choose to do so. As Safe at Home continues to grow and as a third opportunity for renewal is approaching (beginning September 2019), a deeper analysis of renewal rates is needed in order to adequately project future growth rates and budget needs.

Graph 6 Household Renewals by Year



Children Who Become Adults, 2008-2018

When an active participant reaches majority age (18 years-old), they are required to formally indicate their desire to remain in Safe at Home. A form entitled Certification of Continuance is mailed to them. If the young adult continues to reside with the parent who enrolled them as a minor, the Safe at Home office must receive the completed form within 30 days of their 18th birthday in order to avoid cancellation. Graph 7 shows, by year, the number of participants who reached majority age and the number of those participants who chose to remain in the program as they entered adulthood.



If the young adult has moved out of their parent’s home and the young adult desires to maintain their program participation, they are required to meet with a Safe at Home Application Assistant to complete an initial program application and participate in individualized safety planning with the victim advocate. This requirement is in the best interest of the participant’s personal safety and is mandated per Minnesota Rules, part 8290.0600, subpart 3. During the past decade, this occurrence has been very rare. Most young adults who continue their program participation still reside with the parent who enrolled them. Therefore, they simply return the completed Certification of Continuance form to the Safe at Home office.

Consistently, less than half of young adults whose parent enrolled them as a small child choose to continue their program participation as they enter adulthood. However, during the past year the program has seen an increase in young adults who return and re-apply several months or years after their program participation has ended, re-establishing their program participation on their own as an adult. These

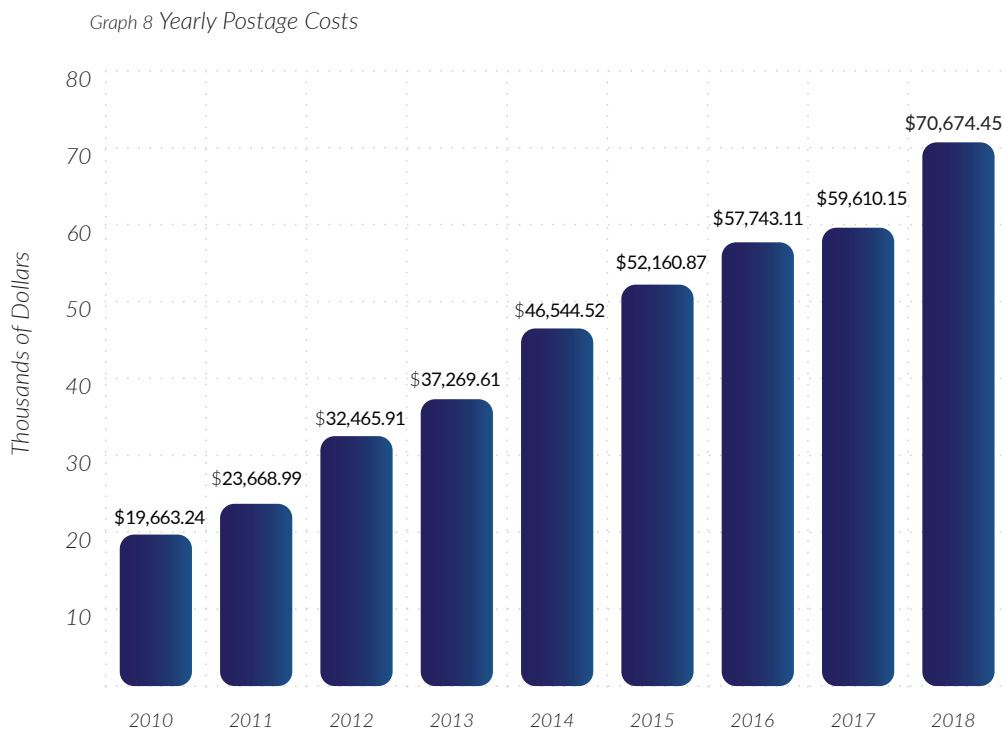
occurrences have just begun, but enough have happened to make it important enough to mention. There could be an emerging trend that needs monitoring or further investigation. As a whole, the needs, patterns, and trends of children who become adults while in Safe at Home requires more attention and analysis.

In addition to the possible emerging trend identified above, there is a definite pattern of behavior of young adults who choose to stay in Safe at Home when they become 18 years of age. For the most part, they appear to be disengaged and disinterested in the need to take effective safety measures. Initial conclusions are that they have a parent who took numerous safety steps for them for several years and the young adult either has no knowledge of those steps, does not fully understand the need for an effective safety plan, or they feel safety steps are unnecessary. Most young adults are non-communicative with the Safe at Home office and the parent that enrolled them as a child attempts to continue to be the main source of contact with the Safe at Home office about their affairs. The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act must continually be emphasized and explained. The ability to successfully and effectively reach this population must be evaluated and improved.

Mail and Postage Expense

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 program 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 office 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 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. In calendar year 2018, the office processed more than 250,000 pieces of mail for participants. This does not include absentee voting, enrollment materials, or office correspondence to participants. It only includes mail from third parties being sent to program participants. The amount of mail as well as postage expense continues to climb. In 2019, due to continued program growth and the largest United States Postal Service postage increase since 1991, Safe at Home will face the largest increase in postage expense in the history of the program. The chart below shows yearly postage costs.



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