

NJCASA 2021 BIENNIAL REPORT



DEAR SUPPORTERS,

The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is celebrating our 40th anniversary. Such milestones are often testaments to our endurance and commitment, but they also provide unique opportunities for change as we look ahead. A few of our greatest recent accomplishments include:

- Expanded state appropriations for sexual services from \$900,000 to over \$12 million
- Established standards for sexual assault response team (SART) services
- Expanded civil statute of limitations for sexual assault
- Informed and shaped a range of survivor-centered policies
- Developed standardized Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate (CSVA) Training
- Helped pass the Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act (SASPA)

And now, NJCASA is dedicated to planning a bigger, bolder future!

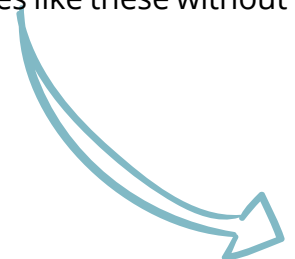
In April, we published [*Centering Survivors: The Report from NJCASA's Sexual Violence Needs Assessment*](#). This report underscores a need to do far more to support communities with historically higher rates of sexual violence, such as women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with disabilities. However, in order to build stronger, more equitable systems of care, we know we must first look within ourselves. This is why, over the past several months, we've been working with the Anti-Oppression and Resource Training Alliance (AORTA), an organizational leadership cooperative devoted to helping movements achieve stronger values and purpose.

As we delve into this important next phase of our work, we're excited to welcome our new Interim Executive Director, Dr. Renai Ellison. Renai earned an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership from Stockton University and Master and Bachelor of Arts from Rowan University. She began work in sexual assault services at SERV in Camden, N.J., and served as an NJCASA board member from 2017 - 2018. With a strong background in diversity, equity, and inclusion, Renai is passionate about strengthening NJCASA's anti-racist work. Her full bio is available [here](#).

Under Renai's leadership, NJCASA is expanding the team, continuing to advocate on behalf of survivors and those who serve them, and providing innovative leadership to build a better, stronger New Jersey. We hope you'll join us in welcoming her and that you'll continue supporting our work in the months and years ahead. Enclosed, you'll find our Biannual Report, which provides more details about our accomplishments over the last six months. We can't make strides like these without partners like you, so we're forever grateful for your continued commitment.

Here's to the next 40 years!

read on to learn more!



SUCCESSFUL BUDGET ADVOCACY

NJCASA has continued to advocate for robust funding on behalf of sexual violence service providers in every county, particularly in the aftermath of COVID-19, given that we anticipate a heightened need for support at this time. As a result, we are thrilled to share that the new state budget includes \$12.6M for survivor services in New Jersey (N.J.). This reappropriation of state monies signals that lawmakers in Trenton continue to prioritize funding for survivors and those who serve them. NJCASA looks forward to shoring up service infrastructure across the state and to exploring how we can share funding with culturally specific survivor service organizations.



The latter represents a continuation of a collaboration established earlier this year, as the state funding increase in 2020 afforded an opportunity to expand sexual-violence-specific funding to non-traditional recipients outside of the designated 21 county-based programs. This resulted in eight culturally specific service providers receiving funding through the new Victim Expansion Fund. They are Community Affairs and Resource Center, Harambe Social Services, Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey, Legal Services of New Jersey, Manavi, Mercy Center, Partners for Women and Justice, and Wafa House. In July, NJCASA released a report examining the impact of this funding and proposing recommendations for expanding these partnerships in ways that will increase and enhance services for survivors across the state.

SUCCESSFUL POLICY ADVOCACY

NJCASA has continued to advocate for strong survivor-centered policies to help end sexual violence and to provide comprehensive services to those impacted by it. On Monday, April 12, Governor Murphy signed seven key pieces of legislation into law, representing significant strides in addressing the needs of sexual violence survivors across the Garden State:

- [\(S3070\)](#) which establishes a three-year **“Sexual Violence Restorative Justice Pilot Program”** in North, Central, and South Jersey to bring survivors and their abusers together to seek collective healing solutions outside the judicial system.
- [\(S3071\)](#) which requires police departments to **provide a copy of the rape complaint** and a form the victim could submit that makes corrections or additions. A county prosecutor’s office staffer will be named to help victims complete the forms.
- [\(S3072\)](#) which **mandates that victims get an information packet explaining their rights**, the law, the court process, and available counseling services. They would also get a phone number to call for updates on their case.
- [\(S3073\)](#) which **requires county prosecutors to notify victims** whether charges will be filed.
- [\(S3074\)](#) which mandates the attorney general to **track sexual assault cases** and issue an annual report with statistics on how many complaints were filed, prosecuted, or led to plea agreements.
- [\(S3075\)](#) which obligates the State Police and local police departments to **train sexual violence liaison officers** to serve as the in-house experts and primary points of contact on sexual violence cases.



SUCCESSFUL POLICY ADVOCACY (CONT'D)

- [\(S3076\)](#) which requires county prosecutors and assistant prosecutors who handle sex crimes to undergo **periodic training** developed by experts in trauma-informed care and the NJCASA. This codifies a directive former state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal [announced](#) three years ago.

LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF CRISIS

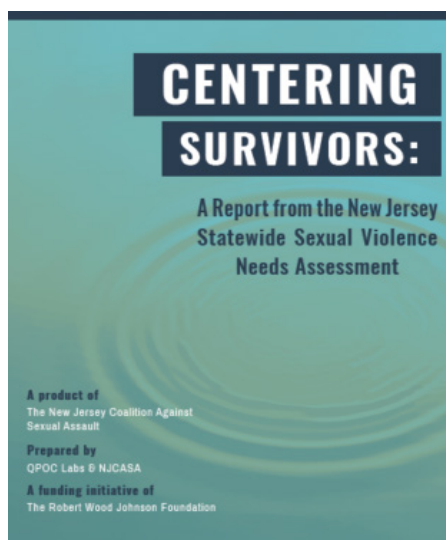
During periods of crisis, organizational leaders must be ready to adapt and expand services. This has been the case for NJCASA since the outset of COVID-19, and the last six months have been crucial to understanding the long-term impact of the pandemic on survivors and those who support them. During this time, we have continued a robust bilingual (Spanish/English) public awareness campaign, supported through a

generous New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund (NJPRF) grant. The PSA has been featured [online](#), as well as on television and radio, and it has allowed us to reach thousands of New Jerseyans, letting survivors of sexual violence know that support is available in every county, even during these challenging times.



We have also been closely tracking data on the impact of COVID-19 to see how this crisis has shaped service provision over the last year and how we can better address the unique needs of survivors now and in the months ahead. Sexual violence is a widely underreported crime, and early research indicates that lockdown conditions and other factors related to COVID-19 have led to decreases in reporting, coupled with increases in instances of sexual harassment and assault—creating what some have termed a “shadow pandemic.” Our goal is to reach as many survivors as possible in the aftermath of the pandemic, recognizing the serious need to address the compounded trauma that many have experienced. Additionally, we want to take lessons learned from this experience and establish more equitable, responsive practices that will serve us well into the future.

THE STATE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVOR SERVICES IN N.J.



In April, NJCASA published [Centering Survivors: The Report from NJCASA’s Sexual Violence Needs Assessment](#). Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), this report overviews results from NJCASA’s statewide Survivor Survey and Stakeholder Survey to better understand the lived experiences of survivors of sexual violence in N.J. In our systems advocacy, NJCASA seeks to improve the range of supportive measures available to survivors. Gaining valuable insights about the complex and diverse needs of survivors throughout the state is the critical piece of the puzzle needed both to respond to and prevent sexual violence. We are grateful to the hundreds of survivors who shared their experiences with us and made this report possible.

THE STATE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES IN N.J. (CONT'D)

NJCASA designed the needs assessment with the goal of identifying and filling gaps in knowledge regarding the range of needs of survivors, with the understanding that these are often impacted by the fundamental causes of inequality, such as oppression and discrimination. We conducted the needs assessment survey and data analysis in partnership with QPOC Labs, LLC, a small consulting firm with the mission of utilizing data-driven evaluation, community engagement, and strategic dissemination of findings to advance social justice. We are looking forward to using these findings as we seek to improve systems of care in the months and years ahead.

MAKING SERVICES MORE INCLUSIVE

Creating Accessible Sexual Violence Programs



Improving access to care is one of NJCASA's top priorities. This is why we have created a series of webinars forming a tool kit for providers to enhance the accessibility of sexual violence services. This webinar series is one of the resources available to NJCASA's membership programs as they build robust and responsive sexual violence service programs. In this series, sexual violence program staff will find a framework for understanding accessibility

through multiple lenses, as well as strategies to recruit advocates from diverse communities. There are several ways we can think about accessibility, from the physical accessibility of our programs and services, to the ability to communicate meaningfully with survivors, to ensuring they feel our services are culturally relevant to them. As we expand this project, we will continue to look at and define accessibility through a number of different lenses, including language and cultural accessibility, and physical & cognitive dis/ability.

As part of this commitment to creating more inclusive services, we are also in the process of planning a three-day virtual conference entitled ***Centering the Margins: Conversations About New Jersey's First-Ever Sexual Violence Needs Assessment***, which will be held on December 8th - 10th. This event is supported by RWJF and will feature panels on a wide variety of topics related to diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. We hope you will join us as we bring together subject-area experts to explore how we can create more equitable, empowering systems of care and support for sexual violence survivors from marginalized communities throughout N.J. and beyond.



NEXT STEPS

As we look to closeout our anniversary year, NJCASA will continue working with stakeholder to glean insights about the needs of our communities and to shape services that are more responsive to them. In August, we will be sharing a stakeholder survey, understanding that strengthening NJCASA's commitment to social justice is our top priority and that we can and must do better. We are presently also growing our team, as well as looking to grow our board. Being a member of NJCASA's Board of Trustees is a unique opportunity to shape the future of our organization, as we continue to identify ways of enhancing and increasing impact. If interested in serving on NJCASA's Board, we welcome you to reach out to Dr. Renai Ellison. Her email is rellison@njcasa.org.