

Supporting Survivors through Access to Programs

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence is the state's coalition of nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs whose work is to create communities free of sexual violence by providing culturally affirming, trauma-informed advocacy, prevention, and intervention services through victim assistance, community education, and public policy advocacy. The Alliance's member centers share coverage of all towns and cities in the state, creating a rich network of services for victims and survivors of sexual violence and their support networks.

The Alliance and its sexual assault crisis services centers have provided free and confidential services to child, adolescent, and adult victims and survivors of sexual violence throughout Connecticut since 1982. The coalition actively seeks and administers funds to develop and support its member centers by providing skills and information to support survivors of sexual violence. The Alliance also actively works with state and national multidisciplinary partners to improve the response to victims of sexual violence and their supporters.

The 2019 Census Report states that Connecticut's population is 16.5% Latino and 12% African American. Nearly a quarter (22%) of residents report speaking a language other than English at home, and 282,000 residents speak English "less than very well." Additionally, the Census Bureau estimates that 7% of Connecticut residents under the age of 65 live with a disability, while the 2017 American Community Survey estimates 11% of Connecticut residents are living with a disability, including 5% of residents who report a cognitive disability, 3% who report a hearing disability, and 5% who report an independent living disability^[1].

Services offered

The Alliance is a multi-faceted organization that provides technical assistance to its nine-member centers and speaks on a statewide platform to provide our services to survivors of sexual violence.

The Alliance has a strong program team that works with the member centers on program and policy issues training, technical assistance, and ways to prevent, educate and respond to sexual violence. The areas of concentration include Latinx outreach, justice-involved advocacy, K-12 and college advocacy, data management, Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, communications, and policy.

The Alliance employs 14 specialized Post-Conviction Victim Services (PCVS) advocates who provide direct services to victims of sexual assault whose offenders are on the State of Connecticut specialized sex offender probation and parole supervision and management units throughout the state.

The Alliance has a legal services team, the Victim Rights Center of Connecticut (VRCCT), which includes five attorneys and a paralegal who all specialize in representing sexual assault victims through the criminal legal process.

The need to be addressed

There is a lack of state population-level data on the prevalence and incidence of sexual violence. However, the CDC estimates are that one in four women and one in six men will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime and that nearly 19% of Connecticut residents have experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes^[2]. In Connecticut, 14% of residents report that they have personally experienced childhood sexual assault. Nearly one in five girls and one in fourteen boys has been a victim of sexual abuse in our state and one in every seven of those victims was under the age of six. 44% of victims of rape are under 18 years old. ^[3] In most cases, these children know their abuser and they and their family have been groomed by the person who does the harm, leaving a lasting effect on the victim and their family.

Many victims and survivors of sexual violence do not report to the police and many offenders of sexual assault never enter into the criminal legal system, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report (2017). This highlights two overarching issues, one, that many victims and survivors do not trust or aware of the systems that are available to them, and two, victims and survivors may not want to participate in the criminal justice systems available to them, as many offenders are people that they know. Additionally, having been both physically and emotionally harmed, victims may believe that they are responsible for what happened to them or worry that others may not believe them.

What we are looking for

Understanding and communicating the amount and impact of sexual violence in our society is difficult. Many people do not want to talk about it, others only know outdated myths about sexual violence, and some are apathetic to the impacts it has on survivors. How do we open the conversation while ensuring victims and survivors feel safe?

We want victims and survivors to know that we believe them and that a network of advocates and crisis counselors across the state can provide advocacy, services, and information to support them. The significance of trauma from sexual violence cannot be minimized and presents in how survivors react to messaging. We want all citizens in Connecticut to know that there are programs available to support survivors and many community-based efforts to prevent sexual violence. What we envision is an overarching campaign that brings this home to survivors and victims as well as raises awareness among policymakers and the public.

As the state's anti-sexual violence coalition, The Alliance is responsible for not only centering the voices of survivors but also creating opportunities for meaningful collaborations that promote social change. The organization's external communications will highlight and increase awareness of sexual assault services in Connecticut, with an emphasis on reaching underserved communities. We are committed to reaching communities that have not felt secure with the criminal justice system and may feel we are an extension of that system.

Project Goals and Objectives:

1. Support and enhance external communications with the public to increase awareness of sexual assault crisis services in Connecticut especially within underserved communities who are impacted by sexual violence with a focus on survivors of color, adolescents and Spanish speaking survivors
 - 1.1. Create and implement a statewide advertising and outreach campaign about available services, especially to the underserved, vulnerable groups who are not aware of The Alliance and our member center services
 - 1.1.1. Use the platform to educate the public about issues such as grooming, bystander intervention and consent.

- 1.2. Assist with earned media opportunities through outreach to media outlets and social media.
2. Assist with the rollout of text and chat platforms to begin in late Summer 2021
 - 2.1. Connect with survivors who may not be comfortable or able to reach out through our telephone hotlines for support
 - 2.2. Research and identify best ways to reach targeted populations
 - 2.3. Build broad-based media campaign

Responsibilities of the Parties

1. The contractor will work with staff of The Alliance and its membership to support the creation of the campaign
2. The Alliance will assist with outreach to its member centers and staff to engage the contractor with research
3. The campaign will be measured by analyzing the reach and increases to requests for services by population, using the matrices available through the media consultant (i.e., social media analytics, web page views, reach of print or broadcast materials)

Terms and Conditions:

Proposal and Award Notification Timeline:

- o RPF release date: March 18, 2021
- o Submit questions to The Alliance on or before April 2, 2021
- o Proposals due: April 9, 2021
- o Proposal award date: April 16, 2021

Format for Proposals

- o All proposals must include the following:
 - § How metrics for the campaign will be determined
 - § A working timeline of all project activities and deliverables
 - § In addition to the project narrative, please submit the following with your proposal:
 - A budget listing all expenses to be paid up to \$25,000

Questions regarding the proposal and project narrative and budget should be submitted to Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations, by email at lucy@endsexualviolencect.org with the subject line "Supporting Survivors through Access to Programs" Project narratives should not exceed 8 pages. Project budgets and other supporting documents are not included in the 8-page limit.

[1] Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2019.) 2017 Disability Status Report: Connecticut. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI).

[2] Smith, S. G., Chen, J., Basile, K. C., Gilbert, L. K., Merrick, M. T., Patel, N., ... Jain, A. (2017). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 state report.

[3] CT State Department of Education, <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Publications/Statewide-K12--Sexual-Assault-Abuse--Prevention-Awareness--Program-Guidelines/Section-1-Overview-of-Sexual-Violence>