

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence 2022 Legislative Priorities: Victim-Centered & Trauma-Informed

Ensure Funding for Victims of Crimes

A temporary but significant 35% cut in available federal funds for state's Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants means at least 52,504 victims stand to lose access to critical support from Connecticut's victim services organizations over the next two years (2022-2024) if additional support isn't provided. Partnering with victim advocacy groups, we are requesting \$12,296,962 million in one-time funding to be allocated to Connecticut's Office of Victim Services (OVS) for distribution to victim services provider agencies assisting victims of violent crime.

Over the last year and a half, we have witnessed the unique impact the pandemic has had. Reports of child sexual violence to our member centers increased 12%. From increased violence to strained access to social services, our organizations have been stepping up to conduct intensive case management for survivors and their families with complex needs.

When victims do not receive the support they need, especially as children, the long-term effects of trauma manifest in several ways, including chronic physical and mental health issues, depression, suicide, substance use disorders, and difficulty maintaining employment. These issues, when not addressed, can have a greater economic burden on the state.

Codify the Definition of Consent for Sexual Assault Crimes

Connecticut law does not currently define consent in regards to sexual activity. Consent is always a critical factor in determining whether or not sexual assault is a crime. Connecticut law currently looks to a “reasonable person” standard, whether the defendant reasonably believed there was consent. A common reaction by victims of sexual assault is for the victim to “freeze” which has been construed as consent. By codifying the definition of consent both parties have the same expectations, which hopefully, leads to an enjoyable consensual experience.

“Consent” means: the unambiguous, informed and the voluntary manifestation of an agreement freely given by each individual who actively agrees to engage in a sexual act without the use of force, fraud, or coercion and may be taken away at any time by anyone for any reason. The absence of “no” for any individual does not assume consent. Consensually participating in a sexual act at a prior time does not assume consent to participate in a sexual act at another time.

Cases in which victims were left without recourse due to the lack of a definition for consent include stealing (understood that use of prophylactics would be used but removed during the act); rape by fraud/ misrepresentation (one person impersonating another or misrepresenting their identity in order to have sex with someone); the trauma response “tonic immobility” seen as consent; and certain power dynamics that are not currently codified.

Bar Unauthorized Pelvic and Prostate Exams for Patients Under Deep Anesthesia

Prevent unnecessary pelvic and prostate medical exams of patients under deep anesthesia for teaching purposes without the express and informed consent of the patient.

For more information contact Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations: 860-282-9881; lucy@endsexualviolencect.org; www.endsexualviolencect.org

Eliminate the Civil Statute of Limitations for Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation, or Sexual Assault

Connecticut's current civil statute of limitations effectively tolls 30 years from the child sexual abuse victim's 18th birthday. In 2019 the law was extended to 30 years from a victim's 21st birthday and only affects those whose child abuse occurs on or after 10/1/2019. Survivors, whose average age of disclosure for sexual assault crimes is 52, want the civil statute of limitations for sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or sexual assault eliminated and retroactive.

People who groom and sexually abuse children are masters of manipulation and often make their victims believe they are at fault, creating feelings of worthlessness and shame. The victim's life is permanently altered, and as children, they grow into adults who continue to suffer in silence or are shocked by specific memories when they bubble up. At that point, for many, their lives come into focus as they finally understand the cause of their ongoing depression, physical ailments, substance abuse, or self-harm behaviors.

As seen in other states, eliminating the civil statute of limitations identifies hidden child predators and the institutions that endanger children, shifts the cost of abuse from the victims and taxpayers to those who caused it, and educates the public about how pervasive the risk is to kids. All Connecticut residents are owed that duty of care.

Survivors should not have to pay, emotionally and financially, for the abuse that was perpetrated against them while those who caused the harm continue to evade responsibility.

Support Child Victims of Sexual Abuse

Monitor and support legislation that protects children from sexual violence including the response to and prevention of sexual abuse.

Uphold Reproductive Rights, Seek Reproductive Justice and Maintain Access to Services Support collaborative efforts to uphold and maintain access to safe and legal reproductive healthcare and reproductive justice in our state in partnership with the Connecticut Coalition for Choice.

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence is a statewide coalition of nine community-based sexual assault crisis service centers whose mission is to create communities free of sexual violence and to provide culturally affirming, trauma-informed advocacy, prevention, and intervention services centered on the voices of survivors.

