



# CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Support. Advocate. Prevent.

## 2024 POLICY PRIORITIES

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (The Alliance) works to prevent and eliminate sexual violence in our state through education, legislation, advocacy, trauma-informed care, and a state-wide network of support for victims and survivors. We believe that sexual violence is a preventable public health epidemic, we believe that we can make things better, and we know that we are stronger when we work together. During this legislative session, The Alliance will work collaboratively with victim services communities to find a solution to dwindling federal VOCA funds that largely support victim services in Connecticut, as well as focus on the following policy priorities to ensure that survivors have access to justice, healing and support.

### INCREASE THE RIGHTS OF VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

**The Alliance seeks to add protections in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit transactions for victims of sexual violence.** Survivors deserve protection from discrimination in the aftermath of sexual violence and extending protections will support survivors seeking justice, healing, and wellbeing.

**The Alliance wants to broaden the coverage in CT FMLA and/or “Safe Leave” and CT PFMLA to include victims of sexual violence in eligibility criteria.** Victims experience trauma and disruption to all facets of their lives. Allowing victims of sexual violence to take up to 12 days off per calendar year for certain issues related to the violence including the need to seek medical care or attend criminal justice proceedings will support survivors’ long-term wellbeing.

*Currently only victims of domestic violence or family violence have access to these rights.*

### IMPROVE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE TO VICTIMS

**The Alliance supports a broad range of policy and practice updates to increase victim participation in the criminal justice process, to increase the efficacy of sex crime investigations and prosecutions, and to hold those who cause harm accountable for their actions.** While sexual violence is incredibly prevalent, most victims of sexual violence do not report sexual assault crimes for fear of not being believed, being retaliated against or the belief that they will not get good outcomes through the criminal justice system. Increasing access to comprehensive education, model policy, and collaboration between the criminal justice system and community-based resources will increase survivors’ access to justice and healing.



The Alliance supports a broad-range of policies related to improving the response, investigation, and outcomes in sexual assault cases including:

- Requiring the creation of a **model sexual assault response policy**
- Requiring law enforcement to **provide victims with written information about services** available to victims of sexual violence
- **Protecting victims from retaliation in the form of defamation suits** when reporting sexual assault, abuse or misconduct

The Alliance also supports an array of language changes that better reflect the experiences of victims and support holding those who perpetrate harm accountable:

**The Alliance supports legislation which would add “continuous course of conduct” in the definition of “sexual intercourse” and “sexual contact.”** Including this language would allow those who cause harm to be held accountable for the entirety of their actions even in cases when a victim cannot orient to date, time, location, etc. for every assault. This is especially critical in child sexual abuse cases. See also CT State Supreme Court ruled in *State v. Douglas C.* and *State v. Joseph V.*

**The Alliance supports amending Sexual Assault in the Second Degree and Third Degree to codify a definition of “force” that includes non-physical compulsion.** Research has well documented that the perpetration of sexual violence very often includes threats, coercion, and other forms of non-physical force; however, our legislation has not been updated to reflect that nuance. Currently these statutes only reference the use of physical force or the threat of the use of physical force. The use or the threat of non-physical action against an individual has been added to further protect victims of sexual assault. The proposed legislation recognizes that there are non-physical threats against an individual (e.g. damage to personal property or real property; exposure of personal information that would subject the person to ridicule, hatred or contempt) that might compel a person to submit to unwanted sexual contact.

**The Alliance supports changing “child pornography” to “child sexual abuse material.”** Pornography does not describe the non-consensual nature and true impacts of this type of abuse, and many victims share that they experience the current terminology as another victimization.

2.15.24

