



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

## Survivors at the Center of Sexual Assault Awareness Month

As April begins, and we gear up for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we cannot help but reflect on the past year. Last April, rape crisis centers were quickly transitioning to virtual services while trying to meet the emergency needs of survivors and keep staff safe; while in person fundraisers and awareness events were being canceled in droves; and we were all reeling from the physical and social and emotional impact of the pandemic. At the same time, we continued wrestling as a nation with the dual pandemic of systemic racism. And then, in the fall, we voted in a historic presidential election with far-reaching consequences. As we continue to figure out the way forward together, with hope on the horizon, we know some things are consistent:

- Survivors are always at the center of our work.
- We believe prevention is possible.
- Policies you need to meet the needs of survivors and prevent sexual violence will be our priority.

According to [our most recent survey](#), 62% of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services and 35% lack a full-time therapist on staff. We spent last year advocating for relief funding for rape crisis centers to transition to virtual services and meet the needs of survivors, and we were thrilled the American Rescue Plan included [\\$198 million for rape crisis centers](#).

Solving the [Victims of Crime Act \(VOCA\)](#) funding emergency also is an absolute imperative. We are advocating together to ask the Senate to follow the House and pass S. 611, the VOCA Fix Act, during Sexual Assault Awareness Month to help reverse local program cuts.

At the same time, we're actively working on reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and want to see the Senate take action on the [House-passed H.R. 1620](#). Additionally, we're asking appropriators to increase funding in FY 2022 for key VAWA programs like the [Sexual Assault Services Program \(SASP\)](#) and [Rape Prevention & Education Program \(RPE\)](#).

Working with the new White House Gender Policy Council and Rosie Hidalgo, Senior Advisor on Gender-Based Violence and Special Assistant to the President, we are optimistic about strong administrative action to end sexual violence. We look forward to swift action to strengthen the response to sexual violence in schools through a new Title IX rule and applaud the serious

commitment at the Department of Defense to addressing sexual violence. State coalitions, local program, and over 30 members of Congress are calling on Health and Human Services Secretary Becerra to appoint a [Special Advisor on Sexual Violence](#) because we know that the needs of survivors span every aspect of our social services infrastructure and go far beyond the justice system.

As advocates organize across the country to meet survivors where they are and ensure their needs are met; draw the connections between oppression and sexual violence; pass strong state law for survivors; educate around high-profile cases of sexual violence; and reach young people and communities with prevention messages -- know that we are with you.

The road is long and winding, with plenty of curves along the way, but with our collective passion, caring, and wisdom, we WILL end sexual violence--together.

We wish you a powerful, inspirational, transformational Sexual Assault Awareness Month.



Monika Johnson Hostler, President



Terri Poore, Policy Director