

March 20, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Carlie Fischer, and I work for the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA). I am the primary MECASA contact for matters related to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, and in my role, I convene the Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network. However, I am speaking to you today in my capacity as Co-Chair of the committee established pursuant to the 131st Legislature's LD 1092, a Resolve to Establish an Ad Hoc Committee to Address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). In close partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Child and Family Services, I convened a group of CSEC survivors, anti-trafficking providers, systems partners, and community members with specific expertise to write a report with recommendations for CSEC prevention and intervention. I am deeply dedicated to anti-trafficking efforts in this state, and I would like to express my strong support of LD 117, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services. Thank you to Senator Duson for sponsoring this legislation.

While many others will speak to the broad importance of this bill in strengthening support for sexual assault survivors, I want to highlight one key component: funding for a CSEC Coordinator. 'CSEC' is an umbrella term that refers to a range of experiences wherein a person profits off the sexual abuse of a minor, with child sex trafficking being a notable example.

Like many states, Maine is working to improve its response to CSEC. Survivors often have complex needs that require a coordinated approach across child welfare, law enforcement, healthcare, education, and community-based services. Many states successfully utilize a case management model where dedicated CSEC Coordinators help streamline this process, ensuring that professionals across different systems work together, that survivors and their families understand what resources are available, and that service providers have the training and guidance necessary to offer the best possible support. Without these critical positions, responses can be inconsistent, and families may struggle to navigate the various systems meant to help them.

We know the case management model is effective, yet Maine only has *one* CSEC Coordinator tasked with serving the entire state. She is wonderful and has positively impacted many survivors and families, and yet it is unrealistic to expect one position to manage the level of need that Maine is currently facing. This lack of investment means there are major barriers to access, particularly for Mainers living outside of Cumberland County.

This bill would add a second CSEC Coordinator who could lighten the load, double the impact, and expand rural outreach. It is a practical, proactive, and cost-effective step towards strengthening Maine's ability to provide consistent, trauma-informed care. In addition to benefiting the young people directly affected by CSEC, this position would help improve collaboration among agencies, reduce inefficiencies, and create safer, more responsive communities.

I urge you to support this bill—not only for the critical support it provides for sexual assault advocates but also for the lasting impact it will have on improving Maine's response to CSEC. Thank you for your time. I would be pleased to try to answer any questions you may have.

About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.¹ Each year, 19,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.²

Maine's [sexual violence service providers](#) provide free and confidential services across the state to victims/survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault and those close to them, as well as to individuals who wish to increase their understanding of the issues. Just some of the services include a 24-hour statewide sexual assault helpline, crisis intervention and information, support groups, in-person accompaniment and advocacy through the medical and legal systems, and school- and community-based prevention education. Services are provided for a victim/survivor regardless of when they experienced sexual violence, and regardless of what type of sexual violence they experienced. Types of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment and gender-based bullying, child sexual abuse, elder sexual abuse, stalking, sex trafficking, and sexual violence within an intimate partner relationship.

24/7 Confidential

Maine Sexual Assault Helpline: [1-800-871-7741](tel:1-800-871-7741)

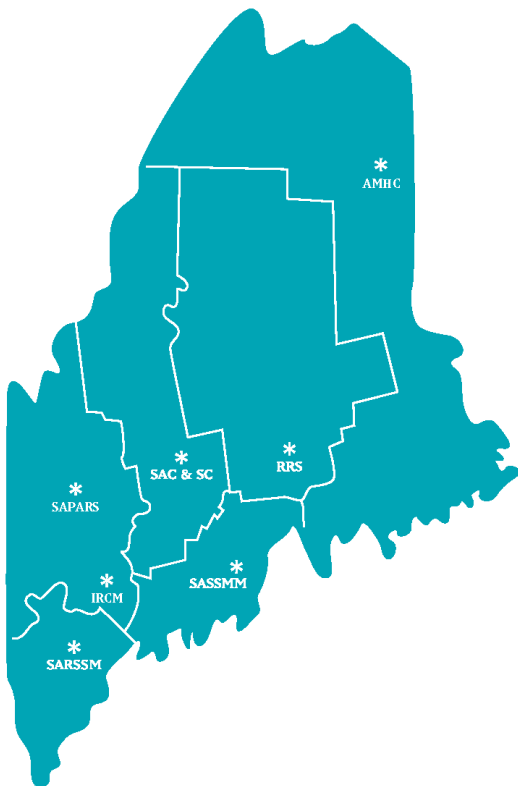
¹ Murray, C., Dumont, R & Shaler, G. (2022). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Maine Statistical Analysis Center. University of Southern Maine.

² *Ibid.*

mecasa

MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT

info@mecasa.org | mecasa.org
207-626-0034



STATEWIDE
SEXUAL ASSAULT HELPLINE
1-800-871-7741

Free. Private. 24/7.

MAINE'S SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTERS

AMHC Sexual Assault Services (AMHC)

Serving Aroostook, Hancock, & Washington Counties •
amhcsas.org

Immigrant Resource Center of Maine

Serving Androscoggin & Cumberland Counties • ircofmaine.org

Rape Response Services (RRS)

Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties • rrsonline.org

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services (SAPARS)

Serving Androscoggin, Oxford & Franklin Counties and the towns of
Bridgton & Harrison • sapars.org

Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center (SAC & SC)

Serving Kennebec & Somerset Counties • silentnomore.org

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM)

Serving Cumberland & York Counties • sarssm.org

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM)

Serving Eastern Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln
Counties • sassmm.org

MORE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES

Maine TransNet • mainetrans.net • info@mainetransnet.org

Wabanaki Women's Coalition • wabanakiwomenscoalition.org
207-763-3478

Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-551-3639

Houlton Band of Maliseets, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-532-6401

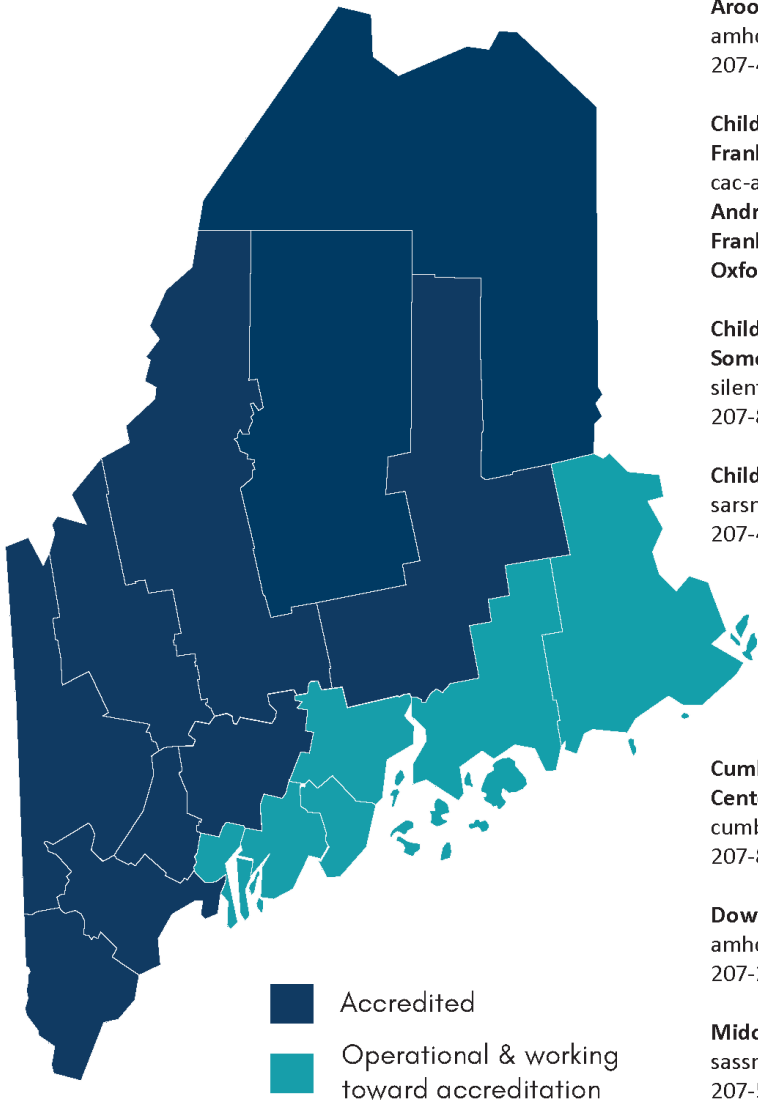
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

Penobscot Indian Nation, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-631-4886



Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



Aroostook County Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-472-6134

Children's Advocacy Center of Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties
cac-afco.org
Androscoggin: 207-784-0436
Franklin: 207-778-9777
Oxford: 207-739-1228

Children's Advocacy Center of Kennebec & Somerset Counties
silentnomore.org/about-our-cac
207-861-4491

Children's Advocacy Center of York County
sarsmm.org
207-459-2380

Cumberland County Children's Advocacy Center
cumberlandcountycac.org
207-879-6160

Downeast Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-255-3687

Midcoast Children's Advocacy Center
sassmm.org
207-522-7162

Penquis Children's Advocacy Center
penquiscac.org
207-974-2469