

# **mecasa**

## **MAINE COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT**

April 21, 2023

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

My name is Melissa Martin and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the organization which represents and serves Maine's sexual violence prevention and response programs as well as Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers. MECASA initiates and advocates for victim-centered public policy; provides expert training, technical assistance, and resources for providers and partners; and funds the service providers in your communities.

MECASA is here today in support of LD 1360, as amended, An Act Requiring Training Regarding and Screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences. Thank you to Representative Gramlich, Senator Brenner, Speaker Talbot Ross, and Representatives Dhalac, Gattine, Graham, Madigan, Sachs, and Stover.

We believe that ACES assessment is an important, evidence-based self-assessment tool to allow adults to be better informed about their health and options. We are here today because the ACES questionnaire specifically asks about experiences of sexual violence in childhood. We have worked with the bill sponsor and other stakeholders to help craft the amendment you have before you. For a variety of reasons, we support the amendment as drafted.

In general, we support survivors of sexual violence being empowered to disclose sexual violence when they are ready, in the way they are ready. This is why we support the amendment, which allows survivors to self-score their own ACES and resiliency scores. This allows a survivor to disclose their ACES score without disclosing specifically whether they have experienced sexual violence as a child.

We also specifically support this project as a pilot project with the support of a social worker and with data collection and training. We believe training is vital for any healthcare workers who may be dealing with survivors disclosing childhood sexual violence. We believe that ACES could be an empowering tool, but we also understand that there is the potential of re-traumatization when survivor's revisit their childhood trauma. Therefore, we think it would be helpful to survey patients

and providers to see what is working well and what can be improved on before scaling the project more broadly.

Finally, we believe strongly that ACES questionnaires should be administered only to adults, especially at the pilot project stage. When a minor discloses sexual violence, there is likely to be a mandated report to the Department of Health and Human Services. Although that might be a good thing in many cases, we also risk putting teen survivors in the position of choosing between disclosing sexual violence or feeling they cannot accurately complete a medical screening. If they do disclose and the abuse is reported, especially for older teens, that may negatively impact their trust of medical and other systems into their adulthood.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 1360 and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

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### About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.<sup>2</sup>

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*

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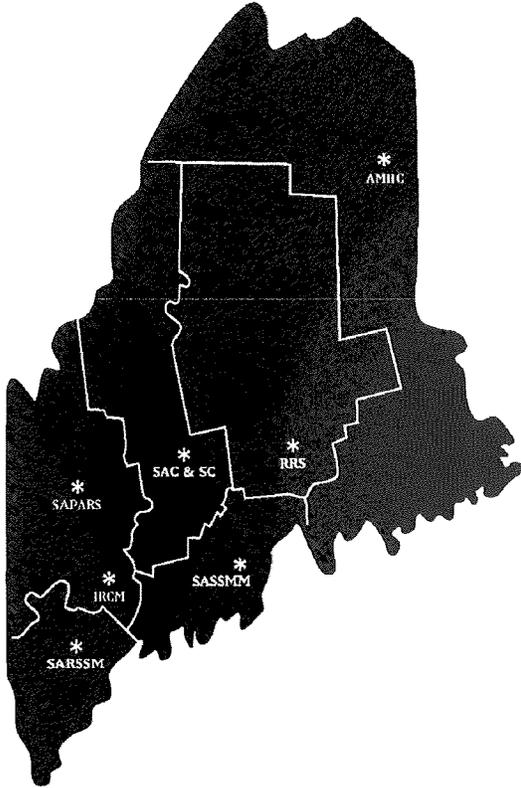
<sup>1</sup> Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

<sup>2</sup> *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 •  
amhsexualassaultservices.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 • sarsonline.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

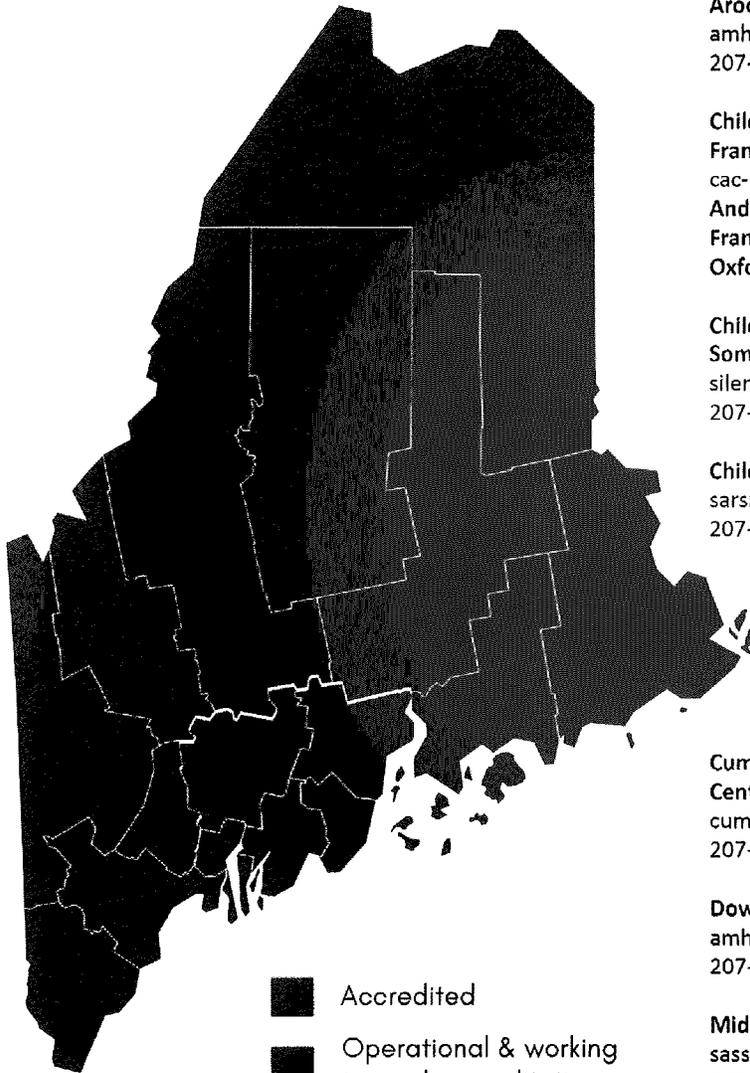
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual  
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

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