

# **mecasa**

**MAINE COALITION AGAINST  
SEXUAL ASSAULT**

January 9, 2024

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Lisa Råvar, and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the organization that 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 254 An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum. Thank you to Senator Daughtry for sponsoring this bill.

Sexuality education and sexual violence prevention go hand in hand. MECASA has long supported the work of sexuality education in Maine, including helping plan the annual statewide comprehensive sexuality education conference and co-presenting with sex ed partners on topics to audiences from both disciplines. We are grateful for the work our partners do in advancing the health and well-being of young Mainers.

Comprehensive sexuality education is the foundation in preventing sexual violence. It is impossible to talk about safer sex practices without discussing how to make sure one's partner wants those sexual activities to begin with. And young people who know and feel both safe and comfortable using correct terms for their body parts are less likely to experience sexual violence and more likely to seek help if they do.

Consent education is not only a pillar in sexual relationships; it is necessary for safer and more respectful communities as a whole. Young people who have the skills to ask permission before doing something and who value respecting people's boundaries develop lifelong skills that will serve them in all their interactions - whether that's asking for what they need in a doctor's office or navigating a personal conflict.

Comprehensive sexuality education curricula ensures young people do not have to rely on less reliable or appropriate sources of information. Young people are hearing what is expected of them in regard to sex and sexuality from lots of directions - any time they log onto social media, turn on the TV, or chat with peers. We have an opportunity here to ensure they learn the messages that we would hope for – about respect, autonomy, and health.

With LD 254 we are supporting Maine’s young people in getting access to accurate information and the skills to engage in safe and respectful ways with one another.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 254 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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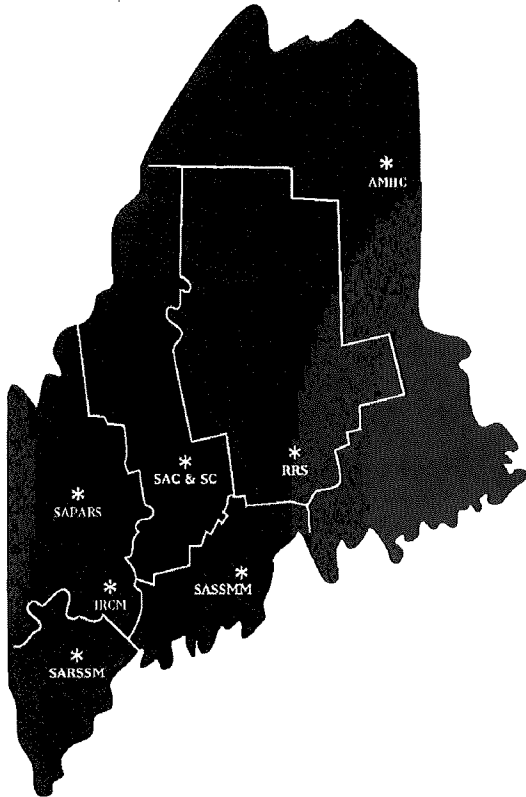
<sup>1</sup> Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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**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 •  
amhcsexualassaultservices.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

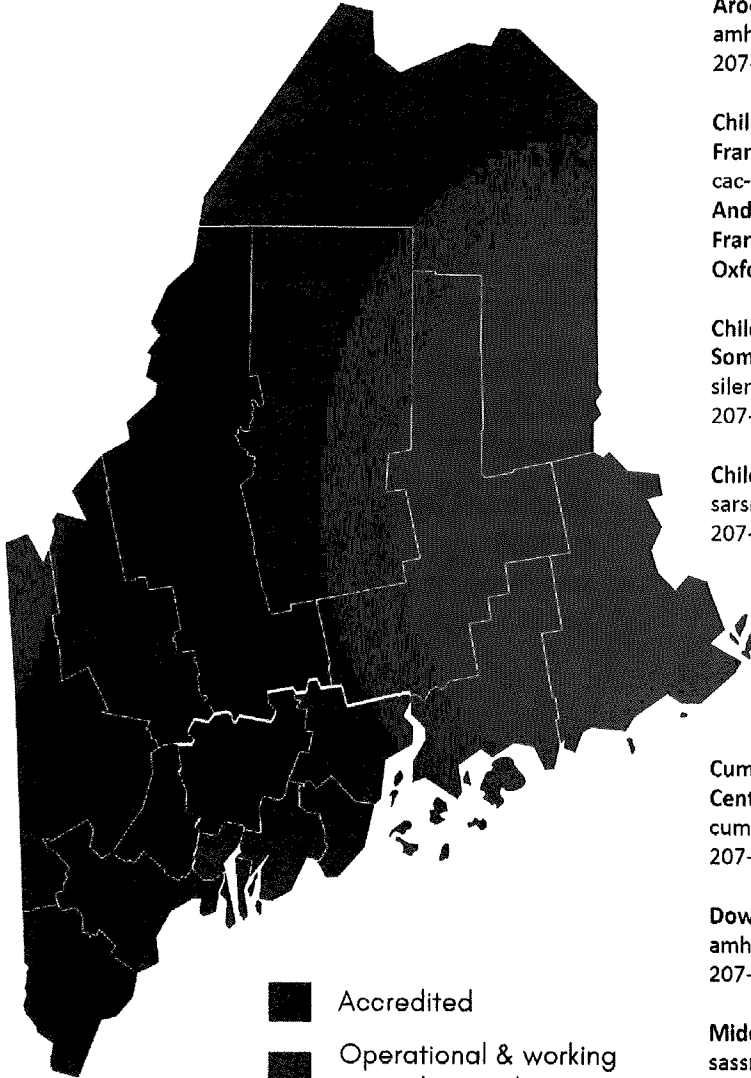
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual  
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

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



# Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



- Accredited
- Operational & working toward accreditation

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

**Children's Advocacy Center of Androscoggin,  
Franklin, and Oxford Counties**  
cac-af0.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**  
sarshm.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**  
sasmm.org  
207-522-7162

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