

SAAM

ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

CALCASA

**CALIFORNIA COALITION
AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT**

ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

All advocates know that sexual violence is connected to other social justice struggles. Now more than ever it is important that strategies to prevent sexual violence, and other forms of violence, are rooted in an understanding of the larger structures of systemic oppressions that shape our society.

Systems of oppression give greater social power to some people over others based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other aspects of identity. Working towards a future without sexual violence means that advocates, survivors, and communities need to respond to a complex and layered reality that centers the needs of those survivors most marginalized, silenced, and unseen.

This toolkit will provide graphics, talking points and background resources on the connection between sexual violence and intersecting issues of LGBTQ equality, racial justice, economic justice, transformative justice, health and wellness, reproductive rights, and immigrant justice. The toolkit seeks to inspire advocacy that is grounded in community needs and comprehensive approaches.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
5	LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR
6	LGBTQ EQUALITY
8	RACIAL JUSTICE
10	ECONOMIC JUSTICE
12	TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE
14	HEALTH & WELLNESS
16	REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
18	IMMIGRANT JUSTICE
20	DOWNLOADS

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Members:

Over the past year, sexual assault has received national attention and public awareness, and the nature of our work is changing along with the social and political climate. As we enter Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), we have the opportunity to continue to elevate our movement, educate stakeholders, and create positive change. CALCASA is honored to support the 84 rape crisis center and rape prevention programs that serve all of California, provide survivors with a place to turn in their time of need, and take action to prevent sexual violence.

This year, CALCASA emphasizes the idea of collaboration and reciprocal advancement through [Ending Sexual Violence: An Intersectional Approach](#). This theme calls on the strengths that the anti-violence movement can find through intersectional approaches and intentional practices. Our charge for SAAM was to inspire advocacy that is grounded in community needs and comprehensive approaches.

This year's toolkit takes a look into different movements including: LGBTQ equality, racial justice, economic justice, transformative justice, health and wellness, reproductive rights, and immigrant justice . While the toolkit addresses critical issue areas, it is not exhaustive. It is designed to inspire initiatives and opportunities for transformative change. These new opportunities can help strengthen and grow support for survivors and our communities while we brace for rapid change in times of uncertainty.

We look forward to promoting all of the innovative work of CALCASA members and providing assistance in messaging and coordination. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



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LGBTQ EQUALITY

Norms that support gender inequities, hyper-masculinity, an adherence to traditional gender roles, and a general acceptance of violence do not only perpetuate sexual violence but also breed homophobia and transphobia. By making these connections and intentionally working to advance both LGBTQ rights and end sexual violence, advocacy can create equitable and safe communities for all gender identities and sexual orientations.

How does the movement to end oppression against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities connect to the movement to end sexual violence?

Norms that support gender inequities, hyper-masculinity, an adherence to traditional gender roles, and a general acceptance of violence do not only perpetuate sexual violence but also breed homophobia and transphobia. By making these connections and intentionally working to advance both LGBTQ rights and end sexual violence, advocacy can create equitable and safe communities for all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Sexual violence impacts all communities – including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals. In fact, some forms of sexual violence impact LGBTQ communities at greater rates compared to cisgender heterosexual men and women. Transgender people in particular face some of the highest rates of sexual violence, especially transgender women of color.

In addition to experiencing high rates of sexual violence, LGBTQ communities face a lack of family acceptance and systemic homophobic, transphobic, and biphobic discrimination in laws, policies, employment, public services, and education. This systemic and interpersonal discrimination starts at a young age and can increase the risk of LGBTQ youth experiencing depression, substance abuse, and engaging in risky sexual behaviors. LGBTQ youth also experience elevated rates of physical assault at school, homelessness and disproportionate rates of interaction with

the juvenile justice system. Compounding these experiences is the fact that LGBTQ people are also members of other communities and experience oppression and discrimination at these intersections. This increases the marginalization of LGBTQ people thus increasing the risk of sexual violence. In the face of these realities, it is crucial that anti-sexual violence organizations not only partner with LGBTQ organizations to respond appropriately to survivors of sexual violence, but ensure prevention efforts create linkages with other LGBTQ rights efforts in order to advance the full well-being of LGBTQ communities and do not reinforce heteronormative values.

Across the country, there are inspiring examples of rape crisis centers partnering with LGBTQ communities to advance both LGBTQ rights and inclusion and sexual violence prevention. In one example in North Carolina, a rape crisis center prevention coordinator teamed up with counseling staff from two separate high schools to start Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs for students. The development of the GSAs is intended to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors associated with first-time perpetration of sexual violence while also contributing to a more positive school climate for LGBTQ students.

Whether working with a K-12 school, a college campus, or in the community, partnering with LGBTQ groups and engaging LGBTQ survivors enhance resources, elevate the ways anti-violence issues intersect, and develop creative and strategic efforts to dismantle oppression and end sexual violence.

RACIAL JUSTICE

Racial justice must be a part of finding comprehensive responses to and prevention of sexual violence. To end sexual violence in the next generation, there must be steadfast commitment to dismantle oppression based on race and advocacy for women of color survivors of sexual assault. Racial justice work must also engage efforts for white people to work with other white people to end white supremacy.

How are the movements for racial justice connected to the movement to end sexual violence?

Audre Lorde stated, “we do not live single issue lives.” While reflecting on the work to end sexual violence it is imperative to maintain an intersectional framework on racial justice that seeks to identify ways that race should inform advocacy efforts aimed at increasing equity and equality in society. An intersectional approach recognizes how multiple identities differently impact people’s lives and how solutions will recognize these complexities.

Because of the disparities in research for women of color experiencing sexual assault, there are few studies that focus solely on the rate at which women of color experience sexual violence. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a study in 2011 that found that Native American/Indigenous women (27.5%) and Black women (21.2%) experienced rates of sexual violence in their lifetime at rates significantly higher than the national average in the United States. Close to 14% of Latina women experienced sexual violence within their lifetime. It is imperative that local programs are actively promoting and supporting efforts to eradicate violence against women and girls of color.

Racial justice is a “proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.” Racial justice must be a part of finding comprehensive responses to and prevention of sexual violence. To end sexual violence in the next generation, there must be steadfast commitment to dismantle oppression based on race, and advocacy for women of color survivors of sexual assault. Racial justice work must also engage efforts for white people to work with other white people to end white supremacy.

There are inspiring examples of centers and programs spearheading these initiatives like the East LA Women’s Center (ELAWC). ELAWC has been engaging their community through programs that are culturally and linguistically relevant that enables clients, survivors, and communities equitable opportunities and treatment. They recognize that their work to support survivors of sexual assault includes the complex intersections of HIV/AIDS prevention for Latina and black women, support for poor communities, and utilizes community mobilizing models, such as the Promotoras Program that builds expertise and champions local community leadership.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The economic burden for survivors of sexual assault is real. “Women at the margins are the ones who bear the brunt of the harshest realities, including sexual violence, and they do so with the least resources.” The most vulnerable communities, facing poverty and economic hardship as well as sexual violence, are dealing with the compounding and layering of burdens that impact basic needs—their ability to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves and their families. Services need to provide the comprehensive and flexible support that these survivors need.

How does the movement for economic justice connect to the movement to end sexual violence?

The economic burden for survivors of sexual assault is real. “Women at the margins are the ones who bear the brunt of the harshest realities, including sexual violence, and they do so with the least resources.” A 2017 study estimated lifetime cost of rape was \$122,461 per victim or a national population economic burden of nearly \$3.1 trillion. However, the economic impact of sexual violence goes beyond the cost per victim—it impacts survivors’ ability to access resources and is linked with increased vulnerability due to poverty.

Economic justice is the ideal that the country’s economic systems and institutions should be accessible to all so each person can to create a foundation of resources to have a dignified, productive, and creative life beyond economics. Central to the idea of economic justice is that there should be access to basic needs so that individuals and communities can build beyond just surviving. As the Southern Poverty Law Center notes “Poor people in America today are not only facing an economic gap – they’re facing a justice gap. Too often, they’re exploited and abused simply for being poor.”

The most vulnerable communities, facing poverty and economic hardship as well as sexual violence, are dealing with compounding and layering of burdens that impact basic needs—their ability to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves and their families. Services need to provide the comprehensive and flexible support that these survivors need.

Rape crisis centers have been working in and with their communities and many have specially targeted

programs for those most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged. rape crisis centers provide services to survivors based on needs, not ability to pay. The centers purposefully outreach and build relationships with economically disadvantaged communities in urban and rural settings. Innovative new projects include micro loans to survivors to build economic stability, financial awareness and financial education for survivors and communities, and improving access to resources such as victim’s compensation. In Los Angeles, Peace Over Violence has worked with survivors to offer financial education and build economic independence through supporting entrepreneurial survivor-led businesses.

There is a growing need to address the intersections between poverty, cycles of community disenfranchisement and discrimination, and victimization in the wake of a shrinking middle class “dream” and a widening gap between the rich and poor. rape crisis centers can help inform community partners to build systems that take into account the economic burden of sexual assault and the experience of economically disadvantaged survivors. Centers and programs can connect their work to survivors’ economic viability—whether this is their access to financial planning, ability to stay employed, or ability to meet basic needs for themselves and their families.

Beyond directly supporting victims with toy drives and access to direct resources, rape crisis centers can advocate around the de-criminalization of poverty (such as the criminalization of homelessness or street vending) in their communities. These advocacy efforts have large impacts on survivors of sexual assault and an anti-sexual assault advocacy lens is needed in order for economic justice to be meaningful for all.

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

Survivors of domestic and sexual violence and other forms of oppression, particularly women, trans women, trans and gender nonconforming individuals, face additional trauma and abuse due to the criminal justice system. Transformative Justice is a process where all individuals affected by an injustice are given the opportunity to address and repair the injustice. Those affected relate how the act has impacted them and decide what should be done to repair the harm done.

How does the movement for transformative justice connect to the movement to end sexual violence?

The criminal justice system often fails to support survivors of intersectional forms of oppression as demonstrated in the brave faces of Marissa Alexander, Nan-Hui Jo, and the New Jersey 4. These survivors of domestic and sexual violence and other forms of oppression, particularly women, trans women, trans and gender nonconforming individuals, face additional trauma and abuse due to the criminal justice system and police violence.

With the troubling rates of mass incarceration, state violence and criminalization of survivors of sexual and domestic violence, many communities and advocates are exploring non-criminalization methods of addressing and ending violence. Contradictory to criminal justice solutions, transformative justice practices through restorative justice identify alternative solutions to criminalization and incarceration. Transformative Justice seeks to change the larger social structure and the personal structure of those involved. It looks at the circumstances surrounding the offender's actions, the obligations it creates, and the opportunity for change. It seeks to provide answers to victims by recognizing the wrong and providing restitution.

Transformative Justice is a process where all individuals affected by an injustice are given the opportunity to address and repair the injustice. Those affected relate how the act has impacted them and decide what should be done to repair the harm done.

The sole reliance on the criminal justice system has targeted communities of color and also proved

inefficient in deterring crime and reducing recidivism rates. The transformative/restorative justice framework has been developed for and within specific communities, recognizing that each cultural community is diverse and distinct and individual differences must be respected and acknowledged. What might work in one community as a restorative justice practice, may not work in another. Central to the transformative/restorative process is community engagement, cultural relevance, and a commitment to a holistic view of accountability

There are a number of programs and centers already implementing these practices. For instance, Justice for My Sister which is a social justice organization and East Los Angeles collective runs an arts and leadership program for young women in Los Angeles and Guatemala. Recognizing that the criminal justice system often acts punitively towards survivors of sexual assault in communities of color and there is no focus on reconciliation, they are attempting to hold assailants accountable for assault through community channels. The Sycamore Tree Project is a model of transformative justice that has been used throughout the world. It introduces unrelated survivors and offenders (not each other's victims & offenders). For the first time, many offenders are confronted with the harm their actions have had on others. Survivors hear the circumstances of the offender's life and what led the individual to commit the criminal act.

In order to eradicate sexual violence, the current systems of accountability must be examined to be inclusive of what all survivors seek in healing and justice. The forms and methods of accountability, healing, and justice must be just as comprehensive as the forms of violence one seeks to eradicate.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Holistic healing practices and different strategies for wellness provide more specialized and responsive options for survivors and promote resiliency and healing.

How does the movement to increase accessibility to health and wellness connect to the movement to end sexual violence?

Recovering from trauma requires the restoration of balance between the emotional brain and cognitive brain. Survivors of trauma often feel disconnected from their bodies and experience vulnerability due to this disconnection. This is particularly relevant to sexual assault trauma because the body itself was the location of the trauma. The body becomes a barrier to the individual's recovery, and healing must include comprehensive body and mind approaches.

Health and healing are possible. Due to the brain's plasticity, there are mechanisms that can help "rewire" the brain and there are specific physical activities that entail mind and body connection. Examples of these activities are yoga, meditation, biofeedback, Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), amongst others. However, access to these treatment techniques and tools is limited.

To counteract issues of accessibility it is critical that partnerships with local providers be established to share skills. Health care needs to meet survivors where they are and propose therapies that will aid them. An example of a more holistic healthcare approach is the Resource Sharing Project's piece, Holistic Healing Services for Survivors. Using multiple tools and methods, and remaining curious about whole-person healing is central to a more comprehensive wellness approach.

Healing services can be incorporated into the work of rape crisis centers in a variety of ways ranging from community referrals to in-house practitioners and practice groups to culturally specific programs that focus on traditional healing practices. Sexual assault victims advocates can be well versed on the services their organization provides, and they can be trained on using these methods. To increase accessibility to health and wellness the anti-sexual violence field needs to practice implementing "self-healing" activities to learn about their potential, which goes beyond sexual trauma. Holistic healing practices and different strategies for wellness provide more specialized and responsive options for survivors and promote resiliency and healing.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Access to medical services and contraception is central to empowerment, and denying such access reinforces the same norms of sexual violence: women do not have the right to control their own bodies. To create a world in which sexual violence does not exist, women's rights must be protected to care for and control their own bodies.

How does the movement for reproductive rights connect to the movement to end sexual violence?

Gender equity is at the heart of preventing sexual violence and promoting women's health. When male dominance is prioritized over female or non-binary health, violence becomes expressed in policy, medical practice, and interpersonal interactions. In this political climate, women's rights to control and care for their own bodies are being eroded and those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged will be disproportionately impacted by policies that limit healthcare and reproductive services funding. Access to medical services and contraception is central to empowerment, and denying such access reinforces the same norms of sexual violence: women do not have right to control their own bodies. To create a world in which sexual violence does not exist, women's rights must be protected to care for and control their own bodies.

To support reproductive rights connects to meaningful prevention of sexual violence and centers survivor's needs. From abstinence-only sex education to the abolition of abortion, women's control over their bodies and lives is being threatened by policies that would remove access to contraception that allows women to decide how many offspring they have and when. 30 states do not require medically accurate sex education in

school, which harms youths' ability to make healthy decisions about sexual activity and basic self-care. Exposure to medically accurate sex education has been proven to delay initiation of sexual activity and is associated with lower rates of unwanted pregnancies among teen-aged girls. Sex education and contraceptive use are critical in empowering and equipping all genders to make decisions regarding family planning and wellness that will impact all areas of their lives.

Rape crisis centers can implement practices and support systems to address the intersections of sexual violence and reproductive justice/rights. Advocates work with their local school districts to incorporate medically accurate sexual education that includes defining consent and promoting healthy relationships. Speaking out about the connection between women's health and sexual violence is a way to inform policy and educate decision-makers. Advocates can form partnerships with local women's health agencies, such as Planned Parenthood or general health service centers to help ensure survivors and other members of the community have meaningful access to prevention education, health services, and resources. Lastly, connecting with organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) can bolster new ideas for collaboration to meet the needs specific to the community.

IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

People who are immigrants and survivors of sexual violence often face the danger of immigration enforcement and the complex impact of the criminal justice system. These threats make survivors less likely to seek and access help. It is important for advocates to understand immigrants' rights, and become knowledgeable of special immigration resources for victims in order to center their needs.

How does the movement for immigrant rights connect to the movement to end sexual violence?

People who are immigrants and survivors of sexual violence often face the danger of immigration enforcement and the complex impact of the criminal justice system. These threats make survivors less likely to seek and access help. It is important for advocates to understand immigrants' rights, and become knowledgeable of special immigration resources for victims in order to center their needs. Many immigrants have experienced complex violence along their pathway to the United States—violence in their countries of origin, violence en route to the United States, gender-based violence in their homes. They can face violence in detention facilities. And they face violence when they are silenced by those who have harmed them for fear of deportation. One refuge afforded to survivors of sexual violence are U Visas, but the fear of being identified when seeking assistance and the fear of deportation is often a deterrent to accessing these protections and other social services that support victims of crime.

U Visa protections are provided to survivors through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which was the nation's response to protecting undocumented victims of domestic violence and sexual violence. VAWA allows for immigrants who are victims of sexual assault to petition for legal status in the United States. The VAWA visa allows an abused spouse or child of a U.S. Citizen, Lawful Permanent Resident, or an abused parent of a U.S. Citizen to self-petition for lawful status in the United States. Some of the benefits afforded to petitioners

could be protection from removal proceedings, work authorization in the U.S., access to public benefits and the ability to apply for permanent status in the United States.

The movement against sexual violence cannot ignore the topic of immigration in supporting survivors and their families. It is important to provide specialized and culturally relevant services that recognize the threats and fears of deportation in the immigrant community. There are practices and initiatives that rape crisis centers can take to shape their services. Advocates can take and provide trainings on "know your rights" for immigrants, centers can change how services are advertised and tailor services for immigrant communities, and advocates can stand with immigration rights groups to support survivors. Inspiring examples of work that programs and centers are already doing include collaborations with detention facilities based on the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). PREA protects and provides support for incarcerated survivors, including survivors in detention facilities. Sure Helpline works with their local detention facility to provide training to detention staff, support groups for survivors, and crisis support for survivors.

Survivor's rights are complicated and stigmatized in the face of growing anti-immigration rhetoric. Engaging other groups and organizations that focus on immigrant justice can help bolster the support for immigrant survivors and create more collaborative and meaningful resources for the community.

DOWNLOADS

The following resources are available to download at www.calcasa.org/resources.



LGBTQ EQUALITY

Norms that support gender inequities, and a general acceptance of violence, do not only perpetuate sexual violence but also breed homophobia and transphobia.



IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

People who are immigrants and survivors of sexual violence often face the danger of immigration enforcement and the complex impact of the criminal justice system.



RACIAL JUSTICE

To end sexual violence there must be steadfast commitment to dismantle oppression based on race and advocacy for women of color survivors of sexual assault.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The most vulnerable communities, facing poverty and economic hardship as well as sexual violence, are dealing with the compounding and layering of burdens that impact basic needs.



TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

Beyond the criminal justice system, many survivors of sexual assault seek transformative spaces for reconciliation and accountability with community supports.



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Ending sexual assault is closely connected to protecting reproductive rights. The rights to control one's own body and make reproductive choices are basic needs for all survivors.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Healthcare must be accessible for all. Wellness tools that recognize the impact of trauma provide more pathways to healing and resiliency for survivors and families.

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