

February 17, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Caitlin Sorge, and I am the Director of the Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) at the YWCA New Britain. Our program offers assistance to sexual assault survivors and their loved ones. Our services include a 24-hour English and Spanish confidential hotline with immediate access to trained and certified counselors. We also provide individual crisis counseling, support groups, accompaniment through medical, police, and court procedures, campus advocacy, and prevention education. YWCA New Britain – SACS covers a 46-town region including all of Hartford county, part of Tolland county, and the town of Plymouth. Our program covers one of the largest territories in Connecticut. In fiscal year 2014-2015, we provided services to 732 sexual assault survivors.

Due to budget cuts and lack of funding over the years, YWCA New Britain – SACS has reduced our program staffing hours, which has created unique challenges for our program to meet the ever-growing needs of our community. Each full-time Advocate position has been reduced to 30 hours/part-time statuses. Our Community Educator position has been reduced to 20 hours weekly but is required to meet the prevention education needs of 46 towns. Our Campus Advocate has been reduced to 30 hours but is required to meet the campus outreach needs of 14 college campuses. Our Child and Adult Advocates have been reduced to 30 hours weekly but are meeting the recovery needs of survivors and their families. Our Advocates respond to the needs of those in the aftermath of trauma around the clock. To say that our work is emotionally and physically taxing is an understatement. Advocates deserve a livable wage and sufficient paid work hours.

YWCA New Britain – SACS is respectfully requesting the Appropriations Committee to leave the rape crisis line item fully funded. Our program is rising to the challenge of supporting survivors and providing effective prevention programming to help end the prevalence of sexual assault in Connecticut. We know our work positively impacts and shapes the lives of survivors. YWCA New Britain – SACS evaluates our program through client questionnaires. We are proud to share the following outcomes:

- 100% of clients felt their Advocate was sympathetic and helped them understand the effects of trauma.
- 100% of clients were provided resources and safety planning.
- 100% of clients were assisted with access to appropriate medical care and felt they understood the criminal justice process with help from an Advocate.
- 98% of clients felt their Advocate helped them understand and/or manage their feelings.
- 100% of clients felt they benefited from receiving SACS services and would recommend the agency to someone in need of services.

Sexual assault can harm survivors emotionally, psychologically, and physically. Common effects from sexual assault include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, flashbacks, substance abuse, suicide, self-harm, and sexually transmitted infections. We know that when survivors are given support and advocacy in their recovery process, they are in a better position to be able to manage these effects. YWCA New Britain – SACS remains committed in our mission to support survivors in our community.

We look forward to continuing to meet the needs of Connecticut residents affected by sexual assault with your support and partnership.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Sorge, LMSW

for every woman

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

for every woman

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