



# CASA News

Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused  
301.739.4990 • 24 Hour Hotline: 301.739.8975 (301.739.1012 TTY)

Spring 2021

## Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) During a Pandemic....

Think back for a moment, how you felt when you heard you shouldn't leave your home except to shop for essential items? How it felt when you were told you had to wear a mask, you couldn't go out to eat, get your hair cut, go to the dentist or visit your family? Helpless. Sadness. Despair. Loneliness. Fear. Anger. Frustration. Lost.

IPV victims experience many of these feelings daily without the pandemic. IPV is characterized by one person having control over the other in an intimate partner relationship. These relationships have many facets of control which include physical, emotional, financial, and or sexual violence. These individuals are dealing with a pandemic which may cause a second layer of these same feelings. All of which may lead to hopelessness, fatigue and depression. If you can imagine that going to work is your only safe place and it closes temporarily. The people who are your support system cannot be accessed. The systems that are normally in place are now transitioning to online or phone only.

Many victims may now be quarantined at home with their children and possibly the abusive partner. These added stresses can include unemployment, home schooling, financial concerns, food insecurity and daily news reports of how the pandemic is affecting individuals. Some victims of IPV are continuing to work as essential employees where there is an added layer of stress of contracting the virus, fear of bringing it into their household and dealing with the possible loss the virus may create.

When the stay at home orders first went into effect, many victims were unsure of how they would get help or support through this time. They may have been in the process of making arrangements to move out, filing for a protective order or divorce. All of this was put on hold and victims thought they really couldn't do anything. Some thought the courts, shelters and human service

agencies were closed. When an incident did happen, they didn't feel that they could go to their primary care office, emergency room or urgent care. There were obstacles to reaching out for help at this time and increased feelings of fear.

Our agency is essential and remained open to take calls assisting victims through the pandemic. The court system made arrangements to continue issuing protective orders, shelters found safe lodging for those seeking emergency placement and counseling services moved to remote or telephone. However, still being able to provide these vital services didn't assuage the immense amount of fear that many victims were feeling. One of the most important services we provide is safety planning; discussing a victim's situation and coming up with safer options if their situation escalates to an unsafe level.

As we move forward and put the early stages of the pandemic behind us, we now reflect on how we have adapted our services to meet our client's ever changing needs. We know we have to always be flexible and open to new ideas and strategies to assist those in need. We take from this a renewed vision of our mission statement: To provide services and education that promote physical and emotional safety, foster growth, and empower individuals, families and communities involved in domestic violence and sexual assault/abuse.



Like our Facebook page for up to date information on ways to support our agency, news and articles relating to domestic violence and sexual assault, and upcoming events. Find us at [www.facebook.com/casawashco](http://www.facebook.com/casawashco). Sign up for our Online Newsletter Today! See Notice inside!

### Inside:

- Upcoming Events
- Sexual Assault Evidence Testing
- Legislative Updates
- We thank our long time volunteer for his dedication to our agency

# SIGN UP NOW

# SURVIVOR'S INPUT

If you would like to continue receiving information and updates on CASA, Inc. events please visit our website at [casainc.org](http://casainc.org).

Click on the newsletter icon and enter your email address to receive pertinent information and updates relating to intimate partner violence and sexual assault.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**We will no longer be mailing newsletters.**



## UPCOMING EVENT

Mark your calendar for our annual Run, Jane, Run Golf Tournament scheduled for **June 7, 2021**. Contact our office for information on participating or sponsoring!



## THANK YOU

**Thank you** to Sheehy Hagerstown for a very generous donation of \$5,000. This will help CASA serve many individuals who may be experiencing intimate partner or sexual violence.



**Thank you** to Wright Gardner Insurance for your annual turkey donations for our clients! Your generosity was much appreciated.

**Thank you** to every individual and business who joined in helping this year. CASA thrives on the wonderful support from the community!

## JOE RETIRES



In December 2005 Joseph P. Gentile, from Berkley Springs, reached out to CASA to be a volunteer...what an honor for us! He expressed that he had seen evidence of domestic violence where he lived in Morgan County and he wanted to contribute in a "tangible manner".

Joe has worn many different hats during his tenure as a volunteer here. He has picked up donations, assisted staff, provided manpower when needed, moved furniture, hung pictures and many bulletin boards. He was excellent at fixing a sticky desk drawer, file drawers and squeaky doors as well as providing tender care to our office plants. He established and maintained our flower beds. He said he hoped his landscaping would convey a message to women approaching the office for the first time "from this point on your life is going to be a little better."

Joe always showed up with a smile on his face eager to work for us every Wednesday for the past 15 years. He saw an injustice and dedicated his time to lend a hand where it could make the most difference for battered women and children. Joe is the definition of "volunteer". He has also built wooden street signs for his housing development, maintains bird feeders in the area and is a weather observer for the National Weather Service. Finally, he needs to be commended for his service to our country; he is retired from the US Navy and other agencies he has devoted his time to.

**Thanks Joe, from all of us at CASA!**

# SEXUAL ASSAULT EVIDENCE TESTING

## New Criteria for testing sexual assault evidence kits in Maryland effective Jan 1, 2020.

In 2020, the Maryland General Assembly enacted Chapter 34 (2019), setting forth the criteria to be applied by all law enforcement agencies determining whether to submit a sexual assault evidence kit (“SAEK”) to a forensic laboratory for analysis. Under the new law, which became effective January 1, 2020, a SAEK shall be submitted for testing unless:

- A. There is clear evidence disproving the allegation of sexual assault;
- B. The facts alleged, if true, could not be interpreted to violate a provision of Title 3, Subtitle 2, Title 3, Subtitle 3, Title 3, Subtitle 6, Title 11, Subtitle 3 of the Criminal Law Article of the Maryland Annotated Code;
- C. The victim from whom the evidence was collected declines to give consent for analysis; or
- D. The suspect’s profile has been collected for entry as a convicted offender for a qualifying offense in the Combined DNA index System (CODIS) maintained by the FBI and the suspect has pleaded guilty to the offense that led to the sexual assault evidence collection kit.

Also, in this legislation are the guidelines for reviewing a law enforcement agency’s determination not to test a kit. Those recommendations establish a two-tier review process. First by local Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART’s) and second by the Committee. The Committee has developed guidelines to provide additional direction to SARTs and Committee members and to ensure uniform statewide implementation of the new review process.

“SART “ means a Sexual Assault Response Team which includes at least one representative from the following professions and organizations:

- A. Forensic Nurse Examiner
- B. Local Law Enforcement Agency
- C. Local State’s Attorney’s Office
- D. Local certified Rape Crisis Center
- E. Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- F. Crime Lab, if available
- G. Crime Victim Rights Attorney, if available.



The SART and Committee meetings are not open to the public. Information provided to or gathered by a SART or Committee for the purposes of conducting an Untested Kit Review are confidential. Written determinations issued by a SART or Committee are not confidential, however, any personally identifying information shall be redacted prior to release.

For more information visit <http://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/sakt>

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### **SAFE Exams – Reimbursement and Confidentiality – SB406/HB425 - PASSED**

This bill prevents the government from requiring that hospitals share graphic, private details of sexual assault in order to be reimbursed, and ensure that reimbursement policies are based on current science. Reimbursement for testing cervical swabs in appropriate cases will be expanded to up to 15 days after an assault.

### **Human Trafficking – Vacating Convictions – HB242/SB206 - PASSED**

Current law permits a survivor of human trafficking to vacate a conviction for prostitution when the underlying activity was caused by trafficking. This fails to include many other crimes that are related to trafficking, such as loitering, indecent exposure, and drug possession. This re-introduced bill expands the types of crimes that a human trafficking survivor can seek to vacate and means more survivors of human trafficking can rebuild their lives.

### **Marriage Should Not Be a Defense to Sex Crimes – Love is No Defense Act – SB230/HB590 – PASSED the House, Died in Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Maryland allows marriage to be a defense to some sex crimes. It is past time to remove this archaic law from the books. Discussions surrounding this bill were a bleak reminder that there is still much work to be done. This bill passed the House easily, but met opposition in Committee in the Senate and then ran out of time when COVID ended session early.

### **Prohibition of Waiver of Rights – Sexual Assault Investigations – SB807/HB1575 – PASSED**

As a result of the heroic advocacy of sponsors Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Sandy Bartlett, this bill passed on the last day of the abbreviated legislative session. It will prohibit law enforcement from asking sexual assault survivors to sign a waiver of rights to further investigation. This practice is now widely viewed as outdated and harmful, but continued to crop up in some jurisdictions.

### **Dogs in the Courtroom – SB101/HB311 – PASSED**

This bill expands an existing pilot program permitting therapy dogs to support child witnesses during court proceedings, including during child sexual abuse prosecutions.

### **Protective Orders - Relief Eligibility - Rape and Sexual Offenses – HB248/SB210 – PASSED with Amendment.**

This bill moves rape and sexual assault out of the peace order statute and ensures that survivors receive the more robust response of a protective order. Senate amendments require that the sexual assault have occurred within the past 6 months.



# Wish List

We are in need of the following items:

- Disposable diapers (size 4,5,6)
- New sweat pants and shirts (all sizes)
- Pre-teen boys pajamas and robes
- Inexpensive alarm clocks
- Umbrellas
- New socks, underwear and flip flops of all sizes
- Canned goods (SpaghettiOs, juice, tuna), peanut butter and jelly, other non-perishable food items
- Paper products, cleaning and sanitizing supplies
- Twin size sheets, blankets and pillow cases
- Gift cards for clothing/grocery/gas/teen interests**



# Donate

If you would like to donate to CASA, Inc., in helping victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault, there are several options below.

- You can use the enclosed envelope and send in a check or money order.
- You can donate online using PayPal at [www.casainc.org](http://www.casainc.org) (click on *Get Involved*)
- During your estate planning and or creating or modifying your will, please keep CASA in mind.
- To find out how CASA can help you turn your highly appreciated assets into a charitable donation to CASA without capital gain tax burden, please call us today at 301.739.4990 or email us at [markp.casa@myactv.net](mailto:markp.casa@myactv.net).

**A donation of any amount can help someone in need.**

## EXECUTIVE STAFF

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*Let the Healing Begin.*

