



WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

WCASA Condemns ICE Enforcement Against Survivors

Madison – August 8, 2017 – “The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault calls on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to take meaningful steps to ensure that survivors of sexual violence, domestic abuse, and human trafficking can access protection and justice without fear of being detained or deported,” stated Pennie Meyers, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA). WCASA represents the 56 sexual assault service providers across Wisconsin, and advocates on behalf of survivors of sexual violence, including sex trafficking.

“Given the increased threats and violence against marginalized communities in our country, WCASA is alarmed that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security are undermining the purpose and intent of the Violence Against Women Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act,” stated Meyers.

“The administration’s extensive enforcement activities are clearly creating a chilling effect on immigrant survivors seeking help and reporting to law enforcement,” stated Meyers. “All survivors deserve access to support services and justice without fear of repercussions for seeking help.”

As demonstrated in the results of a [nationwide survey](#) of advocates and attorneys, 78% of respondents reported that immigrant survivors report having concerns about reaching out to the police. In addition, 75% of respondents reported that immigrant survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to the offender.ⁱ

This evidence of a chilling effect is echoed by law enforcement, including those in [Houston](#), [Los Angeles](#), and [Denver](#). Judicial officers are also expressing concern about the detrimental impact that immigration enforcement in courthouses is having on survivors’ access to justice.ⁱⁱ

In March 2017, WCASA joined 562 other organizations that support survivors of sexual violence, domestic abuse and/or human trafficking, in sending to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security [a letter](#) concerning the harmful effects of recent executive orders on immigration enforcement. The letter explains that these orders embolden traffickers and abusers, undermine protections for survivors and witnesses, and reduce the likelihood of people reporting these crimes.

In July 2017, ICE sent a [response](#) to the letter’s drafting organizations, failing to address our concerns and disregarding Congress’ intent to protect survivors through the Violence Against Women Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. The letter also fails to confirm whether [ICE’s prior guidance issued in 2011](#) on survivors and witnesses remains in effect and what, if any, protocols, training, and monitoring are in place to effectuate the consideration of other factors to protect survivors and witnesses. In response to ICE’s letter, the drafting organizations wrote [a letter](#) objecting to ICE’s failure to meaningfully address the enforcement actions’ negative impact on survivors.

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The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA, www.wcasa.org) is a membership agency comprised of organizations and individuals working to end sexual violence in Wisconsin. Among these are the 56 assault service provider agencies throughout the state that offer support, advocacy and information to survivors of sexual assault and their families. WCASA works to ensure that every survivor

in Wisconsin gets the support and care they need. WCASA also works to create the social change necessary to ensure a future where no child, woman or man is ever sexually violated again.

ⁱ Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (APIGBV), ASISTA, Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV), National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH), National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), and Tahirih Justice Center. [2017 Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors](#) (May 18, 2017).

ⁱⁱ Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey Stuart Rabner. [Letter to U.S. Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Secretary Kelly](#) (April 19, 2017). In addition, several high-level state court officials, including the Chief Justices of [Washington](#), [California](#), [Connecticut](#), [Oregon](#), and [New Jersey](#) have written to DHS that immigration enforcement at courthouses undermines the operations and mission of the court system.