



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statewide Anti-Sexual-Violence Coalition to Hold Virtual Advocacy Day**

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV), Ohio’s statewide coalition that provides technical assistance and training to rape crisis programs around the state, will move forward with its annual advocacy day. In compliance with the statewide mandate from Governor DeWine that limits gatherings, the April 22<sup>nd</sup> event will no longer be held at the Ohio Statehouse. Instead, OAESV will practice social distancing by offering a webinar-based panel discussion and virtual meetings with legislators.

Since 2013, OAESV’s Annual Advocacy Day to End Sexual Violence has provided advocates, survivors, and interested members of the public with the opportunity to express the importance of sexual violence advocacy and prevention to members of the Ohio Legislature. “The one-on-one meetings with lawmakers provide opportunities for rape crisis professionals to share insight on pending legislation and make informed requests for funding increases,” says the coalition’s Executive Director, Rosa Beltré.

OAESV works with its Survivor Advisory Council and local rape crisis centers to develop long-and short-term public policy objectives. OAESV staff then develop and implement strategies to support passage of laws and budget resolutions necessary to achieve those objectives. “OAESV recognizes that the time is now for us to believe survivors, embrace our voices, and advocate for sexual assault survivors in all 88 counties,” adds Beltré.

OAESV still plans to hold an in-person Advocacy Day event in September, but Camille Crary, Director of Legal Services & Policy for the organization, maintains the importance of speaking to legislators now in order to continue the work of advocating for survivors of sexual violence in Ohio. “Lobbying firms representing an array of interests are still meeting with lawmakers. It’s important to maintain our communications with our representatives and senators, so that when they come back from this unexpected break from in-person hearings and session, they keep survivors and rape crisis programs in mind with further crisis planning, future budgets, and legislative efforts,” she says.

OAESV has also been working to highlight the increased importance of advocating for survivors of sexual violence during the many changes that come with social distancing. Crary says, “Increased isolation can increase violence while also reducing reporting resources available. Right now there’s an increased need of support from legislators and state funders.”

The agenda is packed with a range of speakers including, Representative Emilia Strong Sykes, Center for Family Safety & Healing President Lynn Rosenthal, and other lawmakers and Ohio rape crisis program leaders. The program ends with various telephone or video meetings between small groups of constituents and state and federal lawmakers.

There is still time for interested parties to register to attend the virtual panel, as well as for constituents to register for the meetings with lawmakers, by visiting [www.oaesv.org/advocacyday](http://www.oaesv.org/advocacyday).

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*Video and telephone interviews available upon request.*

*As Ohio’s statewide coalition, OAESV advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.*