Ohio’s civil statute of limitations for child sexual abuse is longer than it is for adult sexual violence. Minors who have been sexually assaulted have a 12-year deadline from the accrual date (O.R.C. 2305.111). Depending on the case, the 12-year statute begins when the victim turns 18. By the time the victim is 30 years old, a civil lawsuit must be filed in order to proceed with a case within the timeframe.

Generally, the period for adult victims of rape and sexual assault is much shorter. According to O.R.C. 2305.111(B)(1), adult victims have one year to sue a known abuser.

The statute of limitations for a criminal prosecution of rape is 25 years, with the following exceptions: If 25 years has lapsed, but a DNA record in a § 2907.02 investigation is found to match another DNA record, the prosecution may bring the criminal action within 5 years; or If 25 years has not lapsed, and a DNA record in a § 2907.02 investigation is found to match another DNA record, the prosecution may bring the criminal action within 25 years of the rape or 5 five years of the match, whichever is later.

The average age of reporting child sexual abuse is about 52 years. Regardless of their age at the time of the sexual violence, most survivors come forward about their abuse and are met with arbitrary deadlines for filing legal claims — known as statutes of limitation (“SOLs”) — that have expired in Ohio.

The physical, emotional, and psychological effects of sexual violence can influence how and when a victim reports a crime. From our work with thousands of survivors across the state of Ohio, we know that delayed disclosure to law enforcement and other systems-based responses are the norm. Delayed disclosure, coupled with narrow statutes of limitations, impact the path to justice and compensation for survivors. By the time most survivors report their abuse, the period for filing legal claims has expired. Simply put, the doors to justice are locked for many survivors of child sexual abuse and rape as a result of overly restrictive statutes of limitations.

OAESV’s public policy work and corresponding materials are supported by a generous grant from the George Gund Foundation, a private Ohio non-profit organization that has donated $722 million dollars since 1952 to projects that advance human welfare and society.