

## Tip Sheet: Engaging Sexual Assault Advocacy in Your State

Successful engagement of the advocacy community is key to effectively establishing your teleSAFE project. Advocates are a crucial component for the survivor during the medical forensic exam. They share project information and accessibility and they are a contact for survivors' care (and significant others) post-exam.

This tip sheet offers steps to consider when building your understanding of the basic infrastructure of sexual assault advocacy in your state. The purpose is to help guide your successful engagement with local advocacy centers serving your spoke site locations.

### Step One: Start with the state coalition

The role of the state coalition can vary, but typically acts as a unifying force for stakeholders related to key policy and funding issues, and facilitates knowledge building and information sharing among members.

- Coalitions are either separate sexual assault coalitions or dual coalitions (domestic and sexual violence)
- Role and purpose: Sexual assault coalitions can take many roles, ranging from the lead on policy issues to certification of local programs, or to funding centers as a pass-through entity. Their primary purpose and mission will be available on their website

The state coalition should be a prime source of information and guidance on advocacy engagement. Reaching out to the executive director will give you an opportunity to introduce the project and to learn about how it fits into the strategic goals for responding to the needs of sexual assault survivors in your state.

**Action:** *Look up your state's coalition [here](#)*

### Step Two: Learn about the types of advocacy centers in your state

The coalition should be able to provide you with information about how sexual assault services are organized in your state. Most state coalitions will show a map of service centers on their website and will be able to share with you the catchment area that each center serves, including any overlap between centers.

There may be a wide variety of organizations in your state providing sexual assault services. Some will be stand-alone rape crisis centers (these centers tend to have the most robust services available for sexual assault prevention and survivor services), a program for sexual and domestic violence with shelter services, or a multidisciplinary center such as a YWCA or family justice center. Services for minors may be available at any of these centers, and/or accessed through child advocacy centers.

*Action: Look for a map and/or a description of the sexual assault advocacy organizations on the coalition website.*

### **Step Three: Explore funding regulations for advocacy centers providing 24/7 medical accompaniment**

Governmental funding is the main source of revenue for most, if not all sexual assault services. This is important because contracts for these funds often:

- Dictate the region of the state that each center is serving
- Define the service requirements (e.g., 24-hour hotline, free counseling services, medical accompaniment, etc.) that the center will provide to survivors
- Mandate the training and supervision required for staff and volunteers

Knowing the state funding requirements for sexual assault advocacy centers can give you an idea as to how statewide funding is distributed, and the expectations for existing services.

*Action: Ask the coalition (or other governing body) if there is a written guide or a sample of contract conditions of mandatory services that you can review.*

### **Step Four: Research the center(s) who will be providing accompaniment to your teleSAFE spoke site by looking at their website and social media before contacting the center.**

You will likely want to speak with the executive director (ED) first to ensure they are aware of the teleSAFE project. The ED may connect you with an advocate who either oversees or provides the medical accompaniment services, especially in larger organizations.

*Action: Contact the state coalition and ask for an e-introduction to the advocacy center's executive director.*