

ANNUAL REPORT



Jennifer Wilkey



MECASA



Macaluso



Sarah Firth



Katie Kondrat



n Booth



Elizabeth Ward Saxl



Canyon Sears

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MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT

FFY 2020

OUR MISSION

The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault is organized to end sexual violence and to support high quality sexual violence prevention and response within Maine communities.

Dear Friends:

While I'm sitting in my "home office" (if you can even call it that) trying to write this letter, the dog is asking to be let out for the 3rd time this hour, I hear what sounds suspiciously like Netflix coming from daughter's bedroom where she is "doing her homework," and every word of the conference call my husband is on is audible in the background. It's just an average day here in the MECASA corner office.

The good news is MECASA's work has always been responsive to our dynamic environment; we are conditioned to shift our focus to meet the most pressing needs. When COVID arrived, MECASA's staff used that experience and quickly pivoted to ensure survivors, advocates, and local sexual assault support centers had what they needed. Below are a few examples of how our team has responded:

- We provided tools, funding, and best practice models to support Maine's sexual assault support centers in protecting client information on the web, supporting survivors during hospital exams remotely, and offering digital support groups.
- Through MECASA's Maine Human Trafficking Survivor Fund, we ensured critical immediate support for basic needs was available to trafficking survivors.
- We obtained supplies, like masks and hand sanitizer, for Maine Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) so they could continue to provide forensic interviews and help children and families during investigations of suspected child sexual abuse.
- A new partnership with Good Shepherd Food Bank provided food and grocery gift cards to food insecure families coming through the CACs.
- We created new materials and trainings for teachers, in their role as mandated reporters, to help protect isolated kids experiencing sexual abuse during these challenging times.

Since the last legislative session ended prematurely in March, many important bills were set aside. When the Legislature begins their work in earnest in January, many of those issues will be revisited as well as a range of new proposals. Some of our goals for the session include:

- Improving access to protection from abuse orders for victims of sexual violence,
- Providing access to civil remedies and damages for the victims of child sexual abuse who are currently barred from civil action,
- Improving the availability of tools to support survivors of sexual violence on college and university campuses, and
- Ensuring funding for sexual assault and domestic violence services is continued; this is critical as we expect a surge of demand for services on the other side of COVID-19.

While we look forward to 2021, we also know that the work will continue to be challenging. The MECASA team is ready and excited to meet those challenges and to support our providers and partners in Maine. Thank you for your partnership.



Elizabeth Ward Saxl
Executive Director

P. S. If you would like to share thoughts on our programs or work, we are always listening.

Technical Assistance & Programs at MECASA

MECASA provides technical assistance to Maine sexual assault support centers including:

- Offering research and advice,
- Coordinating training,
- Facilitating peer conversations, and
- Creating tools to improve prevention or response practices.

A technical assistance question we are working on:



How can we support survivors and healing outside the criminal justice system?

In FFY 2020, we provided 1,500 hours of research and advice technical assistance, a 15% increase from last year, including 300+ hours of support on budgets and finance and 50+ hours of support on data collection. Additional technical assistance included:

- 29 training events,
- 80 peer sharing calls, and
- Tools to support providers' work, including guides, outreach materials, and model policies.

MECASA Programs



The Children's Safety Partnership (childrenssafetypartnership.org) trained (in person and virtually) 150+ school personnel on child sexual abuse prevention and response.



The Maine Sex Trafficking & Exploitation Network (mainesten.org) trained 319 people (including advocates, educators, law enforcement, medical professionals, and more) on responding to trafficked youth and adults.



The Children's Advocacy Centers (cacmaine.org) conducted 1,022 forensic interviews of children suspected of experiencing sexual abuse. Advocates spent 1,855 hours assisting families and connecting them to community resources.

We cannot end sexual violence without confronting racism.

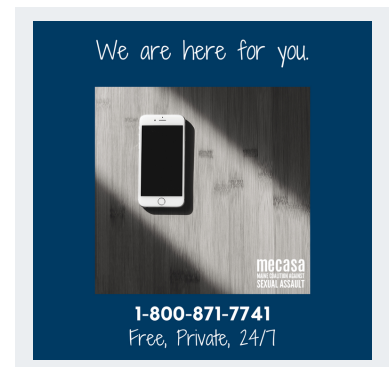


They are inseparable, as oppression is a root cause of sexual violence. We are committed to being anti-racist and have hired consultants to help guide us in building a strategic plan and actionable commitments towards anti-racist programs and policies. MECASA staff meet as a learning cohort, dedicating time to individual growth and learning, and in a work group, to further conversation and a path for MECASA as an organization. We are asking ourselves what anti-racism looks like within all our programs and actively listening to, learning from, and amplifying the voices of local and national leaders and BIPOC survivors in this work. It is an exciting and necessary journey and we welcome your questions, collaboration, and conversation.

Supporting Advocates and Local Centers

Adapting to COVID-19

When COVID-19 hit Maine, MECASA immediately began to work on ways we we could adapt while staying safe. We launched weekly peer-sharing calls for advocates around the state to discuss the impact of quarantine on their work. MECASA provided emergency funding for centers to modify services and programming, including new digital support groups and a safe and confidential video chat platform for survivors. Staff created new remote programming resources, including a guide on supporting survivors remotely during sexual assault forensic exams. Working with community partners, we located vital supplies, like masks and hand sanitizer, allowing Children’s Advocacy Centers to continue forensic interviews and help children and families during investigations of suspected child sexual abuse.



MECASA supported teachers, in their role as mandated reporters, to help protect isolated kids experiencing sexual abuse during these challenging times. The Children's Safety Partnership, a program of MECASA, provided guidance for responding to and supporting students after disclosures, a video version of the one-hour child sexual abuse response training, and materials on social emotional learning (a protective factor from child sexual abuse). With the return to a hybrid school year, the prevention team is developing new supports around best practices for online learning and teaching.

We will continue to adapt and support as needed throughout the pandemic.

New Advocate Training Curriculum



Advocate training is the foundational 40-hour training all staff and volunteers at sexual assault support centers receive. This year, representatives from all seven members centers built a shared curriculum to be delivered statewide starting January 2021. The curriculum, built around the Foundation for Advocacy Facilitator’s Guide (written by national partners), integrates the philosophy and practice of advocacy with the skills to support survivors of sexual violence.

There are so many opportunities that come from having a shared, statewide advocate training curriculum including: consistency of services for survivors, efficiency when a new trainer joins the staff, co-delivery of the training by two agencies, and having a team of experienced trainers offering lessons learned and updates to the content.

"I feel grateful to meet with and learn from my fellow advocate trainers throughout the state every month, collaborating with MECASA and our sibling centers to discuss our vision for a unified advocate training curriculum."
-Work Group Participant

Maine Children & Families

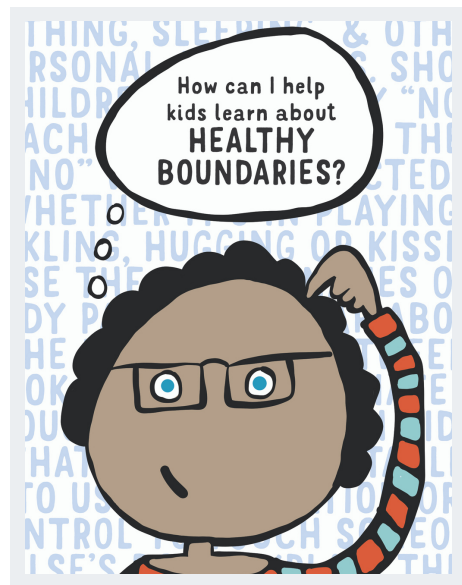
Preventing Sexual Violence Before it Happens

MECASA provides prevention tools and resources to centers, educators, and caregivers that help change the conversation and thinking around gender, boundaries, and healthy relationships. The goal of prevention work is to stop sexual violence before it begins.

MECASA's prevention team has been hard at work hosting statewide peer calls and trainings for community based preventionists to support their emerging needs. In the last year, we covered topics such as porn literacy, sexting, and best practices for online teaching and learning. For educators, we provided guidance on lessons, books, and activities they can use to incorporate child sexual abuse prevention education into their classrooms on a regular basis.

For caregivers and parents, we have the Children's Safety Partnership website. On the site, there are activities, resources, and book lists for teaching about boundaries, how to understand feelings, and healthy sexuality. These foundational skills are shown to prevent child sexual abuse.

Visit childrenssafetypartnership.org to learn how you can talk with the kiddos in your life and download samples of the "Kids in Space" workbook. At MECASA we believe that together we can use prevention to create a safer, healthier, and more inclusive world for everyone.



Partnering with Good Shepherd Food Bank



In 2020, a partnership with Good Shepherd Food Bank and the Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) began to help address clients' food insecurity by providing food and grocery gift cards to the families they serve at CAC locations. These valuable resources help families in need focus on healing and recovery, not where they'll get their next meal. Children and caregivers who are working through abuse and learning to heal should not have to face hunger too.

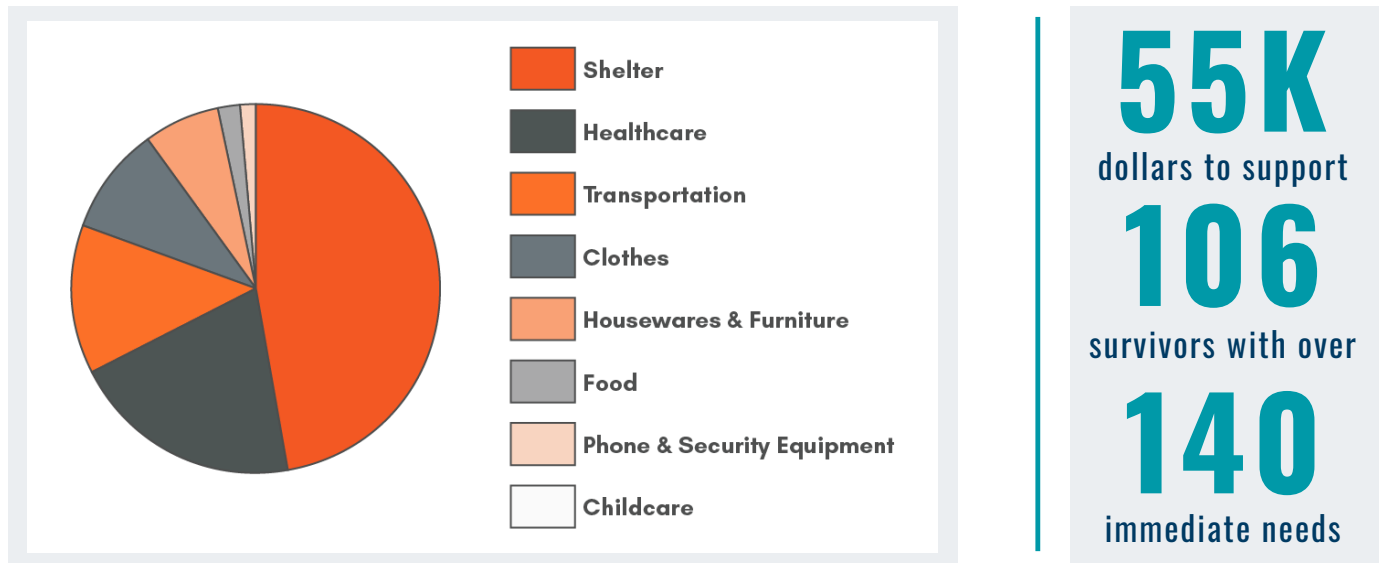
We cannot thank Good Shepherd Food Bank enough for their dedication to families and children across the state of Maine.

Visit cacmaine.org to learn more about how CACs help Maine children and families.

Anti-Trafficking Efforts in Maine

Maine Human Trafficking Survivor Fund

The Maine Human Trafficking Survivor Fund provided over \$55,000 of support to 106 survivors, meeting 140+ needs in FFY 2020. These needs include shelter, transportation, healthcare, clothing, phones, food, childcare, and home needs. This additional help fosters a victim's ability to find safety and to move towards healing. You can donate to the fund at mainesten.org.



Study on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

During the last year, the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine conducted a study looking at the child welfare system's identification of and response to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in Maine. This research included in-depth participation by Child Protective Services (CPS) staff, analyzing and reviewing data of CSEC cases, and conducting interviews and focus groups with relevant professionals. The findings of this study included the following recommendations:

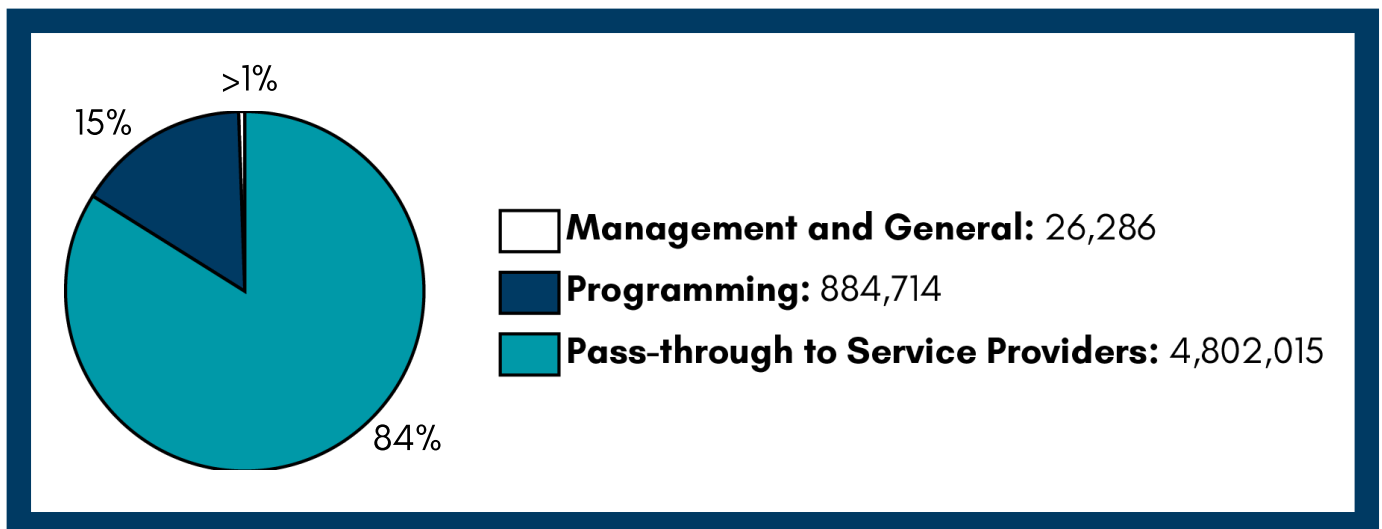
- Update the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) policy and screening tool for CSEC and Human Trafficking,
- Revise Maine's child welfare statute to reflect the federal Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 requirements, which includes all commercially sexually exploited children as a part of the child protective system,
- Create more training opportunities for CPS staff, and
- Implement a systems based response to CSEC through the existing Children's Advocacy Center model, which reduces trauma through limiting disclosures and incorporates a multi-disciplinary team to improve information sharing.

MECASA and the Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers support these recommendations and thank the Office of Child and Family Services for all they have already done to implement them. We are grateful to have such a meaningful and productive partnership.

FYY 2020 FINANCIALS

REVENUES:	9/30/2020 (Audit in progress)	9/30/2019 (Audited)
Dues/Donations	32,727	46,042
Foundations	10,000	12,700
State & Federal Grants	5,622,254	5,067,901
Sub-Contracts	52,974	202,354
Investment Return	2,705	3,673
Other Revenue	14,250	19,741
	5,734,910	5,352,411
EXPENSES:		
Prevention & Victims Services	661,780	745,862
Technical Assistance & Coalition Building	167,605	159,301
Pass-Through to Service Providers	4,802,015	4,162,708
Other Sub-Contracted Programs	55,329	223,696
Management & General	26,286	40,569
	5,713,015	5,332,166
Change in Net Assets	21,895	20,245
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	238,216	217,971
Net Assets at End of Year	260,111	238,216

FYY 2020 EXPENSES



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