



Pennsylvania Coalition to
Advance Respect

2101 N Front Street
Governor's Plaza North, Building #2,
Harrisburg, PA 17110
717-728-9740
www.pcar.org

a division of respect together

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MEDIA CONTACT

Demetrius Archer

Director of Communications

Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR)

darcher@pcar-respecttogether.org

267-746-9368

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pennsylvania Makes Historic \$12 Million Investment in Rape Crisis Services

Years of survivor advocacy lead to landmark funding increase for rape crisis services

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Today, Gov. Josh Shapiro signed Pennsylvania's 2026–27 state budget into law, delivering a historic \$12 million increase for rape crisis services and bringing the total state appropriation to \$24.171 million.

The Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR) celebrates this significant investment in survivors and the statewide network of rape crisis centers serving all 67 counties. The increase nearly doubles the funding available for services, including 24-hour crisis hotlines, counseling, medical and legal advocacy, prevention education and accompaniment for survivors navigating hospitals, police investigations and court proceedings.

"Today marks a turning point for survivors and rape crisis centers across Pennsylvania," said **Joyce Lukima, Coalition Director of PCAR**. "This investment carries the voices of every survivor who spoke out, every advocate who kept showing up, and every center that continued serving its community through years of uncertainty. We are deeply grateful to Gov. Shapiro and the lawmakers who listened and acted. Because of this investment, rape crisis centers can begin rebuilding capacity and strengthening the services survivors depend on."

Pennsylvania's rape crisis centers have endured years of stagnant state funding, rising operating costs, growing demand and an 11% reduction in federal Victims of Crime Act funding since 2020. State funding remained flat during six of the previous 10 budget cycles. Last year's prolonged budget impasse further destabilized programs, contributing to layoffs, service reductions, longer waitlists and increased financial pressure across the network.

The 2026–27 investment represents the largest single-year increase for rape crisis services in Pennsylvania history.

“Today, lawmakers made a historic decision,” said **Gabriella Romeo, Public Policy Director of PCAR**.

“They made a decision to carry on the legacy of supporting survivors. They made a decision to lead the way in survivor advocacy. They made a decision to fund a safer, brighter future, not only for survivors, but for all Pennsylvanians.”

Through the budget process, survivors, rape crisis center staff, volunteers, community leaders, and advocates contacted lawmakers, shared their experiences, participated in regional meetings, and traveled to the state Capitol to demonstrate the urgent need for sustainable funding.

Sen. Scott Martin, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, played a critical role in advancing the funding increase and building legislative support for the investment.

“Rape crisis centers have faced a growing demand for services to support survivors of sexual abuse and assault,” said Sen. Scott Martin. “I’m extremely pleased we were able to show our strong commitment to victims and those who have dedicated their lives to providing these critical services around the clock.”

For local rape crisis centers, the investment provides an opportunity to restore stability, strengthen staffing and ensure survivors can continue accessing timely support in their own communities.

“This investment means YWCA Lancaster can move forward with greater stability and renewed hope,” said Stacie Blake, CEO of YWCA Lancaster. “It means more survivors in Lancaster County can reach a trained advocate, receive counseling, and find support without facing longer waits or fewer options. Our staff and volunteers have continued showing up through years of uncertainty because survivors needed us. We thank Sen. Martin for his continued leadership and are deeply grateful that Pennsylvania has now chosen to show up for them, too.”

The investment will also help sustain services in Philadelphia, where WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence serves as the city’s only rape crisis center.

“We are deeply grateful to Governor Shapiro and Pennsylvania’s legislators for recognizing the critical role rape crisis centers play in supporting survivors and strengthening communities. We especially thank Philadelphia’s legislative delegation for listening to Philly’s survivors, hearing the concerns of our dedicated advocates, and helping deliver this historic investment,” said LaQuisha Anthony, Acting Executive Director of WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence. This investment gives WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence, the city’s only rape crisis center, greater stability to remain a vital part of Philadelphia’s public safety infrastructure. Every day, our advocates answer crisis calls, accompany survivors through hospitals and courtrooms, and provide counseling and support as people rebuild their lives. WOAR is an essential lifeline for this city, and this funding helps ensure that lifeline remains strong when survivors need us most.”

Rape crisis centers are a vital part of Pennsylvania’s public safety infrastructure. Advocates respond when survivors call after an assault, accompany victims through forensic examinations, help families understand their legal options, and provide counseling as survivors rebuild their lives. This support can also help survivors remain engaged with investigations and the criminal justice process.

Early intervention reduces the long-term costs associated with untreated trauma, including health care needs, housing instability, lost productivity, substance use, and involvement with emergency and criminal justice systems. Investing in rape crisis centers strengthens communities while preserving an established network of local providers with decades of experience serving Pennsylvania families.

“We are grateful that Pennsylvania chose to invest in survivors and the people who stand beside them,” said **Ali Perrotto, CEO of the Sexual Assault Resource & Counseling Center of Lebanon County**. “This milestone was achieved by survivors who told the truth, staff who carried the weight, and volunteers who refused to let the need be ignored. Their courage moved lawmakers. Their persistence changed the budget.”

Last year, rape crisis centers throughout the state met with 17,017 new clients, which is a 13% increase from the previous year. Advocates answered 17,458 hotline calls, provided 119,330 hours of counseling, and reached 242,000 children through school programs.

The new funding will help centers begin addressing staffing shortages, long waitlists, inadequate wages, and growing service demands. PCAR will work with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and local rape crisis centers to distribute the funding and support its effective implementation across the Commonwealth.

PCAR thanks Gov. Shapiro, Sen. Martin, legislative leaders, and lawmakers from both parties who supported this investment. The coalition also recognizes the survivors, center staff, volunteers and community advocates whose testimony, persistence and courage kept this need before Pennsylvania’s leaders.

Survivors were heard. Pennsylvania acted. This investment will help ensure that when someone reaches out after experiencing sexual violence, trained and compassionate support is there to answer.

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About the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect

The Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect is the Commonwealth’s recognized coalition working to prevent sexual violence and support survivors. PCAR supports and strengthens Pennsylvania’s network of rape crisis centers, which provide free and confidential counseling, advocacy, prevention education and crisis intervention services in all 67 counties. PCAR is a division of Respect Together, a national organization working to end sexual abuse, assault, and harassment.

Find Help

Free and confidential help is available through Pennsylvania’s rape crisis centers. To locate a center or connect with services, visit [PCAR.org](https://www.pcar.org) or call 1-888-772-7227.