Survivors’ Access to Supportive Care Act (SASCA)

Position

The International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) maintains that the federal government must assist in ensuring victims of sexual assault and domestic violence have access to essential services when an assault has been committed. IAFN calls upon Congress to enact the *Survivors’ Access to Supportive Care Act (SASCA)* during this 117th Congress to ensure these services are available within urban and rural communities across the United States.

It is anticipated the SASCA will be reintroduced during the month of March 2021 by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) in the Senate. A companion bill in the House of Representatives will be reintroduced by Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA).

SASCA would do the following: 1) strengthen the sexual assault examiner workforce by evaluating state-level needs, 2) develop and test national standards of care for victims of sexual assault, 3) increase understanding of and access to sexual assault care nationwide, 4) increase understanding of and access to sexual assault care nationwide, 5) increase access to SAFE/SANE services for students, and 6) create a new resource center to provide technical assistance to states and hospitals in providing care to survivors.

Background

Data on the number of sexual assault examiners nationwide and in selected states are limited or unavailable. SASCA will provide for state-level surveys to better understand the availability of sexual assault examiners, the costs of training, the spectrum of state-training requirements and standards, and the status of funding at the state level for sexual assault examinations.

Currently, no federal programs exist for the sole purpose of expanding access to health care for survivors of sexual assault, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) does not oversee any national standard or certification protocol for sexual assault examiners. SASCA will address both of these needs by directing HHS to establish a national training and continuing education program, to be tested and incorporated by health care providers nationwide, including in rural areas where
access to sexual assault examinations is limited due to provider and hospital shortages.

SASCA will establish a pilot grant program to expand medical forensic exam training and services to new providers, as well as to Federally Qualified Health Centers and Title X funded clinics to expand access in rural areas. SASCA will also establish a national sexual assault taskforce of government agencies and key stakeholders to better understand sexual assault and address the needs of victims. This taskforce will additionally provide a best-practices guide to treating survivors of sexual assault.

SASCA will require that institutions of higher education make students aware of SAFE/SANE services on campus, including by providing information on the nearest hospital with SAFE/SANE services for student as well as information on transportation costs.

SASCA will create a new resource center, available to any hospital receiving federal funds, which aims to support access to sexual assault forensic examinations and encourage training. In addition, the center will facilitate interstate learning collectives to help share and learn best practices.

For more information or to become an original cosponsor of SASCA, please contact Laurel Sakai in Senator Patty Murray’s office at Laurel_Sakai@help.senate.gov or Stephanie Kang in Rep. Jayapal’s office at stephanie.kang@mail.house.gov. Please contact IAFN’s Federal Representative, Patrick Cooney, at Patrick@federalgrp.com or (202) 413-2629 (m) with any questions you might have regarding this issue.