

December 2007

## Official Position Statement on **MANDATORY EDUCATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, JUDICIARY AND COURT EMPLOYEES**

### POSITION

It is the position of the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) that all judges, prosecutors, and police officers should be mandated to attend training on issues related to sexual violence. The curriculum will educate judges, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors about the unique nature of sex crimes and be approved by NJCASA.

### RATIONALE

Sexual assault is the most underreported violent crime in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Reporting and prosecuting sexual violence is vital to ensuring the safety of our citizens. Survivors and their loved ones often describe the judicial process as a revictimization. Many survivors of sexual violence are reluctant to be involved in the prosecution of their attackers. In addition to formal changes in the law, government officials involved in the criminal justice system should receive educational programming on working with survivors of sexual violence to ensure the process does not re-victimize survivors and other witnesses.

With such education in place, judges will be knowledgeable about the impact of sexual violence and participation in a criminal trial on a survivor, as well as the unique challenges present for those involved in the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence. Prosecutors and law enforcement officers will be given information that will assist them in viewing sex crimes as serious criminal incidents that should be fully prosecuted while maintaining a respectful attitude toward the survivor and her or his needs. Mandatory education will eradicate the misconceptions about both sexual violence and sex offender management that taint the judicial process. By eradicating misconceptions and promoting respectful attitudes toward survivors within the criminal justice system it is more likely that survivors will report sexual violence and increasing the number of offenders who may be prosecuted.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: National Victims Centre and Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center. 1992. Rape in America: A Report to the Nation. p. 11.