



## Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocates as Frontline Workers

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August 24, 2021

To: Members of the Minnesota Frontline Worker Pay Working Group

From: Violence Free Minnesota, The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA), The Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC), Sacred Hoop Coalition, The Minnesota Alliance on Crime (MAC)

**Re: The Frontline Work of Victim Advocates During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Dear Members of the Minnesota Frontline Worker Pay Working Group,

In collaboration, Minnesota's coalitions working to end violence and abuse request that victim advocates working in shelters and providing direct services to victims/survivors of crime be included in the pool for frontline workers pay. Our five statewide coalitions represent more than 100 programs who provide domestic and sexual violence services across the state in all 87 counties.

Domestic and sexual violence programs provide essential services. During the 2011 government shutdown, our programs were named critical core functions of government. We continue to be considered essential services. Under Governor Walz's emergency executive order 20-20 directing Minnesotans to Stay at Home, our services were exempted as critical, essential services. Indeed, our programs across the state remained open, providing services for those experiencing abuse or violence at home. Our programs have a direct and immediate impact on the public safety, health and well-being of Minnesotans.

For two weeks immediately prior to the Stay at Home order, calls coming into the statewide DayOne crisis hotline were up 10%. For the week of March 2, 2020 – the first week of the Stay at Home order – the hotline calls increased by 26%. All of our shelters, parenting time centers, and programs providing direct services had to juggle continued or increased demand for shelter and direct services while struggling to access protective gear and cleaning supplies for their congregate living spaces in order to maintain the health and safety of themselves and those in shelter. This put shelter workers and advocates at increased risk and exposure to COVID-19 during incredibly chaotic and uncertain moment in history.

When victim/survivors of domestic and sexual violence reach out for shelter or services for themselves and their children, victim advocates must be present to meet a wide variety of needs during an incredibly frightening time of crisis. As our advocates continue to provide these essential in-person services during the additional crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic (and again with the surge of the Delta variant), they have and continue to assume higher risks of contracting COVID-19 in a congregate living environment.

We appreciate your consideration of victim advocates in shelter, parenting-time centers, and direct services organizations in the pool of frontline worker pay. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the statewide coalitions if we can provide any additional information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Katie Kramer  
Policy Director  
Violence Free Minnesota

Artika Roller  
Executive Director  
MNCASA

Bobbi Holtberg  
Executive Director  
MN Alliance on Crime

Nicole Matthews  
Executive Director  
MIWSAC

Katy Eagle  
Executive Director  
Sacred Hoop