



General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Joint State Government Commission
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***Short Summary in Response to House Resolution 642 of 2020
Mental Health Services for Victims of Sexual Assault and Rape, A Staff Study***

In response to national reporting on the traumatic psychological and financial impact of sexual assault and rape in American culture, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives adopted House Resolution 642, P.N. 3023, on February 4, 2020. The resolution directs the Joint State Government Commission to publish, within a year, a report on the shortcomings of mental health services for survivors of sexual assault and rape, and how they can be improved.

Specifically, the resolution directed the Commission to review and report on:

- Factors that deter persons from seeking mental health services
- Sources of funding for mental health services for survivors, including Victims Compensation Assistance Program, and ways to better advertise and utilize those resources
- Better structure for telephone hotlines to result in a more streamlined process in connecting callers with local mental health care providers
- Use of telemedicine to bridge provider gaps
- Determine if a national certification program would be appropriate to assist survivors in finding an experienced provider

Additionally, the resolution calls for specific recommendations on how to best connect victims who report to hospitals for examination with mental health services before leaving the hospital and any other solutions to better serve survivors who are seeking mental health treatment.

This report offers recommendations that ensure the quality of medical care received by survivors is sensitive to the psychological responses of the survivor even while undergoing examination and treatment. This includes recommendations to promote a certified sexual assault nurse examiner program, increase the use of telehealth, and providing for a designation of all hospitals based on their ability to provide comprehensive sexual assault services to aid in triage of sexual assault victims. Additionally, a notification and posting program for sexual assault hotlines and services is recommended that could provide information to survivors in an easily accessible manner, which may be particularly helpful for those who do not seek immediate care.

Additionally, this report examines existing laws and services in Pennsylvania and makes recommendations to improve their responsiveness to sexual assault and rape survivors.

The full report is available on our website <http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/>