



## For Immediate Release

**Contact:**

Jill J. Morris, Director of Communications  
717.728.9740, x144  
jmorris@pcar.org

HARRISBURG, PA (April 9, 2008) – Survivors of sexual abuse and advocates for victim services rallied at the Capitol Rotunda Wednesday in an effort to bring awareness to concerns of proposed state funding levels.

The Support Our Services Rally was organized by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape.

State funding for victim services remained level in Gov. Edward Rendell's proposed Fiscal Year 2008-09 budget. This funding goes to 52 rape crisis centers and sexual assault programs that serve the 67 counties throughout the state. It's the second time in four years that victims' programs may be forced to operate without a Cost of Living Adjustment.

"Flat funding in the face of increased costs is merely decreased funding," said Sen. Michael O'Pake. "That's a truth we cannot let become a reality."

Rape crisis centers throughout the state say that because of the budget crunch, they may ultimately be required to cut or limit services to victims of sexual assault.

The statistics show cuts in services are unacceptable, advocates said.

In a 2008 survey of the 52 centers throughout the state, 70.8 percent indicated level funding would force them to lay off staff, and 14.6% would probably cancel projects such as community outreach and school programs.

Since 2001, rape crisis centers have lost more than 240 staff – or the equivalent of 280,000 direct victim service hours.

Some rape crisis centers indicated in the survey they may be forced to implement a waiting list, or increase the number of victims who have to wait for services, because of these funding crunches.

In Fiscal Year 2006-07, Pennsylvania rape crisis centers and Sexual Assault programs provided confidential and free services to 13,410 adult victims of sexual violence, 9,934 children who were sexually abused, and 13,320 family members of victims.

“Based on these numbers, we can not afford to place victims of crime – women, children and men – who seek help onto waiting lists, or to cut much-needed education and outreach programs,” said Delilah Rumburg, executive director of PCAR.

Survivors of sexual abuse spoke to the crowd about the impacts of abuse, and about the benefits of the services.

State Representatives RoseMarie Swanger and Paul Clymer, and Senators Jane Orié and Jay Costa also attended the rally, and vowed to lobby for at least a 3 percent COLA in the budget.

Liz, a survivor of abuse, talked through tears about the nightmares and fake smiles that encompassed her life during six years of abuse. But she also talked about the counseling she received through The Crime Victims’ Center of Chester County, Inc., and the support they provided to her during the trial and conviction of her perpetrator—her stepfather.

“The Victim’s Center helped me so much,” Liz said. “Without them, I wouldn’t be who I am right now.”

The COLA would increase the line item in the budget for rape crisis centers by about \$183,000 in FY 2008-09.

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**CUTLINE:**

Delilah Rumburg, executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, speaks at a Support Our Services Rally to bring awareness to concerns of proposed state funding levels.