

April 10, 2015

Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts
Rules Comments
Hughes Justice Complex; P.O. Box 037 Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0037

Dear Committee Members:

The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback regarding rule amendments recommended in relation Unified Health Service Provider Privilege.

NJCASA represents the twenty-one county-based rape crisis centers in New Jersey, plus the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at Rutgers University. NJCASA, through working with sexual assault service providers, allied professionals, and survivors, elevates the statewide discourse around the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in our communities.

NJCASA's member organizations provide comprehensive sexual violence services to survivors and their loved ones – 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. Much of our work with survivors relies on the foundation upon which privilege is extended to victim-counselor communication. Current law recognizes that privilege.

NJCASA believes that victim-counselor communications are substantively and fundamentally different than other mental health communications and by their very nature are entitled to a stronger privilege, for which the law *currently* provides. **NJCASA urges the Committee to retain the status quo for victim-counselor privilege, or suggests that it take a functional approach and allow it to attach to victims and communications had with other service providers.**

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process and hope that the Committee will take into consideration the unique and sensitive nature of sexual assault, and the need for advocates to maintain privileged communication with survivors.

Sincerely,



Patricia Teffenhart, MPA
Executive Director