

ANNUAL REPORT

2021



CENTER FOR SURVIVOR
AGENCY & JUSTICE

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A LETTER FROM ERIKA

Dear Friends and Supporters:

The year of 2021 was a year of great inequity, but it was also a year of deep impact for the Center for Survivor Agency and Justice.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic outlook for those who had experienced domestic violence was bleak. The monthly income of survivors was typically less than \$1,000 and 70% of survivors were in debt, often as a result of their partner's fraud or coercion. By the end of 2021, twenty months into the pandemic, the economic outlook for domestic violence survivors was substantially worse. Ninety percent of advocates reported that survivors had lost income, couldn't pay bills, and were food insecure. Many did not receive the stimulus checks due to immigration barriers or abuse by their partners, and many could not access the courts due to shutdowns. The economic impacts of the pandemic were most profoundly felt by survivors who are Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+, and members of other marginalized groups.

Throughout 2021, CSAJ fostered change at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels, to address economic inequity and expand economic justice for survivors across the nation. We launched a groundbreaking Access to Justice e-Course, a 7 part virtual training that puts critical resources and knowledge on economic justice at the fingertips of legal advocates. We held the first ever Coerced Debt National Summit, which drew



ERIKA SUSSMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

over 100 practitioners from 36 states across the nation to learn about cutting-edge strategies and organize for systems and policy change. We organized a powerful coalition of advocates and survivors from across New York City to develop a NYC Economic Equity Agenda for Survivors that will fuel citywide legislative and policy change in the year ahead. And, CSAJ led and supported National, State, and Local Efforts to address the systemic barriers and create more equitable policies for survivors of domestic and sexual violence across the nation. CSAJ contributed to the White House National Action Plan on Gender Equity. And, thanks to the federal legislative efforts of our Coerced Debt Working Group, the Violence Against Women Act now includes protections for survivors who experience economic abuse.

As I write this letter, 2022 is awash in challenges as well as opportunities that are ripe for impactful change. A global pandemic continues to exacerbate the economic and racial inequities, while the white supremacist movement poses dire threats to Black and other marginalized Americans on a daily basis. These structural inequities and ongoing racial trauma fundamentally shapes survivors' lived experience and demands that we focus our efforts on systemic transformation.

In the year ahead, CSAJ will: build the capacity of state domestic violence coalitions and programs to advance economic and racial equity; organize and develop a National Equity Agenda for Survivors; advance coerced debt advocacy in states across the nation; and embolden the work of community based advocates in their efforts to address the economic needs of survivors.

Our call to action has never been clearer, nor has it been more urgent. In 2022, with your support and partnership, CSAJ will draw closer to our vision of a world where all people have equal access to physical safety, economic security, and human dignity.

In solidarity and with gratitude,
Erika Sussman

MISSION

Our mission is to promote advocacy approaches that remove systemic barriers, enhance organizational responses, and improve professional practices to meet the self-defined needs of domestic and sexual violence survivors.

VISION

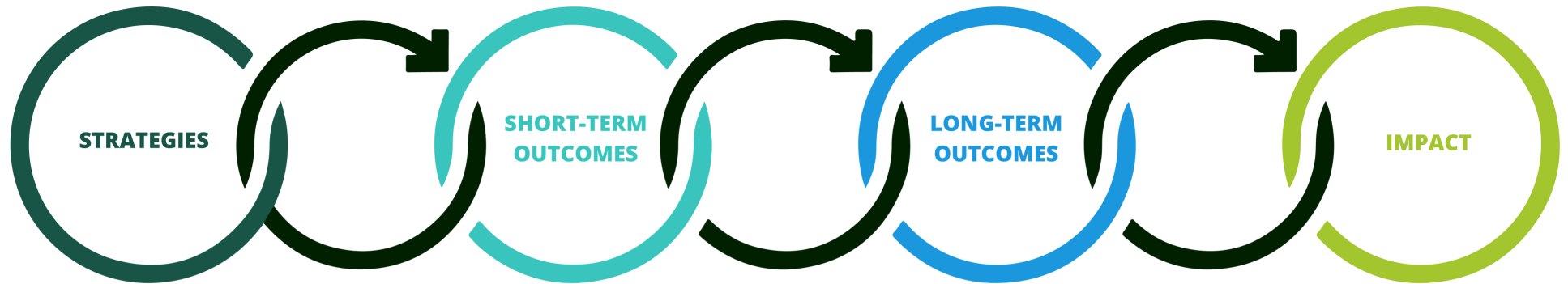
We envision a world where all people have equal access to physical safety, economic security, and human dignity.

VALUES

To carry out our mission, we've established a number of organizational values and a theory of change that put the principles of survivor centered advocacy into our practice:

- **Survivor Centered Advocacy**
- **Margins to Center**
- **Agency**
- **Economic Agency**
- **Civil Legal Advocacy**
- **Multilevel Advocacy**
- **Intersectional Approaches**
- **Partnership & Collaboration**
- **Praxis**

THEORY OF CHANGE



WORK WITH ADVOCATES

1. In-person & online training on economic advocacy
2. Develop tools and resources on economic advocacy
3. Gather experts to develop solutions and create strategies



Increased knowledge, skills, and strategies on consumer and economic advocacy

Better able to meet the consumer and economic needs of survivors

WORK WITH ORGANIZATIONS & COMMUNITIES

1. Assess gaps in—and opportunities to strengthen—economic advocacy for survivors
2. Develops and pilot solutions, including facilitating and strengthening among community members, experts, and other stakeholders
3. Compiles and disseminates best practices



Increased understanding and capacity to address the gaps in their economic advocacy and services

Strengthen their approaches to meet the economic needs of survivors

WORK TO INFLUENCE POLICY & SYSTEMS

1. Submit comments and present testimony on proposed regulations, and advocate for policy change
2. Builds coalitions of advocates and experts to support local, state, and national efforts
3. Conducts public awareness and communications campaigns
4. File and contribute to amicus briefs in impact litigations



Lawmakers and judges have a greater awareness of survivors' consumer and economic needs

Laws and systems are responsive survivors' consumer and economic needs

Survivors of domestic and sexual violence have equal access to economic security, physical safety, and human dignity

KEY PROJECTS

CONSUMER RIGHTS INITIATIVE

A national project that enhances economic justice for survivors by building the capacity of and building partnerships between domestic violence and consumer law attorneys, advocates, and programs.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROJECT

(Accounting for Costs to Ensure Survivor Safety) A national project for non-lawyer legal advocates to address the costs & inequities that block survivors' access to civil justice.

RACIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY FOR SURVIVORS PROJECT (REEP)

A national project that brought together partners from anti-poverty, anti-racist, and anti-violence fields to help programs identify and address structural inequities facing survivors.

ACCOUNTING FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY

An Atlas that expands survivor economic agency by helping advocates and programs map, navigate and change the economic landscape.

PILOT & DEMONSTRATION SITES

Resources, innovative models of practice, and work with specific organizations to foster organizational and community change.

RESEARCH & POLICY WORK

Research that reflects survivors' lives, and fuels policy and systems change to create real impact.

STRENGTHENING ADVOCATE CAPACITY

THE QUICK READ



896 advocates

serving 32,000 survivors

We trained nearly 1,000 on-the-ground advocates in 14 trainings, who in turn helped to meet the economic needs of over 32,000 survivors.



90%

**increase coerced-debt
advocacy skill**

After the first ever National Coerced Debt Summit, 90% of participants reported increased knowledge and skills to address coerced debt and a better understanding of their state's legal context.



85

advocates enrolled

We filled critical training gaps. Just days after launching the groundbreaking Access to Justice eCourse, 85 advocates and programs had already enrolled.



THE IMPACT

- Enhanced consumer and economic advocacy through training and TA
- Ensured advocates infuse economics into every aspect of their work
- Equipped with individual and organizational strategies

Access to Justice E-Course

We launched a groundbreaking Access to Justice eCourse. A 7-part virtual training that puts critical resources and training at advocates' fingertips. One month later, 85 advocates have already started it.

Training Topics

coerced debt, starting the economic conversation, building community resilience committees, accessing the Child Tax Credit, and implications for family law cases, and more.

"Being able to talk with others about economic safety planning helped me to feel less alone. I have been the resource point person for a while and it is fun to be able to hear of ideas I have not thought of!"

-Advocate

ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY CHANGE

THE QUICK READ



100
practitioners
from 36 states

The first ever National Coerced Debt Summit drew 100 practitioners from 36 states to organize for state legislative change to address coerced debt.

400
hours

We responded to 126 requests for support from on-the-ground organizations seeking everything from case consultation to organizational change.



90+
advocates connected

As a result of the Coerced Debt Summit, we launched a national email listserv that keeps 90+ advocates connected, problem-solving, and organizing for change.



THE IMPACT

- Connected advocates and attorneys and built cross-movement partnerships
- Built organizational capacity to provide survivor-centered economic advocacy
- Built capacity of individual advocates to engage in systems and policy change

Demonstration Projects

- We worked with the District Alliance for Safe Housing in a 12+ month demonstration project to integrate survivor centered economic advocacy into their culturally specific, housing advocacy and programs.
- We fostered more equitable funding and partnerships to support advocacy and programming in Wisconsin and Connecticut (in partnership with the Alliance of Local Service Organizations).
- We developed an Equity Data Dashboard that puts needed data on violence, economics, and social inequity at the fingertips of program and coalition leaders.

“I’ve seen the magic of CSAJ joining [meetings with City legislators] and being able to share local and national data.”-Camba Legal Services

“During COVID-19, everyone else’s eyes were forced to look at issues we’ve been struggling with for a long time. And there’s more coalescing from all sorts of fronts - fronts typically siloed.” - Urban Justice Center

POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

THE QUICK READ



70%
have debt

Our Economic Well-Being Study revealed 70% of survivors (pre-pandemic) had debt, half reported coerced debt. Typical debt loads are \$20,000 from medical bills, utilities, and credit cards.



3
**federal
policy shifts**

We agitated for 3 federal consumer rights policy shifts and successfully included a definition of economic abuse in VAWA.

8

**NYC Advocacy
Organizations**

We convened and supported 8 NYC advocacy organizations to develop a policy platform and agenda for Survivors Economic Equity.



THE IMPACT

- Fostered a surge in consumer rights and coerced debt legislation
- Increased awareness about the link between violence and economic inequity
- Put survivors' economic needs on policy makers' agendas and led national efforts for systems and policy change.

Coerced Debt Working Group

We led and supported National, State, and Local Efforts to address systemic barriers and create more equitable policies and systems. Our Coerced Debt Working Group contributed language to address debt and economic abuse more generally through powerful federal legislative efforts, such as the Comprehensive Credit Act and the Violence Against Women Act.

Economic Equity Agenda For Survivors

We organized a powerful coalition of advocates from across New York City to develop an Economic Equity Agenda for Survivors that will fuel citywide legislative and policy change. To date, we have held four visioning calls with representatives from 26 community-based organizations, and held two calls with 30 Latinx survivors.

Policy Successes

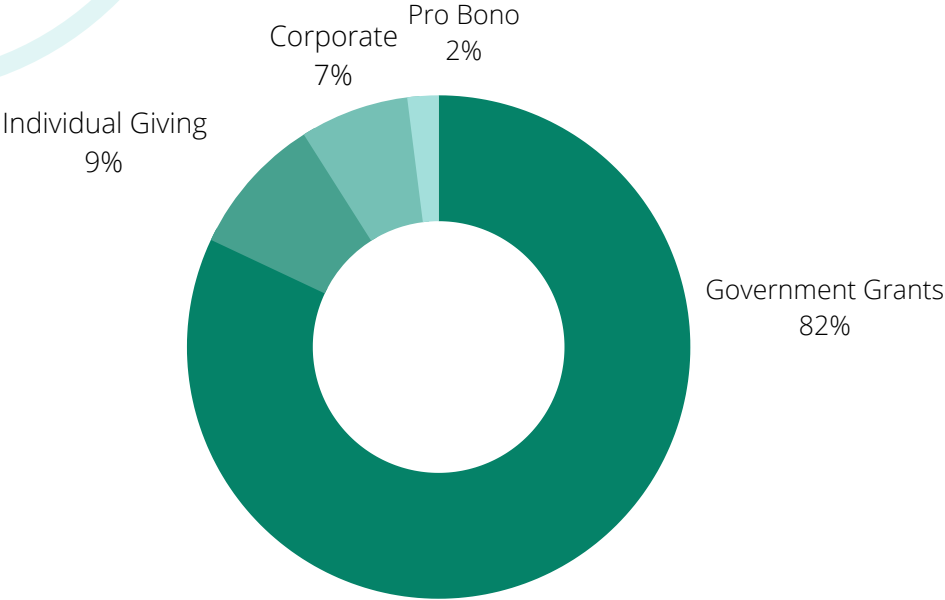
- Department of Treasury: addressed stolen or not received stimulus checks (via CARES Act & American Rescue Plan)
- Violence Against Women Act: Economic Abuse Provision included in VAWA
- Comprehensive Credit Act: Pushed reforms to credit reporting and repair systems
- State Coerced Debt Legislation: Texas, Maine, California sought changes...and soon New York

Research Learnings

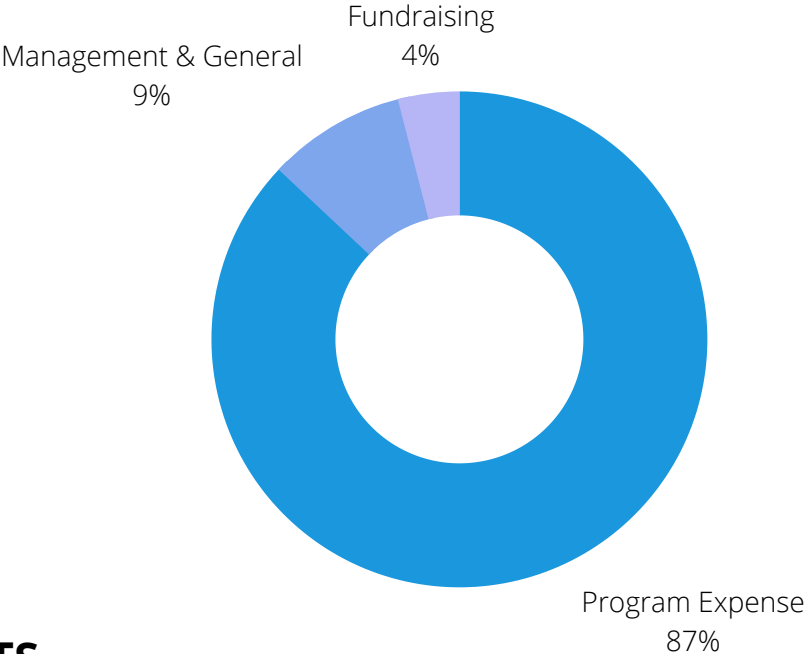
- Findings on Survivors' Economic Well-Being from surveys of 627 survivors in 13 states
- Published six regional Snapshots on Coerced Debt
- Released a Full Data Dashboard on the Economic Impact of COVID-19

FINANCIALS

FUNDING SOURCES



OPERATIONAL EXPENSES



ACHIEVEMENTS

Funding Achievements

Increased revenue from 2020 to 2021 by 10%
84% of our grants are multi-year which allows for planning ahead and sustainability
Individual Giving increased 100%

Operational Achievements

Hired two new staff: a Director of Operations and a Capacity Building Manager

DEEP GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS

GOVERNMENT & PRIVATE FUNDERS

Office of Violence Against Women,
Department of Justice
Allstate Foundation
New York Women's Foundation

CORPORATE DONORS

Google
Alliance Bernstein LLP
The Walt Disney Company
Crime Junkie Podcast
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Billie Kaufman
Jeffrey Kochian
Cathern Koehlert
Ross and Tracy Levitt
Risa Lieberwitz

Dana & Leon Liebowitz
Laura Lucy-Ilan
Annie Lukingbeal
Dan and Maia Madger
Evan Mallah
Sally Margolis
Kim McCarthy
John McGuire
Carly and David Miller
Muna Ndulo
Rich Palermo
Dennis Perluss
Donna Rabinowitz
Angela Rehm
Ian Rosenberg
Nelson Roth
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Mary Schillinger
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Marvin & Mildred Simson
Gail Stockamp
Ari Sussman
Bob & Diane Sussman
Douglas and Ellen Sussman
Michael Todd Taylor
Winnie Taylor
Frederick & Debra Title
Blanche Valancy
LuAnn Wee

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LOOKING AHEAD

IN THE YEAR AHEAD, CSAJ WILL

- Build the capacity of state domestic violence coalitions and programs to advance economic and racial equity
- Organize and develop a National Equity Agenda for Survivors
- Conduct research and leverage data to address the systemic economic barriers facing survivors
- Advance coerced debt advocacy in states and across the nation
- Embolden the work of community-based advocates in their efforts to address the economic needs of survivors