

Community Needs Assessment Report

Prepared for Public Audiences | 2026





Executive Summary

Sexual violence affects people of every age, gender identity, race, income level, and community. Survivors often navigate not only trauma, but also fear, shame, isolation, and complex systems that can make seeking help feel overwhelming.

In 2025, Cleveland Rape Crisis Center (CRCC) conducted a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CNA) to better understand how survivors and community members across Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, and Ashtabula Counties experience CRCC, what barriers remain to accessing support, and how CRCC can continue evolving to meet community needs. This condensed report shares key findings from that work. The full report is available upon request.

The assessment affirms that CRCC continues to be a highly trusted, deeply valued organization. Survivors consistently describe CRCC as compassionate, affirming, and life-changing. At the same time, the findings highlight important opportunities: clarifying who CRCC serves, expanding flexible service options, increasing visibility across the full four-county region, and addressing the shame and fear that continue to prevent many survivors from seeking help.

This report reflects what the community shared—and how CRCC is listening.

This condensed report is adapted from the full 2025 Community Needs Assessment & Program Evaluation prepared by The Center for Community Solutions.



About Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

Founded in 1974, Cleveland Rape Crisis Center is the only organization in Northeast Ohio exclusively dedicated to supporting survivors of rape, sexual abuse, and sexual violence, as well as their non-offending loved ones. For more than 50 years, CRCC has been a trusted provider of trauma-informed services and a leader in prevention, education, and systems change.

CRCC provides a comprehensive continuum of services, including:

- 24/7 confidential hotline (phone, text, and chat)
- Trauma therapy for children, adolescents, and adults
- Victim advocacy and accompaniment
- Case management and wraparound support
- Specialized human trafficking services and a drop-in center
- Prevention education and professional training

CRCC serves a four-county region—Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, and Ashtabula—and delivers services both in person and remotely to ensure access for survivors across urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Community Profile & Service Area

CRCC's service area spans more than 1.67 million residents across Northeast Ohio. This region includes dense urban neighborhoods, growing suburban communities, and expansive rural areas—each with distinct strengths, challenges, and access barriers.

Key community characteristics include:

- Over one-third of residents identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color
- Nearly one-third of residents live in or near poverty
- More than 40% of residents rely on public health insurance (Medicaid, Medicare, or VA)
- Between 16–20% of adults report frequent mental distress

Housing affordability, transportation access, and economic instability vary significantly across counties and shape survivors' ability to seek support. These conditions underscore the importance of flexible, geographically responsive, and culturally humble service delivery.

Why a Community Needs Assessment

CRCC last conducted a community-wide needs assessment in 2017. Since then, the region has experienced profound changes, including the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability, shifts in technology and service delivery, and evolving conversations around equity, identity, and trauma.

The 2025 Community Needs Assessment was conducted to:

- Understand how survivors and community members perceive CRCC today
- Identify barriers that prevent people from accessing help
- Learn how service preferences vary by age, geography, and identity
- Inform CRCC's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan

The assessment included community surveys, focus groups with survivors, stakeholder interviews, and program evaluation data. Together, these voices provide a roadmap for strengthening access, trust, and impact.

Community Needs Assessment Themes

The findings from the assessment coalesced into five interconnected themes. Each theme reflects how community members experience CRCC, how they seek support, and what they believe would strengthen the region’s response to sexual violence.



Theme 1: Perceptions of CRCC

CRCC is widely recognized and respected. Fewer than 8% of survey respondents had never heard of the organization, and nearly three-quarters said they understand what CRCC does. Survivors and partners frequently described CRCC as a “lifeline,” a place of safety, and a source of healing.

At the same time, perceptions of CRCC’s scope are uneven. Some community members—particularly those outside Cleveland or in rural areas—assume services are only for people who live in the city or who experienced a recent assault. Awareness is lower for services available to men, people assaulted many years ago, and individuals whose first language is not English.

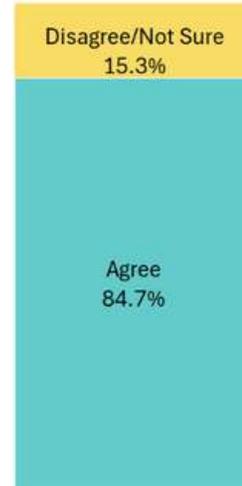
The name “Cleveland Rape Crisis Center” generated thoughtful, mixed feedback. Many value the honesty and clarity of the word “rape,” while others find it triggering or worry it limits reach. These perspectives varied by identity, underscoring the importance of inclusive, nuanced messaging.

Theme 2: Trust

Trust is one of CRCC's greatest strengths. Approximately 85% of respondents said CRCC is an organization they trust, and more than 90% believe it could help a friend or family member. Trust is reinforced through personal experience—nearly all survivors who used CRCC services reported that their privacy was respected.

Many respondents have referred loved ones or clients to CRCC, reflecting confidence in the organization's care and professionalism. While trust is high across groups, younger adults expressed slightly lower confidence, pointing to an opportunity for targeted outreach and engagement.

CRCC is an organization I can trust



“[My therapist’s] compassion and wisdom created a safe space where I felt heard, understood, and empowered to grow.”

- CRCC Client



Theme 3: Service Delivery Preferences

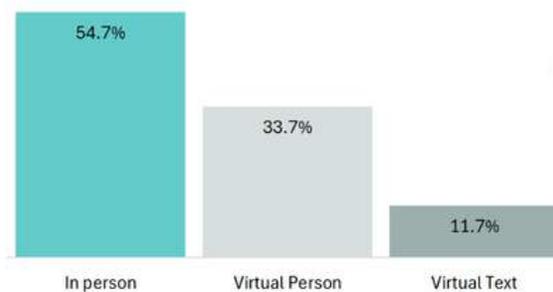
Community members expressed strong preferences for flexible, accessible services. Overall, many prefer in-person support, especially within CRCC’s four-county service area. Survivors in more distant counties and younger respondents showed greater openness to virtual and text-based options.

Across groups, respondents emphasized:

- The importance of evening and weekend availability
- Desire for services close to home, work, or school
- Continued access to telehealth and remote support

These preferences highlight the need for hybrid service models that meet survivors where they are.

Where is the best place to receive services?



Theme 4: Barriers to Care

Despite high trust, many survivors face significant barriers to seeking help. The most common barriers include shame, fear of not being believed, concern that the assault happened “too long ago,” safety fears related to the abuser, and worries about being forced to involve law enforcement.

I do not think anyone will believe me.

I feel ashamed or embarrassed about asking for help.

I don't want to be forced to go to the police.

I'm afraid of my abuser or rapist finding out where I am.

Compared to 2017, these barriers have intensified—particularly fear, shame, and concerns about police involvement. LGBTQ+ survivors reported especially high levels of internalized barriers.

Reducing stigma, increasing clarity about confidential services, and normalizing help-seeking are critical to improving access.

Theme 5: Opportunities

Survivors and partners offered clear ideas for strengthening CRCC's impact:

- Louder, clearer outreach about who CRCC serves
- Increased presence in hospitals, schools, colleges, faith communities, and community spaces
- More culturally responsive and identity-affirming services
- Expanded holistic supports such as transportation, housing, and peer support

These opportunities align closely with CRCC's strategic priorities and community partnerships.



Key Takeaways

CRCC is a trusted, life-changing resource across Northeast Ohio

Awareness of who CRCC serves is strong but uneven

Survivors want flexible, accessible, and affirming services

Shame, fear, and misinformation remain major barriers to care

Community members want CRCC to be more visible, louder, and present



CRCC is committed to responding to these findings with compassion, accountability, and action—ensuring that every survivor knows they are not alone and that help is here.

“I cannot express enough gratitude
for the therapy services I received.
They truly saved my life.”

- CRCC Client



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