

2025 IMPACT REPORT



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the President	03
Letter from the Executive Director	04
Our Board & Staff	05
Our Mission	09
Advocacy	13
Education	22
Resources	30
Our Reach	35
Our Future	41

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

To our community,

This past year has been one of both evolution and resolution.

In November, we stepped into a new chapter and proudly introduced our new name, The Assist! This is a renewed reflection of who we are and how we lead: a global, survivor-founded, and survivor-led organization that equips athletes, families, coaches, and institutions with the tools to prevent abuse and build safer sports environments. The Assist represents connection, trust, and teamwork. We are a movement of survivors and allies communities working together to protect athletes. While our name evolved, our mission did not.

This year, we continued to push for the systemic reforms athletes deserve. When institutions faltered or allegations arose across youth, collegiate, and elite sports, we responded with clarity and compassion. Through various statements issued to the media, interviews, and opinion pieces, we stood in solidarity with survivors while calling for stronger safeguards, transparent reporting systems, and enforceable protections. As I told a journalist at Front Office Sports this fall, when someone is criminally charged with child sexual abuse, timely and effective cross-reporting is not optional. It is essential. When safety systems fail to activate, those procedural breakdowns put athletes at continued risk. Survivors deserve better than reactive responses. They deserve systems that work.

That belief guided our work alongside the U.S. Center for SafeSport during a critical period of scrutiny and reform. We advised on trauma-informed investigative practices, led trainings for investigative teams, reviewed survivor-facing communications, and helped strengthen processes to prevent further harm. These steps were concrete and survivor-informed, reflecting our commitment to both accountability and solutions. They also helped solidify our identity as a trusted partner and expert voice.

Through expanded Compassionate Coach® training and trauma-informed education initiatives, we equipped coaches and sport leaders with practical tools to recognize warning signs, understand the impact of trauma, and create athlete-centered team cultures. Strong boundaries protect athletes and good coaches, too.

We also strategically elevated this message during major sporting moments, reminding families that as young athletes are inspired by what they see on the global stage, safeguarding must be part of the dream from day one. Excellence in sport can never come at the expense of safety.

Behind every training, policy recommendation, and public statement was survivor leadership. As a survivor myself, I know that justice is not defined by headlines alone. Justice means change. It means stronger laws, improved oversight, mandatory reporting that functions as intended, and institutions that center healing and prevention rather than reputation management. Our strategic communications plan this year helped insert The Assist into conversations happening across the world, furthering our efforts to ensure that conversations about sport also included discussions about safety.

None of this work happens in isolation, but rather because of a community that believes athletes deserve better. Because of supporters who invest in trauma-informed education. Because of survivors who trust us to elevate and amplify their voices. Because of partners who are willing to examine systems honestly and commit to reform.

As we look ahead to another year of advocacy, I remain hopeful. Thank you for standing with us through this evolution. Thank you for believing survivors. Thank you for helping us build systems where safety is not an afterthought, but the foundation.

Together, we are redesigning sport so that every athlete can pursue their goals in environments that truly feel safe.

With gratitude and hope,

GRACE FRENCH

Founder & President, The Athlete Survivors' Assist



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To The Assist Community,

As we reflect on this past year, I am moved by how much growth, courage, and momentum can be built when survivors lead with clarity and conviction. Thanks to your partnership, this has been a defining year for our organization. 2025 honored our roots while also boldly stepping into our future.

As Grace mentioned, in November, we announced our new name: The Assist. We also launched a new digital platform to expand our reach and deepen our impact. This evolution was more than a rebrand. It was a reflection of who we have become. The Assist is a global, athlete-survivor-founded and survivor-led organization equipping athletes, families, coaches, and institutions with the tools to build safer sport environments. While our name changed, our mission did not. We continue to believe survivors, elevate their voices, and drive systemic reform so that abuse in sport is not inevitable, but preventable.

Over the past year, we advanced that mission across every pillar of our work: education, resources, and advocacy. Through expanded Compassionate Coach® training and trauma-informed education initiatives, we equipped coaches and sport leaders with practical strategies to recognize warning signs, create athlete-centered team cultures, and understand how trauma affects performance and wellbeing. We continued to reinforce a simple but powerful truth: strong boundaries and compassionate leadership protect athletes and strengthen sport.

At the national level, we leaned into moments of urgency and accountability. Throughout 2025, The Assist worked closely with the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center) as it continued to strengthen its trauma-informed practices and demonstrate institutional courage in transforming its investigative processes to be more trauma-informed. Over the course of the year, we led trainings for investigators, reviewed survivor-facing communications, and helped strengthen pathways to confidential survivor support. Survivors deserve systems that work and prioritize transparency, safety, and trust. We will continue to support ongoing efforts to strengthen athlete protection systems and help foster greater confidence in them.

When allegations surfaced across schools, universities, and elite sport, we responded with survivors in mind – standing in solidarity with those impacted while working to strengthen education, safeguards, and accountability. These moments are painful reminders that abuse in sport is not confined to one level or one program. But they are also reminders of why our work matters.

This year, we also strategically elevated our voice during major sporting moments to ensure that conversations about excellence in sport are inseparable from conversations about safety. As the world celebrated athletic achievement, we reminded families and communities that prevention must be proactive, visible, and embedded in everyday practice.

Behind every public statement, training, and policy recommendation is something even more powerful: survivor leadership. Our work continues to be guided by those with lived experience and by individuals whose insights shape legislation, inform investigative practices, and strengthen the standards we advocate for across the sport ecosystem. Justice for survivors means change, and change requires sustained partnership.

As we look ahead, the stakes remain high. Major global sporting events, legislative opportunities, and growing public awareness present an important window for reform. We are prepared to meet that moment with strategic communications, expanded programming, and unwavering survivor-centered advocacy. None of this would be possible without you.

Your support fuels this journey. It strengthens policy reform. It ensures that when survivors and whistleblowers reach out, someone is there to listen, believe, and act. Whether you have partnered with us through donations, collaboration, or by amplifying our message, you are part of this movement.

Together, we are building a culture where every athlete can train, compete, and pursue their dreams free from fear. On behalf of the entire team at The Assist, we thank you for standing with us.

With deep gratitude,

JULIE ANN RIVERS-COCHRAN, MSW

Executive Director, The Athlete Survivors' Assist





President & Founder

Grace French

Grace French is the President and Founder of The Athlete Survivors' Assist and a marketing professional dedicated to athlete safety and survivor advocacy. A survivor of abuse at Michigan State University, she works to reform sports culture, consent policies, and institutional accountability.

She has testified before Congress, spoken at the UN General Assembly, and advised organizations like FIFA and the IOC on athlete protections. Her advocacy has led to the passage of nine Michigan laws and the 2020 Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletes Act.



Vice President

Dr. Danielle Moore

Dr. Danielle Moore, a founding board member of The Athlete Survivors' Assist, advocates for athlete safety and survivor rights. A Nassar survivor, she works to improve the judicial process for others facing similar trauma. As an adjunct professor at The Chicago School, she holds a doctorate in clinical and forensic psychology and a master's degree in clinical and forensic psychology. Her expertise in trauma and mental health informs her advocacy. Honored with the Arthur Ashe Courage Award and Glamour's Women of the Year, Dr. Moore remains committed to systemic change and survivor support.



Board Director

Mary Cain

Mary is a medical student at Stanford University School of Medicine. After her groundbreaking 2019 NY Times Op-Ed, Mary has dedicated her career to driving change in sport, with an emphasis on athlete well-being. She is the founder of the nonprofit, Atalanta NYC, and serves on the board of The Athlete Survivors' Assist. Mary also had a record-breaking professional running career that included becoming the 2014 World Junior Champion in the 3000m and a finalist at the 2013 World Championships in the 1500m.



Board Director

Dwight Hicks

Dwight Hicks is a former professional football player, winning two Super Bowls (1981, 1984) with the San Francisco 49ers and appearing in four consecutive Pro Bowls (1981-84). Hicks also competed at the University of Michigan, where he received All-Big Ten Conference recognition and All-American Honors. Hicks now works in the entertainment industry and does motivational speaking engagements.



Board Director

Alexander S. Rusek

Alexander S. Rusek is a Shareholder at Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C., specializing in complex litigation, business law, and criminal defense. He has represented over 100 survivors in high-profile abuse cases and a defendant in the Flint Water Crisis (charges dismissed). A cum laude graduate of Michigan State University College of Law, Rusek serves on multiple boards, including The Assist, and is President-Elect of the Ingham County Bar Association. Recognized with numerous legal and community awards, he is also a published author and advocates for trauma-informed legal practices.



Board Director

Devi Jags

Devi Jags is an Entrepreneur, Writer, and Activist. She is co-founder of an Indian food brand, Sambar Kitchen. Her work can be seen through her endeavors: Chatty Monks Brewing, The Sparkle Community, and much more. Devi holds an MFA in Creative Nonfiction Writing from Sarah Lawrence College and has been published in The Washington Post, Vogue India, Teen Vogue, Women's Health, and Bon Appétit. She was a 2023 Winter Resident of the Tin House Publishers Workshop and has been interviewed by The Washington Post, Unit3d Podcast, and Newsy for her advocacy work in sexual violence prevention.



Board Secretary

Janelle Hill

Janelle Hill, APRN, PMHNP-BC, is a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. She is the owner/founder of Refuge Mental Health Services and has over 12 years of experience in psychiatry. Janelle obtained her Bachelor's Degree of Science in Nursing from the College of Saint Mary in 2012 and her Master's Degree in Science from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) in 2016. Janelle served as the legislative liaison for UNMC during her college career and has remained involved and an avid advocate against sexual abuse and violence on the local and national levels since that time.



Executive Director

Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran, MSW

Over 25 years ago, Julie Ann began her career in the field of the prevention and intervention of domestic violence and sexual assault by providing direct services and advocacy at local programs throughout the U.S. Prior to The Assist, Julie Ann worked for the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health. As a survivor of childhood trauma, Julie Ann is a fierce advocate whose personal experiences have translated into a lifelong goal of listening to, then advocating for survivors while holding perpetrators and the systems that support them accountable.



Director of Programs

Kacey Long, MSW

Kacey Long brings over a decade of experience in sexual violence prevention and survivor advocacy. A survivor and former athlete, she has focused on policy development, athlete protections, and trauma-responsive best practices. Before joining The Assist, Kacey oversaw 16 child advocacy centers in Georgia, assisting nonprofits in addressing child exploitation. She has served on Georgia’s Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force and multiple nonprofit boards dedicated to ending sexual violence. She holds a Master’s in Social Work from the University of Michigan.



Executive Assistant

Dominique Davis

Dominique is a mother of three, former elite gymnast, and athlete survivor dedicated to making sports safer. Her advocacy began after experiencing abuse as a young gymnast, fueling her passion for athlete safety and systemic change. She holds a degree in Exercise Physiology and Nutrition from the University of Missouri-Columbia and is a certified yoga instructor. An avid climber, she serves on the Board of the Southeastern Climbers Coalition. She is dedicated to creating a welcoming sports environment where all athletes can thrive.



Senior Policy and Advocacy Specialist

Emily Austin

Emily Austin, J.D., is the Founder and President of Pivot Advocacy, P.C., where she supports community and institutional change to end abuse through education, policy, and systems reform. She holds a B.A. from UCLA and a J.D. from USC Gould School of Law, and has led survivor-centered policy and training work across the sexual and domestic violence fields, including roles with ValorUS, the California Women’s Law Center, and Peace Over Violence. Emily brings deep expertise in trauma-informed practice and survivor-driven advocacy, including national and international systems reform to better support athlete survivors of abuse.



Senior Legislative Advocate

Sally Schaeffer

Sally Schaeffer is the founder of Uncorked Advocates, a federal government relations firm, and brings more than 25 years of experience advancing policy for nonprofits and philanthropic organizations. She has worked with The Assist since 2022 and specializes in charitable policy, appropriations, and issues impacting children and women, including gender-based violence and trauma. Sally previously served as Government Relations Director at Independent Sector and worked on Capitol Hill. She also served as the Washington advocate for Girl Scouts of the USA after successfully working on the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization of 2013, and she has been recognized by The Hill as a Top Lobbyist since 2021.

WE BELIEVE SPORTS SHOULD BE SAFE FOR ALL ATHLETES

We bring awareness, accountability and transparency to sexual violence against athletes at all levels.

From elite to non-elite, the culture of sports that tacitly supports sexual abuse against athletes does not discriminate based on an athlete's ability. Our work is athlete survivor-founded, survivor-led, and trauma-informed, and we carry out our work through three pillars that support our mission: education, resources, and advocacy.



The Athlete Survivors' Assist is a global organization that advocates for athlete-survivors of abuse in sports, working to amplify their voices and champion their rights. We are committed to ensuring that all athletes can compete in a safe, supportive environment—free from harm, fear, and failures in accountability. Through advocacy, education, and survivor-led initiatives, The Assist strives to create a sports culture that prioritizes protection, accountability, and justice.

Founded in 2018 by survivors of sexual abuse by the now-defamed and imprisoned Michigan State University (MSU) sports medicine physician whose crimes were enabled by MSU, USA Gymnastics, the U.S. Olympic Committee, and the FBI, The Athlete Survivors' Assist remains athlete-survivor-led and survivor-centered. Our community comprises advocates, athletes, and athlete-survivors, united by the mission to end abuse in sports. Our lived experiences shape everything we do, ensuring that survivors remain at the forefront of efforts to raise awareness and drive meaningful change.

The Assist is committed to raising public awareness about sexual violence and other forms of abuse in sports at every level. We work to hold perpetrators and the institutions that protect them accountable while prioritizing transparency in reporting and independent investigative processes. By championing athlete-centered policies, we strive to create an environment where survivors feel safe speaking out, if they choose, without fear of retaliation or dismissal.

The Assist is dedicated to challenging harmful norms, demanding institutional change, and fostering a sports culture built on safety, respect, and athlete well-being. Our advocacy extends beyond individual cases; we strive for systemic reforms that ensure every athlete, regardless of age, level, or background, can participate in sports free from harm. Through survivor-led initiatives, education, and policy advocacy, we are transforming the sports landscape to prioritize athlete well-being and safety.

Our Model: From Survivors to Systems Change

The Athlete Survivors' Assist advances safer sport through three pillars that reinforce one another, grounded in a commitment to trauma-informed systems change.

Education strengthens prevention and response by building trauma-informed capacity and awareness across sport. We help sports organizations build an athlete-centered culture rooted in trust and connection, and provide practical, trauma-informed tools that support athletes' physical and emotional well-being, so safety isn't dependent on individuals but is embedded in everyday culture and operations.

Advocacy advances trauma-informed systems change and policy by elevating survivor voices and bringing survivor-informed expertise into governance, reform, and accountability spaces. This work helps ensure safeguarding is built into the structures that set standards, make decisions, and manage athlete safety, so accountability is not optional or inconsistent.

Resources support survivors and the broader sport ecosystem with practical tools and clear, trauma-informed pathways, so athletes, families, coaches, service providers, and institutions can access guidance, find support, and act with integrity in ways that honor survivor choice.

A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

In 2025, The Athlete Survivors' Assist entered a new chapter of growth and maturity, one defined by reach, credibility, and readiness. Throughout the past year, we deepened our commitment to survivor-centered education, broadened our systems-level technical assistance, amplified athlete-survivor leadership across national and global sport integrity spaces, and enhanced our public presence through a comprehensive rebrand and website redesign.

This year affirmed a core truth that guides our work:

Survivor voice is not symbolic. It is systems infrastructure.

When athlete survivors are meaningfully included in the design of policies, trainings, and processes, safeguarding becomes more than a promise; it becomes practice. That is what we advanced in 2025: practical tools, stronger systems, and clearer pathways to support.

Across our three pillars, education, advocacy, and resources, we trained and equipped coaches, service providers, leaders in sport, and institutions responsible for athlete safety.

We strengthened our public-facing resources so that athletes, families, and organizations can access clear, trauma-informed support and guidance centered on survivor choice and individualized pathways.

To the athlete-survivors who trust us, the partners who help scale solutions, the funders who invest in safer sport, and the community members who show up year after year, thank you. We are proud of what we built in 2025, and even more committed to what comes next.



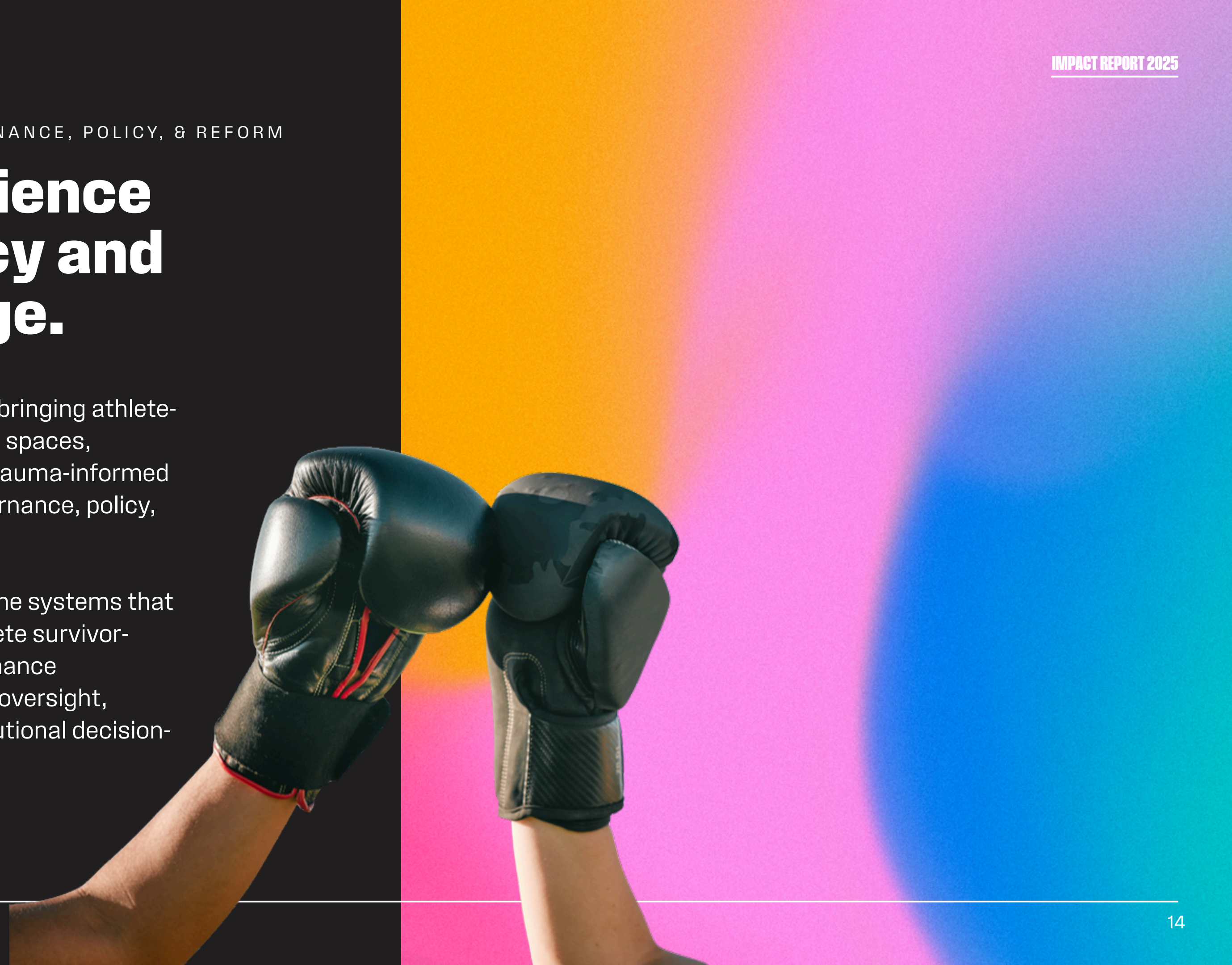
ADVOCACY

SURVIVOR-LED INFLUENCE FOR GOVERNANCE, POLICY, & REFORM

Survivor experience drives advocacy and systems change.

The Assist advances accountability by bringing athlete-survivor expertise into decision-making spaces, nationally and internationally, so that trauma-informed safeguarding becomes a reality in governance, policy, and culture.

In sport, policies are only as strong as the systems that implement them. We advocate for athlete survivor-centered safeguarding as a core governance responsibility, embedded in standards, oversight, accountability mechanisms, and institutional decision-making.



Stages & Platforms

U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT (THE CENTER) | 2025 NGB SUMMIT:

U.S. National Governing Body leaders from dozens of sports gathered in Denver to advance athlete safety and culture change. The Summit included eight athlete panelists (including members of The Assist board of directors and SafeSport Athlete Advisory Team) representing 11 sports, sharing lived experience and practical insights on how prioritizing safeguarding strengthens sport culture.

The Assist played a visible, athlete-centered role in the Summit experience. Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran addressed the full group at the beginning of the Summit, helping set a survivor-centered frame for the days ahead. Over two days of athlete panels, athlete-survivor board members shared their stories, and The Assist provided safeguarding support to attendees. The Center publicly recognized The Athlete Survivors' Assist and Safe Sport International for helping lead the athlete panels and sharing expertise.



Bringing athlete and survivor voices directly into NGB leadership spaces accelerates culture change by turning safeguarding from policy into everyday practice.

Pictured: Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Devi Jags

Stages & Platforms

PLAY THE GAME 2025 | TAMPERE, FINLAND:

Play the Game is a major international forum for sport integrity, democracy in sport, and governance reform. At the 2025 convening, Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Emily Austin elevated a core message: sport systems cannot become safer without meaningful survivor engagement and structural reform. The survivor-centered call was clear: Rebuilding trust in sport requires transparency, accountability, and tools grounded in lived experience.

In a featured session focused on survivors of abuse in sport, the discussion emphasized that survivor input is too often treated as a “checkbox” rather than as partners in repair. Julie Ann underscored how uncommon it still is for sport leaders to truly listen to athletes and center them in regulations and decision-making. She emphasized that performative consultation is not survivor engagement. Emily shared how The Assist’s survivor-developed workshop supports athlete survivors who choose to engage in policy advocacy by building practical skills and confidence to contribute to reform efforts.

Sessions co-presented by Julie Ann and Emily :

- Engaging Athlete Survivors in Creating Safer Sports for Athletes: How to Build Trauma-Informed Advocacy for System Reform
- Integrating Trauma-Informed Practices Into a Coaching Philosophy to Engage Coaches as Change Agents
- Leveling the Playing Field: Ending Gender-Based Violence Through Advocacy and Action

Moderated session (Julie Ann)

- From Crisis to Culture Shift: Confronting Abuse in Sport



When survivor expertise is brought into global integrity forums, safeguarding shifts from policy language to institutional responsibility, and systems become more credible, actionable, and trusted.

Pictured: Emily Austin and Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran

Stages & Platforms

NSAC 2025 | NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT CONFERENCE®

The Assist brought sport-specific expertise into one of the largest national convenings of advocates working to end sexual violence. NSAC 2025 brought together thousands of practitioners and leaders focused on prevention, survivor-centered response, and systems change across sectors. The Assist's presence ensured that abuse in sport and the unique barriers athletes face in reporting and receiving support were represented in the broader movement.

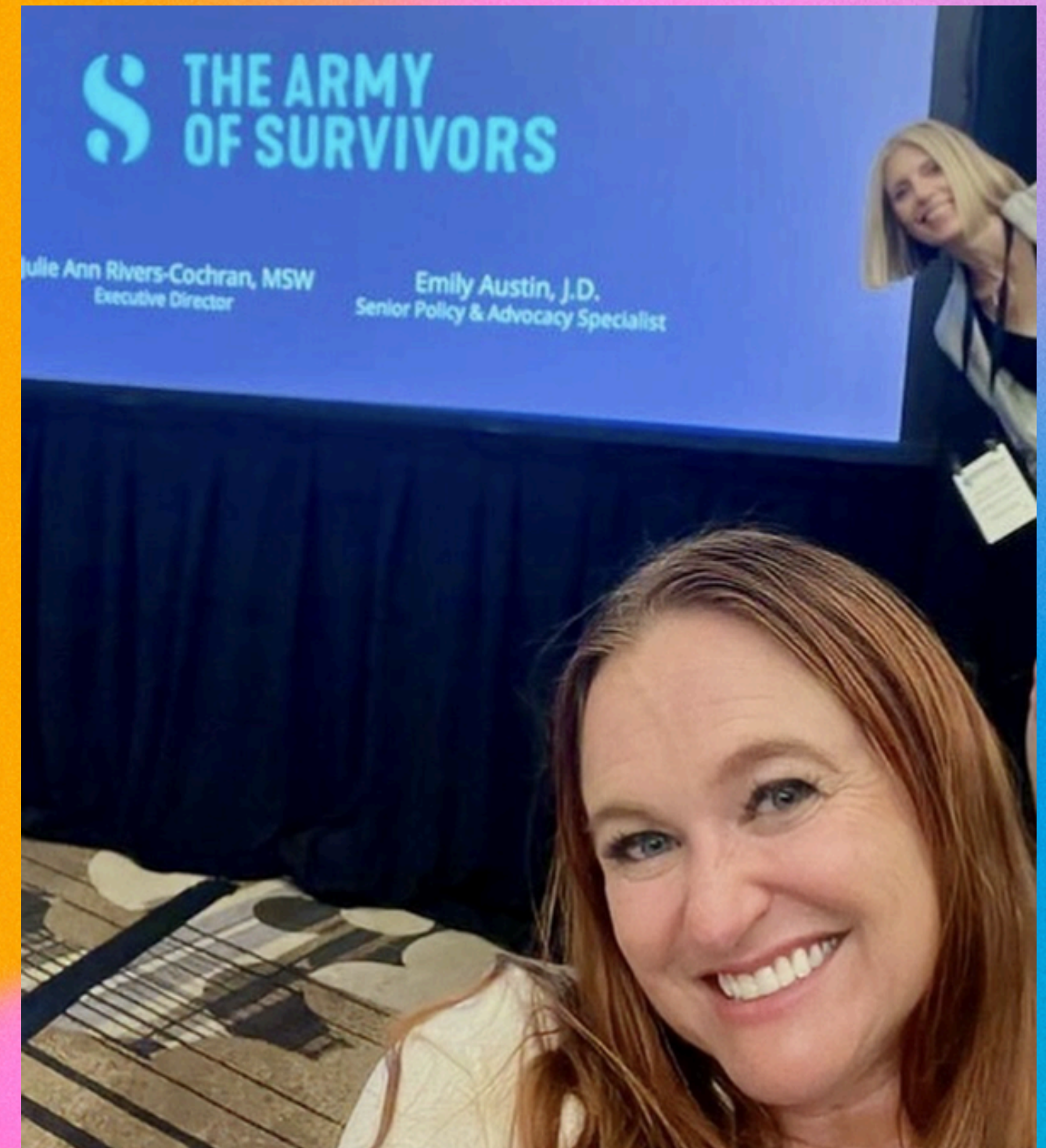
Featured Session (NSAC 2025):

“Changing Sports Culture: Lessons in systems change from local programs to international sports organizations.”

Speakers: Emily Austin and Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran

This session focused on trauma-informed best practices for centering athlete-survivor voice to shift systems, strengthen prevention, and improve response and support.

The session emphasized how abuse in sport is shaped by power, culture, and institutional incentives and why sport-specific, survivor-centered design must be built into safeguarding work at every level. Participants received practical frameworks for trauma-informed advocacy, strategies for ethical engagement with athlete-survivors, and actionable approaches that support culture change and accountability across sport systems.



Sport-specific abuse requires sport-specific solutions. Our presence at NSAC strengthened cross-sector alignment and expanded the national toolkit for responding to, and preventing abuse in athletics.

Pictured: Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Emily Austin

Stages & Platforms

SPORT & RIGHTS ALLIANCE (SRA) ANNUAL SUMMIT | SWITZERLAND

The Assist joined global leaders at the Sport & Rights Alliance Annual Summit to advance trauma-informed, survivor-centered safeguarding as a core human rights issue in sport governance. This engagement focused on aligning safeguarding with athlete rights and welfare across global sport systems, and strengthening shared expectations for accountability and implementation.

The Summit emphasized elevating athlete-survivor leadership in governance spaces, advancing safeguarding and trauma-informed reforms internationally, and strengthening global advocacy for safe, equitable sport. It also supported deeper coalition alignment around what meaningful safeguarding looks like in practice, not only in policy.

Safeguarding reforms accelerate when survivor-centered approaches are grounded in rights-based frameworks, and coalitions coordinate standards and implementation expectations across institutions.



This summit strengthened coalition relationships and reinforced survivor-centered safeguarding as integral to sport integrity and human rights commitments.

Pictured: Emily Austin

2025 ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

Stages & Platforms

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF LAW – GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT & SPORTS LAW + INDUSTRY CONFERENCE | MIAMI, FL

Dr. Danielle Moore represented The Assist on the panel “Keeping the Game Safe: Addressing Sexual Violence and Child Safeguarding in Sports,” sharing survivor-led insights on prevention, accountability, and safeguarding reform. The engagement advanced sport safety as a legal and governance issue and strengthened connections across sport-adjacent systems working to protect athletes at every level.

NATIONAL CHILDREN’S ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE | WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dr. Danielle Moore was also featured on the opening panel alongside Teresa Huizar, The Assist board member Jimmy Widdifield Jr., and Jenna Quinn, highlighting abuse in sport as a child protection issue that requires sport-specific, survivor-centered approaches. The conversation strengthened cross-field awareness and reinforced that child advocacy systems are key pathways to support.



Sport-specific insight improves coordination, referrals, and response for athlete survivors. This engagement elevated sport-related abuse dynamics within child protection spaces.

Pictured: Dr. Danielle Moore and Jimmy Widdifield Jr.

Scholarship & Thought Leadership

PUBLISHED SCHOLARSHIP: “NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US - ATHLETE-SURVIVOR VOICE IS PARAMOUNT TO MAKING SPORT SAFER.”

In 2025, The Assist contributed to the global safeguarding evidence base through a chapter authored by Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Emily Austin titled: [“Nothing About Us, Without Us - Athlete-Survivor Voice Is Paramount to Making Sport Safer.”](#)

This chapter appears in the international volume *Protecting the Beauty of the Game: Towards a Safeguarding Culture* (ISBN 978-88-943373-8-9), edited by Stefano Bastianon and Michele Colucci. The book is published by the Sports Law and Policy Centre (Italy) (Sports Law and Policy Centre Srls, Nocera Inferiore, Salerno) and includes contributions spanning international federations, national safeguarding approaches, and cultural and organizational dimensions of safeguarding. The publication reflects global reach and multi-system relevance.

The chapter reinforces a core principle of effective reform: athlete-survivor voice must be embedded in governance, policy, and implementation, not added after decisions are made. It positions trauma-informed, survivor-centered safeguarding as a matter of institutional responsibility and system design, and elevates survivor leadership as essential to accountability and culture change in sport. It also outlines the context of abuse in sport for survivors and offers strategies for authentic survivor engagement within a trauma-informed framework, reinforcing that safeguarding reform must be developed with those most impacted.

Survivor Voice as Systems Infrastructure

Across major forums and institutional partnerships in 2025, a consistent message emerged: athlete survivor voice is not symbolic. It is foundational to the systems and infrastructure required for safeguarding to be credible, actionable, and effective. The Assist's advocacy focuses on moving from symbolic inclusion to structured participation that improves how systems are designed, how decisions are made, and how accountability is practiced.

When athlete survivor expertise is integrated into governance and policy:

- Prevention and response are more sport-specific and aligned with lived realities in sport.
- Reporting and response systems are clearer, more consistent, and more accountable.
- Survivor engagement is structured and meaningful, not performative, and athlete voice is embedded into decision-making rather than added after decisions are finalized.
- Trust is strengthened through transparency and follow-through.



Pictured: Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran



EDUCATION

TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, & CAPACITY BUILDING

Education is where awareness becomes practice

The Assist shifts the culture of sport by translating survivor-centered principles into practical learning to train coaches, decision makers, and sports institutions to reduce harm, respond appropriately to disclosures of abuse, and strengthen sport environments.

In sport, real impact shows up inside systems when concerns are raised, reports are made, and decisions are documented, because the way people listen and respond in those moments shapes whether athlete safety is truly centered. Survivor-led, trauma-informed education strengthens how people communicate, respond, and lead, supporting athlete wellness and building trust over time.

In 2025, The Assist deepened its role as an expert in abuse-in-sport dynamics and trauma-informed change through structured training and technical assistance across the sport ecosystem with major institutions responsible for safeguarding athletes.

2025 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Institutional Training & Technical Assistance

In 2025, The Assist expanded survivor-led training, technical assistance, and consultation across the sport ecosystem, supporting stronger practice, clearer internal coordination, and deeper trauma-informed capacity across prevention and response.

INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC):

The International Olympic Committee partnered with The Assist to support both its Olympism365 Summit: Sport for a Better World and to provide trauma-informed training for the Safe Sport Regional Hub Initiative Steering Committee.

Olympism365, held June 3-5 in Lausanne, convened over 250 representatives from 100 sport organizations to enhance collaboration and launch joint action to advance sustainable development through sport. Given the Summit's safeguarding track and its focus on building a safer sport ecosystem, Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Emily Austin provided a support room during the Summit and attended sessions. This work created space to support survivor advocates and others impacted by abuse in sport, while strengthening relationships across the global safeguarding community.

In connection with Olympism365 and prior to the official start of the Summit, The Assist delivered a trauma-informed workshop for the IOC Safe Sport Regional Hub Initiative Steering Committee at IOC headquarters. The Safe Sport Regional Hub Initiative is an IOC project focused on building localized approaches to athlete-survivor care and safeguarding through regional solutions. The Steering Committee is guiding pilot hubs in the Pacific Islands and countries of South Africa.

The Assist provided this workshop for 20+ Steering Committee members, including IOC leadership of the Hub Initiative, to build shared understanding of what trauma-informed care and practice look like in sport. The training addressed trauma impacts in sport, the ways athletes and others in sport can be uniquely vulnerable to harm, and practical approaches for institutional courage and trauma-informed practice within sport settings. Several participants followed up afterward for continued learning and future collaboration.



Pictured: Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Emily Austin

2025 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Institutional Training & Technical Assistance

U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT:

Throughout 2025, The Assist provided trauma-informed training, technical assistance, and consultation to support the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s (The Center) continued growth in trauma-informed organizational practice and athlete-survivor-centered engagement. The work combined targeted training with ongoing consultation and recommendations to strengthen internal practice, external communication, and survivor-informed approaches across the Center’s work.

Key elements of this engagement included:

- Trauma-informed review and support on communication and outreach, including clearer resource connections and the use of trauma content warnings where appropriate
- Training for the Center teams and external partners to build shared language and strengthen consistency in trauma-informed approach, including audit-team and Response & Resolution training, and broader training impacts reported by participants
- Support during in-person engagements, including confidential advocacy capacity in convening spaces, as part of strengthening trust and safer participation in difficult-topic environments

This year-long partnership reflects The Assist’s broader role across sport systems: supporting organizations in building trauma-informed practice that holds both athlete safety and organizational accountability as essential to safeguarding work.



Pictured: Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran, Devi Jags and Janelle Hill

2025 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Institutional Training & Technical Assistance

FIFA-SAFEGUARDING POLICY REVIEW:

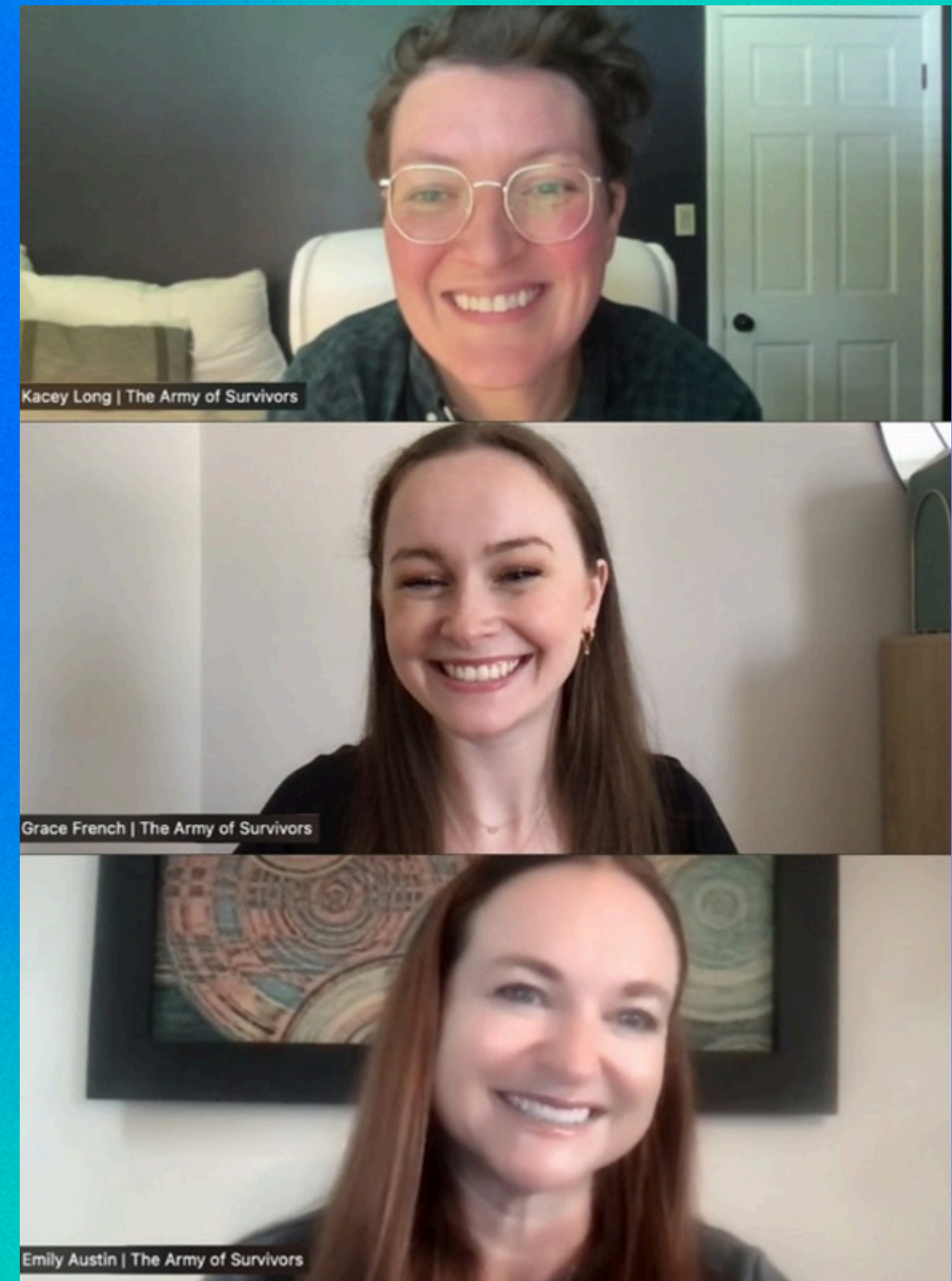
In October 2025, The Assist conducted a trauma-informed review of FIFA’s safeguarding policy to strengthen clarity, alignment, and survivor-centered practice.

This engagement focused on applying survivor-led, trauma-informed expertise to policy structure and language so that safeguarding expectations are clearer and more usable in practice. We reviewed and synthesized recommendations and held collaborative discussions to support policy refinement and future alignment with trauma-informed safeguarding norms.

Webinars (OVW Training & Technical Assistance Provider)

As an Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) provider, The Assist brings sport-specific expertise into the broader survivor-serving ecosystem, connecting the realities of abuse in sport to the domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and child sexual abuse fields.

This role helps advocates and service providers better understand the unique dynamics and barriers athlete survivors may face, strengthens coordination between sport systems and Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault/Child Abuse/Child Sexual Abuse networks, and supports trauma-informed learning that can be applied across settings where survivors seek help and healing.



Pictured: Kacey Long, Grace French, and Emily Austin

2025 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Webinars and Field-Facing Education

START BY BELIEVING IN ATHLETICS | VIRTUAL

Kacey Long delivered survivor-centered framing for why “Start By Believing” belongs in athletics and reinforced shared language that supports safer, more consistent responses in sport settings.

Early responses shape whether athletes feel safe to disclose and seek support; belief-based norms reduce barriers and strengthen culture. This session strengthened survivor-centered response expectations and practical language that can be applied in athletics environments.

WOMEN WHO MOVE THE GAME | LOS ANGELES, CA

Emily Austin and Board Director Devi Jags attended the Women Who Move The Game lunch-and-learn at SoFi Stadium, where they shared The Assist’s mission and highlighted survivor-led education, training, and resources to help make sport safer. The event created space to connect with women innovators across the sports ecosystem, strengthening relationships that support future learning opportunities, collaboration, and broader awareness of trauma-informed safeguarding in sport.



Pictured: Emily Austin and Devi Jags

2025 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Program Enhancements: Compassionate Coach®

Compassionate Coach® continued to scale in 2025, strengthening program integrity and readiness for expanded cohorts.

Compassionate Coach® is an 8-week trauma-informed curriculum developed with athletes and athlete-survivors, alongside experts in trauma-informed care, institutional courage, and player-centered coaching. It equips coaches with practical tools to understand trauma, recognize how it affects athletes, and adjust coaching approaches to create safer, more affirming sport environments.

Phillips Foundation: Supported expansion of Compassionate Coach®, including stronger evaluation and sustainability planning.

adidas Foundation: Supported program delivery planning and cohorts staged for launch, reflecting global recognition of The Assist's approach to culture change through education.

Program Integrity: Compassionate Coach® was formally trademarked, strengthening program identity and long-term scalability.



“This program completely reshaped how I view my role as a coach. I now understand the power I have to make a real difference in athletes’ lives.”

-Compassionate Coach® Participant

2025 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Education Spotlight: What “Trauma-Informed” Means in Practice

A trauma-informed framework is rooted in the understanding of the pervasiveness and impact of trauma. The goal is to mitigate the effects of trauma, support healing, resilience, and well-being, and attend to trauma’s impact organizationally, not only individually. It is grounded in the full context of a person’s experience and shifts the question from “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” Being trauma-informed is both a philosophy and a skill set, grounded in survivor-centered movements and applied through strengths-based, multi-dimensional approaches.

Trauma-informed education is essential everywhere athletes and survivors interact with sport systems: prevention, reporting, communication, investigations, decision-making, and organizational culture. Because trauma impacts people differently, trauma-informed work is not framed as “fixing” trauma through process change alone. Instead, it reflects an ongoing commitment to strengthening safety, trust, clarity, and care in how organizations communicate, make decisions, and engage with athletes and survivors, while recognizing the real and lasting impacts of trauma.

Why This Matters

Sport environments have unique power dynamics, performance pressures, and institutional incentives that shape how safety is practiced day to day, both in prevention efforts and in how organizations respond when harm is disclosed or suspected. Many sports bodies are working to strengthen athlete safety, but often need sport-specific, trauma-informed education and technical assistance that support consistent practice across an entire organization (not just within one team or department). This work strengthens culture and systems, improves coordination across roles, and supports clearer, more reliable approaches that center on athlete wellness and survivor choice.



Pictured: Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Devi Jags

RESOURCES

CLEARER PATHWAYS TO SUPPORT, TOOLS, AND ACTION

Resources are what make support accessible, particularly when it is needed most.

In 2025, The Athlete Survivors' Assist strengthened and clarified resource pathways for athlete survivors, families, coaches, service providers, and institutions, making support easier to find and use.

In sport, information gaps can create real harm: confusion about reporting, fear of retaliation, uncertainty about what to do next, and the absence of trauma-informed guidance when people need it most. Clear, practical resources reduce friction and help people act responsibly, with survivor choice at the center.

Our resource ecosystem is built for real-world decisions, offering guides and courses grounded in survivor insight and practical application.

The Assist's resources include trauma-informed guidance and practical tools to strengthen practices, prevention, and response.



2025 RESOURCES HIGHLIGHTS

Rebrand + Website Overhaul: A Public-Facing Evolution

In November 2025, we evolved from The Army of Survivors to The Assist, a new identity designed to make our survivor-led work more accessible, recognizable, and scalable across the global sport ecosystem. Alongside the name change, we launched a refreshed website to strengthen clarity, improve navigation, and make it easier for athletes, families, coaches, service providers, and institutions to find support, training, and tools.

WHY “THE ASSIST”?

Inspired by the role an assist plays in sport, trust, teamwork, and connection. Our rebrand marked an evolution, not a departure. It reflects what we do: survivors helping survivors, and partnering with institutions to create safer systems.

A NEW PLATFORM FOR ENGAGEMENT

The new platform is centered on expanded resources and clearer pathways for athletes, families, coaches, and institutions to engage, whether someone is seeking support, opportunities for learning, or practical guidance to build safer sport environments.

**THE ASSIST**

ADVOCATING FOR ATHLETE SURVIVORS

Brand and digital work supported by Well Design Studio, Harness, and demandDrive

2025 RESOURCES HIGHLIGHTS

Community Gathering / Soft Launch Moment

Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran, Emily Austin, and Janelle Hill hosted a community gathering that also marked The Assist's 7th anniversary, strengthening supporter stewardship through survivor-centered storytelling and in-person connection.

Survivor-led movements grow through trust and meaningful entry points, and this event created space for deeper relationship-building with new and longtime supporters. The gathering expanded visibility and strengthened long-term movement growth in a high-influence market.



Pictured: Janelle Hill and Emily Austin

2025 RESOURCES HIGHLIGHTS

Resource Spotlight: Building Clarity at the Moment It Matters

For many people, a website is often the first place athlete survivors, athletes, whistleblowers, parents and guardians, and coaches go for answers.

The 2025 overhaul focused on reducing friction by using clearer language, improving navigation, and creating easier routes to support so people can find what they need quickly, in ways that honor survivor choice.

Resource Approach (what we prioritized)

- Audience-specific entry points: pathways were organized to help different audiences quickly find relevant support and guidance, reducing barriers to action and strengthening confidence in first steps.
- Practical, trauma-informed guidance: updated messaging and site architecture were designed to improve clarity, accessibility, and engagement with athletes, families, coaches, and institutions.
- Partner-ready tools: strengthened messaging materials and outreach assets to support coalition-building, program adoption, and shared safeguarding language.

Outcome Snapshot

- Stronger usability and clearer engagement pathways
- Increased visibility and improved access to survivor-centered tools
- A scalable foundation for expanding resources in 2026

What's Next

- Expand the resource library and measure what people use most
- Publish additional practical tools for institutions and coaches
- Improve navigation and access for survivors and families across needs





OUR REACH

DIGITAL GROWTH

In 2025, more people found The Assist, followed along, and stayed connected. Our audience continued to grow across platforms, with especially strong momentum on Instagram and steady gains on LinkedIn. The trend was clear: our reach is expanding and our community is becoming more diverse.

Our website grew alongside that momentum. More visitors discovered the platform and spent real time exploring it, with strong interaction across key pages and resources. This growth reflects a simple but important shift, people are not just seeing The Assist; they're engaging with the tools, guidance, and pathways to support, reinforcing the value of the organization's public-facing resources.



Social Performance

7,058

Followers

20,395

Engagements

504,688

Post Impression

Audience Growth

+11%

Total Audience

+84%

New Net Audience

209,741

Post Impression

Website Performance

16,000

New Users

+10%

Traffic

114,000

Events Recorded

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH



BOARD DEVELOPMENT: NEW LEADERSHIP ADDED IN 2025

NEW BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JIMMY WIDDIFIELD JR.

In 2025, The Athlete Survivors' Assist welcomed Jimmy Widdifield Jr. to the Board of Directors, strengthening the organization's governance and long-term capacity for survivor-led systems change.

Jimmy is a training and technical assistance provider specializing in child maltreatment, trauma, and adversity, with more than two decades of experience. His work has focused extensively on problematic sexual behavior (PSB) in children and adolescents, sibling sexual abuse, and strengthening professional practice through trauma-informed training and support.

He currently serves as Project Director for Grant Training and Resources at the National Children's Advocacy Center, directing a federal grant that delivers multidisciplinary training and technical assistance to improve coordinated responses to child maltreatment.

Jimmy brings to The Assist a strong commitment to honoring the voices, experiences, and resilience of those impacted by sexual abuse, and his expertise supports our continued growth in training, partnerships, and systems-change work across sport.

MEDIA, PODCASTS & PUBLIC AWARENESS

In 2025, The Athlete Survivors’ Assist continued to gain national media recognition, with board members, staff, and survivor-advocates amplifying survivor-centered narratives beyond sport insiders and strengthening the case for trauma-informed reform.

The Assist representatives were featured through press releases, podcasts, and earned media coverage, contributing to critical public conversations on athlete safeguarding, accountability, and systems change. Press releases supported key moments throughout the year, including International Safe Sports Day programming, the rebrand, and marathon charity announcements.

Media placements included outlets such as the Des Moines Register, Front Office Sports, WXYZ-TV, and NJ.com, while ongoing podcast and media participation reinforced survivor-led leadership and practical safeguarding solutions.

PODCASTS

Trauma warning: the following podcasts discuss sexual abuse

“Protecting Athletes and Driving Change: The Army of Survivors with Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran and Grace French”

Sports Business Podcast with Prof. C

152: [Janelle Hill] Trauma-Informed // Part 1

What Came Next

153: [Janelle Hill] Beauty in the Brokenness // Part 2

What Came Next

EARNED MEDIA

Trauma warning: the following articles discuss sexual abuse

“NJ.com’s sexual abuse report in youth sports reveals urgent need for reform | Opinion

NJ.com

“FBI, Iowa and federal prosecutors seek leads on ex-gymnastics coach in child porn case.”

Des Moines Register

“Track CEO Charged With Child Rape Passed USATF-Ordered Background Check”

Front Office Sports

“Justice Department releases new Epstein records revealing Michigan connection”

WXYZ-TV (ABC Detroit)

“MENTAL HEALTH, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG ATHLETES, MUST REMAIN A PRIORITY IN THEIR SUCCESS.”

- DEVI JAGS, THE ASSIST BOARD DIRECTOR



PARTNER PRESS & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Trauma warning: the following podcasts discuss sexual abuse

“Mental Health first: A new playbook for Sport”

adidas Foundation

“Safe to Play: How our partners are creating safer spaces for women in sports”

adidas Foundation

“The Athlete Survivors’ Assist and Sport & Rights Alliance”

adidas Foundation

INSTITUTIONAL VALIDATION

Trauma warning: the following articles discuss sexual abuse

“USOPC launches ‘Team USA Safe Online’ platform to strengthen athlete protection”

United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) – Official Announcement / Press Release

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING: MARATHON TEAMS



Marathons continued to be one of our most visible, community-powered ways to fuel survivor-led systems change. We are deeply grateful to every runner, donor, partner, and advocate who showed up for this work. The progress The Assist made in 2025 was strengthened by a community willing to put our mission on their backs, raising awareness, expanding survivor-centered storytelling, and sustaining the programs that help make sport safer.

In 2025, our endurance teams generated both momentum and measurable impact:

26 runners raised \$60,634.22 across three major events. The Bank of America Chicago Marathon team delivered a strong showing with 15 runners raising \$35,102.77. The United Airlines NYC Half Marathon showcased the strength of our community as five dedicated runners raised \$7,949.85, carrying our mission through one of the most iconic races in the country. At the TCS New York City Marathon, six runners raised \$17,581.60, representing The Assist on a world stage and surpassing fundraising goals.

These events did more than raise funds. They brought new people into the movement, deepened long-term relationships with supporters, and expanded the community of champions willing to stand with athlete survivors and help change sport culture.



OFFICIAL CHARITY PARTNER

tcs
NEW YORK CITY MARATHON

OFFICIAL CHARITY PARTNER



NEW YORK ROAD RUNNERS





OUR FUTURE

LOOKING AHEAD

Our work in 2025 strengthened the foundation for growth in 2026: scaling Compassionate Coach® cohorts with clearer evaluation and learning, deepening trauma-informed training and technical assistance for institutions, expanding the resource library through the new website, and continuing to elevate athlete survivor voice in safeguarding systems worldwide.

In 2026, our focus is simple and ambitious: grow what works, deepen what lasts, and keep survivor leadership at the center of how sport systems change. That means expanding education to strengthen prevention, intervention, and response; building stronger, deepening institutional partnerships, and increasing access to practical resources people can use in real time, while honoring survivor choice at every step.

2026 Priorities:

Scale Compassionate Coach® and TISA:

In 2026, The Assist will deliver additional Compassionate Coach® cohorts and launch another TISA (Trauma-informed Survivor Advocacy) cohort supported by major partners. This includes building clearer evaluation and feedback loops, refining curriculum as cohorts expand, and continuing sustainability planning so the program can grow without losing quality or survivor-centered integrity.

Expand training and technical assistance for sport systems:

We will expand training and technical assistance offerings with institutional partners, providing deeper support beyond single-session learning. This includes process-focused education and consultation that strengthens communication, decision-making, and survivor-centered practices across prevention, intervention, and response, while recognizing that trauma impacts people differently and that trauma-informed practice requires ongoing commitment.

Grow the rebranded digital resource library:

In 2026, we will continue expanding the rebranded digital resource hub with practical tools designed for real-world use by athlete survivors, families, coaches, service providers, and institutions. We will also track reach and engagement to improve clarity, navigation, and usability so more people can find support and guidance that honors survivor choice.

Advance survivor-led advocacy and accountability:

We will continue elevating the athlete-survivor voice in the spaces where norms, standards, and reform priorities are shaped through strategic forums, coalition work, and policy engagement. Building on 2025 engagement across national and international convenings, we will deepen relationships and strengthen survivor-informed approaches to governance and accountability across sport systems.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR MAJOR DONORS

In 2025, The Assist strengthened sustainability through diversified revenue, grant investments, and institutional partnerships that expand reach and support long-term program delivery.

BECOME A DONOR!

Make a tax-deductible donation by visiting TheAthleteSurvivorsAssist.org/donate or mailing a check to The Assist at 428 W. Lenawee St., Lansing, MI 48933. The Assist is designated as a 501(C)3. Tax ID 83-1608542

THE OAK FOUNDATION

DEPT. OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

ADIDAS FOUNDATION

PHILLIPS FOUNDATION

CRANE CHARITABLE FUNDS

IN 2025, THE ASSIST DEMONSTRATED WHAT SURVIVOR-LED WORK MAKES POSSIBLE: NOT JUST AWARENESS, BUT SYSTEMS CHANGE. THROUGH EDUCATION THAT EQUIPS, ADVOCACY THAT STRENGTHENS ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESOURCES THAT GUIDE ACTION, THE ASSIST HELPED MOVE SAFEGUARDING CLOSER TO EVERYDAY PRACTICE ACROSS LOCAL ENVIRONMENTS AND GLOBAL SPORT SYSTEMS.

TO OUR ATHLETE-SURVIVOR COMMUNITY, PARTNERS, FUNDERS, AND SUPPORTERS, THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US. YOUR TRUST MAKES THIS WORK POSSIBLE, AND IT FUELS WHAT COMES NEXT.