



National Sexual Violence
Resource Center

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a division of respect together

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PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National award honors Dr. Alissa Ackerman and Casey Ballinger for outstanding contributions to preventing sexual abuse, assault, and harassment

For the first time, the Gail Burns-Smith Award honors two advocates who are bridging support for survivors with treatment for those who cause sexual harm.

HARRISBURG, PA – The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) and the Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA) are pleased to honor Dr. Alissa Ackerman and Casey Ballinger with the 2024 Gail-Burns Smith Award. Ackerman, co-founder and owner of an organization dedicated to restorative justice for sexual harm, Ampersands Restorative Justice, and Ballinger, Training and Technical Assistance Manager with the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CCCASA), will receive the award during the 2024 National Sexual Assault Conference®.

Presented jointly by ATSA and NSVRC, the award is named in honor of Gail Burns-Smith, one of the first advocates to recognize and speak publicly about the importance of collaboration between victim advocates and those working in sex offender management to effectively prevent child sexual abuse.

New in 2024, NSVRC and ATSA are proud to offer this award to two individuals, one who primarily provides services to those who have been sexually harmed and another to an individual who provides treatment or does research in treatment or prevention of sexual harm.

In the spirit of Burns-Smith's work, Ackerman says she has used her experiences as a practitioner, academic, and survivor to understand, "everything she can about sexual offending, the impacts of sexual victimization, and restorative options for those impacted by sexual harm." Holding a PhD in Criminal Justice from the City University of New York, and serving as the Criminal Justice Department Coordinator and Associate Professor at California State University, Fullerton, is just a part of her story as a researcher and advocate. Early in her career, her research, "focused on the detrimental impacts of sex crimes policies and practices in the United States." This, in combination with her participation in a community-led treatment program for perpetrators who had committed sexual offenses in the past, led to her understanding that efforts to prevent sexual abuse, assault, and harassment must include treatment for people who perpetrate. Her work includes authoring and co-editing eight books, co-authoring a law review article in CUNY Law Review, writing 35 peer-reviewed journal articles, hosting two seasons of a podcast (*Beyond Fear: The Sex Crimes Podcast*), co-editing a special edition of the Journal of Sexual Abuse, and giving 75 talks and trainings domestically and internationally, such as her TEDx Talk in 2018. Her steadfast dedication to aligning an understanding the underlying factors behind why sexual violence occurs, the need for individual and institutional accountability, and pathways to healing for survivors and people who perpetrate all underscore why she is more than worth the recognition this award brings.

With respect to providing treatment and services to those who have experienced sexual harm, awardee Ballinger has given a decade of her life to aiding and supporting survivors, particularly in the legal space. A pioneer, Ballinger, "developed and supervised Colorado's first post-conviction victim advocacy programming, creating intentional spaces for survivors to have their voices considered in the treatment and supervision of those who have caused harm." Her journey to helping others began with earning her Master's in Social Work from Colorado State University, and she has not slowed down since. In addition to her role at CCASA, she is an appointed victim representative on Colorado's Sex Offender Management Board and a practitioner representative on the Colorado Restorative Justice Council. Through her work in post-conviction planning and services, she says she, "discovered a passion for restorative practices and finding more opportunities for those impacted by sexual harm to seek accountability and healing on their own terms." For her innovation, compassion, and hard work, she excellently represents the award's goal of connecting victim-centered support for survivors of sexual assault and prevention efforts focused on people who perpetrate abuse.

ABOUT ATSA

The Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. ATSA promotes sound research, effective evidence-based practice, informed public policy, and collaborative community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment, and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are at risk to abuse. ATSA's members include treatment providers, researchers and educators, victims' rights advocates, law enforcement and court officials, and representatives of many other stakeholder groups. ATSA promotes the philosophy that empirically based assessment, practice, management, and policies enhance community safety, reduce sexual recidivism, protect victims and vulnerable populations, transform the lives of those caught in the web of sexual violence, and illuminate paths to prevent sexual abuse.

ABOUT NSVRC

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is the leading nonprofit in providing information and tools to prevent and respond to sexual violence. NSVRC translates research and trends into best practices that help individuals, communities and service providers achieve real and lasting change. The center also works with the media to promote informed reporting. Every April, NSVRC leads Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), a campaign to educate and engage the public in addressing this widespread issue. NSVRC is also one of the three founding organizations of [RALIANCE](#), a national, collaborative initiative dedicated to creating equitable, respectful, and safe environments. NSVRC is a primary division of [Respect Together](#).