

# SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES IN RURAL PIERCE COUNTY

Where are the areas of highest need for sexual assault center services in rural Pierce County as defined by existing survivor-specific service locations?

## PURPOSE

To determine the primary area of U.S. Census designated block groups in rural Pierce County, Washington that are at highest risk for not being able to access necessary advocacy and support services after the event of a sexual assault. There are four main focuses of support services: Advocacy (+Medical), Legal, Shelter/Housing, and Counseling (Mental Health). Sexual Assault Centers have recognized that the rural areas of Pierce County are especially vulnerable after an attempted or completed sexual assault. Rural parts of the country are at higher risk for sexual assault to occur. With differing cultural and geographic characteristics, accessing support may be increasingly challenging. (Lewis, 2003).

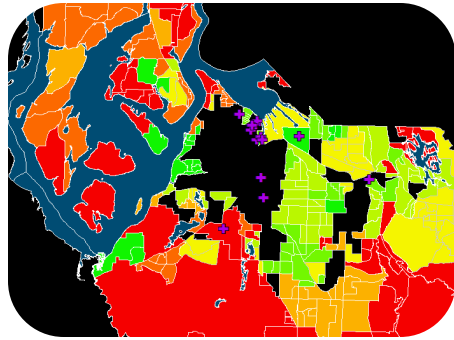
## OBJECTIVES

To determine areas of highest need for sexual assault center services in rural Pierce County as defined by access proximity to advocacy, legal, and housing and counseling. To determine the disparities in access between one service and another and the predominant resource vulnerable communities in Pierce County in the case of sexual violence.

## METHODS

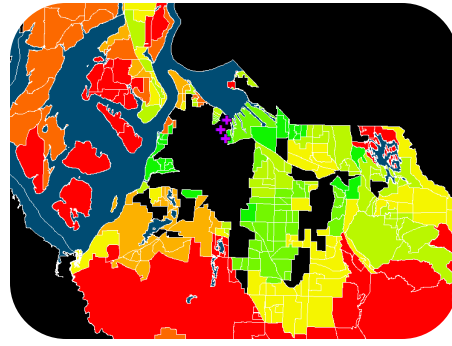
For each map below, coordinate locations of corresponding sexual assault service locations were combined with relating public health/enforcement locations. Some include rural police and sheriff stations, some include hospitals and other healthcare services, some include one or none. In some cases, rural Pierce Transit bus lines were included (more detail provided for each map). Pierce County block groups were then characterized by a green (easy access) to red (challenging access) scale depending on their proximity to one or more of the points (for instance, the darkest green is the closest to the most clustered locations). Note: the blacked out center of the county are Block Groups that qualify as urban, or have a population density of 500 people per square miles (U.S. Census).

## ADVOCACY

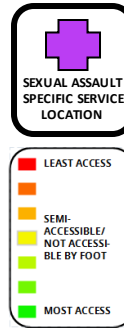


Data points of fifteen different service locations that provide advocacy services for survivors of sexual assault (symbolized as a purple cross) are included. In this case, advocacy includes medical support, transportation to and from a medical center after a rape, and coordinating with other facilities and programs afterwards to continue a steady healing process. This map also includes healthcare centers/hospitals and police/sheriff stations as these are both generally accessible points of entry for getting in contact with an agency that provides sexual assault advocacy. In this map bus routes for Pierce transit were not taken into account for the analysis due to the presence of transportation being a common factor for advocacy services or law enforcement.

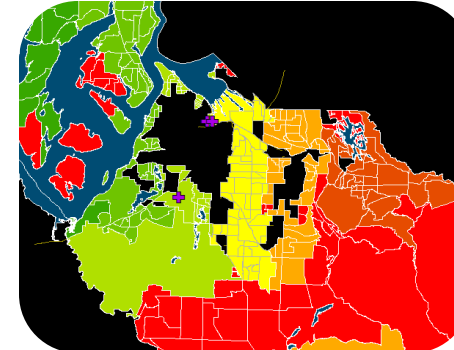
## LEGAL



Four sexual assault legal support services are included into this map's analysis. This form of legal support is often done pro bono, or at a sliding scale rate. However, it must be noted that one of these service locations, though practicing without a discounted rate, is a firm that is sexual misconduct/violence specific, and therefore is included into the analysis. Sheriff and police stations are also included, as they are a direct conduit to receiving legal support if desired. They also are direct ways that a victim can file a restraining/protection order against their abuser all in the same place, a valuable asset to have, especially if you are living with your abuser. This is also the reason bus routes are included.

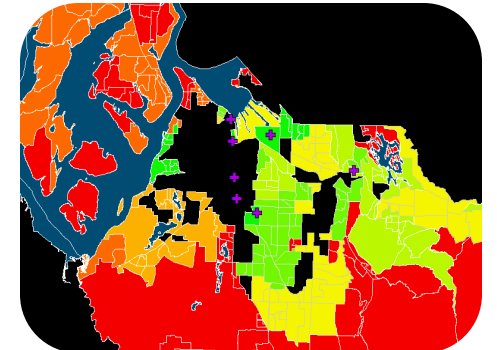


## COUNSELING



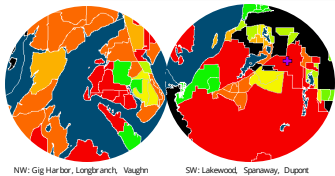
The service locations for this map includes free or sliding scale services only. There are three locations that are not affiliated with hospitals and that focus distinctly on sexual assault. Those which are affiliated with hospitals either provide this or offer specialized group counseling/meetings for related violence like intimate partner abuse. For this analysis, there was one outlier removed from the equation which was because it was located on an island requiring a ferry toll and which had very limited public transit systems. This service agency has another location on the mainland which was included.

## HOUSING

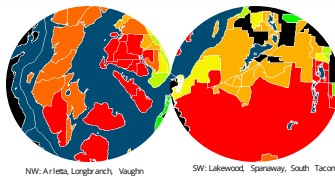


The housing analysis includes sexual assault specific service locations for both shelters and long-term housing support agencies both of which are marked on the map in purple crosses (nine locations total). Bus routes are included into the analysis in the assumption that someone who is seeking shelter after experiencing a sexual assault or intimate partner violence will most likely not have any other form of shelter, including a car. It also takes into account the possibility that their main source of shelter (housing and vehicle) may be owned by their abuser. For this reason a buffer of one mile (a comfortable walking distance) was included into the analysis.

## HIGHEST AREAS OF VULNERABILITY

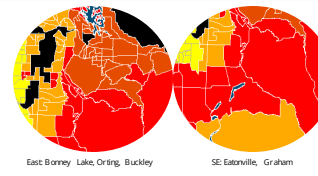


NW: Gig Harbor, Longbranch, Vaughn SW: Lakewood, Spanaway, Dupont

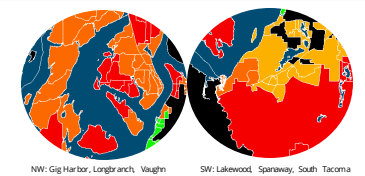


NW: Arleta, Longbranch, Vaughn SW: Lakewood, Spanaway, South Tacoma

## RESULTS



East Bonney Lake, Oring, Buckley SE: Eatonville, Graham



NW: Gig Harbor, Longbranch, Vaughn SW: Lakewood, Spanaway, South Tacoma

Although there are four different specific sexual assault service types focused on in this project's analysis, there were multiple instances where the result of each analysis' highest areas of vulnerability overlapped with another service type. For advocacy (primarily medical) services, Northwest Pierce County (cities/towns specified in detail below magnified areas above) and Southwest Pierce County lacked the resource proximity for survivors to be able to access easily, even with a vehicle readily available. This was also the case for access to housing and shelter services. For accessing legal support, These same areas overlapped in disadvantage, however the city of Gig Harbor was not included here as it has ample access opportunity. Counseling services, notably limited in the beginning, provided one of the most different map visual outcomes. While the majority of Pierce County that was urban could have good access to these services (including the NW and Gig Harbor Area), East and South East parts of the county were noticeably more vulnerable than they had been in other service analysis'. If a sexual assault center, as it exists with the expectations of a state-accredited service center, were to be built in three areas of Pierce County (and balanced by population to maintain a relatively high population served), then the most effective areas to bring these services to are as such: SW/Lakewood area, East/Bonney Lake area, and NW/Gig Harbor area.

## CITATIONS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lewis, S. (2003). *Unspoken Crimes: Sexual Assault in Rural America*. National Sexual Violence Resource Center.  
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Data Source: Pierce County Open Geospatial Data Portal 2011-2020, Washington State Geospatial Open Data