



LGBTQ survivors

Because the majority of the domestic violence awareness movement has focused on heterosexual relationships, members of the LGBTQ community have at times been left out. However, research shows that LGBTQ members are victims of domestic violence at equal or even higher rates compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AFFECTING THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

- Physical violence
- Threats and intimidation
- Verbal harassment
- Sexual violence
- Violence involving a weapon

UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF ABUSE IN THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

There are several aspects of intimate partner violence which can be unique to the LGBTQ community. “Outing” or threatening to reveal one partner’s sexual orientation/gender identity may be used as a form of abuse in violent relationships and may also be a barrier which reduces the likelihood of seeking help for the abuse. Prior experiences of physical or psychological trauma, such as bullying and hate crimes, may make LGBTQ survivors of domestic violence less likely to seek help.

TRANSGENDER INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Transgender individuals may suffer from an even greater burden of intimate partner violence than gay, bisexual, or lesbian individuals. Transgender survivors are more likely to experience threats, intimidation, and harassment within intimate partner violence. Specific forms of abuse occur within relationships where one partner is transgender, including:

- Using offensive pronouns such as “it” to refer to the transgender partner
- Ridiculing the transgender partner’s body and/or appearance
- Telling the transgender partner they are not a real man or woman
- Ridiculing the transgender partner’s identity as “bisexual”, “trans”, “femme”, “butch”, “gender queer”, etc.



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WHY IT MATTERS

Domestic violence is not limited to heterosexual relationships and can affect individuals of all sexual orientations and genders. Within the LGBTQ community, intimate partner violence occurs at a rate equal to or even higher than that of the heterosexual community. LGBTQ individuals experience unique forms of intimate partner violence, as well as distinctive barriers to seeking help due to fear of discrimination or bias.

Although the response to LGBTQ domestic violence is gradually improving, the LGBTQ community is often met with ineffective and victimizing legal responses. Many LGBTQ survivors do not report the violence they experience to police because they believe it will not help them. Furthermore, members of the LGBTQ community may be denied assistance and domestic violence services as a result of homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia.



Alternatives Incorporated provides equal housing and non-residential services for survivors who are members of the LGBTQ community. We strive to provide a welcoming, non-judgmental and supportive environment for all survivors.

BARRIERS TO SEEKING SERVICES/RECEIVING ASSISTANCE

Several barriers exist to addressing LGBTQ intimate partner violence, including:

- Societal beliefs that domestic violence does not occur in LGBTQ relationships
- Potential homophobia from staff of service providers, or from non-LGBTQ domestic violence survivors they may come into contact with
- Lack of appropriate training regarding LGBTQ domestic violence for service providers
- A fear of airing the problems among the LGBTQ population will take away from progress toward equality or fuel anti-LGBTQ bias
- Domestic violence shelters are sometimes female only, and transgender individuals may not be allowed entrance due to their gender/genital/legal status
- The dangers associated with “outing” oneself and risking rejection from family, friends, or society
- The lack of, or survivors being unaware of, LGBTQ-friendly assistance resources
- Low levels of confidence in the effectiveness of the legal system for LGBTQ people

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR LGBTQ SURVIVORS

Everyone, including members of the LGBTQ community, deserves a life free from abuse. These organizations are working around issues of domestic violence in LGBTQ communities:

CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers

Community United Against Violence

FORGE

GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network

Human Rights Campaign

International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission

Lambda Legal

LGBT National Help Center

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Center for Transgender Equality

NCAVP: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

National LGBTQ Institute on IPV

The Network/La Red

The Northwest Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse

PFLAG: Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

TransYouth Family Allies

Transgender Law Center