

## Sexual Assault & Relationship Violence & the LGBTQ Community



*This guide was developed by Neil Vasudeva '16B for a Respect Program summer internship project (2013), in consultation with the Respect Program in the Office of Health Promotion and the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life, Division of Campus Life. Last updated: 10/15/13.*



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## **Sexual Assault & Relationship Violence & the LGBTQ Community**

Anyone can be affected by sexual assault regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion, geography, ability, appearance, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity/expression.

This guide aims:

1. To describe the unique issues faced by LGBT-identified survivors of assault
2. To teach advocates how they can support survivors
3. To display facts about hate violence towards the LGBTQ community.
4. To provide resources to an LGBTQ-identified survivor
5. To help abusers understand how to avoid abusive behavior

This guide recognizes that some individuals may experience sexual assault from someone of the same sex as themselves or because they were perceived as LGBTQ, even though *the survivor or abuser* may not identify as LGBTQ. This guide also provides resources to those individuals. Some survivors may not identify as LGBTQ. This guide can also be useful to those survivors as well.

Please refer to the table of contents below to identify which parts of the guide may be most useful to you.

**If you are interested in being an advocate to support survivors of LGBTQ and/or individuals of same-sex assault, please refer to the follow pages for more detailed information:**

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**If you are an LGBTQ survivor or a survivor of same-sex assault, please refer to the following pages for more detailed information:**

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## Definitions<sup>1</sup>

1. Intimate Partner Violence is a pattern of behavior, which involves abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage or domestic partnership, cohabitation, dating, or within a family. This violence can take many forms ranging from physical aggression to assault to emotional abuse.
2. Sexual Violence is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home, school, and work.

## Statistics<sup>2</sup>

- One study found that 52% of LGBTQ survivors had been sexually assaulted by someone of the same gender.
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
  - In a 2011 study aimed at LGBTQ survivors, 38.7% of survivors of IPV identified as gay, and 31.3% identified as lesbian.
  - More than a third of survivors were between the ages of 19 & 25.
  - Approximately 36.3% of lesbians and 55.1% of bisexual women reported, in a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study, that they had been pushed/shoved/slapped by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.
  - Approximately 24% of gay men and 27% of bisexual men reported, in a Centers for Disease Control study, that they had been pushed/shoved/slapped by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.
  - More than half of bisexual women (57.4%), a third of lesbians (33.5%), and more than a quarter of heterosexual women (28.2%) who experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner reported at least one negative impact (e.g., missed at least one day of school or work, was fearful, was concerned for

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions taken from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic\\_violence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_violence)

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey by sexual orientation

her safety, experienced at least one post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptom).

- Sexual Violence (SV)
  - Studies show that most people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) knew the person who sexually assaulted them<sup>3</sup>.
  - Approximately 1 in 8 lesbians and half of bisexual women have been raped in their lifetime.
  - Almost half of the bisexual women, who experienced rape, were raped for the first time between the ages of 11 – 17 years old.
  - Nearly half of bisexual men and 4 in 10 gay men, have experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime.

### **Possible Effects of Sexual Assault**

- Some LGBTQ people may not typically be considering certain sexually transmitted infections and/or pregnancy due to the anatomy of their partner/s. As a result, they may be less aware of important issues and how to deal with them. The result of painful penetration can be severe both emotionally and physically. Medical providers may also assume that the survivor is heterosexual.
  - Many LGBTQ survivors feel a sense of isolation, vulnerability, paranoia, or punishment. Shame is also a common feeling survivors endure, because they feel that not only has their body been violated, but their identities.
  - If an LGBTQ person has a partner or partners, additional complications may ensue. If a partner is also a survivor, then that person may re-experience their own trauma from this incident.
- LGBTQ survivors may also experience internalized blame that they “deserved” it due to the amount of homophobia/biphobia/transphobia present in society.
  - LGBTQ people are less likely to report. They fear not being taken seriously or experiencing further oppression from authorities.
  - There are also societal perceptions that only men or masculine people can perpetrate and only women or feminine people can experience violence. This can also cause survivors to blame themselves.

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<sup>3</sup> *Sexual Assault and the LGBT Community: Resources and Information*

- Some sexual assaults are actually hate crimes, motivated by fear and hatred of LGBTQ people. In these cases, perpetrators may verbally abuse their victims and imply that the victim deserved to be sexually assaulted. It's important to remember that sexual assault is always an act of violence, power, control, and degradation, but LGBTQ survivors may have also experienced an additional layer of homophobia/biphobia/transphobia.

Sexual violence and intimate partner violence among LGBTQ people are prominent and serious issues which need to be addressed. The following will help you understand more about assault in the LGBTQ community and how to help someone in need.

### **Unique Issues Related to Sexual Assault in the LGBT Community**

It is important to recognize that there are specific fears and problems that may arise with an LGBTQ survivor. The following lists are the common barriers and fears LGBTQ survivors face.

Survivors fear:

1. Not being taken seriously or having their pain minimized.
2. Being revictimized by the police due to their sexual orientation/gender identity when reporting their incident.
3. Being "outed" (having their sexual orientation/gender identity revealed to others without their consent)
4. Being blamed for the assault.
5. The risk of having contracted a sexually transmitted infection.
6. Safety.

Survivors may:

1. Feel betrayed by the LGBT community. Survivors seek comfort in the idea of having other individuals who identify as LGBTQ, and if sexually assaulted by someone in their community, they may feel betrayed by their community.
2. Be concerned that reporting their experience would reflect badly on the entire LGBTQ community
3. Have to explain their experience in a lot more detail than non-LGBTQ survivors would.
4. Have fewer people to talk to due to a lack of trained advocates specifically for LGBTQ survivors.
5. Feel that their experience would not be labeled as rape or assault by

- those who are supposed to help or support them.
6. Feel guilt and depression.

There are also many other barriers such as:

1. Myths surrounding who perpetrates and experiences sexual or relationship violence.
2. Myths about masculinity and femininity as well as the sexualization of LGBTQ people. These myths can include that LGBTQ people or masculine people always want sex.
3. Lack of awareness of sexual or relationship violence both within and outside of the LGBTQ community may make silence feel like the only option.
4. Lack of knowledge of proper resources for LGBTQ survivors.
5. Survivors who are not open about their sexual orientation/gender identity may find it near impossible to talk to anyone, therefore limiting their ability to report the incident. They may feel additional hardship in having to come out about both their experience of violence and their identity.

### **As an Advocate**

As an advocate or helper who is supporting an LGBT-identified survivor of sexual or intimate partner violence, it is important to recognize specific ways to support the individual. Some of the ways are:

- Believe in the individual
- Offer unconditional support and respect
- Respect the need for confidentiality as much as possible
- Be a good listener
- Ask them what they want to do next
- Avoid judgmental comments/jokes
- Respect the individual's final decision even if it is different than you would have chosen
- Mention the different resources available, but don't make decisions for the person you're supporting

***Refer to the list of fears and barriers above for particular reasons why a respect for privacy and expressing belief in what the survivor tells you are critical for LGBT-identified survivors.***

## **Possible Recommendations**

There are many possible steps that communities can take in order to reduce or raise awareness on the issues of sexual and intimate partner violence in the LGBT community. Some of these include:

1. Increasing funding towards local, state, and national funding of LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs, particularly for survivor-led initiatives.
2. Creating initiatives to ensure that there is data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity so as to ensure appropriate data for IPV research.
3. Increasing funding for awareness campaigns on violence in the LGBTQ community.
4. Creating or furthering training programs for advocates dealing with LGBTQ-identified survivors of assault.
5. Providing resources and outreach that are specifically LGBTQ inclusive.

## **Transgender/Genderqueer Survivors**

Research has shown that people who are transgender or genderqueer (trans\*) are subject to the most vicious and obvious forms of violence. Trans\* individuals are routinely subject to discrimination in public, through intimate partner violence, and by medical professionals/authorities.

1. Approximately 50% of trans\* individuals have experienced some form assault from their romantic partner.
2. Studies have shown that trans\* individuals are often sexually assaulted because they are trans\*.
3. Rape crisis centers and hospitals are often unprepared or well-trained to handle issues affecting trans\* people. Systems that are based on the sex someone was assigned at birth, which can be particularly exclusionary or dangerous.

Violence against trans\* people share many similarities with violence stemming from gender oppression or oppression based on sexual orientation. Furthermore, distinguishing the motivation behind a violent attack against a trans\* person is often challenging because of the intersection between transphobia and other forms of oppression. Individuals may be targeted for their gender expression and/or because they are perceived to not be heterosexual.

## **Bisexual/Queer Survivors of Interpersonal Violence**

While talking about individuals who identify as bisexual or queer, there are many common myths associated to this sexual orientation, which individuals who identify as such often face.

- Bisexuality/queerness is not a legitimate orientation.
- Bisexual/queer individuals are really gay/lesbian but won't admit it.
- They're on the fence.
- They don't know themselves.
- They must be in multiple relationships/are polyamorous, which is then implied to mean that they always want sex from anyone
- Bisexual people are promiscuous and can't be trusted (will leave you for someone of another sex).

## **Hate/Anti-LGBTQ Violence**

Hate Violence can range from verbal harassment, phone or e-mail harassment, property damage, threats of assault, actual assault or "bashing," rape, and murder. Many LGBTQ people have experienced some form of hate violence or know of someone who has been impacted by such violence.

LGBTQ individuals often believe a certain level of harassment is inevitable. However, it is important to note that it is *never* okay to be harassed or hurt because of who you are or who you are perceived to be.

### General Facts<sup>4</sup>:

- In 2012, there were 2,016 reported incidents of anti-LGBTQ violence.
- LGBTQ individuals of color were 1.82 times more likely to experience physical violence, compared to white LGBTQ individuals.
- Gay men were 1.56 times more likely to require medical attention than other survivors.
- Trans\* individuals were 1.67 times more likely to experience intimidation and hate crimes than non-trans\* LGBTQ survivors.
- In 2010, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) documented 25 anti-LGBTQ homicides in the United States. Of the 25 victims:
  - 54% were Black/African American, 15% Latino, 12% White, & 4% Native American.
  - 53.8% were transgender women, which correlates to the three year

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<sup>4</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs Hate Violence study

continual trend of violence against transgender women.

### Recommendations to Reduce Hate Violence

- End law enforcement violence against LGBTQ and HIV-affected people through holding police officers accountable for homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic violence, prohibiting profiling based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and training law enforcement on LGBTQ communities experiences of violence.
- End the root causes of anti-LGBTQ and HIV-affected violence through addressing anti-LGBTQ and HIV-affected institutional, cultural, and interpersonal discrimination.
- Decrease risk of severe violence and homicide through ending poverty and homelessness in LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, through things like access to jobs programs, housing and safe schools.
- Collect data and expand research on LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities' experiences of violence on a local, state and federal level.
- Increase funding for LGBTQ and HIV-affected anti-violence support and prevention programs.

**The following pages are intended for individuals who are survivors seeking support/resources. Individuals who currently are in a relationship, and are questioning if their partner is being abusive, please refer to the following pages. It also intended for individuals who are being abusive to their partner to find out how to avoid perpetrating behavior.**

**If you are a survivor of assault or are being abused<sup>5</sup>:**

It's important to know that violence/abuse is not likely to stop on its own -- episodes of violence usually become more frequent and more severe. Remember that you are not alone, and have many advocates to support you through your incident(s).

- Find a safe location away from the perpetrator. Ask a trusted friend to be with you for moral support.
- If you decide to leave the relationship, develop a safety plan. A safety plan can include asking a trusted friend for help, choosing a safe place to stay, and collecting money, emergency phone numbers and a bag of clothes so you can leave quickly.
- Know that what happened was not your fault.
- Seek medical care as soon as possible. Even if you do not have any visible physical injuries, you may be at risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy.
- Recognize that healing from an assault takes time. Give yourself the time you need and know that it is never too late to get help.
- Seek help from one of the resources at the end of this guide.

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<sup>5</sup> Sources: Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network online website & University of Santa Cruz online Student Health Outreach and Promotion

### **If you are being abusive you can:**

- Stop using abuse of any form (physical, sexual, economic or emotional), including threats and intimidation.
- Accept responsibility for your behavior. Remember that the use of violence is a choice and you can choose to change that behavior.
- Do not make excuses for your violence or blame your partner for your abusive behavior.
- Seek professional help from a qualified counselor who is knowledgeable about partner abuse.

### To Avoid Becoming a Perpetrator:

- Remember sexual assault and abuse are crimes and choices. There is no excuse for taking any action involving other people without their explicit, effective consent.
- Do not assume you know your partner's comfort level in intimate situations. You and your partner may not want the same degree of intimacy. If you are confused about the messages you are getting, ask for clarification. Do not pressure your partner into any sexual activity.
- Remember that if your partner is not comfortable with a sexual activity, do not feel rejected. Your partner is not rejecting you as a person; your partner is expressing a decision about participating in a single act at a specific time.
- Be clear that sexual excitement does not justify forced sex. Your partner may consent to some activities and not to others, or may consent and then change his or her mind. Your partner may show physical signs of arousal, but these physical responses do not imply consent to any action.
- Be clear that desire for affection is not the same as desire for sex. Your partner may love you and not want to have sex. Your partner may want to date you and not have sex. Your partner may want to participate in some sexual activities, but not others. Desire for and consent to one activity does not imply consent to another.
- Alcohol, drug use, or mental health problems may make abusive situations worse but they are not excuses for abusive behavior and are not causes of intimate partner or sexual violence.

## Resources for Survivors On-Campus, in Atlanta & Nationally

If you answer “YES” to any of the following relationship questions, you may want to refer to some of the links below and/or take a serious look at your relationship with your partner:

### Are you in a relationship with someone who:

- Keeps you from spending time with friends or family members?
- Makes you account for your time when apart from him/her?
- Is excessively jealous and possessive?
- Makes unreasonable demands for your attention?
- Blames you for all the arguments or problems in the relationship?
- Wants to make all the decisions?
- Invades your privacy – opening your mail, reading your e-mail or going through your personal belongings?
- Gets angry for no apparent reason?
- Seems like two different people – one is charming or loving, the other is mean and hurtful?
- Lies in order to confuse you?
- Criticizes, ridicules, humiliates or belittles you?
- Controls your finances or feels entitled to your financial support?
- Damages your property?
- Harasses you at work or school?
- Threatens to out you at work, to your family or to others?
- Criticizes your body and appearance?
- Prevents you from practicing safe sex?
- Forces or coerces you to have sex or hurts you during sex?
- Becomes angry if you don't go along with his/her sexual demands?
- Blames his/her behavior on alcohol, drugs or his/her own history of abuse?
- Pressures you to use alcohol or other drugs?
- Threatens you with physical harm or makes you feel afraid?
- Pushes, shoves, grabs, punches, hits or strikes you with hands or fists?
- Threatens or assaults you with weapons, such as household objects or knives?
- Manipulates you with the constant threat of mood changes and impending rage? Has you “walking on eggshells” or living with constant stress, anxiety or fear?

**Please visit the links below or call a rape crisis/sexual assault hotline if you feel that you are victim of sexual assault.**

**On-Campus Student Resources:**

**The Respect Program –**

Lauren (LB) Bernstein, LMSW  
Assistant Director for the Respect Program, Office of Health Promotion  
Phone: 404-727-1514  
[Lauren.Bernstein@emory.edu](mailto:Lauren.Bernstein@emory.edu) or [respect@emory.edu](mailto:respect@emory.edu)  
<http://respect.emory.edu>  
1525 Clifton Road, 103-I, Atlanta, GA, 30322

**Counseling and Psychological Services –**

[studenthealth.emory.edu](http://studenthealth.emory.edu)  
Student Counseling Center for appointments call:  
Monday – Friday 8.30 AM – 5.00 PM  
Ph: 404-727-7450

**Confidential HIV/AIDS & STI Testing –**

Student Health Services  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 1525 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA, 30322  
For appointments call:  
Monday – Friday 8 AM – 5 PM  
Ph: 404-778-2700  
Or log onto: [https://www.shspnc.emory.edu/login\\_directory.aspx](https://www.shspnc.emory.edu/login_directory.aspx)

*For Safe Space/LGBTQ Resources please feel free to visit.*

**Office of LGBT Life at Emory University**

Dr. Michale Shutt (Director) & Danielle Steele (Asst Director)  
Dobbs University Center Room 232E  
404-727-0272 | [lgbt@emory.edu](mailto:lgbt@emory.edu) | <http://lgbt.emory.edu>

**Atlanta Resources (Off-Campus):**

**United 4 Safety, a part of the Health Initiative**

U4S HELPLINE: 404-200-5957  
[info@united4safety.org](mailto:info@united4safety.org)

**DeKalb Rape Crisis Center**  
24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 404-377-1428  
Office Line: 404-377-1429

**The Health Initiative**  
[www.thehealthinitiative.com](http://www.thehealthinitiative.com)  
404-688-2524

**Domestic Violence Hotline**  
1-800-33-HAVEN

**Georgia Commission on Family Violence**  
[www.gcfv.org](http://www.gcfv.org)

**Women Healing Women**  
[ww.surviving2thriving.org](http://ww.surviving2thriving.org)  
404-944-6409

**Partnership Against Domestic Violence**  
[www.padv.org](http://www.padv.org)  
404-873-1766 (Fulton)  
770-963-9799 (Gwinnett)

**National Resources:**

- **Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)** Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org) This is a national hotline for victims of sexual assault. The hotline offers free, confidential counseling and support 24 hours a day, from anywhere in the country. When a survivor calls the hotline, s/he is connected to the nearest local rape crisis center through a unique computer routing system that maintains the confidentiality of callers.
- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center** <http://www.nsvrc.org/>  
The National Sexual Violence Resource Center serves as the nation's principle information and resource center regarding all aspects of sexual violence.
- **Rape Treatment Center** <http://www.911rape.org/> This web site offers information on the impact of rape, date rape drugs, facts and statistics, as

well as a comprehensive list of links to other resources.

- **For Men Only: Male Survivors of Sexual Assault** <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/booklets/maleassault/menassault.html>  
This page is from the Counseling and Mental Health Center at the University of Texas at Austin and offers another source of information for male survivors of sexual assault.
- **Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project** <http://gmdvp.org/> The Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project is a grassroots, nonprofit organization providing community education and direct services for clients. GMDVP offers shelter, guidance, and resources to allow gay, bisexual, and transgender men in crisis to leave violent situations and relationships.
- **Suicide Prevention Hotline**, 831-458-5300 or toll free: 877-ONE-LIFE (663-5433) 24-hour Suicide Crisis Line is an anonymous and confidential service that provides distressed people a safe place to express suicidal thoughts and feelings. Volunteers are trained to assess each call for potential lethality and to respond appropriately to ensure the safety of the caller.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) TTY: 1-800-787-3224 The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides anonymous crisis intervention, information about domestic violence and referrals to local services. The hotline advocates can answer calls in English and Spanish and have access to translators in 139 languages.
- **The Network/La Red** 617-423-SAFE (Hotline in English and Spanish) This program offers free services in English and Spanish for lesbians, bisexual women and transgender people who are victims of battering. These services include a hotline, emergency shelter and advocacy programs.

Sources: University of Santa Cruz online Student Health Outreach and Promotion; "Am I Being Abused?" online

**Sources for writing this document:**

1. Northwest Network Relationship Skills Class Curriculum
2. "Get the Facts." *BRCC: LGBT*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2013.
3. *Sexual Assault and the LGBT Community: Resources and Information*
4. Definitions taken from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic\\_violence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_violence)
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey by sexual orientation
6. *National Report on Hate Violence Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,*

- Transgender, and HIV-Affected Communities Released Today*, compiled by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP)
7. "Am I Being Abused?" N.p., n.d. Web. 18 June 2013.
  8. National Resources taken from University of Santa Cruz online Student Health Outreach and Promotion:  
<http://healthcenter.ucsc.edu/shop/sadv/resources.shtml>

***This guide was developed and written by Neil Vasudeva (Respect Program/Office of Health Promotion Summer '13 Intern), in consultation with Lauren (LB) Bernstein (Assistant Director for the Respect Program, Office of Health Promotion) and Danielle Steele (Assistant Director for the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life)***