

Considerations for Responding to Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer/Questioning/Intersex (LGBTQI+) Survivors

Adapted from the Georgia SART Guide by Kelly Andrichik, UW-Parkside Police Department

The victim specific or cultural consideration section is designed to help SART members understand victims from diverse cultures to ensure all victims are served with respect regardless of their background. This section is intended to be a tool to help professionals; however, it is the responsibility of each SART member to integrate culturally relevant and responsive care into their services for victims. It is hoped that SARTs will utilize these considerations to increase their understanding of diversity and learn ways to serve victims with respect to their cultural background and identities. ¹

Criminal justice responders and allied professionals should be aware that personal biases can affect how services are provided to and for victims who may identify differently than they do. As such, these considerations are offered to ensure that all victims are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

According to the Human Rights Campaign²:

- Sexual violence affects every demographic and every community – including LGBTQI+ people
- Nearly one in ten LGBTQI+ survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) have experienced sexual assault from their partners
- Around half of transgender people and bisexual women will experience sexual violence at some point in their lifetime
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people experience sexual violence at similar or higher rates than straight people.

Never assume that a victim identifies as straight or only has heterosexual relationships. Some victims who have been assaulted by a same sex partner or same sex perpetrator may be concerned that they won't be taken seriously by responding professionals. Individuals may be concerned that others believe that people who identify within the LGBTQI+ community cannot be sexually assaulted or that an assault by a same sex partner or same sex perpetrator doesn't count as a "real" assault.

A victim may be reluctant to report an assault if it will somehow involve disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation. Do not assume that if the person is "out" to an individual(s), that they are out to everyone. It is important to get consent from the individual person before sharing their personal information (sexual identity/orientation/expression) with any other providers or family members. For law enforcement, this applies to any radio traffic as well.

People who identify as LGBTQI+ may face discrimination or harassment and may not have the support of their families. Before providing referrals, professionals must consider

¹ *Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team Guide*. 2021. [2021sartguidev2-final.pdf \(svrga.org\)](https://www.svrga.org/2021sartguidev2-final.pdf)

² www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-assault-and-the-lgbt-community

whether the referrals are LGBTQI+ friendly and safe. Comprehensive questioning and acknowledgement of how they identify (partner rather than girl/boyfriend and/or not assuming sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression) will allow victims to build trust and rapport with criminal justice professionals.

Many victims who identify as transgender have documents that have discrepancies between legal name, gender marker, and gender expression. It is best to inquire about these privately to have questions clarified. As in every case, prepare the victim for the potential disclosure of their identify and information when participating in open hearings or other proceedings within the criminal justice system. Respect their decision if they choose not to move forward with a case.

Reminders for responding to LGBTQI+ survivors:

- All survivors deserve to be treated equally with dignity and respect for their privacy and confidentiality.
- Language matters. Use the survivor's preferred name and pronouns.
- Incorporate intake and assessment forms that are gender inclusive.
- Nondisclosure of one's gender identity, transgender history, or sexual orientation doesn't equal dishonesty or deception.
- The process of coming out may change over time. Partners and family members may or may not know of a loved one's gender identity, transgender history, or sexual orientation. Do not disclose this information without the survivor's permission.
- The victim's insurance company may or may not know of a victim's transgender or identity. Do not disclose this information without the survivor's permission.
- Not all documents may have the same name or gender
- Other people may out someone intentionally or unintentionally. Again, protecting the survivor's privacy and confidentiality is crucial.
- As with any survivor, offer sexual health education, education on sexually transmitted infections, and mental health support.

Resources for Professionals and LGBTQI+ Communities

- **LGBT Awareness for Law Enforcement – Out to Protect:**
<https://www.comingoutfrombehindthebadge.com/lgbt-awareness-law-enforcement/>
- **FORGE:** <https://forge-forward.org/>
- **Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities:**
<https://www.theiacp.org/resources/responding-to-sexual-violence-in-lgbtq-communities-law-enforcement-strategies-and>

Vocabulary and Language

In *Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities*, the International Association of Chiefs of Police³, the Human Rights Campaign⁴, and Amnesty International USA⁵ offer the following recommendations and definitions:

“To establish trust and rapport with individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, and to speak accurately about crimes committed against them, it is critical to use accurate terminology and language. Responding professionals are encouraged to become familiar with these as well as other specific terminology that might be used in the communities and cultures within their jurisdictions, but they must remember to never make assumptions and to always reflect back and respect the terms an individual uses about themselves.” - *International Association of Chiefs of Police*

“Please note that each person who uses any a term does so in a unique way. If you do not understand the context in which a person is using a term, you can respectfully ask them.” - *Amnesty International USA*

Ally: A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).

Asexual: The lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people.

Biphobia: Prejudice, fear, or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, romantically, physically, spiritually, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender, or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Bottom Surgery: A surgical procedure by which a transgender person’s physical appearance and function of their existing sexual characteristics are altered to resemble those socially associated with their identified gender.

Cisgender: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Coming out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates his or her sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share this information with others.

³ <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/all/i-j/IACPRespondingtoSexualViolenceinLGBTQCommunities2017.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

⁵ https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/toolkit_LGBTglossary.pdf

Deadname: Also known as a legal name, a deadname is the birth name of someone who has changed it. Using someone's deadname may feel dismissive, demeaning and invalidating.

Gay: A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

Gender: A societal construct, defined by expectations of the ways men and women should behave, including but not limited to the way individuals dress, talk, or act.

Gender Expression: External manifestations and appearance of gender identity; frequently expressed through one's name, behavior, pronouns, clothing, hair, behavior, voice, or body characteristics, which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender Identity: One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither; how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from the sex assigned at birth.

Gender-Nonconforming: A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. Related terms include genderqueer, nonbinary, androgynous, and gender-variant.

Homophobia: The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

Intersex: Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to women.

Misgendering: The accidental or deliberate use of a name or gender pronouns that do not reflect the gender with which an individual identifies.

Non-Binary: An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

Outing: Exposing someone’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety, or religious or family situations.

Pronouns: A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (she, he, it them, and this.) Gender pronouns specifically refer to people that you are talking about. A gender neutral or gender inclusive pronoun is a pronoun which does not associate a gender with the individual who is being discussed (they/them/theirs.)⁶

Queer: A term often used interchangeably with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. This term is sometimes used instead of ‘bisexual’ as a way of acknowledging that there are more than two genders to be attracted to. For decades ‘queer’ was used solely as a slur for gays and lesbians, but was reclaimed by activists as a term of self-identification. However, some still hold ‘queer’ to have a negative connotation, and its use by heterosexuals is often considered offensive

Questioning: A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sex Assigned at Birth: The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy.

Sexual Orientation: A term describing a person’s inherent or immutable emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.

Top Surgery: A surgical procedure for transgender men to remove breast tissue.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression is different from cultural expectations associated with their assigned sex at birth. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.” Transgender is an adjective, not a noun; thus, “transgender people” is appropriate but “transgenders” is disrespectful. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation; therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transgender Man (FTM): “Female to Male;” a person who was assigned female at birth, but now identifies and lives as a male

Transgender Woman (MTF): “Male to Female;” a person who was assigned male at birth, but now identifies and lives as a female

Transphobia: The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people.

Two-Spirit: A contemporary term that refers to Native American lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. This term has been reclaimed by some in Native American

⁶ <https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/>

LGBT communities to honor their heritage and provide an alternative to the Western labels of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender

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