

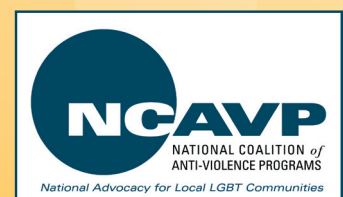
WHY **IT** MATTERS

Rethinking Victim Assistance for
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
Victims of Hate Violence & Intimate Partner Violence

A Joint Policy Report
by the National Center for Victims of Crime
and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

MARCH 2010

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime



The **National Center for Victims of Crime** is the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. Since its inception in 1985, the National Center for Victims of Crime has worked with grassroots organizations and criminal justice agencies throughout the United States serving millions of crime victims.

The mission of the National Center for Victims of Crime is to forge a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. We are dedicated to serving individuals, families, and communities harmed by crime. Working with local, state, national, tribal, and federal partners, the National Center for Victims of Crime:

- Provides direct services and resources to victims of crime across the country;
- Advocates for laws and public policies that secure rights, resources, and protections for crime victims;
- Delivers training and technical assistance to victim service organizations, counselors, attorneys, criminal justice agencies, and allied professionals serving victims of crime; and
- Fosters cutting-edge thinking about the impact of crime and the ways in which each of us can help victims of crime rebuild their lives.

The **National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs** (NCAVP) is the nation's largest anti-violence coalition addressing the pervasive violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) and HIV-affected communities throughout the United States. NCAVP, coordinated by the New York City Anti-Violence Project, is dedicated to supporting local strategies addressing anti-LGBTQ violence and to fostering a national response to anti-LGBTQ violence. Members document and advocate for victims of anti-LGBTQ and anti-HIV/AIDS violence/harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, police misconduct, and other forms of victimization. NCAVP and its members:

- Provide direct services to LGBTQ victims of violence across the country;
- Produce two annual reports: *Hate Violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People in the United States* and *Domestic Violence in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities in the United States*;
- Provide training and technical assistance to mainstream and LGBTQ anti-violence organizations, law enforcement, hospitals, advocacy groups and allies;
- Advocate with local and national victim assistance providers to serve LGBTQ survivors ethically and competently through training and collaboration;
- Organize national and local responses to anti-LGBTQ hate violence; and
- Conduct outreach and prevention education to LGBTQ communities.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Victims of Crime (National Center) is the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization dedicated to helping victims of crime rebuild their lives. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) is the nation's largest anti-violence coalition addressing the pervasive violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ)ⁱ and HIV-affected communities throughout the United States.

In May of 2009, the National Center and NCAVP partnered to produce two related questionnaires surveying community-based organizations and victim assistance providers, including criminal and civil justice agencies, regarding their work with LGBTQⁱⁱ victims and survivors of violence. This survey is the first of its kind and sheds light on the important barriers faced by mainstream and LGBTQ service providers to adequately address the needs of LGBTQ victims of violence.

In releasing this joint policy report, the National Center and NCAVP announce their collaboration to identify and raise awareness about the gaps in victims' rights and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer victims of crime and present the results of their surveys. The ultimate goal of this partnership is to create equal access for LGBTQ victims of violence by fostering a better understanding of outreach, prevention, justice, and direct services for LGBTQ victims of crime and to forge a national commitment to better serve these individuals and communities whose victimization has largely been unseen, unreported, and unserved.

Thirty years ago, LGBTQ anti-violence programs began to offer local coordinated community responses to anti-LGBTQ victimization and to the lack of response from systems designed to aid victims of violence, including legal, medical, victims' assistance, and law enforcement. Several years later, these programs joined together to form the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs to strengthen and broaden their LGBTQ anti-violence work, support existing and help form additional local programs, and work

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- i In this report, the initialisms used, LGBTQ, LGBT, or LGB, vary based on the specific persons being discussed. Lesbians and gay men are individuals that develop intimate and/or sexual connections with members of the same sex. Bisexual people can experience sexual, emotional, and affectional attraction to their own sex and the opposite sex. Transgender individuals are broadly defined as people whose biosocial assigned sex is not congruent with the sex or the gender with which they identify. Queer has historically been used as a derogatory term against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people or those suspected of being L, G, B, and/or T. Currently, some people have reclaimed the term and self-identify as "queer."
- ii The survey collected data on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities, but for the purposes of this paper, the authors chose to leave out the data on this final category. The data suggests the possibility that respondents, given the option to choose multiple categories for their answers, may have chosen queer in a manner that would inflate or conflate the data, as the term can be inclusive of the other four categories used. We have also elected to refer to the queer communities in the overall analysis, as these communities are representative of the populations for whom this paper advocates. Please note further that in other studies that collect data on sexual orientation, the category would remain, but transgender would be separately categorized as the term reflects gender identity.

with mainstream systems to provide culturally appropriate services to LGBTQ victims. Today, this work continues in the face of continued societal homophobia and heterosexism.

Inconsistent access: what victims experience*

In 2008, Davis, a gay man living on the west coast, was in danger when the abuser he had fled found him. Davis received a death threat on his car from the abuser, Jason. Davis had been with Jason for seven years. During that time, Jason was always controlling. He monitored Davis' phone calls, wanted to know where he was at all times, and controlled all of their money. Jason also sexually abused Davis and, after one particularly brutal incident, Davis fled. Davis stayed with a friend that Jason did not know and got a job. He was away from Jason for a month before he found a note on his car from Jason that was essentially written as a contract on his life.

Davis strategized to get to a domestic violence shelter. With help from a local anti-violence program, Davis developed an intensive safety and advocacy plan designed to keep him moving across the country to the east coast. Along the way, Davis contacted gay-friendly churches, local and statewide domestic violence programs, and a national domestic violence organization to find shelters that would accept men, and programs that would provide food, toll money, and gas cards. The national program provided information about local shelters that would accept men, but this information was not always accurate. Davis' calls to statewide coalitions and statewide domestic violence hotlines often resulted in the message "we don't shelter men." With the help of the coalitions or by talking to supervisors, Davis could sometimes get shelter for a night or two. This process happened repeatedly during the 12 days Davis traveled to the east coast.

When Davis could not get space in domestic violence programs, he looked for homeless shelters; however, due to the very recent sexual assault, Davis did not feel safe in a homeless shelter. After much advocacy, one particular shelter agreed to make arrangements to allow Davis to sleep in one of the beds that was in the staff offices; however, when Davis arrived, the staff person that greeted him told Davis that he thought that Davis didn't look gay and looked like he could take care of himself, so he would need to stay with the rest of the men.

*This compilation was provided by The Network/La Red, an NCAVP member program.

As demonstrated by the findings in this report, the National Center and NCAVP found that, in 2009, LGBTQ victims of crime still did not have consistent access to culturally competent services to prevent and address the violence against them. Too often, mainstream victim assistance agencies cannot meet the needs of LGBTQ crime victims in culturally sensitive ways, while LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs either lack the resources to do so or do not exist.ⁱⁱⁱ Without access to culturally competent advocacy, intervention, and other critical services, LGBTQ victims will continue to suffer disproportionately from violence and the after-effects of victimization.

iii Throughout this paper, "mainstream" victim assistance provider refers to providers working primarily with heterosexual victims of crime; anti-violence programs are NCAVP's network of more than 35 anti-violence organizations that monitor, respond to, and work to end hate violence, domestic violence, and other crimes affecting LGBT communities.

This report makes recommendations and ultimately proposes collaboration between mainstream victim assistance agencies and LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs to increase the efficacy and equity of services provided to LGBTQ victims of crime, particularly hate violence and intimate partner violence. The recommended strategies will be effective only when supported by the necessary changes in laws and policies to provide LGBTQ victims of crime with equal access to victims' rights and services.

The National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs make the following recommendations:

1. Build collaboration among LGBTQ anti-violence programs and mainstream victim assistance providers to increase the availability of culturally competent services for LGBTQ victims of crime by providing LGBTQ-specific training for criminal and civil justice system personnel and victim assistance providers.
2. Assess and evaluate the implementation of state and federal protections for victims of crime and implement policy and legislative changes to assure that LGBTQ victims have equal access to protections.
3. Increase public awareness of the extent and impact of victimization against LGBTQ individuals and communities and on crime victims' rights and services through national and local public awareness, education, and outreach campaigns.
4. Increase state and federal funding for collaboration, training, outreach, services, research, and data collection on the victimization of LGBTQ people.

About This Report

The National Center and NCAVP began this collaborative survey and report to gain a better understanding of the victim services provided to LGBTQ victims of crime throughout the United States. The focus of this joint policy report is on the crimes of hate violence and intimate partner violence against LGBTQ people, because these are the crimes that are most reported to NCVAP programs. This report confirms that gaps in services for LGBTQ victims of violence exist and shows the need for culturally competent service provision through LGBTQ and mainstream service providers' collaboration. These gaps in services compromise the safety of LGBTQ individuals, families, and communities.

This report first presents a brief overview of what we know through published literature on hate violence and intimate partner violence against LGBTQ people. Next, there is a discussion about why more is not known about the victimization of LGBTQ people and the responses to them. Existing research gaps reflect a dearth of information about the experiences of victim assistance agencies and anti-violence programs in responding to crime against LGBTQ people. To learn more about the current state of services provided to

LGBTQ victims, the National Center and NCAVP conducted surveys of victim assistance providers and LGBTQ anti-violence programs to begin to fill this knowledge gap. This report reviews key findings from the surveys as well as highlights relevant comments supplied by survey respondents.

The results made clear several pertinent steps, discussed in the recommendations, which must be taken to improve the response to LGBTQ victims of crime. Such an endeavor must include cross-training and collaboration; public awareness, education, and outreach on the scope and impact of crimes against LGBTQ people and the lack of options for victims; and improved data collection and research addressing the victimization of LGBTQ individuals, families, and communities. This work will require funding and relevant changes to laws and policies to ensure equal access to victims' rights and services for LGBTQ crime victims.

In the conclusion, allies are invited to embark on this journey forward to providing effective, relevant, and equitable victim assistance.

WHAT WE KNOW

Since the Stonewall Riots of 1969, which sparked the modern lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer rights movement, LGBTQ individuals and communities have become more visible throughout the United States. However, these individuals and communities continue to experience significant degrees of discrimination and violence, ranging from government-sanctioned discrimination to a wide range of crime victimization, including assault, harassment, stalking, sexual violence, and homicide.¹ In focusing on hate violence and intimate partner violence in this report, the National Center and NCAVP address two prevalent and dangerous forms of violence experienced by LGBTQ individuals and communities.² This focus was also chosen because the needs of victims of these crimes may not be adequately addressed if the victim assistance providers do not know the sexual orientation and/or gender identity^{iv} of the victim and if LGBTQ-sensitive services are not available.

Hate violence against LGBTQ people are crimes motivated by the offender's bias against the actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity of the victim. Hate-motivated violence is rooted in cultural bias. An attack against an individual or an act of property damage that clearly reflects bias motivation is also an attack against a community and may simultaneously incite community-wide fear and panic as well as frustration and anger. Such attacks send the message that a community and anyone as-

iv Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction toward others. Gender identity is the psychological sense of one's gender or lack thereof.

sociated with it is not safe, raising anxiety and fear for members of the community who may not even have known the victim.

Hate violence against LGBTQ people is on the rise. From 2006 to 2008, reports of anti-LGBT bias-motivated violence increased by 26 percent overall, with a 36 percent climb in crimes committed by strangers, a 48 percent increase in bias-related sexual assault, and an all-time high rate of hate violence resulting in murder. In 2008, medical attention was required by 46 percent of all victims of LGBT hate violence reported to NCAVP programs.³ According to another recent study, approximately 20 percent of lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people experienced a crime against their person or property based on their sexual orientation and 50 percent experienced verbal harassment over their lifetime.⁴ In addition, reports of anti-LGBT bias-related physical abuse at the hands of law enforcement personnel increased 150 percent from 2007 to 2008.⁵

The impact of hate violence harms members of the victim's community as well, and can leave them feeling isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law.⁶ A 2006 poll found that 54 percent of LGBTQ people responding were "concerned," "very concerned," or "extremely concerned" about being the victim of a hate crime.⁷ According to studies by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), hate crimes based on sexual orientation bias have more serious and long-lasting psychological effects than other crimes because of the link to core aspects of the victim's identity and community.⁸

Intimate partner violence against LGBTQ people, defined as a pattern of abuse in which one partner isolates, coerces, and dominates another in order to control the relationship. Abusers often capitalize on widespread bias directed at sexual orientation and/or gender identity by threatening to "out" (reveal the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of) the victim to family members, employers, landlords, or others in positions of power.⁹ This threat is an effective tool of manipulation and control because once outed, people may lose jobs and homes, as well as custody of their children.¹⁰

Some studies suggest that intimate partner violence occurs in the relationships of LGBT people at about the same rate as in heterosexual relationships, or in approximately 25 to 33 percent of all relationships.¹¹ The National Violence Against Women Survey reported that slightly more than 11 percent of the women who had lived with a woman as part of a couple reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked by a female cohabitant.¹² Researchers also report a high rate of battering within gay intimate partnerships among men, with 39 percent of those studied reporting at least one type of battering by a partner over a five-year period.¹³ Transgender people may experience a higher level of both intimate partner violence and sexual assault.¹⁴

The harm caused by anti-LGBTQ bias also poses additional barriers for victims of intimate partner violence. An LGBTQ victim may hesitate to disclose partner violence for fear that the abuse will be consid-

ered evidence that the victim's sexual orientation and/or gender identity is unhealthy. Seeking support from family members is especially difficult if the family disapproves of the relationship,¹⁵ although studies reveal that even LGBTQ friends and community members are largely unprepared to support victims of intimate partner violence.¹⁶ Additionally, criminal justice personnel and victim assistance providers often underestimate the physical danger involved in same-sex relationship abuse, or fail to recognize that a physically smaller partner may be the perpetrator. Victims may not be believed, or their concerns minimized, by service providers as well. Mainstream victim services and civil and criminal justice agencies may contribute to the appearance of bias by the lack of inclusive language or images used in outreach materials or even their program name. For example, a name that may seem innocuous, such as "The Women's Safe-place," may prevent men, transgender persons, or even lesbian or bisexual women, from seeking services.

There is a dearth of culturally competent victim services for LGBTQ victims of crime. Furthermore, many victim-serving agencies are not well trained to work with LGBTQ victims and survivors of crime.¹⁷ Perhaps the most significant barrier to services for LGBTQ victims is the existence of bias attitudes: homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and predominant heterosexism.^v The history and prevalence of such attitudes means that LGBTQ victims may fear encountering bias, even if the service provider or justice agency has made efforts to increase their cultural competency.¹⁸ Without training, providers often fail to consider and address the relevance of anti-LGBTQ bias in the victim's experience. An LGBTQ crime victim may experience bias repeatedly, from being targeted because they are LGBTQ to problems reporting the crime to lack of inclusive victim services. Failure to understand the significance of the victim's sexual identity and/or gender expression therefore presents a great barrier to LGBTQ victims of crime seeking services. While accessible support services can play an important role in preventing victimization and helping victims live free from victimization,¹⁹ many LGBT victims and survivors do not feel that supportive services are readily accessible.²⁰ In fact, studies have shown that only one in five survivors of same-gender sexual assault and intimate partner violence received victim services.²¹

Despite the victimization experienced by LGBTQ individuals, there are fewer than 40 NCAVP-member LGBT-specific anti-violence programs in the country. Most are small, staffed largely by volunteers, generally under-funded, and lack the capacity to engage in the outreach, education, and advocacy necessary to raise awareness and increase reporting and help-seeking for these crimes. These programs' direct service departments are critically understaffed to meet current needs. As well, few national violence prevention

v Homophobia is any attitude or behavior predicated in the assumption that heterosexuality is both normative and desirable, resulting in the marginalization of lesbians, gay men, and queer people at personal, familial, and/or societal levels. Biphobia is any attitude or behavior predicated in the assumption that engaging in intimate/sexual behavior solely with those of the opposite sex is both normative and desirable, resulting in the marginalization of bisexuals at personal, familial, and/or societal levels. Transphobia is any attitude or behavior predicated in the assumption that biological sex and gender are binary and synonymous, resulting in the marginalization of transgender individuals at personal, familial, and/or societal levels. Heterosexism denotes negative attitudes, biases, and discrimination in favor of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. It can include the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that only opposite-sex attractions and relationships are valid and therefore superior.

or intervention organizations highlight the needs of LGBTQ victims and, while some federal agencies include LGBTQ populations among their concerns, federal laws do not recognize LGBTQ relationships or families. The federal Violence Against Women Act does not mention gender identity or sexual orientation in its definition of “special populations.”^{vi}

These disparities reflect widespread misconceptions about the need for victim services for LGBTQ communities. LGBTQ victims and survivors must know that relevant resources exist to assist them, and victim assistance providers must be trained and supported to develop competency in addressing LGBTQ victimization and addressing these unmet needs.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

Legitimacy in policy work is established in large part through data that justify the need for new policy or changes to existing policy. In the field of victim services, practical challenges have made it difficult to build a solid empirical foundation on which to base effective policies, particularly for underserved victim populations.²² The available statistics are largely compiled through direct service and crime reporting data or studies that help to establish parameters such as definitions, prevalence, and demographics of victimization.

Statistics on historically marginalized communities as well as of highly stigmatized forms of violence (intimate partner violence or violence that relates to personal identity, such as hate violence) are under-reported. The U.S. Department of Justice advises policymakers “Homosexual victims may decide not to report hate crimes to police because of fears of reprisals or a belief that they will be forced ‘out of the closet.’ Such an ‘outing’ may cause repercussions to their career and

LGBTQ victimization is under-reported due to many risk factors:

Isolation inhibits full participation in society and exacerbates vulnerability to crime by creating less awareness of what constitutes a crime, crime victims’ rights, and options for reporting.

Revictimization by homophobic and transphobic responders, lack of specific services, and environments which force victims to educate the providers contribute to fears of seeking help.

Shame in the face of societal stigma and victim blaming may be exploited by perpetrators. By targeting victims in highly stigmatized communities, perpetrators count on shame to keep victims from reporting the crime.

Discrimination and rejection are risks for victims “outing” themselves by seeking help. Being identified as LGBTQ means risking public rejection and stigma, discrimination in employment and housing, threats, and revictimization.

Within the LGBTQ community, risks include confidentiality being violated, retaliation by the perpetrator, and being perceived as betraying the community by taking problems to outsiders.

vi 42 U.S.C. §13925(a)(33) “The term “underserved populations” includes populations underserved because of geographic location, underserved racial and ethnic populations, populations underserved because of special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status, or age), and any other population determined to be underserved by the Attorney General or by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, as appropriate.”

relationships with family and friends. Some victims have little confidence that authorities will bring the perpetrators to justice.²³

Taken individually, each of these issues presents an additional roadblock to reporting hate-motivated and intimate partner violence; taken as a whole, they become nearly insurmountable odds against seeking assistance.

Statistics reported by law enforcement agencies

In addition to the under-reporting of hate violence and intimate partner violence by LGBTQ victims and victim service agencies, there is also significant under-reporting by law enforcement agencies.

Large numbers of law enforcement agencies report zero hate crimes to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program, the national data collection system.²⁴ Despite growth in the total number of agencies participating from 1992 to 2004, approximately 84 percent of participating agencies reported zero bias incidents in each of these years.²⁵ This may accurately reflect the number of bias crimes coming to the attention of law enforcement personnel in some small jurisdictions, but it likely reflects a substantial under-reporting problem for many jurisdictions, particularly those in larger, more diverse communities. Using a national survey of police agencies, one study of note found that roughly 5,000 to 6,000 additional agencies investigated one or more crimes that could have been reported as bias crime incidents to the UCR.²⁶

A factor that contributes to the underreporting of intimate partner violence against LGBT people is police failure to identify incidents as crime victimization. Studies suggest that police often fail to recognize that the incident has occurred in the context of an intimate partnership, or, because of a misconception among law enforcement that a determination of domestic violence is based primarily on the sex of the victim, many simply assign the label of “mutual abuse” and arrest both parties in incidents of violence in an LGBT relationship.²⁷

Statistics reported by victim assistance agencies

As new LGBTQ-specific victim’s rights laws are being considered and passed, it is imperative to learn more about the need for LGBTQ victim services, including the number of those who seek assistance, the number served, and the number referred or turned away. This data is crucial for developing support for services and advocacy, and for indicating how services may need to be adapted. We can only speculate how many LGBTQ victims of intimate partner violence are using victim assistance services because there are numerous challenges to obtaining this data, such as victim assistance providers not wanting victims to feel pressured to disclose sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Other issues in data collection reflect general mores concerning socially encouraged privacy around matters of sexuality, assumptions of heterosexuality and gender identity, lack of understanding regarding diversity among LGBTQ people, and the

need for data collection skills development. Misconceptions and assumptions about a victim's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, especially as they correlate to age or any additional identity-based marker, increase the risk that LGBTQ victims will fail to be identified and fail to receive culturally relevant services and advocacy.

Consequently, currently collected and available crime statistics, even those we cite in this report, are unlikely to represent the true extent of crime victimization against LGBTQ people. Nor do we know when or how LGBTQ victims are using victim assistance and if their needs are being met. In summary, LGBTQ people need relief from stigma, discrimination, and the threat of violence to help end their historic invisibility. This invisibility contributes to being uncounted and unserved. It is imperative for professionals to recognize and document crimes against LGBTQ individuals and communities, and to create safe and effective crime and victim services data collection systems.

WHAT WE LEARNED: SURVEY FINDINGS

In May of 2009, the National Center and NCAVP each conducted national surveys to assess the state of victim assistance for LGBTQ^{vii} victims and survivors of crime. This survey is the first of its kind and sheds light on the current barriers to addressing the needs of LGBT victims of violence. The National Center surveyed its network of more than 10,000 legal system-based and community-based victim assistance agencies across the nation. NCAVP surveyed its member programs and their networks. There were a total of 648 survey responses. Responders were from a variety of victim assistance settings, including 40.5 percent nonprofit domestic violence centers, 38.7 percent nonprofit sexual assault centers, 26.6 percent prosecutors' offices, 16.5 percent law enforcement agencies, and 16.5 percent nonprofit organizations serving child victims. (In reviewing the survey findings, please note that data from multiple choice questions have been aggregated and reported in a range of numbers that may not equal 100 percent.)

Introduction to the findings

Overall, the results showed that LGBTQ-relevant victim assistance is generally lacking in every area included in the survey. Agencies expressed both a strong need and a willingness to receive culturally-specific training and technical assistance. The respondents also acknowledged the importance of LGBTQ-specific victim assistance and demonstrated a desire to better serve LGBTQ victims. Most respondents reported that their agencies:

- lack outreach to LGBT victims;
- lack staff LGBT cultural competence training;

vii The surveys collected data on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities, but for the purposes of this paper, the authors chose to leave out the data on the latter category. The data suggests the possibility that respondents, given the option to choose multiple categories for their answers, may have chosen "queer" in a manner that would inflate the data as the term can cross-cut the other four categories.

- did not implement LGBT-specific victim services policies and practices;
- did not collaborate with LGBT-specific service providers; and
- were under-resourced to correct these barriers to LGBT-specific services.

Lack of LGBT-specific services

While a strong majority of those surveyed reported a belief that it was important to serve LGBT victims, many agencies did not implement policies and procedures specifically for working with LGBT victims, including LGBT-friendly signs and materials, and gender-neutral intake forms. Most—from youth services to elder services and government agencies to nonprofits—face challenges in providing culturally competent services to LGBT survivors of violence. Obstacles range from general underlying staff homophobia to a perception that there is no need for specialized services for LGBT people. Victim service providers report they are overworked, under-funded, understaffed, and have limited options for offering a broad range of services in ways that are culturally specific. Thus, many providers have adopted a “one size fits all” approach to service provision, as illustrated by respondents’ comments in the sidebar.

Only six percent of all survey respondents indicated that a majority of the victims they served (75 to 100 percent) identified as L, G, B, and/or T people. Further, the data suggests that the types of victim services available to each group differed. Of the NCAVP respondents, general victim services were more likely to be provided to lesbians than to gay men or transgender people. Nearly all the NCAVP survey respondents provided support groups that included lesbians and bisexual women, whereas the top service provided for gay male victims and survivors was referral (93.2 percent). Services provided to transgender victims and survivors included crisis intervention services (81.9 percent), individual counseling (79.4 percent), and shelter (58.1 percent).

Lack of culturally-specific outreach

One effective way to build an LGBT community’s trust that an agency is inclusive is to have materials that are designed to encourage LGBT members to access victim services. Across the board, the top challenge

Respondents’ comments on the lack of LGBT-specific services

We treat everyone the same.

How can we single out one section of the population and show favoritism?

Our population being served are predominantly women, ages 14 - 61, and sexual orientation has never been a concern when dealing with rape victims.

We primarily serve children.

Let’s put criminals in jail regardless of who or what the victim likes to have sex with!

We are primarily a partner abuse intervention program – so maybe it doesn’t apply.

The challenges to serve victims are immense and we endeavor to be available to all, to encourage their participation, and to provide services without categorization or preference, no matter who they are.

reported by service providers was a lack of outreach materials specifically designed for LGBT victims. The survey respondents indicated that most agencies do not provide such materials. In fact, 69.2 to 92.9 percent of all survey respondents reported that they lacked outreach specifically designed for LGBT victims.

Culturally specific outreach signals to LGBT victims that the available services will address their real-life needs and communicates that LGBT survivors' feelings, experiences, and concerns about the victimization are valid, and that someone else understands this. Victim assistance providers expressed a desire to increase their outreach to the LGBT community, let them know of the services available, and increase general awareness of the impact of LGBT victimization.

Lack of victim assistance provider training

Many victim assistance providers have little training in cultural competency regarding LGBT victims. Such training would help them become attuned to the concerns of LGBT victims, including victims' fear of encountering a homophobic or heterosexist response by the criminal and civil justice systems or victim service providers, fear of being "outed" if they were not fully public with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and the fear that they may be seen as betraying their community if the perpetrator is also LGBT. Training would also help victim service providers learn to recognize their own internal biases or actions that imply the existence of a bias.

National Center survey respondents identified a lack of training as one of their top challenges in serving LGBT victims; specific populations they need more training to help include:

- gay/bisexual men (66.3%);
- transgender people (51.3%); and
- lesbian/bisexual women (43.2%).

NCAVP respondents similarly reported a lack of training in issues specifically related to LGBT victims of violence:

- transgender people (93.3%);
- lesbians and bisexual women (70%); and
- gay and bisexual men (68.9%).

Many victim service providers responded to the National Center survey about training needs with statements that they strive to serve all victims equally or that they do not discriminate. While these are appropriate values in victim services, the statements indicate the perception that all victims' needs are the same, sexual orientation and gender identity do not matter, and, therefore, there is no need for cultural competency training or LGBT-specific services. Without additional training, victim assistance providers risk believing that they are delivering "equal" services to LGBT victims while delivering fewer or less than adequate services. Training in cultural competency would help victim service professionals achieve their

goal of being accessible and sensitive to all victims and support more effective identification of crimes, classification of crimes, safety planning, lethality assessment, and options counseling.^{viii}

In the National Center survey, 56.4 percent of providers said that they would be very likely to use specialized training or technical assistance to better serve LGBT victims, and a total of 81 percent indicated that they would be very or somewhat likely to participate.

Lack of inclusive reporting forms

The surveys elicited a number of data-related issues regarding providers' reporting on work with LGBT victims and survivors of crime. The sidebar adds additional insights from some respondents' comments on the dilemmas encountered. If an LGBTQ victim receives services, data collection and reporting forms may not be written in an identity-inclusive way to capture the nature of a same-sex intimate partnership, the victim's sexual orientation, and/or gender identity, or the bias-motivated aspects of the violence. National Center respondents identified that the lack of specific LGBT-inclusive language on reporting forms was a top challenge in serving LGBT victims and survivors.^{ix} Most victim assistance providers do not track these statistics. In fact, the majority of all survey respondents stated that their agencies did not have mechanisms to track the number of LGBT victims served.

Lack of LGBT-specific policies and practices

In the National Center survey, responses about LGBT-specific policies and practices varied by victim assistance setting; overall, 71.3 percent had written and adopted a non-discrimination policy covering sexual orientation, while 28.7 percent had not. In the NCAVP survey, 79.3 percent had written and adopted a

Respondents' comments on the lack of data collection on LGBT victims

Even when we know the incident entails a same sex relationship, the victim will not acknowledge it as such and will refuse to be provided 'specific' assistance.

We have discussed tracking LGBTQ clients, with some in favor and some opposed at our agency. The pros are obvious, but the cons were that requiring orientation information to be disclosed at intake implies that if a client is not comfortable discussing their orientation, they are not welcome, and rather than set up that potential scenario, we opted not to collect LGBTQ data for any clients.

We cannot assume LGBTQ identity of crime victims who don't self identify. In some LGBTQ relationships, victims will not identify as intimate relationships; only as roommates when they believe a partner will be arrested.

viii Another recent study revealed some common misperceptions among crisis center staff regarding same-sex intimate partner violence; they rated scenarios as less serious than opposite-sex intimate partner violence and judged same-sex intimate partner violence as less likely to get worse over time. M. J. Brown and J. Groscup, "Perceptions of Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence Among Crisis Center Staff," *Journal of Family Violence* 24, (2009): 87-93.

ix Note though, that 77.4 percent of National Center survey respondents asked intake questions in a way that did not presume the gender of the victim, the victim's partner, or the offender.

non-discrimination policy regarding sexual orientation, and 46.1 percent had LGBT-related protocols that were enforced.

For some victim assistance agencies, advocating for prevention, outreach, justice, services, and policies that are inclusive of LGBTQ communities can mean risking one's job, agency funding, or general community support, and—especially without support from federal agencies and national organizations—can seem too great a burden for an individual victim advocate or local agency to bear. As the sidebar underscores, without adequate protections, individuals and organizations may opt not to push too hard for LGBTQ-inclusive practices.

Homophobia and transphobia are still quite prevalent in the workplace²⁸ and, in many states, protections for LGBTQ employees are not guaranteed.²⁹ According to the American Psychological Association, LGB individuals are less likely to suffer discrimination in organizations that have policies against LGB discrimination.³⁰ Such protections are imperative in victim assistance, as they allow and even encourage staff to advocate for inclusive and effective services for LGBTQ victims.

Respondents' comments on homophobia's effect on victim assistance agencies

Most of our agencies are not even providing any sort of safe space for our LGBTQ employees, much less a safe environment for LGBTQ victims/survivors.

I believe the biggest issue for our office is the public stigma.

Our agency is in an extremely rural area with a strong Christian base. Unfortunately, there are extreme biases in this community, and even the mention of LGBT services creates uproar.

This is a huge mountain to climb.

Lack of collaboration between LGBT and mainstream victim service providers

In the National Center survey results, 43 percent of sexual assault and intimate partner violence service providers said they did not collaborate with any LGBT organizations; neither did half of responding law enforcement-based victim assistance programs and nearly 78 percent of prosecutors' offices. Many respondents mentioned the difficulty of finding partner agencies to support or reach LGBT victims in areas that are rural or highly conservative and noted that a list of local LGBT resources would be helpful.

Those agencies that did report collaborations most commonly mentioned an LGBT community center or LGBT anti-violence project as a collaborating partner, while others included university-based programs, pride organizations, and chapters of PFLAG (Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

Lack of funding for LGBT-specific services

Across the board, the NCAVP survey respondents indicated that their services were not able to meet the needs of LGBT survivors of violence. Lack of funding and staffing were identified as major concerns:

- 93.3% of the programs reported they lacked funding and staffing for services to transgender people,
- 91.0% of the programs reported that they lacked funding and staffing for services to lesbian/bisexual women, and
- 89.9% of the programs reported they lacked funding and staffing for services to gay/bisexual men.

NCAVP respondents also indicated that they needed funding for outreach to LGBT survivors. Specifically: 92.9 percent needed funding to outreach to transgender people, 71.8 percent to outreach to gay men, and 69.2 percent to outreach to lesbian/bisexual women. Many reported that they were not able to access funding for outreach because of an inability to establish the sufficient need based on the small number of LGBT victims who had sought services. This is a well-known conundrum in developing services for marginalized communities. Outreach is under-resourced and limited, which restricts access to the targeted community and in turn restricts the targeted community's participation in responses to the problems. This results in a failure to document a specific population's needs. Without being able to gather the required data or outreach outcome measures, developing programs are hard-pressed to make the case for increased funding, thereby creating a frustrating cycle that produces an inability to deliver increased and more focused services to particular communities.

A Closer Look: Shelter

Notable in addressing the needs of LGBTQ victims, is the particularly difficult issue of access to domestic violence shelter spaces. The dilemma facing providers in sheltering LGBTQ intimate partner violence victims runs the gamut of issues from adhering to mission statements and the fiscally-related need to fill beds, to creating harmony in the living spaces and having the necessary facilities to meet the needs of diverse residents. In New York City, there are 2,081 shelter beds for victims of domestic violence; four of them are LGBTQ-specific. Anecdotal reports from LGBTQ providers show that gay, bisexual, and transgender men cannot access shelter because most domestic violence shelters do not house men.

Perhaps that is why the issue of shelter access was not among the top three challenges listed by National Center respondents; the majority of responding domestic violence programs may not shelter men, therefore they did not identify this issue as a priority. When LGBTQ victims have been housed in mainstream shelters, there are reports of negative reactions from other residents. In fact, 90 percent of NCAVP respondents felt that other clients would have difficulty with transgender individuals in the shelter; 63.3 percent were concerned about reactions to gay or bisexual men, and 40 percent were concerned about reactions to lesbians.

Some shelters try to circumvent these difficulties by offering gay men and transgender people “hotel shelter” for short stays. While staying at a hotel or motel may attempt to address immediate needs, it does not offer male victims the same level of safety and security, nor inclusion into a community of survivors with access to a greater scope of services, such as support groups and short-term and transitional housing. It also does not challenge agency policies to rethink how services are provided and how to address the needs of survivors that do not fit providers’ understanding of who may be victims of intimate partner violence.

This report underscores the need for national and local collaboration among victim assistance organizations, LGBTQ anti-violence programs, and victims/survivors to address this disparity. We must assess the emergency shelter needs of LGBTQ victims, study the dilemmas faced by local agencies in providing relevant shelter options, and generate practical recommendations that can be implemented in local communities to best ensure victims’ safety, services, and rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LGBTQ victims of crime are not receiving the necessary services to address immediate victim needs nor the attention and awareness necessary to end violence against and within LGBTQ communities.³¹ Victim assistance providers do not have adequate cultural competency to respond to LGBTQ victimization and LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs are overburdened. An adequate response system involving law enforcement, victim services, and anti-violence programs that serves all LGBTQ victims is needed.

The National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs make the following recommendations:

1. Build collaboration among LGBTQ anti-violence programs and mainstream victim assistance providers to increase the availability of culturally competent services for LGBTQ victims of crime by providing LGBTQ-specific training for criminal and civil justice system personnel and victim assistance providers.

To improve our national response to LGBTQ victims, it is essential that the level of collaboration between LGBTQ anti-violence programs and mainstream victim service providers—including law enforcement agencies—increases. Such collaboration will foster LGBTQ-specific competency and sensitivity in mainstream first responders and providers and supply an important link between LGBTQ victims and the civil and criminal justice systems. Interagency coordination and collaboration will also result in a broader range of remedies for LGBTQ victims and communities, and assure that LGBTQ victims and communities receive the resources they need to survive the violence and engage in meaningful prevention.

State- and federally-funded programs, including law enforcement agencies, must be required to obtain meaningful training to increase cultural competency when working with LGBTQ victims. The overall majority of victim assistance providers who responded to the National Center and NCAVP surveys indicated that they needed additional training to help them reach and serve LGBTQ victims. Such training can help victim service providers better identify any underlying biases that may impair their ability to serve LGBTQ victims, or actions that create the appearance of bias.

Training for law enforcement personnel can help them to better distinguish hate crimes from crimes of opportunity, to discern a hate motivation in cases where there are multiple motivations for the offense, and to respond appropriately to LGBTQ intimate partner violence. Where the size of the jurisdiction or level of LGBTQ victimization so justifies, law enforcement and prosecution agencies should be encouraged to designate an LGBTQ crimes investigator or prosecutor.

LGBTQ anti-violence programs across the country have demonstrated the ability to develop and deliver a range of trainings to help law enforcement personnel address various biases in dealing with LGBTQ victims. Such sensitivity trainings include learning appropriate responses while working with LGBTQ victims, the proper use of language, identifying anti-LGBTQ hate violence, dismantling gay and transgender panic defenses, and assessing abusers and victims.^x

Training and support to increase the cultural competence of law enforcement personnel and victim service providers must be prioritized, and increased state and federal funding must be available to carry out these trainings and to deliver follow-up technical assistance to providers.

x To learn more about these trainings, contact NCAVP or visit www.ncavp.org.

2. Assess and evaluate the implementation of state and federal protections for victims of crime and implement policy and legislative changes to assure that LGBTQ victims have equal access to protections.

Part of any strategy to improve our national response to crimes against LGBTQ victims will include legislative and policy changes to assure LGBTQ victims' needs are recognized, considered, and met. State and federal laws must include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes to assure equal access to justice for LGBTQ victims of violence. State and federal governments must understand that victims of violence include LGBTQ persons, and must ensure that support for domestic violence services, shelters, safe houses, and transitional housing is inclusive of same-sex and transgender victims, including men and male-identified people. To accomplish this, national, state, and local collaborations must be supported to assess the emergency shelter needs of LGBTQ victims, study the dilemmas faced by local agencies in providing relevant shelter options for LGBTQ victims, and generate practical victim-centered recommendations that can be implemented in local communities to resolve this disparity.

3. Increase public awareness of the extent and impact of victimization against LGBTQ individuals and communities and on crime victims' rights and services through national and local public awareness, education, and outreach campaigns.

The justice systems, social response systems, LGBTQ communities, and society at large must be made aware of the scope and effect of violent crimes against LGBTQ persons, as well as of victims' rights and services. Until this happens, LGBTQ victims will not receive adequate priority. Outreach materials and public awareness campaigns would serve to encourage the recognition and reporting of hate crimes, bias incidents, and LGBTQ intimate partner violence. As victims realize that they are not alone and others recognize that crimes against LGBTQ persons can happen even in their own communities, such crimes are more likely to be identified and reported. A national awareness campaign should also include local components to raise the profile of local LGBTQ-friendly services and allies. There is also a particular need for materials designed for friends and family of victimized LGBTQ persons so that they can be better prepared when victims turn to them for help.

4. Increase state and federal funding for collaboration, training, outreach, services, research, and data collection on the victimization of LGBTQ people.

State and federal funding must be provided to increase the capacity of local service providers to meet the need for LGBTQ victim assistance. To date, there are fewer than 40 LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs existing in 20 states. More than half of the country lacks dedicated services for LGBTQ victims. Committing state and federal funding for victim services, outreach, and prevention within LGBTQ

communities is required to foster the development and expansion of these LGBTQ-specific programs and resources throughout the United States.

State and federal policies and practices must ensure that state- and federally-sponsored surveys of victimization include indicators that adequately address sexual orientation and gender identity as separate study dimensions. Efforts must also increase quantitative and qualitative research among LGBTQ persons and increase opportunities for publication and dissemination of scientific research of studies that illuminate the specific experiences and consequences of LGBTQ victimization. Ultimately, research and data will undergird evidence-based practices for outreach, prevention, and intervention.

State and federal victim services funding must be inclusive of LGBTQ victims and must hold funded programs accountable to report on the number of LGBTQ victims seeking services and the LGBTQ-specific services programs provide. Agencies that conduct national, state, or local crime data collection or reporting, including victimization surveys, must gather data on crimes against LGBTQ persons.

As is evident from the findings of this report and the limitations of LGBTQ victimization research, it is nearly impossible to measure the need for services for LGBTQ victims of violence. Even when victims do report, fear of revictimization or lack of knowledge on the part of responders may result in victims receiving services without being identified as LGBTQ. Service providers may not have the mechanisms to properly document LGBTQ relationships or sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Federal, national, state, tribal, and local programs need culturally competent technical assistance on the importance of and strategies for safely and ethically collecting and reporting this data.^{xi}

CONCLUSION: A PATH FORWARD

With this report, the National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs have taken the first step in an initiative between mainstream victim assistance providers and LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs to increase the efficacy of outreach, prevention, justice, and direct services for LGBTQ individuals, families, and communities harmed by crime. We invite federal, national, state, tribal, local, and individual collaborators to join us in this endeavor. This initiative must encompass cross-training and collaboration; LGBTQ-specific training for law enforcement and victim assistance agencies; more resources for LGBTQ anti-violence programs; public awareness, education, and outreach; and more consistent LGBTQ-focused research and data collection. Advocacy to change laws and policies that address the victimization of LGBTQ people is integral to this effort to provide LGBTQ victims with equal access to victims' rights and services.

xi For example, victims may be provided with anonymous feedback forms that also collect demographic information, including indicators of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Discriminatory policies that harm LGBTQ people and communities must be changed both to allow meaningful access to services required by LGBTQ victims and to end government-sanctioned discrimination that is at the root of bias-related anti-LGBTQ crimes. Additionally, the hard work of changing socio-cultural biases against LGBTQ populations must become a much stronger and intentional part of crime prevention work.

LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs must have resources and support to build their capacity to collaborate with and train law enforcement agencies and mainstream service providers to ensure inclusive and competent outreach and services. Funding interventions targeted for groups who experience identity-based violence is not a new concept. The violence against women movement, for example, established intimate partner violence and sexual assault laws, funding, and services based on this very premise.

The National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs will continue to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations made in this report and to seek opportunities to bring attention and resources to improving victim assistance for all victims of crime, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people.

ENDNOTES

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