

SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ VICTIMS OF CRIME



A practical guide to understanding common barriers for LGBTQ+ victims of crime and how to help.



Seeking & Receiving Services

Finding the courage to report a crime is not easy for any victim. Members of the LGBTQ+ community experience additional barriers to seeking or receiving services.

- Dangers associated with "outing" oneself and risking rejection from family, friends and the community.
- Societal beliefs that DV does not occur in LGBTQ+ relationships.
- Fear that airing problems among the LGBTQ+ population will take away from progress toward equality or fuel anti-LGBTQ+ bias.
- Fear of homophobia from law enforcement and staff of service providers.
- Fear that the crimes against them will not be taken seriously.
- Lack of appropriate training regarding LGBTQ+ DV for service providers.
- DV shelters are typically female only, and male or transgender individuals may not be allowed entrance.
- Lack of, or survivors being unaware of, LGBTQ-friendly assistance resources.



@queerleaderscoalition

ENSURE SAFETY:

Only a person who feels respected and safe can be cooperative and provide you with the information you need to help them. Not every LGBTQ+ person is open to everyone about their sexuality or gender identity. Make sure that people feel comfortable and secure and that they can confide in you. It is especially important to handle reports in a professional and empathetic manner.

- Respect their identity and choice to define their identity.
- Establish trust and make them feel safe.
- Make a proactive statement about your agency's non-discrimination policies.
- Respect anxieties about any disclosures and don't pressure or try to force a disclosure.
- Be aware that official documents do not always reflect the true gender identity of a person (eg. drivers license)
- Protect personal privacy. Be sure to do everything to protect a person's privacy and always reassure them about it.
- If you are not sure about the meaning of something, ask in a professional and respectful manner.
- Take a thorough report on all aspects of the incident.

CONNECT VICTIMS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

Early engagement with community resources is essential to reduce fear, mistrust and misunderstandings between victims and authorities.

In order to overcome these obstacles, cooperation between police, prosecutors and victim services have proven to be beneficiary for both the victim and law enforcement.

- For Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, call a NEWS Advocate 707.255.NEWS.
- Napa County Victim Witness 707.299.1414
- LGBTQ Connection 707.251.9432

Essential Practices: What Helps?

Here are some things you can do to help victims and reduce harm as they recover from the trauma of a crime.

- Demonstrate that you and the agency are LGBTQ-friendly and treat the victim with empathy, kindness and respect.
- Be an active listener and use the same gender pronouns as the person you are talking to.
- If you don't understand something regarding a person's identity it is best to ask in a professional and respectful manner. If you make a mistake, as soon as it becomes obvious or pointed out, simply apologize.
- Inform the victim of their rights.
- Assure victims that you will consider their safety and confidentiality at all times.
- Always ask questions about the context of the event and not about the victim's identity and private life (unless it is necessary because of the nature of the crime).
- Avoid using generalizations and comparing them to other victims.
- Provide opportunities for choice to give victims back some control that was taken away due to the crime (i.e. preferred times and modes for contact).
- Elicit their perspective: ask questions about what they need.
- Make connections to community-based advocacy resources.

Essential Practices: What Hurts?

The following will most likely break down trust and increase victim fears about reporting a crime.

- Making assumptions about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Using disrespectful language, homophobic slurs or comments.
- Refusing to use a victim's gender pronouns.
- Reacting with disbelief, disgust, revulsion or anger at what they've reported.
- Being judgmental.
- Assuming you understand the victim's perspective.
- Asking for details you don't need.
- Feeling sorry for the victim and looking upon them as helpless.
- Leaving victim information in an unsecure location.
- Rushing a report and not collecting enough information.
- Contacting victims without their prior consent may increase their risk of further harm.

