

Domestic Violence in LGBT Community

What does domestic violence in the LGBT community look like?

Domestic Violence in the LGBT community looks very similar to the domestic violence/abuse that is prevalent in the heterosexual community. As in the heterosexual community, domestic violence is highly under-reported; mainly because of fear of revealing sexual orientation and the response that might be received from the community.

What are some of the forms of abuse found in the LGBT community?

The forms of abuse are the same among all kinds of people. Domestic violence is the exercise of power and control by one individual over the other and usually includes physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual, spiritual and financial abuse. However, the way that these manifest might be slightly different.

- Threatening you with “outing” thereby exposing victims’ sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or HIV status to family, employers, police, religious institutions, the community, or child protective workers.
- Withholding necessary hormone treatment for transgenders, which is medically required during the transition process.
- Use children in common to control you around issues of custody and visitation, particularly in cases where the child(ren) are biologically related to the perpetrator and may or may not be legally adopted by you.
- Constantly reminding you that you will not be able to seek services to escape the perpetrator because of the social oppressions faced like sexism and homophobia. Also, if you are an LGBT of color, threats of facing racism when you seek help.
- Terrorizing you that the LGBT in your area is a small community and accusing the perpetrator will let the community make assumptions, thereby limiting your social interactions.

What are some of the common myths in our society about the LGBT community?

- It is assumed that same sex intimate partners cannot be victims of domestic violence because they have equal social standing, are both of equal physical strength and therefore unable to exert power and control over, or be controlled by an intimate partner.
- LGBTQ relationships are abnormal and therefore, the abuse is not serious and the victim should easily be able to leave the relationship.
- Children raised by LGBT parents will become LGBT.
- LGBT parents are more likely to molest/abuse their children.
- LGBT parents cannot provide a stable home for children because children need a “father” and a “mother”.

What are some of the barriers to addressing domestic violence in LGBT Community?

- Lack of availability of proper service and trained staff.
- Possible overlooking for LGBT victims by mandatory domestic violence victim screeners at hospitals.
- Most shelters prohibit male victims from entering their facilities.
- When victims in LGBT community come forward, they risk becoming vulnerable targets for general criminal behavior outside of their intimate relationship because of their sexual orientation.
- Most domestic violence support groups are designed for heterosexual victims.

What are some of the resources available to LGBT Community?

- When there is an incident of domestic violence and you call the police, all police officers are required to complete a Domestic Incident Report (DIR).
- Expanded access to Family Court and Civil Orders of Protection to persons who are or have been in an intimate partner relationship, even if they never lived together, got married or have children in common applies not only to heterosexual couples but also to same-sex couples.
- In addition to the family offenses listed in the Family Offense Petition, the police or prosecutor may decide to consider additional charges under the Hate Crime Statute passed in 2000 for violence motivated by prejudice and hate because of race, color, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation etc..
- **The New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline**
English: 1-800-942-6906/ Spanish: 1-800-942-6908
24-hour, toll-free, all-language Domestic Violence Hotlines that can assist LGBTQ victims of domestic violence with finding support and shelter services statewide.
- Child and Family Service Haven House: (716) 884-6000 [24 hour hotline]
- Pride Center of WNY: (716) 852-7433 [9am-5pm only]