

Guidelines and Strategies for Addressing Sexual Violence in the LGBTQ Community

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AFFECTS EVERY DEMOGRAPHIC AND EVERY COMMUNITY—INCLUDING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER (LGBTQ) INDIVIDUALS. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual experience intimate partner violence at similar or higher rate than self-identified heterosexual individuals. The 2010 survey estimated that more than four in ten lesbian women and more than two in ten gay men have experienced rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner, with even higher numbers for bisexual individuals. (The true figures might be even higher due to the significant underreporting of IPV by victims of all sexual orientations.) The alarming rates of sexual violence within the LGBTQ community warrants attention. Effective policies and procedures, along with a strategic response by law enforcement and criminal justice partners, need to be implemented to address the specific needs of individuals who identify as LGBTQ and to build and sustain positive, healthy relationships between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community.

The decision to report a sexual assault to law enforcement and engage in the criminal justice system can be difficult for any victim, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity; when compounded with the historically strained relationship between the LGBTQ community and law enforcement, this decision becomes even more difficult. When crimes of sexual violence in any community go unreported, survivors may not receive needed services, perpetrators will not be held accountable, and the community will remain at risk for continued victimization.

It is incumbent upon law enforcement leaders to build relationships with the LGBTQ community, in service of the profession's overall goals to reduce crime, hold offenders accountable, and improve community safety.

Drawing from the promising practices and innovative initiatives pioneered by law enforcement agencies throughout the United States, the IACP, in collaboration with a group of multidisciplinary subject matter experts, developed *Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities: Law Enforcement Strategies and Considerations*. In order to better equip law enforcement with information to strengthen the agency response to sexual violence of LGBTQ individuals, the document serves as a broad foundation for developing healthy relationships with this community. Although every case of sexual violence is unique and each victim has specific needs, this resource can be used by law enforcement to strengthen their response to sexual violence of LGBTQ individuals and the development or sustained support of community partnerships and collaborations. ♡

