

Responding to the Needs of LGBTQ People of Color Experiencing Sexual Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, or Stalking

LGBTQ People of Color experience high levels of trauma, discrimination, violence, and oppression based on race, gender, and sexuality. Understanding how racism, homophobia, and transphobia simultaneously affect LGBTQ People of Color is critical when working to provide culturally relevant services to LGBTQ survivors of violence.

This guide is designed to help providers be more informed about the nuanced and complex realities of LGBTQ People of Color. It is for service providers to use when working to reach LGBTQ people and communities of color who are experiencing violence in their lives. It is not a one-size fits all guide but rather a tool that aims to provide context as well as action steps for reaching these communities.

Homophobia and transphobia exist in many communities and cultures and is indiscriminate. The lack of resources and funding in communities of color make it difficult for LGBTQ People of Color in their communities to build programs, organizations and institutions that advocate for LGBTQ rights—making LGBTQ centers, formalized groups or formal advocacy less visible (though not completely absent) in some, not all, communities of color.

Concepts to Consider...

1 Support & Social Groups for LGBTQ People of Color

Specific programming and activities that are for and by LGBTQ People of Color survivors is a great way to work with and support LGBTQ People of Color. In many communities of color, especially in the South, **sharing our stories with each other is not only an act of courage but also a practice of healing.** Story circles, listening sessions, and support groups are all important ways of lifting up the voices, experiences, and resiliency of LGBTQ survivors of color.

2 Engaging the Legal System

Racial-profiling and criminalization is a profound reality in LGBTQ communities of color. LGBTQ People of Color are often profiled for being black, brown, immigrants, and/or gender non-conforming. **Street harassment at the hands of the police is a common occurrence — especially for Black and Latino LGBTQ people.** It is important for anti-violence organizations to be aware of this reality and to respect survivors' desires to access resources and support outside of the legal system.

3 Transgender Women of Color

Transgender Women of Color experience high levels of violence and discrimination based on race, economic status, gender, and sexuality. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' 2012 Hate Violence Report, **“Transgender people of color were 2.59 times as likely to experience police violence compared to white cisgender survivors and victims. Transgender women were 2.90 times as likely to experience police violence compared to overall survivors and victims.”**

Living at the intersections of identities and oppression, Transgender Women of Color are pushed into the margins by domestic & sexual violence agencies, mainstream LGBT organizations, the healthcare system, and a majority of society's institutions. Due to this high level of marginalization, Transgender Women of Color are forced into survivor economies such as sex work. Often, this leads to the unjust criminalization and incarceration of Transgender Women of Color—particularly Black and Latina transgender women.

In order to address issues of violence at its root, it is critical for an organization to prioritize and value the lives and experiences of Transgender Women of Color who are survivors of racial and economic violence, as well as intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

A few words about Trust...

Trust is an ongoing goal, practice, and value when trying to build with, support, and provide services to LGBTQ communities and people of color. As people who are constantly forced to confront racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexual violence, partner abuse, and work discrimination—often all at once—there are a many reasons to be guarded, cautious, and reserved. Trust is not something that is rushed but rather something that is earned. The goal is not to rush a process for the sake of a report, data collection, or deliverable but to earn it for the sake of community and relationship building for the long-term.

Trust and transparency must always be front and center when reaching out to LGBTQ communities of color.

Action Steps...

- 1 Listening: LGBTQ People of Color are the experts on their lives**
It is extremely important to listen to LGBTQ People of Color with care and intention. Not just once—but again and again. It is critical to listen to the realities of others people's lives that we have ourselves felt that we do not understand. It can be easy to assume that because we have been trained as counselors, organizers, educators, and service providers that we are experts and “know best.” **The violence that LGBTQ People of Color experience will only begin to be addressed when LGBTQ People of Color are listened to and supported.** LGBTQ People of Color are experts of their own lives and therefore are best suited to develop skills and strategies for eradicating and confronting violence.
- 2 Outreach: Don't wait for people to come to you**
Have staff trained on multiple forms of outreach including events, club/bar outreach, street outreach, and community speak-outs. Find out where the LGBTQ hot spots are and where communities of color neighborhoods are located in your area. **If we want to reach LGBTQ People of Color, we must go to them and not expect them to come to us; simply because we have the ability and willingness to provide services.**
- 3 Staffing: Tokenization & Leadership**
In order to reach LGBTQ People of Color survivors, it is important for an organization to be made up of staff and volunteers who are also LGBTQ People of Color. **There must be an intentional approach to identifying, building, and supporting LGBTQ People of Color leadership in a way that maximizes this leadership with integrity while simultaneously minimizing any possibility of tokenization and exploitation.** It is LGBTQ People of Color, with support from allies, who will reach LGBTQ communities of color best.
- 4 Language Justice in LGBTQ Communities**
Multi-lingual capacity-building is key when working with LGBTQ immigrant communities. Language should not be a barrier when seeking help and services. It is important that an agency striving to serve LGBTQ communities of color is also aware of language access and is thinking through how to provide LGBTQ immigrant people who don't speak English with accurate information and resources. **Work with staff to identify agency specific language access plans and connect with interpreters and translators in your community.**



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