

Tips for Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Survivors

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1. **Work to establish an atmosphere of trust** between you and your client. With LGBT-specific cases this may require familiarizing yourself with a number of otherwise unfamiliar issues including but not limited to the self identification of a client's gender, the way your client describes the violence and how your client describes their relationship with their partner.
2. **Use gender-neutral terms** until the client identifies the abuser's gender (e.g., "So what is your partner's name?" instead of "What is his name?").
3. **Use inclusive (gender neutral) language**, ask respectfully how your client identifies and what pronouns they prefer, then mirror their terminology in both identity and language they use to describe the violence.
4. **Create intake forms that are neutral in tone.** For example, instead of "Gender: F or M," use "Gender: _____," which allows transgender clients to self-identify. Also consider using language like "partner" instead of "boyfriend" or "husband" on written materials.
5. **Instead of using the phrase "battered women"** — which may alienate battered gay men and transmen — use gender-neutral language like "victim" or "survivor."
6. **Provide gender neutral bathrooms.** Gender neutral bathrooms can alleviate unnecessary strain and anxiety for transgender clients.
7. **Learn how to assess victim and perpetrator by observing behavior and not gender.** Work with your local Anti-Violence Project to obtain the training necessary to make this assessment. See, www.ncavp.org.
8. **Guard against making assumptions based on gender roles or gender presentation** (e.g., butch/femme). As in all interviews, practitioners should ask detailed questions that allow clients to explain their story.
9. **Don't over-apologize!** Practitioners should also expect that they will make mistakes while learning to work with LGBT-specific intimate partner violence issues. Should you make a mistake concerning someone's gender identity or any other LGBTQ related issue, apologize and move on.
10. **Familiarize yourself with your state's specific laws** concerning intimate partner violence. Protections for LGBTQ victims of intimate partner vary widely from state to state. See <http://www.abanet.org/domviol/statutorysummarycharts.html>
11. **Develop a relationship** with your local LGBTQ domestic/intimate partner violence victim's advocacy group. There are many organizations working to provide detailed information and services specific to your state. See <http://www.ncavp.org>