

## **Sexual Assault in the LGBTQ Community**

Although sexual assaults are not isolated to any one type of victim or perpetrator, there are issues that may arise for LGBTQ people that are unique to our community. This brochure will help you navigate some of the difficult decisions and feelings that can occur if you have been a victim of a sexual assault. It will also give you the tools you need to get support from within the community.

### **What is Sexual Assault?**

Sexual assault and/or rape are violent crimes used as a tool to gain power, humiliate, and control. Not all sexual assaults are physical; they can also be verbal, visual, or any method that forces you to join in nonconsensual sexual contact or attention without your consent. It is often used as a form of hate crime against the LGBTQ community. Being forced to have unprotected sex or to engage in more sexual activity than you had wanted also constitutes sexual assault. If your boundaries were violated during sex-play or your safe words were not respected, it is still considered sexual assault. If you participate in sex work and someone forced you to do something you did not agree to, it is sexual assault. People of all genders and sexual orientations can commit sexual assault.

Sexual assault is never the survivor's fault.

### **What do I do if I have been sexually assaulted?**

- Go to a safe location away from the attacker.
- Call someone who can help you such as a friend or family member you trust or law enforcement. Feelings of shame, guilt, fear, and shock are normal.
- Seek medical care as soon as possible. You will be examined, treated for any injuries, and screened for possible sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy. Note: You are not required to have a sexual assault forensic exam, but if you choose to do so, it is ideal to collect forensic evidence from the body within 72 hours.
- Consider preserving evidence by (a) avoiding cleaning or straightening up the assault location, (b) remaining in the clothing worn during the assault or putting the unwashed clothing in a paper (not plastic) bag so that it can be entered into evidence, and (c) avoid bathing, washing hands, or brushing your teeth. Although it is difficult not to clean up, it will help the police in evidence collection if you report the crime.
- It is normal to be worried about “outing” yourself to the hospital staff or to law enforcement. It is up to you to decide what information you feel comfortable revealing and the most important issue is your physical and mental health.
- If you suspect you have been drugged, inform the hospital staff and request that a urine sample be collected.
- If you decide you want to file a police report, you or the hospital staff can call the police from the emergency room.
- If possible, write down or record the details you can recall about the assault and the assailant.

- Ask the hospital staff to connect you with the local rape crisis center or LGBT center. The center staff can help you make choices about reporting the attack and getting help through counseling and support groups.
- Reporting the crime does not in any way “betray” or hurt the LGBTQ community as a whole. Reporting the crime helps to address a serious problem affecting all communities.

### **What are your rights?**

You have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect in regards to your gender identity and/or sexual orientation and as a survivor.
- Sensitivity towards you as a survivor of sexual assault by medical and legal personnel.
- Have your rape crisis counselor/advocate and a support person of your choosing present during the sexual assault evidentiary exam or physical exam [CA Penal 264.2(b)(1)] and for any interviews by law enforcement authorities, district attorneys, or defense attorneys [CA Penal 679.04(a)].
- Decline an interview with law enforcement or reschedule for a time when you will be better able to participate.
- Not participate in the criminal justice process.
- Ask questions of the police, sexual assault forensic examiner, and attorneys.
- Be compensated for medical expenses through the Victim Compensation Program if you qualify and cooperate with law enforcement.
- Keep your face and/or name from being used in the media.

## How do I help someone who has survived a sexual assault?

When supporting a survivor of sexual assault it is important not to take control away from the survivor. If you can say and do the following, it will generally assist healing:

- It is important to tell the survivor that the sexual assault is not his or her fault.
- Be a good listener. Avoid second-guessing and resist placing any blame on him or her. Simply listen and accept what he or she says.
- Other than safety and health-related questions, try not to ask the survivor for details about the assault.
- Offer to stay with the survivor. Survivors are sometimes reluctant to be alone after an assault.
- Consider accompanying the survivor to the hospital or other places if he or she requests it.
- Many survivors try to blame themselves because they think the sexual assault would have been prevented had they done something differently. Reiterate that it is not their fault.
- Don't be afraid to suggest that your friend might need support from a counselor or advocate.
- Take care of yourself, too. Make sure you seek support and help if you are feeling overwhelmed.

## Resources

**L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center  
Legal Services Department  
1625 N. Schrader Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90028**

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center offers free legal and advocacy services for LGBTQ survivors of sexual assault through the Legal Department. Services for survivors of sexual assault include: assistance with safety planning, advocacy with law enforcement and the criminal legal system, restraining order and civil legal assistance, as well as referrals for counseling and other services.

To schedule an appointment:  
Call 323-993-7649  
E-mail [dvlap@lagaycenter.org](mailto:dvlap@lagaycenter.org)

## Emergency Numbers:

**24-Hour National Sexual Assault Hotline**  
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Call the National Sexual Assault Hotline to reach your local rape crisis center.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**  
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

If you or a friend is in immediate danger or needs medical attention, please call **911**.



## Information for Survivors of Sexual Assault in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Community

**L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center  
Legal Services Department**

**(323) 993-7649**

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