

RAPID INCIDENT RESPONSE TOOLKIT

Responding to Violence in LGBTQ & HIV-Affected Communities

1. What Rapid Incident Response Can Do

Hate violence is a prevalent and deadly issue being faced by LGBTQ and HIV affected communities¹. While experiences of hate violence – from discrimination and harassment to physical and deadly violence – continue to be a daily reality for many in LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, there is a lack of attention paid to these issues by policy makers, mainstream media, and communities at large. In order to address this violence we need public dialogue between LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, organizers, media outlets, and policy makers by raising awareness about the prevalence of hate violence in LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), GLAAD, The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), The National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), The Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC), The National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce (NGLTF) and their member organizations engage in ongoing, rapid response to call attention to, and increase awareness about this violence and to find solutions to the pervasive hate violence that LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities face on the streets, in the workplace and in their homes. This toolkit will give you the information you need to engage in rapid response to anti-LGBTQ and HIV-affected violence in your communities.

Rapid Incidence response (RIR) is one of the many ways in which organizers can raise public awareness about incidents of hate violence in their community while ensuring that the content of this conversation is grounded in the lived reality of LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities. Rapid Incidence Response:

- involves a number of methods that mobilize local communities,
- provides support to survivors of violence, and
- uses the media as a tool for raising awareness around particular incidents of violence while contextualizing that violence in a broader narrative of the history of violence against LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities.

This toolkit will provide:

- sample rapid response protocols to create media strategies,
- survivor support strategies, organizing, and
- advocacy strategies to address incidents of hate violence.

Anti-violence rapid response can be done in a variety of contexts: from organizations to individuals, survivors who want to take political action after experiencing violence, fully-funded organizations, all-volunteer organizations, and more. This toolkit will give an overview of various types of hate violence that affect LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, provide questions to consider when doing rapid response, provide best practice models for responding to incidents, and help create rapid response plans for local communities.

¹ *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2013*. Rep. N.p.: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2014. Accessed from http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/2013_ncavp_hvreport_final.pdf June.2014.

2. Some Information About Hate Violence

Violence against LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities that is based on anti-LGBTQ and HIV bias, referred to as hate violence, is a pressing issue for LGBTQ and communities. Hate violence is an umbrella term and can take the form of physical assaults, sexual violence, threats, intimidation, verbal harassment, property damage, bullying, and more. Some hate violence is also a crime; some violence may be traumatic, but not rise to the level of a crime due to the type of violence and/or state and federal law.

Data on LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities and the violence they experience in the United States is extremely limited. NCAVP annually collects data and then reports on this violence. NCAVP's 2013 [report](#) on hate violence against LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities documented 2,001 incidents of hate violence in 2013, including 18 homicides². The only comparable data to NCAVP's hate violence report is the "Hate Crime Statistics Report"³ annually released by the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division. This report documents hate crimes motivated by bias against sexual orientation, but as of 2013, omits gender identity, that local law enforcement agencies report to the FBI annually. Only 13% of the 13,022 participating law enforcement agencies reported hate crime data to the FBI in 2012 – an astonishing 87% of agencies did not. The FBI is currently working to collect information on hate crimes data motivated on the basis of gender identity in accordance with the Matthew Shepard, James Byrd Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act, but this information is not currently published.⁴ In 2013 NCAVP documented over 600 more survivors and victims of hate violence than the FBI in 2012 (1,376 survivors and victims compared to 2,001 survivors and victims). While the FBI tracks hate crimes and NCAVP tracks hate violence, including incidents that may not be reported to law enforcement or incidents that law enforcement may not classify as a hate crime, NCAVP still views this difference in data as an indication that many incidents of hate violence continue to go unreported across the country.

3. Rapid Incidence Response

When faced with incidents of hate violence, it is often difficult for survivors, LGBTQ and HIV organizations, advocates, community members, organizers and allies to raise awareness about incidents of hate violence in their communities. Survivors may face re-victimization in telling their stories publically. Organizations, advocates, community members, organizers and allies may not know how to engage media in the way that best supports survivors. Media outlets and local authorities may have particularly biased responses to incidents of anti-LGBTQ or HIV-affected violence, particularly against transgender people and people of color. The tools and suggestions below will help survivors and their allies in creating a plan to respond to incidents of violence in their community and ensure that their message remains consistent with the needs of the survivors and the community.

² *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2013*. Rep. N.p.: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2014. Accessed from http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/2013_ncavp_hvreport_final.pdf June 2014.

³ FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division 2012 Hate Crimes Report. Accessed from <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2012> on June 2014.

⁴ FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division 2011 Hate Crimes Report. Accessed from <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2010/tables/table-4-offenses-offense-type-by-bias-motivation-2010.xls> on April, 4 2014.

a. RIR Roles

RIR can be broken down into three broad aspects and effective RIR campaigns must create a plan for all three aspects of RIR.

Survivor Support	Communications	Organizing and Advocacy
<p>Immediate Crisis Intervention support to survivors who have recently experienced violence, identify and secure services and/or resources to address immediate safety, emotional health, physical health, and shelter needs</p> <p>Survivor Support Plans a plan that identifies resources to support survivor needs including safety, emotional and physical health, economic issues, and legal issues. Plans can address identified needs in the immediate, short, medium, and long-term</p> <p>Individual Counseling work with survivors around emotional health needs related to their experiences of violence</p> <p>Support Groups bring together survivors for mutual aid and support, to heal from violence and create community</p> <p>Individual Advocacy work with survivors to overcome bias and discrimination, in order to access services, supports, and resources. Can include accompanying clients to police precincts, hospitals, public benefits offices, and mainstream service providers</p> <p>Information and Referral provide accurate and complete information relating to violence experienced by LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities</p> <p>Involvement in Public Advocacy survivors may want to engage in public advocacy, organizing, and political action as a part of their healing process; a support plan can link survivors to options to get involved in public campaigns and public advocacy programs</p>	<p>Breaking News communications that occur immediately after incidents to inform your community, often with minimal facts and/or information, that alerts the communities that an incident has occurred</p> <p>Take Action follow up communication that lets people know how they can get involved in organizing responses around a recent incident</p> <p>Safety Alerts communications that give your community concrete tools on how to be safe from violence and seek support, which can be sent as a stand alone or in response to a specific incident</p> <p>Media Release and Advisory communications to the media to bring attention on an incident and/or an organizing & advocacy response</p> <p>Media Advocacy communications and/or other strategies to address racist, homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic media bias if it occurs</p> <p>Press Conferences public statements, coordinated to include media presence at the event, that increases visibility of an incident and/or puts pressure on targets to meet demands; educates public</p>	<p>Vigils –action that raises visibility of an incident when an individual is deceased. Allows family, friends, community, and public officials to publicly mourn and remember the individual</p> <p>Marches & Rallies actions that raise the visibility of an incident. Also can put pressure on relevant institutions (police, media, district attorney) to commit to specific demands</p> <p>Outreach raises awareness in a community about an incident, gathers more information about an incident, distributes safety information to community members, empowers survivors to do something concrete and preventative in the aftermath of an incident, recruits individuals to get involved in reducing violence</p> <p>Meetings with Relevant Officials asks political officials, including elected officials, key decision makers and others, to agree to a series of demands related to an incident or issue</p> <p>Mini Campaigns a rapid response strategy consisting of a series of actions/events designed to pressure a target (leader of an institution) to agree to demands (This may lead to Major Campaigns, organized when there is a series of incidents, a target, and a demand, but are not rapid response strategies)</p> <p>Community Forums useful in mini campaigns [or major campaigns] to get targets to respond to demands, all useful to educate the public around an issue</p>

b. Defining Goals

At the outset of creating a plan for rapid incidence response it is important to define the goals of engaging in RIR. Some of the most important questions to consider are:

- Why do you want to do rapid response work?
- How will RIR impact the survivor (both short- and long-term)?
- What do you have to offer that's not already offered?
- What kinds of violence do you often see in your community?

It is important to answer all these questions and only engage in RIR if there is a clearly identified objective that can be achieved by raising the awareness about the incident. The RIR plan should also center the experience of the survivor and their community.

c. Centering Survivors in RIR

Any successful RIR campaign must center the experience of the survivors and must rely on the leadership of the survivors. If you are the survivor of violence or working closely with the survivor of violence, you want to consider carefully public responses to the violence. While public responses can be useful for a survivor, or communities, survivors who choose to speak publically should carefully consider the potential onslaught of media attention, both in the short-term and in the long-term, and their support systems that can help them deal with this onslaught. If you are not the survivor or working closely with the survivor, you must be careful to limit the amount of information you release to already public information and then disclose any other information you have only with the survivor's permission. This can be a complex and nuanced process, and engages all three columns from the RIR roles, and should be done carefully.

If RIR is not focused on the needs of the survivor, the campaign can be tokenizing and exploitative. Advocates should do the following things before creating a campaign for RIR:

- Discuss potential RIR strategy options to survivors or surviving family or friends and let them decide the most appropriate response
- Support survivors or surviving family in developing the skills to become strong advocates and activists around their incident through:
 - Organizing and outreach trainings
 - Self-care and a careful analysis of the short- and long-term consequences of rapid incident response
 - Discussion on trauma and triggers
 - For further resources for supporting survivors, please visit:
<http://www.avp.org/resources/training-center>
- If the victim is deceased, support the leadership of those closest to the deceased person (chosen or blood family, close friends, etc.)

- Balance survivor self-determination and the impact of trauma
- Trauma can impact RIR by
 - Affecting survivor decision-making
 - Impacting survivor consistency
 - Survivors can feel distrustful or lash out against RIR team

d. Communication Guidelines

To ensure the safety of the survivors and the validity of messaging during an RIR campaign, it is important to keep in mind some general communications guidelines:

- If you aren't working directly with the survivor, stick to information released publicly, preferably from multiple credible sources
- Maintain survivor confidentiality throughout all communications until you have consent to go public
- Conduct speaking or media prep with all survivors
 - To help develop clear messages
 - To support them in managing the emotions of speaking publicly
- Do not release information when you know that publicity may negatively affect the survivor (example: outing someone) or the survivor does not want publicity
- Promote survivor self-determination: never pressure the survivor to do public work
- Provide survivors with sufficient information to make informed decisions around organizing, communications and public advocacy
- The speed and accuracy of RIR is an important factor to consider as quick RIR responses allow survivors and advocates to have more control of the messaging of a campaign
- Release incident information as early as possible with respect to other considerations
 - To assure community that we're working on incident
 - To gather more information
 - To establish ourselves as point people for organizations, media, elected officials and the general public
- RIR roles must be clearly defined within a given campaign. Decision makers, spokespersons, and those responsible for research and outreach must be clearly defined at the outset
- Stick to information released publicly, preferably from multiple credible sources
- Offer to mention or partner with groups in media releases when they are impacted organizations and elected officials

e. Researching the Incident

After establishing the goals of RIR, and carefully considering the issues raised in the section above, “Centering Survivors in RIR” and “Communications Guidelines,” you must be sure that you have accurate information about the incident that occurred. You can do this by researching information about the incident of hate violence before you put out a statement. Reliable information about hate violence against LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities is difficult to obtain via mainstream media and new outlets, which often fail to name bias or hate-motivation as a part of the incident, so survivors, allies, and organizations must often rely on other sources. These resources often include friends and family members of survivors (if they choose to participate), LGBTQ blogs and websites, grassroots organizations that have close ties to the community, LGBTQ and HIV-affected organizations in the community, and other prominent community members. Gathering information from these sources is often easiest if there is an already established relationship between you and your organization and other LGBTQ organizations; a trusting relationship makes sharing information easier and the information is likely to be more reliable. In addition, information about incidents can also be obtained from local law enforcement authorities and other official agencies; however, oftentimes such sources are reluctant to share information with organizers and community organizations.

It is critical that the information you release is either already public (e.g., picked up by the media) or is released with the express permission of the survivor, after careful consideration of short- and long-term impact on the survivor and their family. Once the incident is public, it is searchable and survivors are often contacted months, or even years, after the incident to comment on a more recent incident. Some survivors, especially those who see their roles as public speakers or advocates, will be fine with this; some survivors may find the process to be traumatizing. It is critical to make these decisions and consider impact before any public statement is released. Ultimately, the survivor must decide what non-public information can and should be communicated.

f. Resources

Assess the resources available to you or your organization as a part of the RIR process. These resources could include: access to the internet and/or social media, relationships with blogs or other media outlets, or access to email lists of concerned people who have opted to receive information about LGBTQ and HIV-affected violence. Some of the questions to ask are:

- What resources are available?
- How can you utilize existing resources without re-creating the wheel?
- What is your capacity (money, time, etc.) to work on rapid response?
- What do you know? What do you need to learn?

An effective RIR campaign includes all elements described above, and creates a plan for all aspects of RIR keeping goals, research, and resources in mind:

	Survivor Support	Communication	Organizing and Advocacy
Goals	Crisis Management- meeting the survivor's immediate physical, emotional, material needs	Raise Awareness of Violence Experienced by LGBTQ and HIV-affected people	Hold public institutions accountable to address the violence and support the survivor
Research	From other survivors, service providers, colleagues	Through news articles, blogs, reporters	From political officials, through outreach, coalitions, colleagues
Resources	Hotline, counseling, and online reporting forms	Internet access, websites, relationships with reporters	Outreach, volunteers, and listservs

g. RIR for Transgender Communities and People of Color Communities

Due to the historical oppression and misrepresentations of LGBTQ people of color and transgender communities, media bias should be expected when working with transgender or gender non-conforming people, people of color, or transgender and gender non-conforming people of color. Organizations such as GLAAD have helpful tools and [media guidelines](#)⁵ that help to address some of these issues. Institutional bias from law enforcement, emergency responders, lawyers, and judges may also be more prevalent, so prepare to advocate for survivors – and to rebut this bias - when engaging within these systems, keeping your ultimate goals in mind in the process.

Advocates and organizers should work on base-building in order to support survivors and to find out about incidents as a precursor to RIR. Assessing and assembling a decision-team of the survivor of the incidents and/or their chosen family is important as is having a strong base of transgender and people of color communities which builds trust to make RIR happen more effectively. Having meaningful connections to transgender and people of color communities can help organizers identify incidents which may not be reported on, or reported on accurately, by the media. Organizers must be mindful to not use relationships with transgender and people of color communities in a tokenizing or exploitative way.

In addition, getting the mainstream media's understanding and support for transgender and people of color survivors, and getting that media to see the bias or hate-motivation based on LGBTQ or HIV-affected identity can be harder with survivors who are transgender and people of color because of institutional and personal bias, transphobia and racism. This can be complicated by factors like a survivor's socioeconomic status, criminal records, or lack of education and result in transgender survivors or survivors of color being blamed for the violence. This is because of the preconceived cultural biases that exist in our society which translate to transgender people and people of color survivors being less likely to be perceived as "worthy." To address this issue it is important to explore frames that give real life examples of the day to day oppression that transgender and LGBTQ people of color experience.

⁵ <http://www.glaad.org/reference>

h. RIR Worksheet

This brief worksheet was designed to help organize a RIR plan.

Name of Survivor:	Survivor Support	Communications	Organizing and Advocacy
What are your goals?			
What resources do you have?			
What responses work best for your scenario?			
How will you support the survivor or surviving family leadership?			
How does the survivor's identity impact your plan?			

Who will make decisions and in what circumstances?

The survivor will decide . . .

The community members will decide . . .

The community-based organization will decide . . .

Steps in Your Response:

- Survivor needs:
- Communications needs and strategies:
- Organizing and Advocacy steps:

4. Additional Resources (Glossary of organizations and resources)

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP): NCAVP is a national coalition of anti-violence programs located throughout the country that serve the LGBTQ community. To receive local support and report an incident of violence please visit NCAVP.org.

National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC): The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) is a civil rights organization dedicated to empowering Black LGBT people. NBJC's mission is to end racism and homophobia. As America's leading national Black LGBT civil rights organization focused on federal public policy, NBJC has accepted the charge to lead Black families in strengthening the bonds and bridging the gaps between the movements for racial justice and LGBT equality. (NBJC.org)

National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE): The National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) social justice organization dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people through advocacy, collaboration and empowerment. NCTE was founded in 2003 by transgender activists who saw the urgent need for a consistent voice in Washington DC for transgender people. NCTE provides this presence by monitoring federal activity and communicating this activity to our members around the country, providing congressional education, and establishing a center of expertise on transgender issues. NCTE also works to strengthen the transgender movement and individual investment in this movement by highlighting opportunities for coalition building, promoting available resources, and providing technical assistance and training to trans people and our allies. NCTE sees this type of assistance as strengthening new and existing transgender organizations and our allies, initiating coalition building, and empowering state and local advocates who can mobilize on the federal level. (transequality.org)

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF): The mission of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is to build the power of the LGBT community from the ground up. We do this by training activists, organizing broad-based campaigns to defeat anti-LGBT referenda and advance pro-LGBT legislation, and by building the organizational capacity of our movement. Our Policy Institute, the movement's premier think tank, provides research and policy analysis to support the struggle for complete equality and to counter right-wing lies. As part of a broader social justice movement, we work to create a nation that respects the diversity of human expression and identity and creates opportunity for all. (thetaskforce.org)

Transgender Law Center (TLC): Transgender Law Center works to change law, policy, and attitudes so that all people can live safely, authentically, and free from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression. The Transgender Law Center connects transgender people and their families to technically sound and culturally competent legal services, increase acceptance and enforcement of laws and policies that support California's transgender communities, and work to change laws and systems that fail to incorporate the needs and experiences of transgender people. (transgenderlawcenter.org)

Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC): Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC) is the only national social justice organization that promotes the interests of Trans People of Color. TPOCC is an organization to inspire and nurture collaboration among communities of color dedicated to anti-racism and fighting transphobia and the empowerment of transgender persons of color. We work to strengthen and mobilize individuals, families, and communities by changing laws, educating the public, and building social and economic strength among all persons of color. (transpoc.org)

GLAAD: GLAAD amplifies the voice of the LGBT community by empowering real people to share their stories, holding the media accountable for the words and images they present, and helping grassroots organizations communicate effectively. By ensuring that the stories of LGBT people are heard through the media, GLAAD promotes understanding, increases acceptance, and advances equality.(GLAAD.org)

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NCAVP works to prevent, respond to, and end all forms of violence against and within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), and HIV-affected communities. NCAVP is a national coalition of local member programs and affiliate organizations who create systemic and social change. NCAVP is a program of the New York City Anti-Violence Project.

