



NYS LGBTQ+ IPV NETWORK

Service Access
Assessment Toolkit

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INTRODUCTION

About the Network and the Assessment Tool

The New York State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer Intimate Partner Violence Network (The Network) is a statewide group of direct service providers who are working to ensure that intimate partner violence (IPV) services are inclusive and affirming of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ+) people, especially transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (TGNCNB) and/or Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC).

LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors disproportionately include immigrants and people with unstable documentation status, people living with disabilities, people affected by HIV, people who use drugs, people engaged in informal and illicit economies, sex workers, incarcerated people or those who have been or are currently entangled with the criminal legal system, and low income working class communities.

Our work and this tool recognize that these survivors are the most marginalized in our society, targeted by multiple systems of oppression, and have been historically underserved by the government and the services sector. This marginalization and intersection oppression increases their exposure and subjection to violence, both interpersonal and systemic. This tool aims to help service providers ensure that the needs of these survivors with the most barriers to service and aid are considered and prioritized, not just those who are white, heterosexual, and cis, in order to better address the needs of **all** survivors.

This self-assessment tool was adapted from In Our Own Voices' Assessment, and is a starting point to understanding and analyzing the ways in which organizational practices, culture, and norms may be contributing to barriers to access for LGBTQ+ survivors of color.

Why Use this Tool?

Reflecting the broader injustices of our society, the mainstream domestic violence movement has tended to focus on the needs of white heterosexual cisgender women who experience IPV from their heterosexual, cisgender men partners. This narrow focus erases experiences of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors from the narrative of abuse, despite the evidence that these marginalized survivors face an alarming rate of violence of all forms.

According to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Hate and Intimate Partner Violence in 2017 Report by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, transgender women are at least three times more likely to experience violence on the street compared to cisgender or non-transgender women. LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC people are also more likely to experience violence from family members, roommates, neighbors, landlords, and other people they are in relationship with.

Unfortunately, even when these survivors seek support, they experience discrimination and further violence. In shelters, LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors face violence both from shelter staff and other clients, with transgender women nearly two and a half times more likely to experience violence than their cisgender counterparts. Thus, LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors may avoid accessing necessary support due to fears of rejection or invalidation of their identity and experiences.

Because of policing's role in upholding cisgender heteropatriarchy and white supremacy, LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors are also less likely to seek police intervention, and have worse experiences when they do, sometimes getting arrested with or instead of the person causing them harm. LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors are disproportionately criminalized because of their marginalized identities, documentation, and work status.

Providing services to LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors includes deconstructing the heteronormative paradigm of "domestic violence" to include LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors at every level of IPV programming, policy, and service planning.

By completing this tool, service providers can take an important step in providing affirming services for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors of violence. LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors are often not prioritized by IPV service providers, which can lead to further traumatization and isolation for these survivors. It is also important to also create safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC staff within IPV service organizations, as they are often at the front lines of serving survivors and are often survivors themselves.

Who Should Use This Tool?

This tool was designed for programs that are focused on IPV. However, non-IPV specific gender-based violence programs may also find this tool helpful in assessing how inclusive and affirming their services are and can be. There may be assessment questions not applicable to non-IPV programs but providers are encouraged to apply what is useful from the tool to their programming, and skip or leave what is not applicable. Note: please be advised that too many "N/A" answers (more than 6) may result in an invalid or unusable result.

Steps to Complete This Tool

1. Service providers can complete this tool on paper or [online](#); the Network recommends online completion for several reasons: 1) results can be used to assess overall trends in the IPV service provision sector, 2) results will be tabulated automatically for participating service providers, 3) results can be emailed to participating service providers upon completion.
2. Service providers should have staff closest to the programming complete the assessment.
3. Service providers should focus on their specific programming, shelter, or service when completing the assessment.
4. Service providers should answer honestly to get an accurate result from the assessment.
5. This Assessment tool can work hand-in-hand with other tool kits the Network has created and the Training and Technical Assistance Center to aid organizations in improving their score over time. This includes:
 - [Best Practices Toolkit](#)
 - [Shelter Access Toolkit](#)
 - [Power & Control in Relationships Assessment Tool](#)
 - [Sample Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Policy](#)
6. Service providers can reach out to the New York City Anti-Violence Project or the Network for training support through our [Technical Assistance Center](#) and [Training Request Portal](#).

Steps To Take After Completing This Tool

Upon completing this tool, service providers should be able to assess how inclusive and affirming each component of their programs and services are for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC, by examining the score they received after completing the questionnaire, and following the recommendations given at the end of the assessment.

An organization may take an assessment multiple times, after doing internal work to improve their services or address barriers to service for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors. The ultimate goal is to see scores improve as an indicator of greater service access for these marginalized survivors.

Providers can use this tool to anchor a conversation on program evaluation with a program team, or do an individual analysis of responses to then inform an action plan. This information can support team or individual staff efforts to evaluate their inclusiveness and help teams improve their efforts to serve LGBTQ+BIPOC individuals.

The tool includes a short section toward the end to support providers in identifying key barriers to providing more inclusive and affirming services, and the next action steps the provider can take to become more inclusive and affirming.

SERVICE ACCESS

ASSESSMENT TOOL

[Click here to complete the Service Access Assessment Tool online](#)

Assessment: Direct Services (Answer A-F)

1. Do staff and volunteers share their own pronouns when interacting with survivors, colleagues, and community?
2. Do outreach staff and other staff use gender neutral pronouns when referring to survivors or the person(s) causing them harm until gender specific pronouns are provided?
3. Are screenings conducted based on power and control, not perceived gender identity, to ensure that the caller is not the primary person(s) causing harm before they are admitted to confidential survivor-centric programs/groups/sites?
4. Are staff and volunteers, including crisis line workers, trained to sensitively support LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors with the particular safety needs of belonging to each of these communities, and to competently provide other services, including links and referrals to relevant resources and culturally specific agencies?
5. If available and/or requested, do staff make referrals for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors of IPV who experience criminalization (connected to their survival) and/or have civil legal needs (i.e. order of protection, immigration, divorce, custody, housing, discrimination, etc) to programs that meet those intersecting needs?
6. If an organization has youth programming, are program staff familiar with issues confronting LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC parents and youth (custody, coming out, school issues, transitioning, accommodations, etc.)?

For assessments, respond with:

A Always **B** Often **C** Sometimes **D** Rarely **E** Never **F** N/A

Assessment: Policies and Organizational Culture (Answer A-F)

1. Does the organization make an effort or have a process to hire LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC people as staff, and to support these staff in progressing in the agency?
2. Are LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC individuals involved in the development and decision-making process for inclusive staff and client policies?
3. Have all of your staff (including administration, HR, volunteers, and board members) received routine and ongoing training regarding oppression and best practices in providing affirming services for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors?
4. Are your policies reviewed on an annual basis to monitor the intentional inclusion of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC communities?
5. Are new clients aware of agency confidentiality policy surrounding LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors and the consequences for violating this policy?
6. Are strategies for increasing accessibility for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors integrated into programs and services on an ongoing basis? (For example: language, physical space, printed materials, etc.)

Assessment: Printed Materials (Answer A-F)

1. Do all written and web-based materials use inclusive language and images? (For example: using gender neutral language and avoiding specific pronouns, when speaking of person(s) causing harm or survivors, images with a diversity of community members)
2. Do you have materials in languages other than English?
3. Do your materials explicitly state whether or not your program serves LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB survivors?
4. Does your program provide materials/opportunities to assess whether LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors feel comfortable and welcomed when accessing services?
5. Does your agency have a system for recording names and pronouns other than what is on legal documents?
6. Does your program provide outreach and materials specific to LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors?

For assessments, respond with:

A Always **B** Often **C** Sometimes **D** Rarely **E** Never **F** N/A



Assessment: Physical Space (Answer A-F)

1. Is information about community services and resources for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors easily accessible in your space(s)?
2. Do resource areas contain materials such as books, magazines, and videos that reflect the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors?
3. Are your facilities arranged to accommodate survivors of all gender identities, including safe access to restrooms and other shared spaces?
4. Does your waiting area or public areas have your non-discrimination policy posted?
5. Is the non-discrimination personnel policy available in languages other than English?
6. Does your space provide a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors? (i.e. signage, community photos, etc.)

Open-Response Questions

1. What are 2-3 internal barriers in your agency that prevent more inclusive services?
2. What are 2-3 external barriers facing your agency that prevent more inclusive services?

For assessments, respond with:

A Always **B** Often **C** Sometimes **D** Rarely **E** Never **F** N/A



SCORING AND RESULTS

Scoring the Overall Assessment

To score your assessment, follow the grading system and add up the individual question points to see where you are at in terms of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB cultural competency and service access. The assessment is out of 100 points total.

For every answer **A** = 4 points

For every answer **B** = 3 points

For every answer **C** = 2 points

For every answer **D** = 1 points

For every answer **E** = 0 points

For every answer **F** = Multiply by 4 and add to the points

Open-Response = Add 2 points each for completing, 4 points total

Subscores: Scores by Assessment Area

Service providers can calculate the sub-scores of each of the four sections of the assessment to see where there is particular need to make improvements.

For example, an organization may be meeting many of the best practices of the printed materials and/or physical space, but may be lagging in policies and organizational culture and direct services.

Service providers can then look at the specific recommendations to improve their score in that area. Each area score is out of a total of 24 points.

Results

Once you've counted up your points, refer to the grading range of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB cultural competency to understand where there is room for improvement. Then use the recommendations to improve in particular areas of service access.

0-24: Novice. Your organization may be unfamiliar with the recommended best practices around LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB cultural competency. Your organization is just starting this work and have not yet or have just started to think intentionally about culturally competent services. Read our recommendations on how to actively work to reduce barriers for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC, and reach out to the Network if you are interested in more targeted support around implementing best practices.

28-48: Skilled Learner. Your organization may be developing an awareness of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB cultural competency and is attempting to implement some of the recommended best practices. Your organization is trying to think intentionally about culturally competent services, and you may have a few committed staff doing this work. But overall, the organization may be facing internal or external barriers to doing the work, including but not limited to time, funding, staffing shortages, a lack of commitment from the organizational leadership, or a lack of integration of incorporating service access into the organizational strategic planning and budgeting. Read our recommendations on how to actively work to reduce barriers for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC, and reach out to the Network if you are interested in more targeted support around implementing best practices.

52-72: Competent Practitioner. Your organization is working on improving LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB cultural competency at your agency, and has implemented a sizable amount of recommended best practices, but still strives to reduce barriers and improve services for these marginalized survivors. Your organization may be facing internal or external barriers to going further, and implementing more involved or difficult-to-execute recommendations. There may be other commitments on time, energy, and staffing, a lukewarm commitment from organizational leadership, or a lack of integration of incorporating service access into the organizational strategic planning and budgeting. Read our recommendations on how to actively work to reduce barriers for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC, and reach out to the Network if you are interested in more targeted support around implementing best practices.

76-100: Best Practices Maven! Your organization is following many or most of the frequently recommended best practices around LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB cultural competency. There's always room for improvement, but it's clear you are committed to this work and have thought intentionally about culturally competent services, and are actively working to reduce barriers for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC. Your organization may consider joining the Network to build connections with other providers doing this work, continue building expertise, and spread knowledge to other providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for organizations to improve their score is broken down by assessment area to aid agencies in understanding what actions they can take to specifically improve in particular areas.

Organizations can also refer the Network's other tools, such as the [Best Practices Toolkit](#), [Shelter Access Toolkit](#), [Power & Control in Relationships Assessment Tool](#), and [Sample Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Policy](#) to aid in improving their assessment score. Service providers can also request training with the New York City Anti-Violence Project or the Network through the [Technical Assistance Center](#) and [Training Request Portal](#).

Recommendations: Direct Services

1. Staff and volunteers should share their own pronouns when interacting with survivors, colleagues, and community.
2. Outreach staff and other staff use gender neutral pronouns when referring to survivors and person(s) causing harm until gender specific pronouns are provided.
3. Staff should conduct screenings based on power and control, not perceived gender identity, to ensure that the caller is not the primary person(s) causing harm before they are admitted to confidential programs/groups/sites. Crisis line workers should not assume the gender or sexuality of the caller, or the gender or sexuality of the person causing harm.
4. Staff and volunteers, including crisis line workers, must be trained to sensitively support LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors with the particular safety needs of belonging to each of these communities, and to competently provide other services, including links and referrals to relevant resources and culturally specific agencies.
5. If available and/or requested, staff should be able to make referrals for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors of IPV who experience criminalization (connected to their survival) to programs that meet those intersecting needs. Staff should also be able to make referrals for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors of IPV who have civil legal needs (i.e. order of protection, immigration, divorce, custody, housing, discrimination, etc).

Note: It's important for service providers to be able to conduct trauma informed, nuanced and context driven assessment for survivors of IPV who live at the intersection of criminalization and various types of legal engagement (family, matrimonial, immigration, child support, etc). Criminalized survivorship is intricate in nature and often overlooked in IPV assessment, care coordination, safety planning as well as clinical counseling and multi system advocacy. Many survivors who identify as LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC are not properly assessed for criminalization upon engaging with service providers of victim advocacy organizations, yet are some of the most affected by violence. Having practitioners engage in nuanced assessment that are designed to differentiate survivor responses from a pattern of controlling and coercive behavior or other forms of aggression is paramount to providing holistic service provision.

6. An organization that has youth programming must have program staff familiar with issues confronting LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC parents and youth (custody, coming out, school issues, transitioning, accommodations, etc.)

Recommendations: Policies and Organizational Culture

1. The organization should make a concerted effort to hire LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC individuals as staff, and to support these individuals in progressing in the agency.

Note: Service providers may struggle to connect how staffing practices can improve service provision, but many LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors develop more authentic and trusting relationships with staff when they share those identities. However, it is important that the organization support staff with these identities and ensure there are LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC staff at all levels of the organization to prevent tokenization, burnout, and exploitation.

2. LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC individuals should be involved in the development and decision-making process for inclusive staff and client policies.
3. All staff (including administration, HR, volunteers, and board members) should receive routine and ongoing training regarding oppression and best practices in providing affirming services for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors.
4. Policies must be reviewed on an annual basis to monitor the intentional inclusion of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC communities. Policies should address safety, discrimination, and access among LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC communities.
5. New clients should be aware of agency confidentiality policy surrounding LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors and the consequences for violating this policy.
6. Strategies for increasing accessibility for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors must be integrated into programs and services on an ongoing basis. (For example: language, physical space, printed materials, etc.) LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors should be included in all areas (i.e. language, image, etc.) of outreach for your organization.

Recommendations: Printed Materials

1. All written and web-based materials use inclusive language and images. (For example: using gender neutral language and avoiding specific pronouns, when speaking of person(s) causing harm or survivors, images with a diversity of community members.) Homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, ableism, and classism should be defined as forms of violence and oppression in your materials. Printed and/or web-based materials should include images of LGBTQ+ survivors, including those who are male and/or transgender.
2. You should have materials in languages other than English.
3. Your materials should explicitly state whether or not your program serves LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB survivors.
4. Your program should provide materials/opportunities to assess whether LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors feel comfortable and welcomed when accessing services.
5. Your agency should have a system for recording names and pronouns other than what is on legal documents. Your agency's client intake form should allow LGBTQ+ survivors to self-identify their gender identity.
6. Your program should provide outreach and materials specific to LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors.

Recommendations: Physical Space

1. Information about community services and resources for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors should be easily accessible in your space(s).
2. Resource areas should contain materials such as books, magazines, and videos that reflect the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors.
3. Facilities should be arranged to accommodate survivors of all gender identities, including safe access to restrooms and other shared spaces.
4. Waiting area or public areas should have your non-discrimination policy posted.
5. The agency's non-discrimination personnel policy should be available in languages other than English.
6. Your space should provide a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ and/or TGNCNB BIPOC survivors (i.e. signage, community photos, etc.)

Recommendations: Barriers for Organizations to do Service Access Work

Internal barriers in your agency that prevent more inclusive services may be difficult to overcome if there is not an organizational commitment to service access work, and so it is important for dedicated staff to begin there. External barriers like funding barriers or geographic isolation of services may be more difficult to overcome. The Network will be collecting information on these barriers to see if there are collective ways to address or advocate for policy or budget changes that might address these issues, but we recognize that organizations are trying to work through these barriers in real time. The Network can be a resource to you, and your organization can reach out to us to get more support.

GLOSSARY

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans or Transgender, and/or Queer

Lesbian: women primarily attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women.

Gay: experiencing attraction to some members of the same gender.

Bisexual: a person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender and another gender. (Often used interchangeably with “pansexual.”)

Trans or Transgender: Trans/Transgender is an umbrella term for anyone whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not correspond in the expected way (according to social norms).

Queer: an umbrella term to describe individuals who aren't straight and/or cisgender.

+: the + is included to acknowledge that there are a myriad of queer and trans identities.

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

TGNCNB: Transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary communities (TGNCNB or TGNCNB). TGNCNB face statistically higher rates of violence and discrimination than their cisgender peers, even those within LGBTQ+ communities. TGNCNB identities are often erased and misunderstood, acting as a barrier to accessing services.

Violence: any act where harm is caused to a person, negatively impacting wellbeing. Power over another facilitates harm. There are many different forms of violence: physical, emotional, financial, sexual, spiritual, etc. Violence is defined as perceived by the person experiencing it.

Historically underserved communities: communities that do not receive equitable resources compared to their white, normative counterparts, and in fact, are criminalized, targeted, and subjected to violence instead. This includes BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and TGNCNB people, immigrants and people with unstable documentation status, people with disabilities, people affected by HIV, folks who use drugs, sex workers, survivors of violence, incarcerated people or those who have been or are currently entangled with the criminal legal system, and low income working class communities.

Homophobia: a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have toward LGBTQ+ people.

Transphobia: fear, discrimination, or hatred of trans people or community, or gender ambiguity.

Racism: systemic and interpersonal violence and abandonment based on race and power. A system of oppression maintained by institutions and cultural “norms” that exploit, control, and oppress BIPOC, to maintain a position of social/material supremacy for white people.

Sexism: attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and organizational, institutional, and cultural practices that either reflect negative evaluations of individuals based on their gender or perceived gender, which privilege cisgender males. Sexist attitudes stem from stereotypes of gender roles and power of cis heterosexual men over others.

Misogyny: sexism or the hatred of women. A person with misogynistic beliefs may not be aware that they are demonstrating a hatred towards women – or even believe that they hate women – but their behavior and words expose prejudice, disdain of, or hostility to women.

Misogynoir: the specific hatred, dislike, distrust, and violent prejudice directed toward Black women. Coined by the queer Black feminist Moya Bailey in 2010, the term is a blending of concepts that combines “misogyny” and the French word for black, “noir.”

Cisgender: when someone’s gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth, following social norms.

Cissexism: exercising position of power and preferential treatment of cisgender people, the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more “right” than being trans, that invisibilizes or hypervisibilizes other genders, and justifies violence against all those who are not cis.

Ableism: systemic or interpersonal discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities or who are perceived to have disabilities. Ableism characterizes persons as defined by their disabilities and as inferior to the “able-bodied.” On this basis, people are assigned or denied certain perceived abilities, skills, or character orientations.

Classism: systemic or interpersonal differential treatment based on social/economic class or perceived class. It’s the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage the dominant wealthy class(es). It’s the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class.

Chosen Family: A group of individuals who deliberately choose one another to play significant roles in each other’s lives. One definition of chosen family is a group of people someone is emotionally close and consider ‘family’ even though they are not biologically or legally related. These relationships are especially important to LGBTQ+ and TGNCNB people who may be ostracised from their families due to stigma around their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Primary Person(s) Causing Harm:

An adult or adolescent engaged in an intimate partnership, who perpetrates violence (physical, emotional, financial, etc) on a consistent basis, to maintain power and control towards their partner. The motivation behind this behavior can be conscious or unconscious. PPCH does not necessarily mean the person who “started” a particular violent occurrence, although their behavior might move the victimized partner to enact violence (ex. self-defense). Often PPCH are assumed to be the person in the relationship with the most societal “power” or “privilege” (e.g. in North American society that means: white, male, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, etc). However, this is not always the case. Privilege often does play a factor for PPCH, however there are many ways to maintain power and control over a partner that are not exclusively linked to a person’s privilege. For this reason, privilege *can* plays a factor, but does not exclude those with the least societal power from being a PA (BIPOC, female, LGBTQ+, disabled, etc). Also known in IPV circles as the “primary aggressor,” not used here because we are attempting to move away from binary and outdated language in this tool.