UNIVERSAL DESIGN: Broadening the Scope of Our Services

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Victims of Sexual Violence
Objectives

- Think outside the box and learn through experience
- Explore terms & sexual orientation/gender identity
- Understand ‘terms’ as meaningful and meaningless
- Review statistics and trends
- Understand needs of LGBT victims
- FCASV Brochure for LGBTQI Victims of SV
- Understand barriers to reporting or disclosing
- Explore how barriers create a 'code of silence'
- Universal Design – Visibility for LGBT victims
Gauging the GAYS of our Lives

- What are your experiences working with LGBTQI survivors?

- What are your beliefs about LGBTQI individuals or lifestyle?

- How is this lifestyle different or similar to your own?
That's GAY!
Definition of Terms

- **Homophobia**
  - Fear or hatred of gays or lesbians
  - Individual or systematic discrimination

- **Transphobia**
  - Fear or hatred of transgender individuals
  - Individual or systematic discrimination

- **Heteronormative**
  - Assuming heterosexuality as a given instead of being one of many possibilities

- **Transgender**
  - Individuals who cross over gender identities without necessarily changing their bodies

- **MTF Transgender**
  - Male to Female

- **FTM Transgender**
  - Female to Male

- **Transsexual**
  - Individual whose gender identity does not match the culturally assigned gender identity for their anatomical sex and who generally desires a physical transition (hormones and/or surgery)
True or False???

- Sexual orientation is about being lesbian, gay or bisexual and gender identity is about being transgender or gender non-conforming.
True and False!
Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

- Sexual Orientation
  - Term describing a person’s attraction (physical or emotional) to people of a specific gender(s)

- Gender Identity
  - Individual’s internal sense of being male, female or another gender (not necessarily visible to others).
EVERYONE has a sexual orientation
- Heterosexual, gay, bisexual, lesbian, asexual, queer....

EVERYONE has a gender identity
- Female, male, genderqueer, transgender, two-spirit....
Why We Want Terms...

- We like to have lists of terms and definitions
- We feel like, with the ‘right’ term and definition, we can understand difference
- We like to put people in BOXES
Terms Paradox

**MEANINGFUL**
- Convey respect and openness
- Show that we are listening

**MEANINGLESS**
- Tells you NONE of what you need to know to provide appropriate services
Use Client’s Terms/Language

Because there are no consistent definitions…

- **ALWAYS** use and reflect the language *your client uses* to describe themselves
- **ASK** for the clarification you need in order to serve them
Statistics

- Approximately 50% of transgender individuals are survivors of sexual violence
  - 55% of FTMs
  - 68% of MTFs
- 31% of Lesbian women have been raped
- 12% of Gay men have been raped
- 52% of LGBT individuals report being raped by an individual of the same gender
- Approximately 10% of hate crimes against LGBT individuals involve sexual violence
Trends

- Due to heightened homophobia in the United States, LGBT individuals are at a greater risk of sexual assault by a stranger
- SV is frequently used to ‘punish or humiliate’
- SV is often used against Lesbians to ‘change’ them

- LGBT youth (12-24) experience alarmingly high rates of homelessness when compared to non-LGBT youth
- This subjects them to higher rates of sexual violence
BIRDCAGE ACTIVITY
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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Victims of Sexual Violence
How does being LGBT impact...

...the act of sexual assault?
...the survivor’s reaction to sexual assault?
...the offender’s actions?
...the response of law enforcement?
...the treatment of the medical provider?
Exploring Barriers

- What do you think would be barriers to LGBTQI survivors moving forward in the reporting process?
- What do you think would be barriers to LGBTQI survivors accessing their support network?
- What do you think would be barriers to LGBTQI survivors participating in services offered through a rape crisis center?
- What do you think would be barriers to LGBTQI survivors moving through the legal process?
Exploring Barriers

- Fear of reaching out to a homophobic system and/or individual
- Dread of an assumption of heterosexuality
  - People assisting a survivor of sexual assault may assume that the person is heterosexual.
- Fear of Being “Outed”
- Transgender Survivors
  - Complicated histories/bodies (appearance and/or anatomy not consistent w/gender norms) - problematic for forensic exam
  - Identification may not ‘match’
- Not being taken seriously/having experience minimized
Code of Silence

- This ‘code of silence’ is stifling the LGBT of our communities

- Not an isolated problem; it is far-reaching and under acknowledged

- Research is scarce which makes it very difficult to gauge the full impact of the problem
We need a NEW model to combat the 'code'
Universal Design

- Coined by the architect Ronald L. Mace to describe the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life.
Universal Design in Client Service

EVERY victim of sexual violence should feel that we are here for them – we are charged with creating:

- Outreach
- Connection
- Safe Space
- Understanding
- Acceptance
- Support
Universal Design as a Model

- Moves us beyond *competency*
  - Good enough

- Toward *proficiency*
  - Leaders

- From *under* served to **ALL** served
GROUP WORK

Envisioning Universal Design at your Agency
NO MORE Invisible Victims

- Create safe space
  - Individual
  - Organizational
- Use appropriate language
  - Avoid heteronormative language/assumptions
  - Learn by listening – use their language/pronouns
- Know your LGBT serving partner agencies
  - Local
  - National
“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. **But** if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together…”

*We must believe that our own liberation is bound up with the liberation of those we seek to serve and then we serve from a place of urgency, a heart on fire and an unbreakable, unshakable optimism for we have already envisioned the change we originally sought and with that taste on our tongue, we dig in our heels and beckon destiny.*