Intimate Partner Violence in LGBTQ relationships

Gary Paul Wright
African American Office of Gay Concerns
September 26, 2017
Objectives of Today’s Presentation

- Address Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as it relates to the LGBTQ community
- Point out the unique aspects of Domestic Violence (DV) in LGBTQ relationships
- Touch on the intersectionality of LGBTQ, HIV and IPV issues
- Identify the victims and survivors of IPV and the barriers faced while accessing healthcare, legal protections, and other services
- Explore the myths and truths about DM in same-sex relationships
- Provide resources that are specific to LGBTQ victims/survivors
What is Intimate Partner Violence?

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), also known as Domestic Violence (DM) or Partner Abuse, is a pattern of behavior used by one person in a relationship to assert power and control over the other person.

IPV does not necessarily involve physical violence.

Experts believe that Domestic Violence occurs in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community with the same amount of frequency and severity as in the heterosexual community.

Society’s long history of entrenched racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia prevents LGBT victims of domestic violence from seeking help from the police, legal and court systems for fear of discrimination or bias.
“Partner” refers to a range of intimate relationships:

- Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- Play partner
- Spouse
- Primary, secondary or other non-monogamous partner
- Life partner
- Date
- Boo
- Hook-up
- Lover
- Sexual partner
Is it a Crime?

- In order for a crime to be considered a domestic violence offense, the perpetrator and victim must have a personal relationship at present or in the past.
- Relationships can include: marriage, separation, divorce or living together in the same household at present or in the past.
- Relationships can also include a person whom the victim has dated (the defendant must be 18 years or older or an emancipated minor) or a person with whom the victim has or is expecting to have a child.
- Gay/lesbian relationships also are included.
- Domestic violence can include one or more of the following crimes: homicide, assault, terroristic threats, kidnapping, false imprisonment, sexual assault, lewdness, criminal trespass or mischief, harassment, stalking, criminal restraint, criminal sexual contact, burglary.

www.njecpo.org
Domestic Violence involves the use of coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing, denying and blaming, all of which become more frequent and severe over time.
Hate Violence

Anti-LGBTQ hate violence is defined as any act that an offender commits against a person or a person’s property because of the offender’s bias towards or hatred for that person’s actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.
Gay and bisexual men experience abuse in intimate partner relationships at a rate of 2 in 5, which is comparable to the amount of domestic violence experienced by heterosexual women.

Approximately 50% of the lesbian population has experienced or will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes.

In one year, 44% of victims in LGBT domestic violence cases identified as men, while 36% identified as women.

78% of lesbians report that they have either defended themselves or fought back against an abusive partner.

18% of this group described their behavior as self-defense or “trading blow for blow or insult for insult.”
Effects of Hate Violence

• Victims may believe that their sexual orientation puts them at a higher risk for all kinds of negative experiences.

• Victims of hate crimes based on sexual orientation have been found to suffer greater psychological distress than victims of non-bias-related crimes.

(Herek et al., 1998)
44% of percent of lesbian women and 61% of bisexual women – compared to 35% of heterosexual women – experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

26% percent of gay men and 37% of bisexual men – compared to 29% of heterosexual men – experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.

Male rape victims and male victims of non-contact unwanted sexual experiences reported predominantly male perpetrators. Nearly half of stalking victimizations against males were also perpetrated by males. Perpetrators of other forms of violence against males were mostly female.
Transgender women were 3x’s more likely to report experiencing sexual violence and financial violence.

LGBTQ survivors with disabilities were 2x’s more likely to be isolated by their abusive partner, 3x’s more likely to be stalked, and 4x’s more likely to experience financial violence.
Issues/Barriers Regarding LGBTQ Intimate Partner Violence

- Fewer services
- Increased isolation
- Protecting the community
- Threats of “outing”
- Fear of discrimination
- Lack of available information, research, and reporting
- Shame
- Heterosexism, Homophobia, Transphobia
- Denial
- Lack of awareness and acceptance
LGBTQ AND HIV-AFFECTED INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE RELATED HOMICIDES

- Of the 13 reports of homicides, 77% were people of color, including 7 who were black and 3 who were Latinx.
- Six of the homicides (46%) were transgender women all of whom were transgender women of color, including four who were black and two who were Latinx.
- Four (31%) of the victims were cisgender men and three (23%) of the victims were cisgender women.
- Twelve (92%) of the victims were below the age of 40.
- There was an increase in the percentage of survivors who identified as Black/African American from 14% in 2014 to 21% in 2015.
- In terms of gender identity the most commonly selected identity was man (32%) followed closely by woman (31%). Additionally, 10% of survivors identified as transgender.
- There was an increase in the percentage of undocumented survivors from 4% in 2014 to 9% in 2015.
- About 27% of survivors reported having a disability.
HIV/AIDS and IPV

- The abuser may threaten to tell others that the partner has HIV/AIDS
- An HIV+ abuser may suggest that he/she will sicken or die if the partner ends the relationship
- An abuser may interfere with the partner’s health care
- An abuser may take advantage of an HIV+ partner’s poor health to isolate them from others
- Victims living with HIV/AIDS may be too weak to defend themselves
People living with HIV/AIDS may fear related complications such as easy bruising, infections, or healing slowly.

An abuser with HIV/AIDS may threaten to infect a partner.

It is also part of the social stigma surrounding HIV—no one wants to talk about it.
The Cycle of Violence

Honeymoon → Tension

Denial

Escalation

Explosion
“The Honeymoon"

- The hearts and flowers phase
- Ideal, romantic, “perfect”
- Abusive partner promises to change/stop abusive behavior
- This phase can shorten and disappear over time
TENSION...

Victim feels growing tension and stress
Victim tries to control situation and avoid violence
Victim feels like they’re “walking on eggshells” or “treading on thin ice”
EXPLOSION!!!

- Also known as Acute Battering
- Manifestation of some form of abuse
- This phase often increases in length and severity
Power and Control Wheel for LGBTQ Relationships

- Using Coercion and Threats
- Using Intimidation
- Using Emotional Abuse
- Using Isolation
- Using Economic Abuse
- Using Privilege
- Using Children
- Denying, Minimizing and Blaming
Forms of Abuse

**Physical**

- Hitting, grabbing, pushing, use of weapons, stalking, intimidation
- Injuries mostly to areas of the body not usually seen by others.
- Abuse may worsen during pregnancy and injuries may be around the location of the fetus (i.e. belly)
Forms of Abuse, cont’d.

**Sexual**

- Rape = Forced penetration without consent
  - Includes statutory rape and rape by intoxication
- Sexual Assault
  - Unwanted touching and/or grabbing
- Sexual Harassment
  - Unwanted sexual words/references
- Pressure...
  - To have sex or have unsafe sex
Forms of Abuse, cont’d.

**Emotional/Verbal**

- Use of words, voice action or lack of action meant to control, hurt or demean another person.
- Emotional abuse typically includes ridicule, intimidation or coercion.
Financial

Controlling all money
Controlling possessions: car, phone, jewelry

Spiritual

Misuse or alteration of scripture to explain abusive behavior as allowed and even required

Social

“Keeping partner in check” by using cell phone or other people to track partner’s movements

Cultural

Exploiting beliefs about women’s role to family and loyalty to husband
Fear of shame to family
Concerns over safety and custody of children
Reinforcing assumption of partiality to men in legal decisions
Threatening separation from extended family
Transgender Abuse
Specific forms of abuse occur in relationships where one partner is transgender, including:

- using offensive pronouns such as “it” to refer to the transgender partner;
- ridiculing the transgender partner’s body and/or appearance;
- telling the transgender partner that he or she is not a real man or woman;
- ridiculing the transgender partner’s identity as “bisexual,” “trans,” “femme,” “butch,” “gender queer,” etc.;
- denying the transgender partner’s access to medical treatment or hormones or coercing him or her to not pursue medical treatment.
HIV/AIDS Related Abuse

The presence of HIV/AIDS in an abusive relationship may lead to specific form of abuse, which includes:

- “outing” or threatening to tell others that the victim has HIV/AIDS;
- an HIV+ abuser suggesting that she or he will sicken or die if the partner ends the relationship;
- preventing the HIV+ partner from receiving needed medical care or medications;
- taking advantage of an HIV+ partner’s poor health status, assuming sole power over a partner’s economic affairs, create the partner’s utter dependency on the abuser;
- An HIV+ abuser infecting or threatening to infect a partner.
Partner Abuse is NOT...

► About size, strength, who is “butch” or more masculine

Abuse is about using control (i.e. financial control, manipulation, humiliation, perpetuating stereotypes, etc. to gain power.

► Just happening in heterosexual relationships nor is it mutual in LGBTQ relationships

There is no such ting as “mutual abuse.” When someone uses self-defense, it is not an attempt to control, but rather a reaction to abuse.

► Partner abuse is not a “cat-fight” between women or “boys will be boys” between men

It is a myth that women aren’t violent and that men can’t be abused.
Some Common Myths

- Domestic violence is exclusive to a specific socioeconomic class
- Domestic violence that occurs in LGBTQ relationships is usually mutual
- Abuse is exclusively caused by influence to drugs or alcohol
- Domestic violence is normal in LGBTQ relationships
- The batterer is always the bigger, stronger person in the relationship (butch vs. fem)
  - Abusive behavior in LGBTQ relationships is probably a sexual behavior (a version of sadomasochism)
  - Women are not violent and lesbian relationships are based on equality—lesbians have ideal, loving relationships
  - Women never batter and men are never victims
What is unique about IPV in the LGBTQ Community?

The most common types of violence that survivors reported experiencing were physical violence (20%), verbal harassment (18%), and threats and intimidation (13%).

Survivors who were under the age of 24 were three times more likely to report experiencing sexual violence compared to survivors who were 25 years old or older.

Transgender survivors were three times more likely to report being stalked compared to cisgender survivors.
Transgender women were three times more likely to report experiencing sexual violence and financial violence than survivors who did identify as transgender women.

Survivors who were Latinx were two times more likely to report experiencing violence by a former or ex-partner compared to non-Latinx survivors.

When asked to identify their disability, survivors reported: Mental health disabilities (51%) Physical disabilities (42%) Learning disabilities (4%) Deaf and hard of hearing disabilities (2%) Visual disabilities (1%)

Compared to survivors who did not report a disability, survivors with disabilities were: Two times more likely to be isolated by their abusive partner Three times more likely to be stalked Four times more likely to experience financial violence
Barriers to Reporting Abuse

- Lack of appropriate training regarding LGBT domestic violence for service providers;
- The belief that domestic violence does not occur in LGBT relationships and/or is a gender based issue;
- Lack of appropriate training regarding LGBT domestic violence for service providers;
- Domestic Violence in the LGBTQ community tends to be grossly underreported;
- LGBTQ Domestic Violence is as prevalent and lethal as heterosexual IPV;
- Societal anti-LGBT bias (homophobia, biphobia and transphobia);
- It may be difficult to figure out who is being abusive and who is being abused.
Barriers to Reporting Abuse

- Police are 10 – 15x as likely to make a dual arrest in cases of same-sex DM/IPV than in heterosexual ones.
- Judicial system may not understand dynamics of same-sex domestic violence, and may discount it altogether.
- Judges are more likely to issue mutual restraining orders to same-sex partners
- In the hospital emergency room, the person who is abusive might introduce themselves as a friend and may be allowed to accompany the abused person through the medical visit, compromising the abused person’s privacy and safety.
- LGBTQ individuals who experience abuse may have difficulty finding a safe shelter. Domestic violence shelters are typically female only, thus transgender people may not be allowed entrance into shelters or emergency facilities due to their gender/genital/legal status.
Lesbians/bisexual women often feel victimized multiple times: initially by their partners; by services/institutions that are supposed to be there to help; and by the lack of positive response in their communities.

Furthermore, if a lesbian does decide to seek support, it may create a double crisis. First, she has to “come out” to a stranger at a time when she is very distressed, and then she has to disclose the violence in her relationship.

It is much more common for men to be assaulted by straight men, whereas the majority of woman-to-woman assault is perpetrated by queer women.
Most domestic violence events between men and transgender persons are not reported because survivors fear institutional discrimination as well as stereotype of women in heterosexual relationships.

Gay men and transgender persons often don’t disclose violence to family members because of an already transparent lack of support.

LGBT victims may be met with homophobia and hostility by shelter staff and/or residents.

Often, even discussing safer sex or condom use within a violent relationship often escalates abuse.
LGBTQ intimate partner violence survivors experience violence and criminalization from the police.

This year, 31% of LGBTQ survivors who interacted with police were arrested—that's almost one in three. Arresting survivors has serious emotional, financial, and legal consequences for the survivor. Police must be trained to recognize signs of IPV in LGBTQ relationships. We must seek and create alternatives to the criminal justice system, especially for the safety of those whose identities are already criminalized. Police accountability is an LGBTQ and intimate partner violence issue.

Find out more here: bit.ly/Not1StoryIPV

Of the total number of survivors, 43% reported interacting with law enforcement as a result of the IPV they experienced. Only 33% of survivors made a formal report to law enforcement.
Out of the total number of survivors who interacted with law enforcement: 12% said that the police were hostile, 13% said that the police were indifferent. Mis-arrests of survivors increased from the 17% reported in 2014 to 31% in 2015.
Characteristics of Batterers

Sense of Entitlement
Controlling
Manipulative
Frequently charming
Uninvolved parent
Show contempt for others
Behavioral Tactics Used by Batterers

- Controlling Behavior
  - May attribute behavior to concern for their partner.
  - Use economic control to limit independence of partner
  - Unrealistic expectations
  - Batterer may expect their partner to meet all of his/her needs
Domestic Violence Is Learned Behavior by Batterers

It Is NOT Caused By:

- Illness
- Genetics or gender
- Alcohol or other drugs
- Anger
- Stress
- Victim’s behavior
- Relationship problems
What Makes Batterers So Powerful?

- Isolation of victim
- Societal Denial
- Use of Religious Issues
- Use of Cultural Issues
- Threats of Retaliation
- Threats of “outing” their partner to friends, family, employers or community
Aftermath Issues

- **Physical**
  - Physical injuries as a result of domestic violence
  - Aggravation of pre-existing medical conditions

- **Economic**
  - Job loss
  - Frequent moves
  - Health care costs
Aftermath Issues (Cont.)

- Psychological: Depends partially on where the victim’s stage in the coming out process
  - Depression
  - Vulnerability
  - Internalized homophobia
  - Suicidal thoughts or tendencies
  - Depression
  - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
  - Helplessness
  - Self-blame/Self-disgust
The risk of losing children to third parties is greater for LGBT couples when domestic violence is involved.
Out of the total number of survivors, 27% attempted to access emergency shelter. Of those who attempted to access shelter, 44% were denied.

The most commonly reported reason that survivors were denied shelter was barriers related to gender identity (71%).

Only 36% of survivors reported seeking a protective order as a safety resource for IPV.
General Do’s and Don'ts

The Do’s

- Be realistic about homophobia and gender bias a person might encounter. Respect their choice if the opt not to enter a system they perceive to be biased.
- Have images that reflect the diversity of people you serve in your office and promotional material.
- Be aware of your own discomfort and biases.
- Get more training and educate others, especially providers.

The Do’s

- Use non-gendered language to refer to clients, significant others, etc. (partner, perpetrator, they/them) and name the person as they name themselves.
- Affirm the person seeking support.
- Tell them it is not their fault.
- Advocate for health care services for this person.
- Be able to refer them to an LGBTQ organization or group.
The Don’ts

- Don't assume the person is heterosexual or cisgender.
- Don’t assume that someone was assaulted because they are LGBTQ.
- Don’t tell a survivor to leave an abusive partner.
- Don’t ask the person who is being abused what they did to provoke the abuse (i.e. blaming the victim/survivor).
- Don’t assume the gender of the person being abused.
- Don’t presume that because a person told you that they identify as part of the LGBTQ community that they are “out” to everyone.
- Don’t express discomfort of being squeamish.
Resources

- National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
- An Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence Aid and Resource Collection
- Gay Men’s Domestic Violence Project (GMDVP)
- Lambda GLBT Community Services
- The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
  [http://ncavp.org/](http://ncavp.org/)
- Survivor Project
  [http://www.survivorproject.org/defbarresp.html](http://www.survivorproject.org/defbarresp.html)
- Garden State Equality
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Communities and Domestic Violence: Information and Resources
- For more information:
  [http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/NRC_LGBTDVBibliography.pdf](http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/NRC_LGBTDVBibliography.pdf)
Services

- GLBT National Help Center: 1-888-843-4564
  http://glbtnationalhelpcenter.org
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE
  http://www.ndvh.org/
- Sanctuary for Families
  http://www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org/index.php
- Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence
  http://www.caepv.org/
- The Network for Battered Lesbians and Bisexual Women 1-617-423-SAFE
  http://www.thenetworklared.org/
- Gay Men’s Domestic Violence Project (GMDVP)
  1-800-832-1901 http://www.gmdvp.org/
- WEAVE Inc. 1-866-920-2952 http://www.weaveinc.org/lgbtq
Thank You!

The African American Office of Gay Concerns
877 Broad Street, Ste. 211
Newark, NJ 07102
Phone: 973-639-0700/Fax: 973-639-9722
Visit our Website: www.aaogc.org
Facebook: AAOGC Newark