

# COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT: LGBTQ SURVIVOR INTERVIEW FINDINGS



North Carolina LGBTQ  
Domestic Violence Response Initiative



UNC  
GREENSBORO

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2020- 2021, the NC LGBTQ Domestic Violence Response Initiative conducted a community needs assessment (CNA) within each of the communities where a DVSP or partner agency was located. An important piece of the CNA was hearing from LGBTQ survivors and community members in those counties. We interviewed 13 LGBTQ survivors total, who mostly lived in the Durham and Greensboro, NC areas. We had a difficult time recruiting survivors to interview in Asheville and the Outer Banks area. However, it's important to note that the survivors we talked to did not necessarily experience the violence or abuse while living in their current location.

## Participant Demographics:

- Ages ranged from 23 to 49
- 2 Black, 2 Latinx, and 9 White participants
- 7 Cis women, 1 Trans woman, 1 Cis man, 1 Trans man, and 3 Non-binary participants
- 4 Bisexual/Pansexual, 4 Gay/Lesbian, and 5 Queer-identifying participants

# SAFE & AFFIRMING SPACES

Spaces that feel safe & affirming have these characteristics:

- Presence of LGBTQ affirming visual cues, such as pride flags, stickers, posters, etc.
- Staff are well-trained to serve LGBTQ people
- Racially diverse and Queer staff
- Presence of other queer people in the space

Spaces that DO NOT feel safe & affirming have these characteristics:

- Lack of diversity (all white, all straight, etc.)
- Bad vibes/gut feeling that it is unsafe for a queer person to be there
- Boundaries are violated, such as being touched without consent
- Visual cues that it may not be LGBTQ or BIPOC - friendly (confederate flags, Trump flags, religious iconography)

*"It's obviously nice to see explicit signage or something that says a place is queer friendly, but its really the presence of other queer people that are the main thing."*

# EXPERIENCES WITH HELP - SEEKING:

- Therapists, DV/SA agencies, and friends and family were the most sought out sources of support
- Most survivors we interviewed had a positive experience seeking help with DV agencies and therapists in particular
- Some survivors weren't taken seriously or felt their experiences were dismissed by lawyers, police, and sometimes counselors

"An unmet need was feeling like I can go somewhere and have someone understand that just because I'm with this person doesn't mean I'm *not* queer."

"Law enforcement were not trained to catch that [two women] as DV. They victim-blamed and stereotyped."

# EXPERIENCES WITH HELP-SEEKING

- There is also stigma around LGBTQ DV which prevents people from talking about it or seeking help

"There's a lot of pressure to not discuss queer DV because they don't want to bring any negative perceptions onto the community."

- Some were seeking legal protection, such as through DVPO's, but were unable to have that need met

# IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM NEEDS OF QUEER AND TRANS SURVIVORS

The Top 5 reported needs were:

- 1. Shelter/longer-term housing**
- 2. Medical care that is both affirming and trauma-informed**
- 3. Mental Healthcare/Therapy/Support groups**
- 4. Financial Assistance**
- 5. Accessible information about DV services that are available and LGBTQ-affirming (to increase awareness)**

# HEALING/COPING/ STRENGTHS OF COMMUNITY:

- Therapy and/or Group Therapy was mentioned the most as a helpful resource for healing, followed by physical activity and family and friend support
- Having a queer community who understands was cited as contributing to their well-being
- When asked about the strengths of the LGBTQ community, shared understanding and resilience/persistence were the top responses.

***"I don't feel the same kind of joy around straight people as I do in the queer community."***

# NAVIGATING QUEER COMMUNITY SPACES & WAYS TO INCREASE SAFETY IN QUEER SPACES:

- When asked how they navigated public spaces when their abuser may also be using those spaces, over **60% of survivors** interviewed mentioned some form of avoidance, such as never returning to the space, leaving spaces when harm-doer was present, or moving away.
- Survivors want staff (at LGBTQ bars and organizations) to be trained on the warning signs of abuse and be prepared to offer support/safety
- Community accountability is desired, but many do not know what that could look like. One interviewee suggested the following:

"If the person who's been through it wants to call in their community and try to find some accountability, I think it needs to be customized."

# WHAT PROVIDERS NEED TO DO/UNDERSTAND TO SERVE LGBTQ COMMUNITY EFFECTIVELY:

**"Queer culture functions differently than straight culture. Understanding how queer culture operates and how their supports, families, groups, and who they consider to be family may be structured differently."**

- Queer culture
- Don't make assumptions about identities, relationships, or experiences
- This work should be done alongside/led by queer and trans people
- More training that goes beyond LGBTQ 101
- LGBTQ survivors/the community want to vet providers themselves

# WHAT PROVIDERS NEED TO DO/UNDERSTAND TO SERVE LGBTQ COMMUNITY EFFECTIVELY:

- Accessible services (free, can be accessed without having a car) are essential
- There is a lack of awareness or understanding about what abuse looks like in queer relationships, both from survivors and communities themselves as well as from service-providers. Survivors would like to see more community education to gain knowledge about DV and resources.
- Some LGBTQ survivors will not seek services if there is any chance police will be involved, especially true for LGBTQ survivors of color or if their partner is BIPOC or undocumented.

"My partner was undocumented, and a lot of resources were connected to law enforcement... I was much more willing to get killed than to deport a whole family."