



SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Sexual assault is a form of oppression, as well as a crime. It is an abuse of power that uses violence and coercion to control, silence, and deny people their autonomy and dignity. Sexual violence can happen to anyone and by anyone. It is most often committed by people we know in places where we are supposed to feel safe. Sexual violence may also be paired with hate crimes against people in LGBTQ+ communities. According to the 2022-2023 National Crime Victimization Survey, more LGBT people experienced sexual assault, rape, or aggravated assault with a weapon than non-LGBT people. The survey also showed that LGBT people were at greater risk of experiencing violent hate crimes than non-LGBT people. Sexual violence thrives when people who have power in society use that power to commit violence against vulnerable individuals, like members of the LGBTQ+ community. We must all work together to end these forms of violence.

People in LGBTQ+ communities face unique fears when experiencing sexual assault. These fears can include:

- The danger of being “outed” (having their sexual orientation or gender identity shared with others before they are ready) by others if they report their sexual assault.
- Not wanting to betray their communities by disclosing assault by an LGBTQ+ partner or friend.
- The fear of others’ skepticism or people ‘taking sides’ in small communities.
- The guilt and self-blame leading individuals to question their own sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
- The risk of receiving discriminatory responses from law enforcement, legal and medical staff, and other victim service providers.
- Untrue beliefs (held by themselves or others) that violence should be expected because of the survivor’s sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity.

Resources for Survivors

Call 211 to connect to your local rape crisis center

Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI)

301-565-2277 | toll-free: 1-877-496-7254 (SALI)
www.mcasa.org/survivors/sali

Provides comprehensive legal services to survivors of sexual assault in Maryland. This includes both criminal justice advocacy and civil matters, such as employment, housing, education, immigration, family law, and financial support.

Free State Justice

443-977-4254

www.freestate-justice.org/legal-services
www.freestate-justice.org/community-outreach

Provides legal, educational, community empowerment services, and referrals to LGBTQ+ Maryland residents and their allies.

Additional Resources

Advocates for Trans Equality

www.a4te.org

The National LGBTQ Task Force

www.thetaskforce.org

National Coalition for LGBTQ Health

www.healthlgbtq.org

Parents, Families, Friends and Loved Ones of Lesbians and Gays

www.pflag.org

FORGE

www.forge-forward.org



Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

mcasa.org | 301-328-7023
info@mcasa.org

P.O. Box 8782

Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

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THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY & SEXUAL ASSAULT



Reactions to an Assault

Any way you react or feel after experiencing sexual violence is valid. People react differently and have different responses to trauma. Some common responses can include:

- Depression
- Flashbacks
- Anxiety
- Self-harm
- Avoidance
- Anger
- Increased or decreased interest in sex
- Confusion
- Impacted sense of identity
- Increased substance use

The impact of trauma can persist for years, and can worsen if survivors are unable to seek or receive services. It is important for service providers to acknowledge that the trauma experienced by a member of the LGBTQ+ community who survives sexual assault may be compounded by other traumas they may have experienced as a result of discrimination.

People's experiences with sexual violence, including LGBTQ+ people's experiences, can be impacted by their ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, income level, wealth, education level, occupation, housing, immigration status, and religion. A survivor's location, like if they live in a rural or remote area, can also play a role. It is essential to recognize that sexual trauma combined with these additional factors can have an effect on the survivors' ability to seek help and access resources that could aid their healing process.

If You've Experienced a Sexual Assault

Get Support

It may take time to process your emotions and thoughts around the harm you experienced. It is natural to feel overwhelmed; fear, anxiety, and anger are normal responses. Resources and support are available to you. If you would like to talk to someone anonymously, or are seeking further assistance, you can call **211** or visit MCASA's website at <https://mcasa.org/survivors/find-a-rape-crisis-center> to be connected to an advocate at a rape crisis center in your area. Rape crisis and recovery centers offer services to adult and child victims and their loved ones. These services are FREE. Regardless of when the sexual violence happened, it is healthy to talk to a trained individual who can assist you.

Mental Health Support

The trauma of experiencing sexual violence can be challenging to handle alone. Trauma-informed service providers and culturally responsive mental health services are available and can help. Mental health professionals can provide confidential and long-term care for survivors and their family, friends, and partners to help build and maintain positive relationships, and use healthy coping skills to lessen the impact of trauma. Know that you are not alone, and there are resources available to help. For information about mental health services for LGBTQ+ individuals, visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness at <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/LGBTQ/>.

Medical Help

Medical help is available to you after a sexual assault. In Maryland, there are hospitals with special services for survivors of sexual assault. You can get injuries treated and have medical evidence collected for prosecution. It is important to know that you can get medical help without reporting to the police. Transgender and gender nonconforming (GNC) survivors may have concerns and priorities when receiving medical care after a sexual assault. It is important for providers to provide a trauma-informed and gender-affirming environment for those seeking medical services.

You Have the Option to Report to the Police

Telling the police about your sexual assault is difficult and you should never feel pressured by others to report. You may feel hesitant about reporting the offender because you may want to protect them and your community. It is common to think that there are

few options to consider when seeking justice. If you are worried about reporting or need help with learning about the reporting process, it can be helpful to speak with a sexual assault service provider.

Legal Help

Survivors have the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity when seeking civil legal services and during the criminal justice process. The **Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI)** helps protect those rights by providing comprehensive legal services for sexual assault survivors in Maryland, including civil matters ranging from employment, housing, education, immigration and family law, to financial support and criminal justice advocacy. **FreeState Justice (FSJ)** provides legal, educational, community empowerment services, and referrals to LGBTQ+ Maryland residents and their allies. FSJ's Victim Advocate Coordinator provides support from client intake and assessment to program development and implementation.

National & Regional Helplines

LGBT National Help Center

The Center operates four separate helplines. Services are free and confidential.

LGBTQ National Hotline: **888-843-4564**

LGBTQ National Youth Talkline: **800-246-7743**

LGBTQ National Senior Hotline: **888-234-7243**

National Coming Out Support Hotline: **888-688-5428**

www.lgbthotline.org/national-hotline

Trevor Project Helpline

The Trevor Project Helpline provides 24/7 crisis support services to LGBTQ+ young people.

866-488-7386 | Text: **678-678**

www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help

SAGEYou

An online space created to support, celebrate, and connect older members of the LGBTQ+ community. Find events, resources, and connection.

<https://sageyou.org>

Department of Defense Safe Helpline

Crisis support service offering assistance through live, one-on-one support for military sexual assault survivors seeking help outside of the chain of command. Services are free and confidential. The three-tier reporting system will not share names or other personal information.

877-995-5247 | Text: **55247**

www.safehelpline.org

