

RESPONDING TO TRANSGENDER VICTIMS of Sexual Assault

Message From the Director

About This Guide

Transgender 101

Sexual Assault in the
Transgender Community

Tips for Those Who
Serve Victims

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People who are transgender or gender non-conforming come from all walks of life. They represent all ages, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic status, and they live in communities throughout the Nation. As our country becomes more open to diversity—as demonstrated by the gradual acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) populations—transgender individuals are becoming more visible. When they are victimized by crime, they need and deserve the same level of skilled, compassionate care as other victims, but that right is not yet a reality.

Members of the transgender community are among the most misunderstood and marginalized of populations, leaving them vulnerable to sexual violence. This vulnerability, coupled with past discrimination, stereotypical perceptions, and other barriers to service, means lost opportunities for justice and healing. Yet another concern is that frequently, victims must explain to service providers what it means to be transgender in order to receive culturally competent care. When faced with this lack of understanding, many victims forgo seeking assistance out of fear, mistrust, or frustration. But they urgently need our help.

Historically, many transgender victims of crime have had limited or no access to culturally competent services to prevent and address the violence against them.¹ Through a 2009 cooperative agreement with FORGE, Inc., OVC funded the development of *Responding to Transgender Victims of Sexual Assault*, an online guide to help educate those who respond to sexual assault victims about what it means to be transgender and how to provide these victims with appropriate, accessible care. This groundbreaking resource reflects the perspective of the transgender community, which has gone unheard in mainstream victim assistance for far too long. It is our hope that professionals representing many victim-serving disciplines will find the guide useful in developing community collaborations and protocols to ably serve transgender victims of sexual assault.

The guide presents a wide array of information in a user-friendly electronic format that allows practitioners to pick and choose the information that is most useful to them, from basic information about the transgender experience to specific guidance for sexual assault service providers and advocates, law enforcement officers, medical and mental health care providers, and support group facilitators. It includes practical tools to promote understanding and support of transgender victims, such as preferred language terms. Everyone is encouraged to review the guide's core resource, "Transgender 101," to gain a basic understanding of this population before accessing the educational provider-specific sections.

We hope that you will find this guide to be invaluable in preparing you to serve transgender victims of sexual violence, as well as helping to build more enlightened communities. We welcome your ideas for additional resources to enhance our collective cultural competence as we strive to serve *all* victims of crime.

Sincerely,
Joye E. Frost
Director

¹ National Center for Victims of Crime and National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2010, [Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Victims of Hate Violence & Intimate Partner Violence](#), Washington, DC and New York, NY: National Center for Victims of Crime and National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs.