




SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ STALKING VICTIMS: A GUIDE FOR VICTIM ADVOCATES

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This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-TA-AX-K074 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.



Table of Contents

About This Guide	1
Systemic Issues Affecting LGBTQ+ Stalking Victims	2
Mitigating Systemic Issues	4
Context is Key	4
Identifying Stalking Behaviors	7
Co-Occurring Violence	9
Intimate Partner Violence	10
Sexual Violence	11
Workplace Harassment	12
Technology-Facilitated Stalking	12
Stalking Behaviors Targeting LGBTQ+ Victims	14
Hate-Based Stalking	16
Housing Insecurities	17
Bias Against Trans Women	18
Bias Against Sex Workers	18
Documentation	19
Stalking & Harassment Assessment & Risk Profile (SHARP)	20
Stalking Safety Planning	20
Basic Considerations	21
Disengagement	22
Authority Figure Offenders	23
Stalking Safety Planning with LGBTQ+ Victims	24
Safety Tips for People Who Engage in Sex Work or Street Economies	25
Getting the Facts Right	26
Conclusion	27
Appendix A: Understanding LGBTQ+ Terminology	28
Appendix B: Additional Support for Victim Advocates	30
Appendix C: Support Organizations for LGBTQ+ Victims	31



About This Guide

This Guide is for victim advocates working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals who may be experiencing stalking. Other service providers, individuals experiencing stalking, and friends/family of people experiencing stalking may also find it useful in supporting victims of stalking. It provides basic information about the dynamics of stalking and safety planning, co-occurring crimes, specific tactics used against LGBTQ+ individuals, safety planning strategies that support LGBTQ+ stalking victims, and issues to be aware of when supporting LGBTQ+ victims. This Guide cites research when possible, but stalking research is limited and LGBTQ+ stalking research even more so.

WHAT IS STALKING?

While legal definitions of stalking vary by jurisdiction, a general definition is:

a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or the safety of others; or suffer substantial emotional distress.

Stalking is its own form of violence with its own risks, safety planning needs, and legal responses. Stalkers can be very dangerous, yet too often, stalking goes unrecognized and unaddressed — by victims/survivors and their friends and family, advocacy and support services, and legal systems. **When describing their experiences,**

Stalking reports might sound like:

"My ex has gotten weird."

"Someone's harassing me."

"My neighbor is being creepy."

stalking victims may not use the word "stalking" or express fear. They're more likely to say something like "my ex won't leave me alone," "a coworker is bothering me," or "my landlord creeps me out."

For more extensive information on identifying and responding to stalking, review SPARC's [Guide for Advocates Responding to Stalking](#) and visit www.StalkingAwareness.org.

LGBTQ-specific language continually changes and is influenced by culture, location, race, age, education, and more. **It is vital to respect the language that each person uses for themselves, so listen carefully to the words a client uses and mirror their language.** Using a client's stated name, pronouns, and identity words is essential to show respect and honor each individual's identities and experiences — whether you are talking with the client or others, including colleagues, partners, and other clients in group settings. Introduce yourself with your name and pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them, she/they, ze/zir, hir/hirself, etc.), and ask the client to share their name and pronouns. If a client uses a word that is unfamiliar to you, ask for clarification; it is better to ask than assume. See [Appendix A](#) for more information on LGBTQ+ terms.

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer. The "+" sign is often added to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community.

Systemic Issues Affecting LGBTQ+ Stalking Victims

When supporting LGBTQ+ stalking victims, most of the same stalking information, behaviors, risks, and safety planning considerations apply as when working with the general population. In addition, it is critical to consider specific issues that may affect LGBTQ+ stalking victims. When these specific issues permeate the overall system — rather than being due to a specific, individual, or isolated factor — they are systemic issues.

LGBTQ+ stalking victims may be hesitant to engage with you and/or other professional supports. Many LGBTQ+ individuals have had negative interactions with victim service organizations, health care providers, the criminal and legal systems, and other agencies. Many have also heard about negative interactions directly from LGBTQ+ friends and community members. In addition, the trauma and violence that prior generations of LGBTQ+ communities experienced may contribute to distrust from LGBTQ+ individuals today. All of these reasons may contribute to LGBTQ+ people believing that advocates and other professionals will not provide safety or support. This distrust may extend to the legal system because of the layers of victimization that LGBTQ+ communities have experienced in the criminal and civil legal systems. For LGBTQ+ stalking victims, not seeking a protection order or not reporting a crime may feel safer than pursuing legal action.



LGBTQ+ stalking victims may face additional systemic barriers related to other aspects of their identity, such as those who are minors, elderly, immigrants, formerly incarcerated, undocumented, or from particular racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, and/or who are unhoused, have disabilities, and/or have Limited English Proficiency. As an advocate, it is essential to consider the context and potential barriers a victim may face when seeking services, reporting stalking, and staying safe. Such obstacles may include fear of law enforcement and other authorities, lack of services that meet their specific needs, difficulty accessing services, concerns around staff not being trained on LGBTQ+ issues, and language barriers. It is important to consider this for every victim, because barriers, disabilities, and/or needs may not be readily apparent. The best way to determine potential barriers to safety and services is to ask victims if they would like to share any concerns.

Additional systemic issues to consider are included below.

- **Violence Against Women:** Cataloguing stalking (and intimate partner violence and sexual violence) under the umbrella of “violence against women” or “gender-based violence” is a barrier to many LGBTQ+ survivors. Unless the victim is a stereotypically feminine woman and the perpetrator is a stereotypically masculine man, both the survivor and the

“The police came out three or four times... They would just tell us to behave and that, you know, that we needed to act like ladies. They didn’t even ask for an explanation.”

- Lesbian Survivor of Intimate Partner Violence¹

professional helping them may not identify the situation as stalking, intimate partner violence, or “violence against women.” This may be particularly true for gay men, whose interactions may be classified as “play” or dismissed as “boys will be boys” and not perceived as abusive. The frameworks of “violence against women” and “gender-based violence” can also lead responders to assume the more masculine person in a situation is the abuser.

- **Sex-Segregated Services:** Many services for the crimes under the “violence against women” or “gender-based violence” umbrellas are sex-segregated and/or designed for female victims and male abusers. That means some victim services — like shelters or support groups — may be completely denied to men (regardless of their sexual orientation or gender history) and to women with abusers who are not men. Similarly, providers may deny access to sex-segregated services for women who identify as lesbian or bisexual, as well as for transgender or nonbinary individuals.



- **Inferior Services:** Even when providers are legally required to serve all genders and services are theoretically open to everyone, some services may be poor, discriminatory, inadequate, or even abusive to LGBTQ+ victims. For example, an agency might provide a short-term hotel stay for a transgender survivor away from other victims and where group services are located, which excludes that survivor from peer support and makes it harder for them to access additional services.



- **Bias and Stigma:** Generally, LGBTQ+ individuals are acutely aware of society’s biases against LGBTQ+ communities and may worry that reporting their victimization will reinforce such biases. Victims may fear that disclosing abuse or violence will be a confirmation of biases against LGBTQ+ communities, particularly myths around being dysfunctional or dangerous. LGBTQ+ community members may feel that they are protecting their community by not disclosing stalking and other issues happening within the community.
- **Isolation:** Disclosing issues within the LGBTQ+ community can be perceived by community members as “gossip” or “making the community look bad.” When individuals report, talk about, or otherwise make known that there are abusers within the community, it can lead to additional isolation and ostracizing, or even fracturing communities into taking “sides” with either the victim or the offender.

Mitigating Systemic Issues

As a provider, you can help mitigate the harms of these systemic issues and better support your LGBTQ+ clients with the actions below. Remember that systemic issues are inherently large and pervasive, and often overwhelming.

- Listen to and believe your clients.
- Hear their experiences of prior harm with service providers, if they share about them.
- Reflect the language they use, around what happened to them as well as their name, pronouns, and identity words.
- Know that LGBTQ+ stalking survivors may not want to pursue “traditional” routes of justice or services because of prior negative experiences or systemic biases.
- Do your homework, so your clients don’t have to educate you about LGBTQ+ people and barriers. (See [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#) for places to start.)
- Examine and be aware of your own preconceptions and biases, and treat all victims with the same level of respect.
- Remember that LGBTQ+ individuals have historically faced — and continue to face — stigma, prejudice, discrimination, violence, and a lack of understanding in daily life and when accessing services.



Context is Key

Fear and/or emotional distress are key components of stalking, but what is frightening to one person may not be frightening to another. Acts that may be harmless in a different context may become



Stalking behaviors often include specific meanings only understood by the victim and may be intended to seem benign to anyone other than the victim.

menacing due to their repetitiveness or intrusiveness, or because of the history of violence in the relationship between stalker and victim. **In the vast majority of cases, the stalker knows their victim and so may have intimate knowledge about the victim’s vulnerabilities and what would frighten them.** This can be especially significant for LGBTQ+ individuals, who may experience stalking tactics related to their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.



When victims describe behaviors that distressed them, ask questions such as:

- What did this behavior mean to you?
- What did you think was going to happen next?
- Can you tell me more about your reaction to this behavior?

It is essential for advocates to ask and understand why certain behaviors are frightening to the victim. Even a seemingly friendly note or gift could be alarming, depending on the context. When there has been a history of violence and the victim has gone to significant lengths to avoid any encounters with the abuser, even one text message, gift, or other type of contact is a sign that those efforts have been unsuccessful and the abuser has found the victim and again poses a threat. For example: Receiving a surprise flower delivery is generally a welcome experience, but when a victim has quietly relocated to escape a stalker, that flower delivery can be a terrifying and threatening message that the abuser has found them. And while it is legal to send someone flowers, it may become illegal when part of a pattern of stalking behavior. If the flowers were delivered to the victim's work with a prominent card that identifies them as LGBTQ+, it could add another layer of fear and disruption if they are not widely out.



People react to stalkers in a variety of ways and fear is often masked by other emotions, particularly if the victim comes from a culture that has taught them to suppress some emotions. Fear may present as anger, frustration, hopelessness, despair, apathy, and/or a lack of emotion. Some may minimize and dismiss their stalking as “no big deal.” Friends, family of origin, chosen family, community members, peers, and responders also often downplay the seriousness of the situation. (For some LGBTQ+ people, friends are chosen family.) **It is helpful to consider how victims change their lives to cope with the stalking.** Often a victim has taken multiple steps to address the offender's behavior before contacting support services. When a victim changes their life because of the stalker's behavior, it is a clear sign that the stalker's behaviors are unwanted, and may be a sign of fear.

Discuss with victims:



- What has changed for you as a result of the stalker's behavior?
- What changes have you made to your life because of the stalker's behavior?

Examples of life changes that may indicate victims are frightened:

- Screening phone calls
 - Relocation
 - Efforts to keep their address or location a secret
 - Changing their own phone numbers, email addresses, and/or social media accounts
 - Blocking phone numbers, email addresses, and/or social media accounts
 - Changes to schedule, routine, and/or route/method of transport
 - Avoiding locations or activities
 - Increased security and/or privacy measures
 - Asking friends, family, or professionals for help
 - Informing work, daycare, school, apartment building, religious space, and/or others of the situation and/or asking for accommodations
 - Finances spent on safety devices or accommodations
- 
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Victims use a variety of strategies to cope with stalking, including confronting the stalker, appeasing the stalker, denying the stalking is happening, distracting themselves, or taking steps to try to improve their safety. Some victims purposefully isolate themselves — physically and/or emotionally — from friends and family to mitigate the impact of the stalking on themselves and their loved ones. It is important to note that some victims continue to have contact with and engage with the stalker as a safety strategy. Victims are often gathering information, assessing the offender's state of mind, and negotiating for their safety. Contact on the part of the victim does not mean that the victim is not in fear or that the stalker's behaviors are wanted. It may indicate that the victim is very afraid of the offender and is contacting the offender to be able to assess and plan the steps they will take to increase safety for themselves and their partner(s), family (of origin or choice), children, and/or pets.

Advocates should provide access to the same levels of support for all victims, regardless of how fearful the victim appears. The victim may be afraid or unwilling to say they are frightened, may believe that showing fear will escalate the situation or provide satisfaction to the stalker, or may wish to minimize the danger. Generally, men, victims who are older, and women of color are less likely to express fear than others, largely due to cultural socialization. Men (gay, bisexual, or straight; cisgender or trans) in particular may struggle to acknowledge feeling fearful as a result of social gender norms that teach men they should not be frightened, distressed, anxious, worried, or show emotion.



LGBTQ+ victims may try to protect communities they belong to — LGBTQ+ and others — by not acknowledging their victimization, which would then also acknowledge that stalking can and does happen within the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ victims who are immigrants, people of color, or part of a faith group may feel they are protecting another community they belong to by not acknowledging violence within that community. These feelings may be even more pronounced in small or rural communities where there may not be broader acceptance of these groups.

Identifying Stalking Behaviors

Stalking is prevalent, dangerous, traumatic, and often unrecognized. **Stalking includes a wide range of threatening and disturbing behaviors that can be classified into four categories: [Surveillance, Life invasion, Intimidation, and Interference through sabotage or attack \(SLII\)](#).**ⁱⁱ These categories overlap and build on each other. When stalking victims talk about what they are experiencing, they are unlikely to use the word “stalking.” Instead of asking victims if they are being stalked or harassed, it is better to ask specific questions about stalking SLII behaviors. If the answer to any of the screening questions below is “yes,” you should review and consider asking more questions from [Identifying SLII Strategies](#) and consider completing the [SHARP assessment](#) with your client.



Use these four stalking behavior screening questions to identify SLII behaviors:

- Has the offender followed you, watched you, showed up unexpectedly, or communicated with you in ways that seem obsessive or make you concerned for your safety?
- Has the offender repeatedly initiated unwanted contact with you (e.g. repeated calls, texts, messages, emails, gifts, including through third parties)?
- Has the offender threatened you or done other things to intimidate you? What have they done that has frightened or alarmed you?
- Has the offender significantly and directly interfered with your life? Have they assaulted you while stalking, harassing, or threatening you? Have they forcibly kept you from leaving or held you against your will, caused you to have a serious accident, physically assaulted your friends (or family or community or pets), or seriously attacked you in other ways?

The examples below will help you familiarize yourself with stalking SLII strategies. Remember that these examples pertain to all types of victim-stalker relationships and are relevant to all victims, independent of gender identity or sexual orientation. SLII strategies — and stalking more broadly — can be part of intimate partner violence, human trafficking, hate crimes, or other violence.

Table 1: Examples of Stalking SLII Strategies

 SURVEILLANCE	 LIFE INVASION	 INTIMIDATION	 INTERFERENCE THROUGH SABOTAGE OR ATTACK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow, watch, or monitor victim, in-person and/or using technology • Track victim's location • Seek information about victim from others • Wait for victim, show up uninvited or where victim might be • Hack into victim's accounts to view correspondence • Have others stalk the victim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent and unwanted contact (phone calls, texts, social media messages) • Unwanted gifts • Publicly shame, embarrass, humiliate, and/or objectify victim • Spread rumors about victim • Share/post private information, images, and/or videos of victim • Property invasion or damage, trespassing • Impersonate victim online (like posing as them on dating sites) • Harass victim's friends/family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit and implicit threats • Symbolic violence (like destroying underwear or a meaningful item) • Threats to harm or actually harming self • Threats to harm others (family, friends, pets) • Blackmail, threats to spread rumors, share private information • Threats to interfere with employment, finances, custody • Threats to retaliate against victim if they tell anyone • Deportation or other legal threats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical / sexual attack • Harm victim's family, friends, pets • Sabotage finances, work, or education • Ruin reputation • Steal or damage property, vandalism • Custody interference • Keep victim from leaving • Post private photos, videos, information • Control accounts • Keep victim from leaving • Road rage • Posing as victim and creating harm

The vast majority of [LGBTQ+ stalking victims](#) know the person who is stalking them. Generally, LGBTQ+ individuals experience stalking at higher rates than those who do not identify as LGBTQ+.ⁱⁱⁱ

Women, young adults, individuals with disabilities, multiracial individuals, and people of color also generally experience stalking at higher rates. Individuals with more than one of these identities may be even more likely to experience stalking. **As with many types of interpersonal violence, abusers often target stalking victims because of characteristics that make them less likely to report the violence and less likely to be believed or taken seriously if they do report it.**

Victims, friends, family of origin and of choice, community members, and advocates often fail to recognize patterns of behavior as “stalking,” or associate the term exclusively with following, monitoring, or surveillance — acts that represent only one variety of the many types of stalking behaviors. They may also not recognize that LGBTQ+ people experience stalking or not recognize that the experience a victim describes is stalking, because of their own implicit biases, cultural beliefs, or lack of information about stalking and LGBTQ+ populations.

Stalking can take on specific tactics — and implications — when abusers identify characteristics that they can exploit as part of the abuse, including sexual orientation and gender identity. For example, a stalker might threaten to out an LGBTQ+ victim or to get an immigrant victim deported, or use anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-immigrant slurs to frighten them. A stalker might deliberately target someone with identities that they are biased against. Since every person has multiple and overlapping identities, a stalker might target victims based on multiple characteristics, including LGBTQ+ identity, immigration status, people of certain faith communities, or people of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds. **Stalking may also precede other crimes, including hate crimes, as offenders target and gather information about victims for planning attacks.**

Victim advocates must be familiar with stalking SLII behaviors in order to identify them as stalking; more examples and information can be found in [Identifying SLII Strategies](#) and [Stalking SLII Behaviors and Sexual Violence](#).



Co-Occurring Violence

Many abusive behaviors and crimes frequently co-occur with stalking, including intimate partner violence, sexual assault and harassment, workplace harassment, hate-motivated crimes, protection order violations, trespassing, burglary, nonconsensual distribution of intimate images, vandalism, property damage, threats of bodily harm, voyeurism, witness intimidation, and more. Three of these are briefly described in the sub-sections below, and more are explored in later sections.

CRIMES INCLUDING (BUT NOT LIMITED TO)

IDENTITY THEFT,
COMPUTER CRIMES



VANDALISM,
PROPERTY CRIMES

VOYEURISM, PRIVACY
VIOLATION, IMAGE
CREATION/DISTRIBUTION



EAVESDROPPING,
TRESPASSING,
NONCONSENSUAL
RECORDING

FALSE REPORTS,
WITNESS INTIMIDATION



MAY BE PART OF A STALKER'S COURSE OF CONDUCT

It is important to consider how these co-occurring and interconnected abuses intersect with stalking generally and in unique ways for LGBTQ+ victims. Workplace harassment, hate-motivated crimes, and violent and threatening behavior are common for many LGBTQ+ individuals, especially trans people. These crimes may or may not be related to the victim being stalked, but they are important for you to be aware of as you support victims and help them access the services they need.

Intimate Partner Violence

Stalking often co-occurs with intimate partner violence and can be an indicator of other forms of violence. When an intimate partner repeatedly engages in physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual abuse against a victim, that pattern of abuse (and each individual incident that makes up the pattern) may also be stalking – if it would cause a reasonable person to feel fear or emotional distress. Power and control underlie intimate partner violence, and stalking tactics are often part of the coercive control that abusers exert over their victims. Stalking SLII behaviors are an effort to coerce victims into compliance and to get victims to comply with the stalker's demands. **When intimate partners engage in behaviors like excessive contact, surveillance, showing up, and/or hacking accounts, these behaviors are intimate partner abuse and stalking.** In the section [Targeting LGBTQ+ Victims](#), there are examples of how intimate partners may specifically target LGBTQ+ victims with SLII behaviors.



Stalking can happen before, during, and/or after an intimate relationship. Stalking is not simply the offender having a difficult time letting go of the relationship. It is vital to recognize the offender's history of controlling and dangerous behaviors as well as the fear that the stalking generates in the victim. Even when there is no physical violence, stalking is still dangerous, traumatic, and criminal. Intimate partner stalking victims may not explicitly say they are fearful, but their behavior often shows they feel fear; victims often change their behavior, routines, friendships, and lives because of the abuser's pattern of behavior. According to a national survey, 73% of same-sex intimate partner stalking victims felt emotional distress due to stalking and 50% felt fearful.^{iv}

Same-sex intimate partner stalking victims experience both in-person and technology-facilitated stalking, with 59% of victims being pursued in both ways, 28% only through





technology, and 13% only in-person. Nearly 40% of same-sex intimate partner stalking victims were stalked for more than a year, 47% had stalkers who destroyed property, and 28% had stalkers who threatened to physically attack the victim or others close to them.^v (Due to limited research, we do not have data specific to LGBTQ+ intimate partner stalking and gender identity/expression.)



Sexual Violence

Stalking offenders may use sexual violence as part of a stalking course of conduct, and recognizing this connection can help you provide more comprehensive responses to more effectively serve victims. Fear is a key element of stalking and fear of sexual assault is covered under most stalking statutes. Below are examples of how sexual violence can intersect with each of the four stalking SLII behaviors and more information is available in [Stalking SLII Behaviors and Sexual Violence](#).

Table 2: Examples of Sexually Violent Stalking SLII Strategies

 SURVEILLANCE	 LIFE INVASION	 INTIMIDATION	 INTERFERENCE THROUGH SABOTAGE OR ATTACK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of planning a sexual assault • Monitoring a victim after a sexual assault • Voyeurism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted contact or communication of a sexual nature or about a sexual assault • Indecent exposure • Spreading sexual rumors • Publicly humiliating or shaming or embarrassing the victim with sexual language or information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats of sexual violence or sharing sexual information, videos, or photos (real or fake) • Threats of violence or sabotage if the victim refuses to perform sexual acts • Blackmailing in exchange for sexual activity, photos, videos • Sextortion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual assault • Sexual harassment • Stealing sexual photos or videos • Sharing sexual photos, videos, or information without consent • Sexually trafficking or exploiting the victim

Workplace Harassment

Harassment is generally conduct that creates frustration and/or a hostile environment rather than causing fear; however, harassment can be part of a stalking pattern of behavior because every incident in a stalking pattern may not cause fear or emotional distress. In addition, harassment can turn into stalking when the impact of the behaviors changes from feeling annoyed, frustrated, or upset to feeling unsafe, afraid, or emotionally distressed. This is important to remember because stalking requires a different type of response and support than harassment.

LGBTQ+ employees experience high rates of harassment at work because of stigma relating to their gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.^{vi}

- More than 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ employees of color experience verbal harassment, compared to 1 in 4 white employees
- Trans employees (44%) experience more verbal harassment than cisgender LGB employees (29%)



Many do not disclose or even shield their gender identity or sexual orientation, or change their behaviors to minimize harassment at work (as well as discrimination). Trans employees change their behaviors more than cisgender LGB employees, including changing their physical appearance, how they dress, their bathroom use, and their voice or mannerisms.^{vii}



- 1 in 2 LGBTQ+ employees are not out to their supervisor
- 1 in 4 LGBTQ+ employees are not out to any current co-workers
- 7% of LGBTQ+ employees who are not out to anyone experience physical or verbal harassment, compared with 38% of those who are out to at least some people experiencing verbal harassment and 25% experiencing physical violence





Technology-Facilitated Stalking

Technology-facilitated stalking (also known as “cyberstalking”) should be given the same consideration and concern as in-person stalking. Technologies and tactics used by abusers constantly evolve and may seem impossible or unrealistic when you first hear about them; but stalkers are creative in the pervasive ways they monitor, surveil, contact, control, and isolate victims, as well as the ways they damage victims’ credibility or reputation.

The impact of technology-facilitated stalking is vast and just as invasive, threatening, and fear-inducing as in-person stalking. Victims of technology-facilitated stalking report being just as concerned for their safety as individuals who experience in-person stalking. However, many stalking victims do not consider technology-facilitated stalking tactics to be “stalking,” and so may need help identifying such tactics as part of a stalking pattern of behavior. Technology used to stalk can include but is not limited to: phones, computers, tablets, mobile devices, software, the internet, email, social media, messaging applications, smart home devices, recording devices, tracking devices, or other digital electronic devices and software. Below are some examples of stalking SLII behaviors using technology, many of which are computer crimes.

When developing a safety plan with victims, always consider the victim’s use of technology as a method of support as well as the stalker’s use of technology as a method of abuse. The [Tech Safety Project](#) has a [toolkit for survivors](#), information on [safety planning](#), and more. The [Clinic to End Tech Abuse](#) also offers resources on technology-facilitated stalking.

Table 3: Examples of Technology-Facilitated Stalking SLII Strategies

 SURVEILLANCE	 LIFE INVASION	 INTIMIDATION	 INTERFERENCE THROUGH SABOTAGE OR ATTACK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart home devices • Tracking software • GPS or Bluetooth tracking devices • Cameras or audio/video recording devices • Monitoring online activity • Accessing online accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted contact online, through text messages or phone calls, other platforms • Impersonate victim • Hack victim’s accounts • Impersonate others to access the victim (masking or spoofing calls, social media accounts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online threats • Blackmail • Sextortion • Threats to post private info, photos, or videos, real or fake • Threats to interfere with online accounts • Threats to use technology to interfere with property, employment, finances • Threats to harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post private info, photos, or videos online, real or fake • Spread rumors online • Dox (publicly post personally identifiable info) • Swat (prank calling to prompt emergency response) • Control online accounts • Pose as victim • Use technology to encourage others to harm the victim

Stalking Behaviors Targeting LGBTQ+ Victims

Victim advocates should be familiar with stalking SLII behaviors to identify them when working with LGBTQ+ clients, and it is also important for victim advocates to be familiar with the unique ways that stalking SLII behaviors can express themselves with LGBTQ+ stalking victims. Below is a list of examples of how stalking may present itself with LGBTQ+ individuals; remember that nearly all of these can be done in-person and/or through technology.

Table 4: Examples of LGBTQ-Targeted Stalking SLII Strategies

	SURVEILLANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leverage a small, insular LGBTQ+ community to monitor, find the victim• Wait for, find the victim in LGBTQ+ venues, websites, or neighborhoods• Search public records and/or social media for LGBTQ+ identifying information• Monitor victim location through geo-based dating/hook-up apps (like Grindr & Scruff)	
	LIFE INVASION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purposely and publicly use the victim's wrong name or pronouns• Publicly use anti-LGBTQ+ slurs against the victim• Slander the victim in LGBTQ+ spaces• Show up at LGBTQ+ events, knowing the victim will be there• Join LGBTQ+ groups, events, and/or spaces with the intent to upset, worry, frighten, slander, monitor, or humiliate the victim• Create online profiles of the victim with the intent to humiliate them and/or ruin their reputation in LGBTQ+ groups and spaces	
	INTIMIDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Threats to out the victim by revealing sexual orientation, gender identities, HIV or sexually transmitted infection status• Threats to interfere with a trans victim's medical or legal transition• Threats to share information and photos of a transgender or nonbinary victim from before they transitioned or expressed themselves the way they do currently	

- Threats to use the victim's LGBTQ+ identity to take away or control access to children, pets, or assets
- Threats leveraging a lack of legal recognition or protection for LGBTQ+ victims (such as employment protection, recognized marriage/domestic partnership, etc.)
- Threats to release false information about a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Threats to share online profiles or accounts that would disclose the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Symbolic violence, such as cutting up a Pride flag or clothing important to the victim's identity, or buying a Pride flag to display at the victim's home to out them
- Deface a car or other property with anti-LGBTQ+ epithets or slurs



INTERFERENCE THROUGH SABOTAGE OR ATTACK

- Interfere with a trans victim's medical transition
- Out the victim to their employer, family, school, or other people in the victim's life who may not know about their gender identity or sexual orientation
- Spread rumors about a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Share/post private information, photos, videos about a victim's LGBTQ+ identity
- Damage or discard clothing, items, or medicine vital to the victim's identity or expression
- Share/post information and photos of a transgender or nonbinary victim from before they transitioned or expressed themselves the way they do currently
- Engage in an intentional public argument to disclose a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity information with others
- Take custody of children or pets, or seize assets, because the victim's intimate relationship is not legally binding or they do not have legal protection in place
- Restrict access to bank accounts, set limits on credit card spending, or not allow expenditures on clothing, items, or medical care vital to the victim's identity or expression
- Limit, withhold, throw away, or threaten access to clothing, items, or medical care vital to the victim's identity or expression
- Restrict or remove access to housing because of the victim's LGBTQ+ identity
- Restrict or remove access to housing because the victim's intimate relationship has not been legally codified

- Use the victim's gender identity and/or sexual orientation as part of emotional and psychological abuse/control
- Exploit service providers' and responders' lack of knowledge about LGBTQ+ relationships and victimization to harm the victim and/or prevent them from getting help, including by pretending to be the victim in a situation

Hate-Based Stalking

When stalkers are motivated by prejudice against LGBTQ+ individuals, it may also be a hate crime. Anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs, stereotypes, and/or misconceptions may lead people to stalk individuals whom they perceive to be LGBTQ+. These offenders may try to justify their behavior as protecting their community from LGBTQ+ individuals, but no protection is necessary and such behaviors are stalking, violent, unacceptable, and illegal.

Many LGBTQ+ people report they frequently experience harassment, discrimination, or violence in public spaces, including transportation. The anti-LGBTQ+ comments, taunting, and slurs they experience often happen because others perceive them to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. The observer assigns a gender identity or sexual orientation based on what they see or hear, which may or may not accurately reflect the identity of the person. This perception can happen for a range of reasons, such as a person being in a traditionally “gay” area of town, wearing clothing or accessories that are believed to belong to another gender, or engaging in certain types of public affection.

**OFFENDERS MAY TARGET
SOMEONE BECAUSE THEY
PERCEIVE
SOMEONE TO BE
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
TRANSGENDER, OR QUEER
WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE.**

Street harassment differs from stalking, although victims may use the two words interchangeably when describing a situation. Fear and emotional distress separate stalking and harassment.

Harassment can feel annoying, frustrating, upsetting, angering, etc. — but when the victim (or a reasonable person in their context and situation) feels unsafe, frightened, or emotionally distressed due to the pattern of harassing behavior, it is stalking.



Offenders may follow a passenger off the bus, train, or subway and begin a pattern of stalking behavior. Those who regularly use public transportation may have a routine that allows stalkers to easily follow, monitor, and surveil them.

Being in close quarters on a bus or subway also easily allows for an offender to plant a tracking device on an LGBTQ+ individual or their possessions.

Larger cities often have bars, businesses, and support services focused on serving the LGBTQ+ community. Because these are physical locations, it is easier for stalkers to access victims there if they specifically want to target LGBTQ+ people. And when these venues are located near each other, they often create an LGBTQ+ neighborhood and stalkers may assume that most people visiting such neighborhoods are LGBTQ+. A stalker can use this geographic location as a base for identifying a victim. They may be able to learn the victim's routine and transportation, follow them to their home, and/or engage with other community members to gain more information. Stalkers may also believe that they will not be held accountable for their behaviors, if they think, for example, that LGBTQ+ areas are not as heavily policed by law enforcement or that law enforcement will not take stalking cases as seriously when the victim is LGBTQ+.

Similarly to LGBTQ+ neighborhoods, it is relatively easy for a stalker who is anti-LGBTQ+ to research and find LGBTQ+ events, support groups, and other gatherings. Stalkers may join online meetings, social media groups, messaging boards, or other online places to gain access to a victim, to collect information about them, or to simply be present to provoke fear or other emotions in the victim. When a stalker accesses events and neighborhoods that a victim had viewed as safe and supportive, it can be very traumatic and invasive.

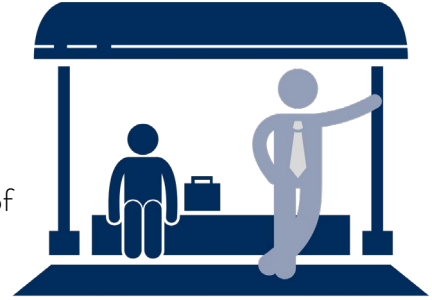


Housing Insecurities

Similar to LGBTQ+ neighborhoods and events, stalkers may easily be able to find where unhoused LGBTQ+ people gather and then identify a target to stalk, as well as perpetrate other abuses like trafficking, exploiting, or grooming LGBTQ+ individuals. LGBTQ+ youth are significantly overrepresented in homeless populations^{viii} and there are high rates of homelessness in LGBTQ+ adults, especially transgender adults. When LGBTQ+ individuals live on the streets or frequently move between households, they may be easier targets for victimization, violence, and stalking.

Some LGBTQ+ youth become homeless because of unaccepting family members, conflict escalation over time, and unstable household environments.^{ix} Family members may stalk youth, in addition to the abuse or neglect they perpetrate at home. The more access to and information about a victim the offender has, the more likely they are to have unique and intimate knowledge about the victim's vulnerabilities and what would frighten them. As such, family members may easily be able to determine where and how the youth may be vulnerable and how to create fear, including around the youth's LGBTQ+ identity.

LGBTQ+ adults may also be homeless due to abusive familial or intimate relationships, or unstable households. In addition, many LGBTQ+ people face low incomes and low wealth due to employment discrimination and low-wage jobs, which affect housing stability. In general, the same considerations for victims of abusive relationships apply to all victims, independent of sexual orientation or gender identity. But LGBTQ+ individuals may face additional issues, such as not having legal protections or facing anti-LGBTQ+ housing discrimination. In addition, they may be denied access to domestic violence or homeless shelters and support services, or may not want to take the risk of an anti-LGBTQ+ shelter environment. As a result, many LGBTQ+ people who do not have a home instead live on the streets, in their car, or move from couch to couch.



Bias Against Trans Women



Many trans women — Black and Latinx trans women in particular — experience what LGBTQ+ community members call “walking while trans.” This phrase emerged from law enforcement applying anti-loitering laws to people whom they perceived as trans and as engaging in sex work, when in reality they were simply walking down the street or standing at a corner. Although this practice is not overtly acknowledged or supported in law enforcement policies, some officers and agencies still unfairly stop, harass, and/or arrest trans people who are simply going about their daily lives. This reputation and these officers may substantially decrease the trust trans people have in law enforcement, reporting crimes, or seeking protection.

People who are not law enforcement may also engage in a similar “walking while trans” practice, which can include tracking, monitoring, assaulting, or stalking trans women. Anti-trans beliefs, stereotypes, and/or misconceptions lead people to mistreat trans women. For example, it is common for trans women to be harassed on public transportation, “cat called” while walking to work, or called anti-trans slurs when entering a public space. If this becomes a pattern of behavior, it may be stalking.

Bias Against Sex Workers

Individuals who engage in sex work — by choice or out of necessity to meet basic needs — may be at increased risks of stalking. LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to engage in sex work than individuals who are not LGBTQ+,^x and trans women^{xi} and LGBTQ+ youth^{xii} are more likely to be involved in the sex trade than other community members. Offenders may weaponize knowledge of the sex worker’s work, threatening to report it to law enforcement, share the information with others who don’t know

about it, or interfere with the sex work itself. Offenders may also intentionally report, share information about, or interfere with the sex work. Offenders may be emboldened by the belief that victims who are sex workers will not be taken seriously if they report and/or that the offender is more likely to be believed than the victim.



Many purchasers of sex work erroneously believe those who work in the sex industry are less worthy or less important, and that the purchaser is somehow better than the sex worker. They also may believe that the person they hire is in a desperate situation and willing to tolerate abusive behavior because they need to do this work in order to survive. Purchasers may also believe they can engage in abusive behaviors in these settings because it is considered “normal.”

Generally, the same stalking tactics can be applied to sex workers as to non-sex workers. Additionally, the predictability of sex workers being in similar locations at recurring times provides easier access for an offender to monitor, track, harass, and abuse them. Street-based sex workers are inherently visible on the street and often in similar locations at recurring times of the day. Someone who engages in erotic dancing may have regular hours promoted to the public, which allows offenders to more easily access them through a known time and place. And escorts who are not street-based may bring their clients to their home or only a few locations, which also allows offenders to more easily track and access them.

Documentation

As with any stalking safety planning, discuss with the victim the possibility of keeping a [documentation log](#) of stalking behaviors and incidents. A documentation log can help a victim process what is happening to them and identify options to increase safety, and it can be helpful if the victim decides to engage with the criminal or civil legal systems. Always discuss with a victim that a documentation log is meant to be a record of incidents, not a journal of their feelings; no information should be included that they would not want the stalker to see, since it could be used as evidence if they engage with the criminal or civil legal system and the stalker would have access to all evidence.

STALKING INCIDENT AND BEHAVIOR LOG						
Date	Time	Description of Incident	Location of Incident (physical location, technology used, online platform)	Witness Name(s) (attach address and phone number)	Evidence Attached? (photos, video, screenshots, items, etc.)	Report Made To (name, office/org, badge or identification #)

Stalking & Harassment Assessment & Risk Profile (SHARP)

SHARP is a valuable tool to assess a stalking situation and should be discussed as an option with every stalking victim, every time their situation changes. It is an online assessment form that can be filled out at www.StalkingRisk.com.

While many risk, threat, danger, and lethality assessments focus primarily on domestic violence, [SHARP](#) is designed specifically to examine and assess stalking. After completing the questions, two reports are automatically generated. One summarizes the situation and examines 14 factors associated with a wide variety of harms including physical or sexual attack, harm to others, ongoing and escalating stalking and harassment, and life sabotage. The other has suggestions for safety planning.

SHARP offers three options for identifying the victim and offenders' genders (female, male, nonbinary), but does not offer a specific option for trans individuals nor does it address the unique ways that stalking affects LGBTQ+ individuals. Become familiar with the tool before using it with an LGBTQ+ client so that you are better able to frame the components for LGBTQ+ individuals.

SHARP ASSESSMENT

The Stalking & Harassment Assessment & Risk Profile (SHARP) is a 48-item web-based assessment that provides an evaluation of the “big picture” of the stalking situation as well as a situational risk profile. SHARP is free to use and available at StalkingRisk.com.



Stalking Safety Planning

Stalking victims are often hypervigilant as a result of constantly being in heightened states of fear and anticipation. Victim hypervigilance can be misinterpreted as paranoia or overreaction. Stalking victims are often the best at predicting the risk the offender poses to them.

Safety planning is an individualized plan that identifies specific strategies and interventions that may increase safety. It provides practical ways to decrease risk; puts victims in contact with a variety of services, agencies, and individuals who can help; and focuses on both physical and emotional well-being. To create a safety plan, you should work with the victim to consider their current situation as well as what the offender might do next, and plan ahead about actions the victim can take to reduce their own risk and the potential for harm. Part of creating a safety plan is also working with the victim to prepare themselves to carry it out to the best of their abilities, to rehearse the steps with them, and to identify trusted people they can share the plan with for help executing it.

Remember that neither a victim nor a safety plan can change the offender's behavior — that is only within the offender's control. However, safety planning can reduce risks and harm. The victim knows their situation best, so help them think through what is best for them and make whatever changes or additions feel right to them.

[Safety Planning Strategies for Stalking Victims](#) has more general information on and tips for safety planning strategies when working with stalking victims.

Basic Considerations

- There is no single “right” safety plan. There are many different ways to cope and survive within a victim’s circumstances.
- Maintain a non-judgmental approach, meeting clients where they are in their journey and recognizing that victims are the experts on their own lives.
- Encourage victims to trust their instincts. Many victims of stalking feel pressured by friends or families to simply ignore the stalker’s behavior or “just tell them off.” Stalkers are dangerous and victims’ fears are justified.
- Plans should be flexible and evolve, change, and adapt as the stalking situation changes.
- Plans should cover all aspects of the victim’s life including physical safety as well as emotional safety. How can they be as safe as possible in their professional, personal, and/or family life?
- Consider the victim’s use of technology as a method of support and the stalker’s use of technology as a method of abuse.
- Consider systemic barriers the victim may face in daily life and when trying to access services.
- Victims must balance their need to live normal lives with their concerns about safety. Only the victim can decide what tradeoffs are realistic and appropriate for them.
- Consider what has happened, what is happening, and what might happen.
 - Being proactive is vital – do not only plan around what has already happened, also consider what the stalker might do in the future, especially in reaction to specific dates, events, or actions taken by the victim.
 - Stalkers often escalate their behavior when the victim reacts in some way — for example, if the victim blocks them on social media, they may show up at the victim’s home.

Discuss three questions with the victim:

- What have you already done?
- What do you need help doing?
- What are you not willing to do?



Disengagement

Stalkers are persistent offenders engaging in unwanted behavior. Stalkers may be notified that their behavior is unwanted by direct, formal means (like a protection order or communication from the victim) or more indirectly (like their victim not responding to their efforts at communication or avoiding them). Whether the stalker is formally notified or should be picking up on social norms that their behavior is unwanted, if they continue to persist it is an important red flag for the victim's safety as well as a clear sign that the stalker's pattern of behavior is deliberate and intentional.

Remember that victims use a variety of strategies to cope with stalking, and some continue to have contact with and engage with the stalker as a safety strategy. While it is best to recommend that the victim completely disengage from the stalker's attempts to have contact with them and never respond or react, the victim may not be able to do that for a variety of reasons and their decision should be respected. Complete disengagement is ideal because many stalkers misinterpret any contact — even negative contact — as encouragement.

However, complete disengagement is often neither possible nor likely. Some victims may have to maintain contact because they share friends or family with the abuser, they work together, or they share custody of minor children. Victims may want to keep in contact with the abuser in order to stay up-to-date on where the abuser is, what they are doing, and how they are feeling, so that the victim is not caught off-guard. In addition, some LGBTQ+ victims may struggle to disengage with current/former intimate partners because of limited dating experiences within the LGBTQ+ community and/or living in a community with a limited pool of LGBTQ+ dating partners.

"If you've never been in a predator-type situation, it's better to know where they're at than not know. The reason I didn't block him was to help not being caught off-guard." ^{xii}

-Stalking Victim



It is important to discuss with victims how continued contact might impact an order of protection or a criminal case against the offender. While victims cannot violate their own civil protection order because such orders only restrict the offender's behaviors, some criminal no contact orders may apply to both parties and victims who maintain contact out of safety needs are often seen by the criminal system as contributing to the offender's behavior. Victim advocates versed in their local jurisdiction's practices (not just the policies on paper) can provide vital information regarding a victim's engagement with an offender and how that may impact the civil or criminal process.

Complete disengagement may also be impossible if the stalker is in a position of authority or power over the victim, such as a mental or physical health provider, law enforcement or someone else in the criminal or civil legal system, or someone at work, at school, in the government, or in their family.

Some victims feel that they should ensure the stalker knows that their behavior is unwanted; when that is true, the victim should tell the stalker once — and only once — that they want the stalker to stop their contact, stalking behaviors, and communication. Consider documenting such communication to show the victim’s effort and desire to disengage. After that, it is important to consider cutting all ties with the stalker, including not answering messages or calls. Some examples of how to express the desire for no contact include:

- “I am not interested in having a relationship with you. Do not contact me ever again.”
- “Do not call, stop by, text, or contact me in any way whatsoever.”
- “I do not want you to contact me in any way. If you continue to do so — or if you are on my property, or follow me — I will call the police/take legal action.”
- “I am ending this relationship. I am not going to change my mind. Do not contact me again. I do not want to have any communication with you, in any form. If you try to contact me, I will call the police/take legal action.”

Authority Figure Offenders



A person of authority is someone who has power over the victim’s personal or professional quality of life, such as a supervisor, a teacher or professor, a coach, a mentor, a landlord, a law enforcement officer, a prosecutor, a judge, a government official, a loan officer, a medical professional, a caretaker, an organizational leader, or someone with more money, resources, and connections in the community than the victim has. Authority figures

may have access to personnel files that contain addresses, emergency contacts, and other confidential information. This poses additional concerns for LGBTQ+ individuals who have information in such files that an authority figure offender can abuse — by manipulating the confidential information and using it to stalk the victim, to identify or assume their LGBTQ+ identity, and/or to blackmail or extort a victim whose identity may not be known to coworkers or fellow students. Due to the power imbalance between victims and authority figures, victims may be less likely to stand-up to offenders and/or report their experience to the police. When the offender is an authority figure, consider:

- What access to the victim does the offender’s authority give them, especially without making others suspicious?
- What information about the victim does the offender’s authority give them access to?
- What power does this offender’s authority give them over the victim?
- Will systems of accountability be harder to apply because of the offender’s authority?

Stalking Safety Planning with LGBTQ+ Victims

In addition to standard safety planning considerations for clients experiencing different types of abuse and the Stalking Safety Planning Basics in the previous section, there are specific issues to consider when supporting LGBTQ+ stalking victims. For example, when planning a “to go bag” with a LGBTQ+ client, discuss if they should include any hormones, HIV prevention (e.g. pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP) or other medication, name change or identity documentation, legal documentation related to shared property or access to bank accounts (particularly for non-heterosexual relationships). Some individuals may also need prosthetics, wigs, makeup, clothing, or accessory items that are vital for their mental health and/or for their safety in public. These accessory items are not just about expressing their gender, but are often essentially linked to being able to move safely in the world, especially for trans people.

It is important to note that threats can be just as disabling and fear-inducing for a stalking victim as the follow-through on threats. Remember that the threat of or actual disclosure of someone’s LGBTQ+ identity can have substantial ripple implications, primarily around personal safety, employment, and housing.

When stalking victims live with other people, it is important for them to discuss safety considerations with the people they live with. LGBTQ+ individuals may live with one or more housemates who are friends, chosen family, or people who they didn’t know before living together. This requires additional considerations for who has access to their living environment, what kinds of tracking devices could be added into the household space, or who might access computers, cell phones, or other personal electronic devices. Having open discussions with housemates about safety can decrease risks for all household members. For example, discussing not giving keys to other people, maintaining secure codes to alarm systems, having locks on individual bedroom doors, and notifying each other when a guest is expected, may be helpful for safety planning.



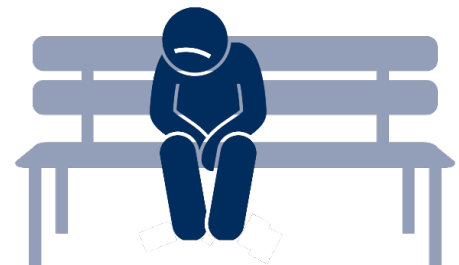
Many LGBTQ+ individuals rely heavily on friends, chosen family, alternative family structures, and affirming family of origin for their primary support. In Black and Latinx queer and trans communities, some are part of the “house” or “ball culture” which has a supportive family structure. Whenever possible, encourage the survivor to include their friends and family in safety planning and other appointments, so loved ones can gain the skills and resources to increase their support. In addition, stalkers may try to stalk their target through these networks, for example by asking seemingly harmless questions about the victim or by pursuing people close to the victim in order to upset them.

Open and affirming faith communities can also be a source of support. Faith communities may provide emotional as well as physical support, since many are involved in social and racial justice, organizing mutual aid, providing housing, offering pastoral care, and encouraging peer-to-peer connection between members. (Mutual aid is an exchange of resources or services within communities to care for one another; it can provide support with food or housing insecurity, transportation, companionship, medication access, and strategizing solutions to complex challenges.)

When considering support services and referrals, always take into account whether LGBTQ+ victims will be welcome and treated respectfully.

Safety Tips for People Who Engage in Sex Work or Street Economies

LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to engage in sex work or street economies.^{xiv} People engage in sex work or street economies for many reasons. For some, it is the job they have chosen to earn money. Others are pushed into it through circumstances, when they are unable to make a living through more traditional work, due to employment discrimination, low wage work opportunities, or displacement from a home/partner/family who previously supported them financially. Some people engage in sex work and street economy work due to coercion, exploitation, trafficking, or other abuse. It is important for advocates to listen carefully to determine if this type of work is part of a larger abusive pattern, is the result of circumstances, or is entered into by choice.



Many people working in street economies are housing and food insecure, and may exchange their work for housing or food in addition to or instead of money.

For many engaging in sex work or street economies, some safety planning strategies may be inaccessible or implausible and additional considerations are important. For example:

- Victims may be much less willing or able to report to law enforcement for fear of being arrested for their work (i.e. arrested for their sex work instead of treated as a victim of the crime they report).
- It may be hard for victims to change their work location or schedule to avoid the stalker.
- Victims are unable to file for unemployment or take paid leave from work, to avoid the stalker.
- Without employer-based health care, victims may lack access to health insurance and/or medical care for physical and mental health services.
- Low income-generating months of the year may lead victims to take additional risks.

- If a victim is able to secure housing at a shelter, the shelter may have rules or curfews that restrict their working hours, resulting in lower or no income.
- The criminalization, stigma, and isolation of sex work and street economy work often makes workers more vulnerable to abusive interactions.

Look for local and national resources and support services specifically for people engaged in sex work or street economics, such as the Sex Workers Outreach Project USA (<https://swopusa.org/> and Hotline 877-776-2004) and HIPS (<https://www.hips.org/>).

Getting the Facts Right

Myths and misinformation abound about stalking and LGBTQ+ individuals. They can be believed by members of the community, family/friends, victim advocates, and others who support victims. Below are some facts explaining the truth.

- ✓ **People of any gender or sexual orientation can be abused and/or abusive.**
 - Many people falsely believe that only men can be stalkers or abusive, only women can be abused, and relationship violence only happens in heterosexual relationships. The reality is that any relationship (including those with more than two partners) can be abusive and people of all genders can be abusive or engage in stalking behaviors.
- ✓ **The physically larger and/or more masculine person is not necessarily the predominant aggressor.**
 - Law enforcement and victim service providers have a history of determining abuse based on body size or masculinity/femininity of each person in an abusive relationship. Size and gender expressions are not relevant to who is an offender or a victim, or to the amount of harm or damage they can inflict on another person.
- ✓ **Men can be afraid of being physically or emotionally hurt.**
 - Stalking laws are sometimes based on whether the victim feels fear. People from some cultures and gender identities may have been socialized not to show fear, but still feel it.
- ✓ **Men do not always resort to physical violence.**
 - Many people falsely assume that men always want to physically fight someone who abuses them and/or that men are always able to defend themselves from physical attack. However, size and/or gender identity do not automatically make someone stronger or more able to defend themselves, particularly when weapons are involved.
- ✓ **No one deserves stalking or abuse.**
 - LGBTQ+ people are often told that they deserve or “invite” abuse by not fitting into heteronormative and gender-conforming norms, but they do not deserve abuse.

Laws and the structure of support and response systems have historically reinforced myths about traditional gender norms and LGBTQ+ individuals. In the same way that rape within a marriage was exempt from rape laws and not recognized as a crime until the 1970s, it was not until 2021 that all states recognized intimate partner violence as a crime no matter the sexual orientations or gender identities of the people involved.^{xv} Historically, same-sex couples have not had the same legal protections as heterosexual couples. These legislative frameworks reflected social views, which still exist and have lasting cultural and service implications. Advocates and community members may not recognize abuse or stalking with LGBTQ+ individuals due to the myths, former laws and exemptions, and misinformation they acquire in the media, in on-the-job training, and/or through social interactions with other individuals.

These myths are not only harmful to LGBTQ+ individuals who believe them, but also to service providers. The implicit and explicit bias stemming from such myths can substantially impede equitable service delivery.

Conclusion

Stalking is a serious form of violence that is often misunderstood and minimized. It is vital that victim advocates are able to identify stalking behaviors and the barriers that stalking victims face, particularly the ways that both show up uniquely for LGBTQ+ stalking victims. This Guide aims to support LGBTQ+ stalking victims and enhance their safety.

All of the SPARC resources referred to in this Guide are available on SPARC's website at <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/victim-service-provider-resources/>. Contact SPARC at tta@stalkingawareness.org with questions, concerns, or requests for technical assistance on responding to victims of stalking. While [SPARC resources](#) can help advocates, victims, and survivors learn more about stalking, SPARC does not provide direct services to victims of stalking.

For additional information and technical assistance to support providers on trans-specific victimization issues, contact FORGE at AskFORGE@forge-forward.org and visit <https://forge-forward.org/>.

Appendix A: Understanding LGBTQ+ Terminology

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. Sometimes instead of Queer, the Q is defined as Questioning, which describes a person in the process of figuring out their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The “+” is added to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual refer to sexual orientation, and transgender refers to gender identity or expression. Queer is an umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender, as well as a specific identity with respect to sexual orientation and/or gender identity. (Remember that the word “queer” has been used pejoratively against LGBTQ+ people and some members of the LGBTQ+ community have embraced and reclaimed the word, while others still find it offensive.)

- Sexual orientation is a term describing a person’s emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction (or lack of attraction) to other people.
- Gender identity is a person’s internal sense of self as being male/man, female/woman, both, neither, or another gender. A person’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. A person’s gender identity can align with or be different from one’s sex assigned at birth.
- Note that gender identity does not imply any particular sexual orientation. Cisgender, transgender, and nonbinary people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, queer, or any other sexual orientation.

Sometimes an “I” is included at the end of the LGBTQ+ acronym, which stands for Intersex. This is a medical term for people born with a variety of different combinations of genitalia, chromosomes, internal sex organs, hormones, and/or secondary sex traits that do not fit within the historically binary definitions of male and female bodies. Note that intersex is neither a gender identity nor a sexual orientation. Intersex individuals are generally assigned a gender at birth, by a doctor and/or their family. Intersex individuals may identify as transgender if they identify with a different gender than the gender with which they were raised.

Pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them, she/they, ze/zir, hir/hirself, etc.) are the words that an individual uses to describe themselves and wants others to use when referring to them. People often make assumptions about which pronouns they should use to refer to someone else, but making these assumptions can send a hurtful message that people have to look a certain way to be a certain gender and use certain pronouns. Actively choosing to ignore a person’s stated pronouns can be offensive and harassing; just as you would apologize if you called someone by the wrong name, if you make a mistake with someone’s pronouns, apologize and do better in the future.

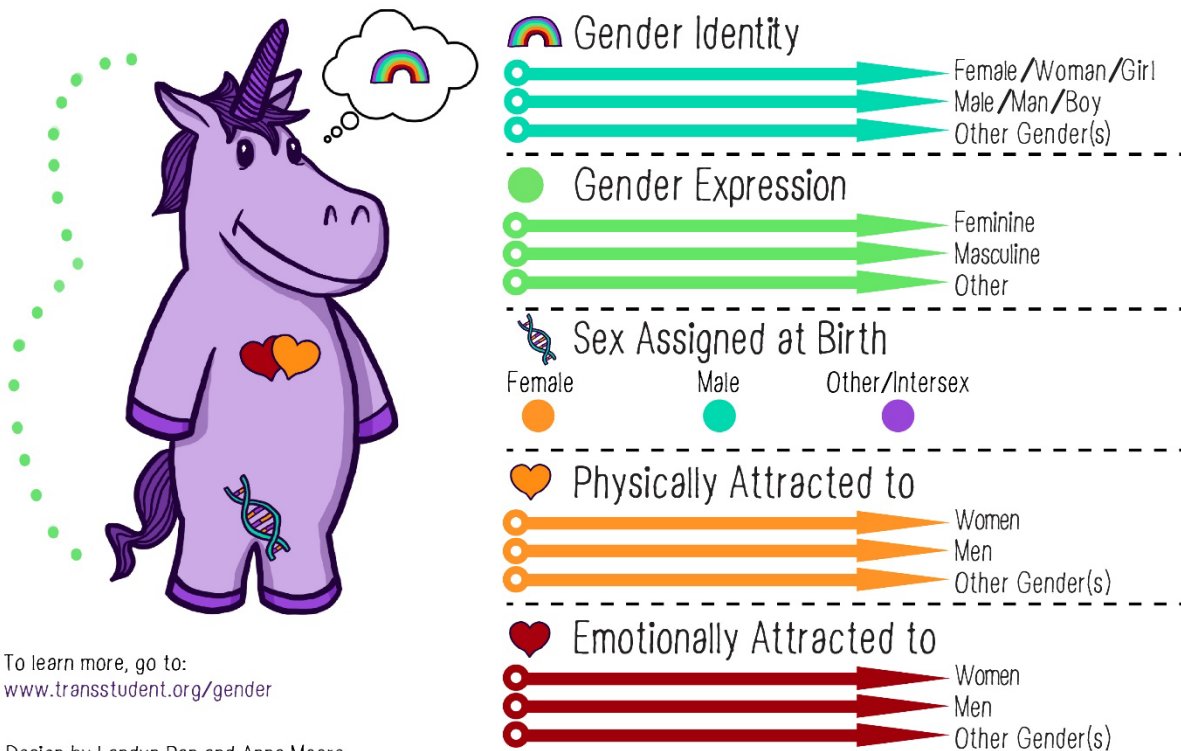
Below are websites where you can learn more about LGBTQ+ terms and more. Remember that terms can mean different things to different people and it’s most important to listen to how an individual discusses and labels their own identities, and mirror their language.

Terms and Definitions:

- GLAAD <https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms>
- Human Rights Campaign Foundation <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>
- PFLAG <https://pflag.org/glossary>
- The Center <https://gaycenter.org/about/lgbtq/>
- Trans Student Educational Resources <https://transstudent.org/about/definitions/>

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



Beyond Definitions:

- FORGE <https://forge-forward.org/resources/>
- Human Rights Campaign <https://www.hrc.org/resources/understanding-neopronouns>
- National Center for Transgender Equality <https://transequality.org/about-transgender>
- The Trevor Project <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/>
- TransLifeline <https://translifeline.org/resources/>

Appendix B: Additional Support for Victim Advocates

Though the resources below do not focus on stalking, advocates serving LGBTQ+ individuals and communities may find them useful.

For Agency Response

- [Is Your Agency Ready to Serve Transgender and Nonbinary Clients?](#) (FORGE)
- [Quick Organizational Audit](#) (The NW Network)
- [Tips for Strengthening and Improving LGBTQ+ Sexual Assault Survivor Access to Services in Oregon](#) (Victim Rights Law Center)
- [From Policy to Practice: Nondiscrimination and Inclusion of LGBTQ Individuals in Victim Services Programs](#) (Anti-Violence Project)
- [Toolkits for Increasing Shelter Access, Adopting Best Practices, Assessing Power & Control, and Assessing Access to Services for LGBTQ Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence](#) (Anti-Violence Project)

For Advocate Response

- [Safety Planning: A Guide for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals Who Are Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence](#) (FORGE)
- [Safety Planning with LGBTQ+ Sexual Assault Survivors: A Guide for Advocates and Attorneys](#) (Victim Rights Law Center)
- [LGBTQ Safety Card and Poster](#) (Futures Without Violence)
- [LGBTQ Domestic Violence Legal Toolkit for Advocates](#) (The NW Network)
- [Power & Control Wheel in LGBT Relationships](#) (Anti-Violence Project)
- [Power and Control Wheel for LGBT Relationships](#) (The NW Network)
- [Abusive Partner Interventions for the LGBTQIA+ Community \(Podcast\)](#) (Center for Court Innovation)

Appendix C: Support Organizations for LGBTQ+ Victims

LGBTQ+ individuals should be able to access any and all support options available to non-LGBTQ+ individuals and any service organizations that receive VAWA funding are [legally required to serve all genders](#). However, some services may not be available to LGBTQ+ stalking victims due to discrimination, services that are sex-segregated, or providers being unaware that LGBTQ+ individuals may experience stalking. Additionally, engaging with providers who are not LGBTQ+-informed can lead to re-victimization and additional trauma. The support organizations below are LGBTQ+-aware and are likely to provide respectful support and services for LGBTQ+ people and issues. Victim service agencies are encouraged to note in their referral lists which providers are LGBTQ+-aware as that is determined.

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) is a coalition of over 40 LGBTQ+-focused anti-violence programs (AVPs) across the country that provide direct services to LGBTQ+ survivors of violence, maintain LGBTQ+-affirming victim service referrals and resources, and provide training to other providers. AVPs are key projects that advocates can connect LGBTQ+ survivors to as well as look to for additional resources.



- <https://avp.org/ncavp/>

LGBT Community Centers offer a wide range of direct services, programming, resource and referral lists, and both peer and professional support systems. Community Centers often have LGBTQ+



AVPs housed within their agencies. CenterLink is the overarching organization that the majority of LGBTQ Community Centers belong to. An additional program of CenterLink is LGBT YouthLink, which assists Community Centers with LGBTQ+ youth-specific services.

- <https://www.lgbtcenters.org/LGBTCenters>

The Network/La Red offers a 24-hour hotline providing confidential emotional support, information, referrals, safety planning, and crisis intervention for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or transgender (LGBTQ+) folks, as well as folks in kink and polyamorous communities who are being abused or have been abused by a partner. They also offer information and support to friends, family, or co-workers on the issue of domestic violence in LGBTQ+ communities. All hotline staff are trained in domestic violence, peer counseling, crisis intervention, and safety planning. Survivors don't have to leave or want to leave their relationship to get support.

- <https://www.tnlr.org/en/24-hour-hotline/>
- Hotline: 617-742-4911 or 1-800-832-1901



The New York Anti-Violence Project provides direct services geared to LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected communities, through a national hotline and online reporting form as well as at service centers in New York City. They also support clients with free and confidential financial and workforce development services, and provide free holistic legal services to LGBTQ+ and HIV-affect survivors in New York City.

- <https://avp.org/get-help/>
- Hotline: Call 212-714-1141 for English and Spanish



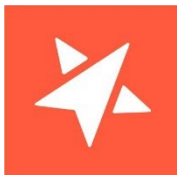
Additionally, they work to shift policy, build community power, and respond to incidents of anti-LGBTQ+ violence. They coordinate the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) and are part of the New York State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Intimate Partner Violence Network, a statewide, multidisciplinary group of direct service providers, community-based agencies, advocates, educators, policy makers, and funders who are working on behalf of LGBTQ+ communities affected by intimate partner violence to ensure that intimate partner violence services are LGBTQ+ inclusive.

The NW Network supports the LGBTQ+ community through advocacy-based counseling and community education. Emergency and ongoing advocacy-based counseling is available for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, harassment, and hate crimes.

- <https://www.nwnetwork.org/support-for-survivors>
- Phone: 206-568-7777



The Trevor Project specializes in providing suicide and mental health support for LGBTQ+ young people. Crisis counselors answer calls, chats, and texts 24/7.



- <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
- Hotline: Text 'START' to 678-678, call 1-866-488-7386
- Live chat online at <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/>

Trans Lifeline provides suicide and mental health support for trans and nonbinary individuals. It is staffed by trans and nonbinary peers.

- <https://translifeline.org>
- Hotline: 877-565-8860
- Twitch Peer-to-Peer: <https://peer2peer.live/>



RAINN provides sexual assault support and is not LGBTQ-specific, though staff are generally trained in working with LGBTQ+ victims. Staff are also trained in working with male victims.



- <https://rainn.org/>
- Hotline: Call 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE)
- Live chat online at <https://rainn.org/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline provides domestic violence/intimate partner violence support and is not LGBTQ-specific.

- <https://www.thehotline.org/>
- Hotline: Call 1-800-799-7273 (SAFE), TTY 1-800-787-3224, Text 'START' to 88788
- Live chat online at <https://www.thehotline.org/>



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