

## **Transgender Awareness is Important, More So Now Than Ever**

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November is a busy month; Thanksgiving, family, friends and a lot of food. We, and our children, are coming down from the sugar-induced frenzy of Halloween, trick-or-treating and gearing up for the holiday season. However, November is also the time where we work to bring awareness to our transgender and gender non-conforming friends and family. November 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> is Transgender Awareness Week. It occurs every year in the week preceding the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20<sup>th</sup>, which is the day in which we remember transgender victims of anti-trans violence in that year. As of October 2019, 21 transgender people have been killed in the United States this year. The majority of those victims have been transgender women of color. Many more have survived anti-trans attacks in the United States. It is because of this targeted violence that awareness about the transgender community, their stories, their experiences and the violence they face needs to be a priority for all communities and anti-violence programs.

Anti-trans violence is gender violence and advocacy to end it needs to be taken up in much the same way as we have done with intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Transgender people, people whose gender identity is different than the gender they were assigned at birth, make up 0.6-3 percent of the US population <sup>(1) (2)</sup>. Gender non-conforming people, people who do not identify specifically with one or any gender, are typically incorporated in the statistics that we are able to compile. While the reporting rates seem to be growing for people who feel safe enough to come out, the violence against this community continues to grow and there is no way to account for the people who do not feel safe coming out to be counted in the population. Anti-trans rhetoric has led to the fight for public access, employment, housing, and medical treatment. Indeed, even if a person is not victimized by direct interpersonal violence, violence against the community by discrimination continues to push many people to stay in, or even to go back in, the closet. Cisgender people, people whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth, have an obligation to address anti-trans bias to put an end to this discrimination.

A myth about the LGBTQ community is that intimate partner violence doesn't happen within this community. That statement could not be any more inaccurate. Power, control, and manipulation exist just as they do in the heterosexual and cisgender community. Transgender victims face particular psychological abuse regarding their identity and may be controlled by a partner threatening to disclose their identity to their employer or to their family of origin, a practice known as "outing" someone. The existence of systemic discrimination against the transgender community, where a person can lose their employment or housing, makes "outing" someone particularly dangerous. The threat of "outing" someone is a particularly powerful form of control and manipulation specific to the LGBTQ+ community. Domestic Violence victim services programs historically built around a cisgender and heterosexual dynamic are often inaccessible to trans and gender non-conforming victims of intimate partner violence. Service providers must be trained on the barriers unique to transgender survivors of IPV. Affirmation can be as simple as using pronouns in email signatures, asking a person how they would like to be called, and having all gender facilities. It should also be addressing anti-trans biases and statements when we hear them in the work place and encouraging our organizations to publicly stand against anti-trans legislations and for anti-discrimination legislation for the LGBTQ community. There are accessible LGBTQ+ specific [resources](#) about intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ community to help.

Transgender Awareness Week and the Transgender Day of Remembrance exist to give space to the lived experiences of transgender people and to remember those we've lost to violence. They are also a call to action for cisgender allies to work to end anti-trans bias and violence. If we are truly dedicated to the work of ending gender-based violence, we must include the transgender community in the conversation. We have to invite our transgender colleagues and friends into the conversation and give them a seat at the table, even when it means giving up ours, and we have an obligation to make it a safe table for them.

“Each and every one of us has the capacity to be an oppressor. I want to encourage each and every one of us to interrogate how we might be an oppressor, and how we might be able to become liberators for ourselves and each other.” - Laverne Cox, actress, 2014

**In Delaware, there are 24 hour hotlines available for victims of intimate partner violence:**

[New Castle County](#): 302-762-6110 (Spanish bilingual hotline available as well)

[Kent and Sussex Counties](#): 302-422-8058

[Sussex County Spanish hotline](#): 302-745-9874

**Additionally, there are national LGBTQ resources available:**

[The Anti-Violence Project](#): 24 hour LGBTQ hotline: 1-212-714-1141 (Spanish bilingual available as well)

[The Network/La Red](#): Works with LGBTQ Victims of intimate partner violence. Hotline: 617-742-4911/ 1-800-832-1901. TTY: 1-617-227-4911

[FORGE](#): Works with transgender and gender non-conforming victims of intimate partner and sexual violence. Provides referrals to local resources. 1-414-559-2123

[LGBT National Help Center](#): Youth Hotline- 1-800-246-7743; LGBT National Hotline 1-888-843-4564; Sage LGBT Elder hotline 1-888-234-7243; online chat at <http://www.volunteerlogin.org/chat/>

References:

<sup>1</sup> Flores, A., et al (2016). How Many Adults Identify as Transgender in the United States. The Williams Institute. UCLA School of Law. Full Report available at: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/how-many-adults-identify-as-transgender-in-the-united-states/>

<sup>2</sup> GLAAD (2017). Accelerating Acceptance 2017: A Harris Poll survey of Americans’ acceptance of LGBTQ People. GLAAD. Full Report available at: [https://www.glaad.org/files/aa/2017\\_GLAAD\\_Accelerating\\_Acceptance.pdf](https://www.glaad.org/files/aa/2017_GLAAD_Accelerating_Acceptance.pdf)