



## SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Sexual violence can happen to anyone and by anyone, however it is most often committed by people we know in places we are supposed to feel safe. For people in LGBTQ+ communities, sexual violence can be paired with sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (SOGIE) based acts of verbal and physical violence.

Sexual violence thrives when people with more power in society assert that power to commit violence against vulnerable and marginalized communities and individuals. To combat this violence, we must also work together to end the forms of oppression – including SOGIE-based violence – that affect these communities.

People in LGBTQ+ communities face unique fears when experiencing sexual assault, such as:

- The danger of being “outed” (having their sexual orientation or gender identity shared with others before they are ready) by others by reporting 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 SOGIE-based discriminatory responses from victim services, law enforcement, legal and medical staff, and other systems
- 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 ()  
[www.mcasa.org/survivors/sali](http://www.mcasa.org/survivors/sali)

Provides comprehensive legal services, including civil matters ranging from employment, housing, education, immigration and family law, as well as financial support to criminal justice advocacy.

#### Free State Justice

(443) 977-4254

<https://freestate-justice.org/what-we-do>

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

### Additional Resources

#### The National Center for Transgender Equality

<https://transequality.org>

#### The National LGBTQ Task Force

<https://www.thetaskforce.org>

#### National Coalition for LGBTQ Health

<https://healthlgbt.org>

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

<https://pflag.org>

#### FORGE

(For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression)

<https://forge-forward.org>



Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

[mcasa.org](http://mcasa.org) | 301-328-7023

[info@mcasa.org](mailto:info@mcasa.org)

P.O. Box 8782

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

The impact of trauma can persist for years, and can even worsen if survivors are unable to seek or receive services. It is important for service providers to acknowledge that the trauma experienced by sexual assault survivors in the LGBTQ+ community may be compounded by the traumas they may have experienced as a result of current and historical oppression and discrimination. SOGIE-based violence leads to even higher rates of sexual victimization for individuals in this community. The intersections of other forms of oppression lead to even higher rates of sexual assault against LGBTQ+ individuals based on their ethnicity, race, HIV status, disability, socioeconomic status, immigrant status, and religion. It is essential to recognize that sexual trauma compounded with the trauma of experiencing these additional forms of oppression can have an effect on the survivors' ability to seek help and access resources.



## If You've Experienced a Sexual Assault

### Get Support

It may take some time to process your emotions and thoughts around the harm you experienced. It is natural for survivors 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 private services to adult and child victims as well as their loved ones. These services are FREE. Regardless of when the incident happened, it is healthy to talk to a trained individual who can assist you after experiencing sexual assault.

### 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 to help mental health professionals can provide confidential, long-term care for survivors as well as 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 (NAMI) at <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/LGBTQI>.

### 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, get tested for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, as well as 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. Many LGBTQ+ individuals have historically faced a range

of negative experiences with law enforcement, from lack of understanding to discrimination, hostility, or violence which have influenced the levels of trust within these communities. 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 to discuss your options.

### 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, including civil matters ranging from employment, housing, education, immigration and family law, as well as financial support to criminal justice advocacy. FreeState Justice is a Maryland-based agency providing legal, educational, community empowerment services, and referrals to LGBTQ+ Maryland residents and their allies.

## National & Regional Helplines

### LGBT National Hotline

An all-ages, anonymous safe space to speak on many issues affecting LGBTQ+ individuals. Services are free and confidential.

**888-843-4564**

[www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org](http://www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org)

### LGBTQ+ Youth

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

**866-488-7386** | Text: **678678**

[www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help)

### LGBTQ+ Elders

The SAGE LGBTQ+ Elder Hotline connects older LGBTQ+ people with crisis responders who can provide information about community support resources Available 24/7 in multiple languages.

**877-360-5428 (LGBT)**

[www.sageusa.org/what-we-do/sage-national-lgbt-elder-hotline](http://www.sageusa.org/what-we-do/sage-national-lgbt-elder-hotline)

### 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. This three-tier reporting system will not share names or other personal information.

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

[www.safehelpline.org](http://www.safehelpline.org)