

# Transforming Access for LGBTQ Sexual Assault Survivors: Why Is it Important and What Can You Do?

A Webinar for Oregon Advocates  
by

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# Objectives

**At the end of the webinar,  
you will be better able to:**

1. Explain key terminology
2. Identify barriers to LGBTQ survivors accessing sexual assault-related services
3. Identify steps you can take to increase LGBTQ survivors' access to services
4. Increase your comfort asking SOGIE questions

# VRLC's Mission

Our mission is to provide free, holistic legal services to victims of rape and sexual assault and to promote a national movement committed to seeking justice for every rape and sexual assault victim.



# Who Can Be A VRLC Client?

- Sexual assault survivor: someone subjected to unwanted touching of an intimate body part
- Multnomah, Clackamas, or Washington County
- Oregon for statewide services
- No income, age, citizenship, or immigration restrictions



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# VRLC Offers FREE Legal Help to Sexual Assault Survivors

## Tri County Only

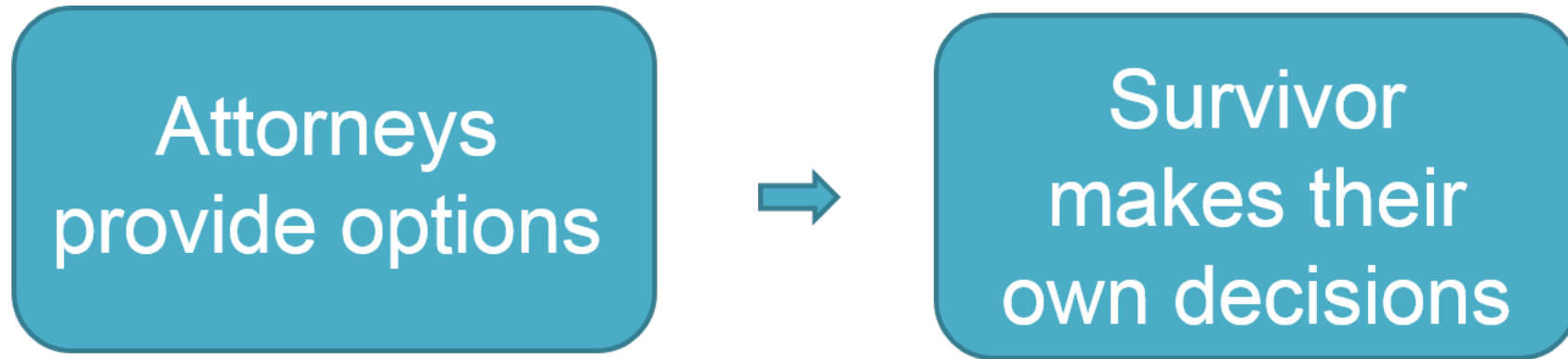
- Safety and privacy
- Benefits and financial stability
- Housing
- Employment
- Criminal Justice Advocacy

## Statewide

- Education
- Immigration
- Trans ID changes



# Survivor Empowerment Model



“The Victim Rights Law Center changed the course of my life. . . You gave me back control of my life. You helped me go from victim to victor.”

– VRLC Client



# LGBTQ: What's That?



**Lesbian**

**Gay**

**Bisexual**

**Transgender**

**Queer**



# Some Key Terminology



- **Sex**
- **Gender**
- **Gender identity**
- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Pronouns**
- **Transgender/Cisgender**
- **Transition**
- **Nonbinary**

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## Words to Avoid

transsexual  
lifestyle  
transvestite  
cross-dresser  
preference  
homosexual

# Why Do We Need to Transform Access for LGBTQ Sexual Assault Survivors?

- LGBTQ people experience sexual assault at rates equal to or higher than the general population.
- LGBTQ people are underrepresented in sexual assault services.
- If we're leaving out vulnerable populations, we can't succeed at combatting sexual assault or serving survivors.

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# LGBTQ Communities and Victimization

- 1 in 2 bisexual women will experience rape in her lifetime, as compared with 1 in 5 women overall.
- Gay men are more than 3 times as likely as straight men to experience unwanted sexual contact.
- 1 in 2 transgender people will experience rape in their lifetime.



# Why Don't More LGBTQ Survivors Access Services?

- Ineffective messaging and outreach
- Past negative experiences
- Lack of inclusive services
- Unwelcoming environment
- Exclusion from services

# How Can We Improve Services for LGBTQ Sexual Assault Survivors?

- Understand why LGBTQ survivors are underserved
- Assess who's accessing your services
- Identify changes you can make
- Center the survivor



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# What Does It Mean to Be Survivor Centered?



# How Can Individuals Begin to Transform Access?

- Question your assumptions.
- Communicate respectfully.
- Interrupt homophobia and transphobia.
- Identify and make appropriate referrals.

# Respectful Communications

- Introduce yourself with your pronouns.
- Include pronouns on business cards and in email signature.
- Ask and use the name and pronouns the survivor wants you to use.
- Don't out a person without their permission.
- Use gender-neutral language.

# Respectful Communications, cont.

- Don't ask about anatomy.
- Don't assume LGBTQ survivors are (or are not) willing to discuss gender identity or sexual orientation.
- If you make a mistake, acknowledge it, apologize, and move on.
- Do not use harmful terms.

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# How To Identify Appropriate Referrals

- Review organizational materials.
- Ask about policies.
- Vet referrals with marginalized communities.
- Follow up with referred survivors (with permission).



# How Can Organizations Begin to Transform Access?

- Conduct an organizational assessment.
- Consult with community stakeholders.
- Identify service gaps in your area.
- Build community relationships.





# Organizational Improvements

- Create and make visible non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Mentor, hire, and retain LGBTQ and other marginalized providers and staff.
- Have staff use gender inclusive terms.



# Organizational Improvements, cont.

- Revise paperwork to allow for pronouns and multiple names.
- Include photos of non-binary and LGBTQ people in outreach materials.
- Have an LGBTQ-friendly resource referral list.



# What's “SOGIE”?

## Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression



# SOGIE Questions: Should You Ask?



1. Are you ready?
2. Is it appropriate?
3. Does it help the survivor?

# SOGIE Questions: What to Ask?

1. SOGIE: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression
2. Three questions: Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Trans Status
3. Gender: Male, Female, Nonbinary, Other
4. Sexual Orientation: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Other
5. Trans Status: Transgender, Cisgender, Other

# SOGIE Questions: How to Ask?

1. Be Transparent
2. Be Humble
3. Try a Script
4. Keep Trying!





# SOGIE Scripts

“Now I’m going to ask you some questions about sexual orientation and gender identity. This information helps us understand our participants’ needs and who we are reaching. These questions are optional—you can tell me you don’t want to answer them. I ask everyone these questions and I’m not allowed to guess.

What is your gender?

Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

What is your sexual orientation?”

# How to Refer a Survivor to the VRLC

**Phone:** (503) 274-5477 Legal assistance intake line: x6

## **Live intake hours:**

- Mon. 11:00 am - 1:00 pm (English and Español)
- Tues. 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Statewide Info Line for Trans Survivors)
- Wed. 2:00 - 4:00 pm (English and Español)
- Fri. 9:00 - 11:00 am

**Statewide Trans ID Project: 503-274-5477 ext. 5**

# Learn More

- FORGE: [Is Your Agency Ready to Serve transgender and Non-Binary Clients?](#) (an in-depth self-assessment tool)
- FORGE Webinar: [Part of the Solution: Gender-Integrated Sexual Assault Support Groups](#)
- GLAAD: [Media Reference Guide](#) (a good starting point for talking about LGBTQ identity and issues)
- Human Rights Campaign [SOGIE Data Collection Guide](#)
- NCAVP and FORGE webinar: [VAWA Non-Discrimination Conditions: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#)



# Resources

- Asexuality Visibility and Education Network

<https://www.asexuality.org/>

- Demonstrate Access: <https://www.demonstrateaccess.org/>

- FORGE: <https://forge-forward.org/>

- GLAAD: <https://www.glaad.org/>

- InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth: <https://interactadvocates.org/>

- National Coalition of Antiviolence Programs: <https://avp.org/ncavp/>

- The Network/La Red: <https://tnlr.org/en/>

# References

- [2015 US Trans Survey](#)
- [National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation](#)