

A Toolkit for Service Providers

Gender-Based Violence in 2SLGBTQ+ Communities

2SLGBTQ+ people are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence (GBV), experience distinct forms of GBV, and often face additional barriers when reaching out for support related to GBV. **Transphobia, homophobia, and biphobia** are structural forms of GBV that 2SLGBTQ+ communities navigate every day in their public and private lives. 2SLGBTQ+ communities face **family violence, street harassment, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and lateral violence** and experience GBV in ways that cisgender and heterosexual people do not. For example, 2SLGBTQ+ GBV can involve experiences of:

- “Corrective” sexual violence
- Outing or threats to out survivors’ sexual orientation or gender identity
- Threats of ostracization from the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- Portrayals of GBV as mutual and even consensual
- Withholding of gender-affirming gear, hormones, and surgery
- Verbal abuse related to someone’s gender identity, sexuality, or sex characteristics

84%
of trans people
in Canada avoid
public spaces

64%
of trans and non-
binary youth experience
sexual harassment

63%
of bisexual girls
and women experience
physical or sexual
assault

25%
of 2SLGBTQ+
youth don’t feel safe
at home



Critical Intersections

GBV disproportionately impacts 2SLGBTQ+ people who are transfeminine, Black, Indigenous and racialized, newcomers and refugees, disabled, homeless, and involved in sex work.

One in three racialized trans and non-binary people were sexually assaulted in the past five years

72% of trans and non-binary newcomers experienced verbal harassment in the past five years

56% of trans women have had a partner that insulted, swore, shouted, or yelled at them

33% of trans women have been forced or pressured to engage in sexual activity when they did not want to

Barriers to Accessing and Benefiting from GBV Services

Gendered Spaces and Limited 2SLGBTQ+ GBV Competency: Most GBV services are highly gendered, and there's a lack of 2SLGBTQ+ service providers and 2SLGBTQ+ competent care.

Violence and Discrimination when Accessing GBV Services: 2SLGBTQ+ people face homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, including TERF rhetoric, when trying to access GBV services, along with racism, xenophobia, ableism, and other forms of discrimination.

Violence and Harm from Police, Border Security, and Child Protection: 2SLGBTQ+ people face risks of further violence, incarceration, and deportation if they access services that collaborate with the state.

Financial and Logistical Barriers: Costs, transportation, language barriers, ID requirements, requirements for parental consent, and lack of privacy to access online services are common barriers that 2SLGBTQ+ people face in trying to access services.



Promising Practices

Learning from the grassroots

“Peer support is what it’s all about. Survivors are talking to their friends and family members - not calling up a psychiatrist.”

- 2SLGBTQ+ survivors, particularly QTBIPOC, refugees and newcomers, and trans people, predominantly often turn to friends, community, and mutual aid for emotional support, informal safety planning, housing alternatives, financial resources, and spiritual healing.
- Some 2SLGBTQ+ communities are running self-organized violence prevention initiatives, such as community meal deliveries, street medic teams, and police watches and interventions.

Nothing about us without us

“I would love to see a mobilization of the peer support [that] is already happening and compensating the people involved. I would love to see funding for those who are already doing the work in the community so that work can continue to be formalized in a way that will grow and maintain capacity.”

- Without **dedicated interventions** by and for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors, 2SLGBTQ+ communities will continue to rely on peer-based and informal networks. These networks are essential to community health and well-being, but volunteer-based efforts are insufficient to address the breadth and depth of GBV towards 2SLGBTQ+ people.
- WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre and OUTSaskatoon are two strong examples of organizations offering 2SLGBTQ+ specific GBV services by and for the community. Their programs include **counseling services, hospital, police and court accompaniment, peer support programming, and training for service providers.**

Relationship building and trust building

“The pandemic really forced us to slow down and root us in decolonial processes, [building] relationships and trust before we do the work. The sense of urgency is a massive issue.”

- There are some individual relationships between service providers across sectors, but organizations largely operate in the silos of their sectors. Focusing on **relationships, trust building, and accountability** has supported some organizations to collaborate and do their work in safer, more effective, accountable, and sustainable ways.
- Through **communities of practice, planning tables, trust-building opportunities, and joint funding submissions**, 2SLGBTQ+ and GBV organizations can begin to build trust and share their respective expertise, while increasing their collective capacity to serve 2SLGBTQ+ survivors.

5 Tips for Organizational Action to Address GBV Against 2SLGBTQ+ People

This tip-sheet features recommendations for feminist and GBV organizations to strengthen intersectional, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive approaches to GBV.

Tip 1: Strengthening Relationships with Local 2SLGBTQ+ Organizations

Gender justice is, and always will be, interwoven with justice for 2SLGBTQ+ people. By strengthening accountability, trust, and relationships with 2SLGBTQ+ community leaders and organizations, feminist and GBV organizations can build capacities together. Strong partnerships with local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations enable the development of targeted initiatives, building the capacity of 2SLGBTQ+ organizations to combat GBV and the capacity of feminist and GBV organizations to address GBV through a 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive lens.

Tip 2: Engage 2SLGBTQ+ Communities in Program Design and Implementation

If 2SLGBTQ+ people aren't engaged in ideation, co-creation, implementation and evaluation, programs and services will continue to omit queer and trans people, and fail to respond to our unique experiences and needs. Through the engagement of 2SLGBTQ+ people in program design and implementation, organizations can ensure a robust 2SLGBTQ+ lens is consistently applied. Through advisory committees, partnership tables, and 2SLGBTQ+-inclusive hiring practices, GBV and feminist organizations can ensure programs reflect and respond to queer and trans communities from the outset.

Tip 3: Advance 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion Through Sustained Training, Mentorship, and Policy Review

While feminist and GBV organizations have long served 2SLGBTQ+ communities, many providers lack the necessary knowledge, tools and competencies to effectively serve 2SLGBTQ+ service users, resulting in poor experiences at times when 2SLGBTQ+ people are at their most vulnerable. Rather than ad-hoc inclusion workshops, GBV organizations should undertake a dedicated review of organizational culture, policies, and procedures, and implement ongoing in-depth training on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion.

Tip 4: Recognize and Respond to the Intersectional Impacts of GBV on QTBIPOC and Marginalized Queer and Trans Communities

Mainstream GBV organizations often think about 2SLGBTQ+ issues through a lens of whiteness, though GBV disproportionately impacts queer and trans Black, Indigenous and racialized people. Tackling homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia cannot be separated from tackling anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, misogynoir, and xenophobia. 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion must be approached with decolonial and anti-racist groundings and action. Instead of siloing 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion into a series of small practice changes, organizations must deepen their understandings of the relationships between colonialism, white supremacy, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, and respond to the intersectional needs of queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and racialized people, newcomers, immigrants, and sex workers.

Tip 5: Condemn Anti-2SLGBTQ+ Hate and Amplify 2SLGBTQ+ Advocacy

GBV against 2SLGBTQ+ communities is upheld and reinforced by broader colonial, anti-trans anti-2SLGBTQ+, misogynistic, and racist norms and rhetoric. GBV organizations can support 2SLGBTQ+ people impacted by GBV by condemning anti-2SLGBTQ+ hate, confronting anti-2SLGBTQ+ dog-whistles, and amplifying calls to action, advocacy and recommendations from 2SLGBTQ+ organizations and activists. Through solidarity efforts, 2SLGBTQ+, feminist and GBV organizations can work together to address the root causes of GBV, confront hate, and advance inclusion.

5 Tips for GBV Service Providers on Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ People Impacted by GBV

The following tips are intended to support service providers to advance 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and competence within their practices and services for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals impacted by GBV.

Tip 1: Problematize Cisnormative and Heteronormative Understandings of GBV

GBV is often understood through a white, cisgender, straight, middle class archetype of the, “helpless, battered woman and the abusive man who seeks to control his wife.” (Fraser, J.A. [2014]. Claims-Making in Context: Forty Years of Canadian Feminist Activism on Violence Against Women. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Ottawa.) This narrow lens makes it difficult to recognize GBV against 2SLGBTQ+ people and meet the unique needs of 2SLGBTQ+ people impacted by GBV. Service providers can problematize cisnormative and heteronormative approaches to GBV by challenging their own assumptions, validating GBV that looks different than the archetype, and learning more about how gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, ability, class, and more impact experiences of GBV.

Tip 2: Adjust Your Practice and Approach through a Queer and Trans Lens

Understanding and respecting gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, harm reduction, non-traditional family structures, non-monogamy and polyamory, queer sex and kink, as well as trauma related to gender and sexuality are a part of 2SLGBTQ+ competent care. Respecting pronouns, challenging assumptions about individuals' gender identities or gender expressions, utilizing gender-neutral language can be introduced into service providers' approaches to ensure 2SLGBTQ+ clients experience a safer and inclusive care experience.

Tip 3: Practice Harm Reduction for 2SLGBTQ+ Safety and Wellness

2SLGBTQ+ people, particularly QTBIPOC, transfeminine and gender non-conforming 2SLGBTQ+ people, face GBV in distinct ways. Service providers can support 2SLGBTQ+ individuals to proactively plan for their safety and develop strategies to maintain their mental health and cope with ongoing experiences of public GBV. As well, service providers can practice harm reduction in their duty to report to reduce the harm 2SLGBTQ+ people and their families may face from police, child protection, and border security.

Tip 4: Intervene in Instances of Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

Be it within your own team, between service users, or when dealing with a partner or external stakeholder, service providers can intervene in instances of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Microaggressions (such as misgendering or deadnaming of trans people) or macro-aggressions (such as instances of violence within a shelter space) often ignored or escalated by service providers. By correcting your colleagues if they make a discriminatory comment or joke, and prioritizing the safety of 2SLGBTQ+ you contribute to a more inclusive workplace culture and normalize 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion.

Tip 5: Advocate for 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion Internally

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ people impacted by GBV takes more than an individual approach. While individuals can make an immense impact in the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ clients, an organization-wide approach is necessary to ensure consistent positive experiences and outcomes for 2SLGBTQ+ service users. Service providers can advocate within their organizations to advance inclusive practices, encourage inclusion training, or review policies from a 2SLGBTQ+-inclusive lens. Internal champions are foundational to advancing 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and ensuring an approach to GBV prevention and intervention that reflects the needs and experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ people.