

The California Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
Domestic Violence in 2000

L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
LGBT Domestic Violence in California in 2000.....	2
Local California Summaries.....	11
Q & A with LGBT Clients Impacted by Domestic Violence.....	15
Recommendations for the State of California.....	20
About the Authors.....	24

Introduction

It is estimated that domestic violence in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities occurs with as much frequency and severity as in the heterosexual community. In fact, experts believe that domestic violence is one of the largest health problems in the LGBT community. However, there are barely more than a handful of organizations in the United States that are equipped to address the multiple and complex needs of LGBT persons impacted by domestic violence.

The LGBT community is highly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, age, language, religion, political affiliation, education, physical ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. These factors, in combination with anti-LGBT bias and prejudice coupled with domestic violence, often produce insurmountable obstacles for LGBT individuals throughout the help-seeking and healing process.

Like heterosexual battering, LGBT domestic violence will increase in severity and frequency without effective intervention. Without an understanding of the unique dynamics and challenges of LGBT battering, intervention is not only ineffective but dangerous and potentially life-threatening. There is a crucial need for appropriate services that include prevention-based intervention programs that are LGBT sensitive and specific as well as an opportunity for service providers to be inclusive in their efforts so that all Californians will have access to the help they so desperately need.

Although such work has begun in California's largest urban areas, there is still much work to be done in the mainstream domestic violence field as well as in California's LGBT communities. We are in a race against time with far too few running the race. Until this race is won, no Californian – regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity – will be free from the threat of domestic violence.

~Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Domestic Violence in California in 2000 ~ by Patrick Letellier

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic violence is not a new phenomenon. Rather, it's an old phenomenon getting some new attention.

In California in 2000, that attention took a variety of forms, namely:

- ~ an effective community-wide educational campaign drawing attention to the problem and telling people where to turn for help;
- ~ enhanced client screening for domestic violence at a large, urban, mental health clinic;
- ~ an in-depth study of violence in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth, including violence in their intimate relationships;
- ~ a comprehensive service provider needs assessment identifying dangerous gaps in service;
- ~ increased collaboration between LGBT specific domestic violence service providers and traditional domestic violence service providers working primarily with battered heterosexual women.

As a result of these developments, reported incidents of domestic violence from LGBT people in California jumped dramatically in 2000. In addition, advocates and policy makers now have data to help inform domestic violence services for some of the LGBT community's most vulnerable members – its' youth – as well as valuable information that will inform planning to reduce service gaps affecting the highly diverse LGBT community as a whole.

An important distinction needs to be made: while *reported incidents* of LGBT battering increased dramatically in 2000, the *prevalence of abuse* in same-gender relationships did not necessarily increase at all. In fact, actual rates of abuse are likely unchanged, with domestic violence affecting approximately 20-25% of all same-gender couples, as it does in opposite-gender couples^{1,2}.

^{1,2} Merrill, G.S., and Wolfe, V.A. Battered gay men: An exploration of abuse, help seeking, and why they stay. *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 39 (2), 2000.

Renzetti, Claire. *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships*. New York: Sage Publications, 1992.

It is also important to recognize that the increases tabulated in California during the 2000 calendar year still represent only a small fraction of the cases of LGBT domestic abuse. Only 5 agencies in California specifically address the problem of LGBT battering; only about 20 agencies do so in the other 49 states. The fact is, if you are a victim of LGBT battering in America, you are not likely to find the help you need.

Like all survivors of domestic violence, LGBT people face enormous barriers in getting help from law enforcement, the medical system, and from traditional battered women's services and related social service providers. But the additional burdens of homophobia and heterosexism make help seeking even more tenuous for LGBT people, leaving them isolated and more vulnerable to their partner's violence. As one example, since police officers were perpetrators in almost half (48%) of the incidents of anti-transgender violence in San Francisco last year³, transgender people are not likely to seek police protection from an abusive partner.

Reported incidents of LGBT battering increased dramatically in California in 2000, with a total of 2,837 incidents reported - an increase of 740 incidents over 1999.

Significantly, all of the additional incidents in California were tallied in Los Angeles, which saw a startling 58% increase in incidents with 2,146 incidents reported - an increase of 790 over the previous year. Even though San Francisco saw a slight drop in incidents in 2000, down to 691 from 741 in 1999, the state as a whole still saw a huge increase.

California's total of 2,837 reported incidents accounts for 70% of the national total, putting California far ahead of any other state in reports of LGBT battering. Only three other cities - all outside California - reported over 100 incidents of abuse in 2000: New York reported 510, Boston reported 397, and Chicago reported 109.

With over 30 million people, California is the nation's most populous state, and it is home to two of the nation's largest and most visible LGBT communities - in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Even so, the high number of LGBT domestic violence incidents reported in California last year points to several factors beyond simple demographics.

³ Anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Violence in 2000. Report published by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects, April 2001.

~Media Campaign Helps Increase Awareness – and Client Load~

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center is home to the broadest array of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender services anywhere and is the world's largest gay and lesbian organization. The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center is a powerful, non-profit force for gay and lesbian rights and home to a wide array of free or low cost legal, employment, educational, cultural and social programs for the LGBT community. A leader in the field of LGBT domestic violence, the L.A. Center conducted one of the first studies ever done on the subject of LGBT domestic violence.

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/ Domestic Violence Program is the most comprehensive LGBT-specific domestic violence program in the nation and provides multiple services for members of the LGBT community and their children including survivors' groups; a court approved batterers' intervention program; youth groups; crisis counseling; short term and ongoing individual counseling; partner abuse prevention groups & workshops; referral to LGBT sensitive shelters; referral to LGBT specific and sensitive legal services; advocacy with law enforcement/criminal justice personnel and agencies/service providers and others; specialized assessment; LGBT domestic violence training, education and consultation; and prevention services for those at risk.

In July of 2000, the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program received a \$450,000 grant from the California Department of Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Branch, to expand its prevention services and make domestic violence prevention education more available throughout Southern California.

More specifically, the grant in part funded a public information poster campaign that alerted people to the phenomenon of same-gender battering and told them where to turn for help. The campaign's eye-catching posters and "There's No Excuse for Partner Abuse" stickers were displayed in LGBT bars, coffee shops, and bookstores, distributed to domestic violence service agencies throughout Southern California, and reprinted in the mainstream and gay press with stories about same-gender abuse. A large part of the increase in California's reports of LGBT battering can therefore be attributed to the effectiveness of this campaign and related outreach efforts.

The Department of Health Services grant also funded LGBT-specific trainings for domestic violence service providers throughout Southern California as well as three full-time staff, all to insure that when LGBT survivors turned to social services for support, they would be appropriately identified and treated with understanding and compassion. As a result of this systematic training and outreach, referrals from battered women's service agencies and related organizations to the STOP Domestic Violence Program increased dramatically over the year.

A second factor contributing to California's lead in reports of LGBT battering is that the STOP Program also expanded its screening of all clients who came to the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center for mental health services. Additional questions were added to the existing domestic violence assessment, thereby enabling clinicians to more readily identify and intervene with all clients at risk for partner abuse. Given the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's multiple and varied programming including family support, counseling, HIV services, anger management, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, etc., a wide array of clients were seeking help from the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center but not necessarily with domestic violence as their presenting problem.

Research on domestic violence clearly indicates that when patients in medical settings are asked about domestic violence in an empathetic and non-judgmental manner, they are likely to respond truthfully⁵. Clients of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center were no exception: an astounding 65% of the mental health clients were assessed to be experiencing domestic violence or at risk for it. As a result, STOP Program staff were able to provide information and counseling for many additional clients.

~Little Help Available for Battered LGBT People~

In an effort to determine what help is actually available to LGBT people affected by domestic violence in Southern California, the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center collaborated with the L.A. County Domestic Violence Council and City of West Hollywood on a survey of 1000 social service agencies and domestic violence organizations throughout Los Angeles County.

This survey – the first of its kind - included questions about staff training on LGBT battering, organizational policies and procedure on LGBT issues, the

⁵ Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs, American Medical Association. Physicians and domestic violence: Ethical Considerations. Journal of the American Medical Association. 1992; 267:3190-3193.

agency's published materials, how they screen victims and batterers, and other salient issues.

Not surprisingly, the responses are disheartening. Only 41 agencies responded to the survey at all (a 4% response rate), and many of those submitted incomplete responses. The vast majority (73%) of the responding agencies neither mention LGBT people in their printed materials, nor address LGBT issues in their policies and procedures. Most do not use LGBT-specific language when screening new clients, and many do not train staff about LGBT domestic violence. In short, the majority do not attempt to serve LGBT people at all, not to mention serve a population as challenging as LGBT survivors of domestic violence.

What does this mean? It means, for instance, that when a battered lesbian reads a brochure from a local domestic violence service agency, she will most likely read only about women battered by men and will assume the agency does not help lesbians. If she calls their hotline anyway, she is likely to speak to a counselor who has had no training on lesbian battering and will ask what her "husband or boyfriend" has done to her.

If she comes out as a lesbian, the counselor is not likely to be able to talk in any depth about lesbian battering or to make referrals to LGBT-sensitive services. The counselor may inappropriately identify the caller as a perpetrator of abuse, and make it more difficult for her to get proper victim services in the future because she has been labeled a batterer by "the system."

The counselor may also be explicitly homophobic and hostile, contributing to the caller's isolation and confusion. Like many others lesbians who seek help from domestic violence services, this woman is not likely to call again, and may be deterred from seeking help from other sources despite escalating violence from her partner^{6,7}.

While there is clearly a dearth of services available for LGBT people affected by domestic violence, the vast majority of survey respondents (78%) expressed a desire for trainings on the topic, for information about resources, referrals, and for staff support to better identify and help LGBT people.

^{6,7} Renzetti, Claire. *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships*. New York: Sage Publications, 1992. For a discussion of the barriers gay and bisexual men face in receiving help from domestic violence services, see also Merrill, G.S., and Wolfe, V.A. Battered gay men: An exploration of abuse, help seeking, and why they stay. *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 39 (2), 2000.

In an effort to meet this need, the STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program increased efforts to expand the activities of the LGBT Issues Committee of the L.A. County Domestic Violence Council. The Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Council was chartered in 1979 and was the first joint government-private sector domestic violence program in California to launch a comprehensive approach to family violence.

The Council's LGBT Issues Committee is a dynamic committee comprised of representatives from numerous domestic violence organizations who are committed to creating greater visibility and public awareness about LGBT domestic violence. Chaired by staff of the STOP Program and the City of West Hollywood, the committee is one of the Council's largest and most active committees. The committee studies the problem of LGBT domestic violence in Los Angeles and makes recommendations and develops activities that support the coordination, education, public information, training, legislation, services and programs.

~Improving Services to People of Color and Transgender Survivors~

Directing our attention to Northern California, a third factor contributing to the high number of reports is that San Francisco is home to the oldest LGBT anti-violence organization in the country, Community United Against Violence (CUAV), which has taken a leadership role nationwide in responding to same-gender battering. Along with its' two collaborating agencies (discussed below), CUAV has consistently served high numbers of LGBT domestic violence survivors.

In the past five years, CUAV has shifted its focus to become an increasingly progressive, multi-racial organization with a commitment to a wide range of social justice issues. As such, it has been able to expand its' client base to include many more people of color and transgender people, including survivors of domestic violence.

San Francisco is also home to the Asian Women's Shelter (AWS), a battered women's shelter that has had a Queer Asian Women's Services program for 10 years and has done significant community organizing among LBT Asian Pacific Islander women.

CUAV and AWS also collaborate with W.O.M.A.N., Inc., a San Francisco domestic violence service agency with a strong Lesbian, Bisexual,

Transgender Anti-Domestic Violence Program that has done groundbreaking work with battered lesbians and their children.

Together, these three agencies have increased their language capacities through a program developed by AWS called the Multilingual Access Model. This model provides a bank of multi-lingual advocates and translators who have been trained in domestic violence, allowing survivors who speak languages other than English to work with domestic violence victim advocates in their native language. Due in large part to this language program, San Francisco reported the highest number of cases from Asian Pacific Island and multi-racial domestic violence survivors in the nation.

San Francisco also leads the nation in reporting incidents of domestic violence among transgender people. While just 3% of the incidents nationwide were from transgender people, 15% of the cases in San Francisco (52 incidents) were from transgender people.

Transgender survivors of domestic abuse represent one of the LGBT community's most under-served populations. Transgender survivors report harassment and abuse that starts with their abusive partners, and often continues when the survivors contact police officers, health care professionals, traditional domestic violence service agencies, and even LGB organizations. This combination of domestic violence and transphobia can prevent even the most determined survivor from accessing help.

The high number of transgender reports in San Francisco may be in part because the Bay Area has a large, organized, and politically savvy transgender community. In addition, one of the City's most visible transgender activist groups, TransAction, is based at CUAV and has taken the lead in challenging the high levels of police brutality against the transgender community. CUAV also has transgender volunteers, Board and staff members, including the Director of Domestic Violence Services, and is striving to be a safe haven for transgender survivors of violence and for the transgender community as a whole.

This underscores the importance of transgender visibility in providing services to survivors of domestic violence. Transgender issues must be incorporated into all training programs, literature, grant proposals, and referral lists, and transgender volunteers, staff, and Board members must be an integral part of all domestic violence service agencies. This is the only way we as a community will be able to respond effectively to the needs of transgender people who are abused by their partners.

~Domestic Abuse Among LGBT Youth~

Community United Against Violence and the Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center conducted a “Queer Youth Relationship Violence” research project in 2000, examining violence in the lives of LGBT and queer and questioning youth (between the ages of 14 and 24) through a survey and a series of focus groups. Called the “Love and Justice Project,” it is the first systematic examination of the experiences and needs of queer youth regarding violence in their families of origin and in romantic relationships⁸.

A startling 49% of the participants reported “feeling abused” in their intimate relationships, while 25% reported having been abusive to an intimate partner. While the term “abuse” was not defined in the survey, and is therefore open to interpretation, the data nonetheless point to high levels of domestic violence among queer youth.

The survey also revealed a fairly closeted - and therefore isolated - population, with the vast majority of the youths not “out” to their families (71%), their friends (59%), at school (81%), or their workplace (88%). Such high levels of isolation can contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence: survivors who have no access to help or support are likely to stay with their abusive partners longer, and domestic violence increases in frequency and severity over time⁹.

Compounding the problem, approximately 90% of the youth reported not feeling comfortable talking with school counselors, teachers, therapists, or hotlines – that is, many of the people who might be able to help identify domestic violence and advocate for the health and safety of survivors.

⁸ Tham, Kar Yin. Love and Justice: Queer Youth Relationship Violence, A Needs Assessment Report. Published by Community United Against Violence and Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center, September, 2000.

⁹ Walker, Lenore E. The Battered Woman Syndrome. New York: Springer Publishing, 1984.

Clearly, the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center in Los Angeles and Community United Against Violence in San Francisco have led the nation in efforts to draw awareness to, and increase understanding of, the invisible epidemic of LGBT domestic violence. Nevertheless, much work is still to be done until LGBT victims of domestic violence and the service providers who help them have the information and resources they need to reduce – and ultimately prevent – domestic violence in this dangerously underserved community.

Local California Summaries

from the

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Domestic Violence in 2000 report (published by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 7/01)

Los Angeles, CA

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP (Support, Treatment/Intervention, Outreach/Education & Prevention) Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program serves lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and offers a broad range of services including survivors' groups; a court-approved batterers' intervention program; crisis intervention; short-term and ongoing counseling; prevention groups and workshops; criminal justice advocacy; specialized assessment; LGBT domestic violence training, education and consultation; and prevention services for those at risk.

Reported cases of LGBT domestic violence in Los Angeles increased from 1,356 in 1999 to 2,146 in 2000. 95% of these cases were reported to, assessed by, or brought to the attention of the STOP Program, the Mental Health Services Department, the Anti-Violence Project or the Youth Services Department of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center. In fact, 62% of all clients seen by the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's Mental Health Services Department reported or were assessed with domestic violence. The remaining 5% of 2000's total number of cases were reported to organizations in Los Angeles other than the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center that track and maintain information about the number of LGBT clients that they serve. Since 1996, the STOP Program has seen a consistent increase in the number of persons who report domestic violence or who are assessed with it. While that increase has been attributable to progressively expanded domestic violence programming by the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, the most recent increase is due in large part to funding for domestic violence prevention activities from the California Department of Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Branch. With receipt of this funding beginning in July 2000, the STOP Program was able to hire staff for its prevention activities and subsequently increased its outreach and community education efforts, in addition to expanding collaborative efforts with other Southern California service providers.

The STOP Program has developed and maintains strong collaborative relationships with the L.A. County Domestic Violence Council, the West Hollywood Partner Abuse Education Task Force, the Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women, the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Greater Long Beach and numerous other organizations devoted to preventing and addressing domestic violence in California. As a result, the number of service providers that requested and received training about LGBT domestic violence increased in 2000, and there was a broader distribution of LGBT-specific domestic violence prevention materials throughout L.A. County and Southern California. Also, the number of regional domestic violence programs and service organizations that track LGBT cases more than doubled from 2% in 1999 to 5% in 2000, but the vast majority of domestic violence organizations still did not track or differentiate LGBT client data.

While the courts in California have slowly begun to standardize batterers' treatment as well as the participation and attendance of batterers in court approved programs regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, criminal justice personnel continued to inadequately assess LGBT cases and failed to apply consistently equal standards throughout 2000. As in 1999, the STOP Program saw an increase in the number of LGBT persons mandated to batterers' treatment in 2000. And because of the unavailability of LGBT-specific batterers' intervention programs and the acute need for them, the STOP Program became one of the largest batterers' intervention programs in Los Angeles County, where there are 140 other court-approved programs designed primarily for the heterosexual population. In addition to the increase in court-mandated numbers, the STOP Program also saw an increase in the number of primary LGBT victims mandated to batterers' treatment.

The highest number of cases were reported in January and November of 2000. While it is possible that the number of incidents increased in conjunction with Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, it is probable that the increases were attributable to increased outreach by the STOP Program during the preceding months. The Stop Program increased its outreach and education activities in October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month and hosted a press conference in December entitled "Holidays Free from Family Violence" in collaboration with the L.A. County Domestic Violence Council. Participants in the press conference included West Hollywood's Mayor, representation from Senator Sheila Kuehl's office, and L.A.'s newly elected District Attorney in his first public appearance following the election.

San Francisco, CA

San Francisco reported 691 cases of LGBT domestic violence in 2000. These findings were gathered through a collaboration between three agencies, Queer Asian Women's Services of the Asian Women's Shelter; the Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Anti-Domestic Violence Program of W.O.M.A.N., Inc.; and Community United Against Violence. There were 434 reports from female survivors, 204 reported incidents from male survivors, and 52 cases involving transgender survivors. The three collaborating agencies each made inroads in services available to LGBT survivors. Asian Women's Shelter created a new program that trains friends of survivors in domestic violence education. Friends are often the first line of support for members of their communities experiencing partner abuse. Building upon 1999 outreach to provide advocacy and support to the deaf and hearing-impaired communities, W.O.M.A.N., Inc. initiated a TTY support line.

CUAV strengthened its ongoing efforts to provide services to the most underserved groups within the LGBT community, providing advocacy, emotional support, emergency housing and courtroom accompaniment to increased numbers of survivors from communities of color and the transgender community. The bulk of the cases, 438 out of 691, were reported by lesbians and gay men (63%). There were 100 documented cases from bisexual survivors (15% of the total), and 80 cases involving heterosexual survivors (12% of the total). There were also significant increases in Latina/Latino survivors (+30% or 86 cases) and multiracial survivors, with 25 incidents reported, up from 14 in 1999. Survivors from communities of color, as well as transgender individuals, often face discriminatory barriers every step of the way when seeking help. In San Francisco, this problem is being addressed with culturally appropriate and sensitive services available at each of the reporting agencies. In 2000, monolingual survivors could access a language bank of multilingual advocates and translators trained in domestic violence through Asian Women's Shelter's Multilingual Access Model. Community United Against Violence has dedicated Spanish-speaking staff, which are also bi-cultural. Also at CUAV, transgender survivors can work directly with a trans advocate. W.O.M.A.N., Inc. began work on the overlooked population of children who witness domestic violence in LGBT families. Statistics on LGBT domestic violence reported by the three agencies represent only a small number of actual cases, and as in heterosexual relationships, LGBT domestic violence occurs in approximately 20 to 25% of all couples. Even in San Francisco, there is a long way to go to meet the demands posed by this problem. Community need still exceeds available resources, especially in providing survivors with emergency housing and shelter.

Currently this is provided through a network of limited hotel vouchers. There is still no fixed shelter or transitional housing specifically designed for San Francisco's LGBT community; consequently, most battered LGBT individuals are more likely to remain with their abusers longer and be at even greater risk for injury.

Note: Data for the 2000 calendar year is compiled and published by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs in the subsequent year.

Q & A with LGBT Clients Impacted by Domestic Violence

Q: What brought you to the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program?

Kevin: I was arrested following a fight with my boyfriend. Rick and I were together for two years, and after being beaten several times by him, I fought back. Rick called the police and I was arrested, incarcerated, and mandated by the court to attend a batterer's group.

Ashley: I was attempting to defend myself when my girlfriend, Rose, sat on me then hit me in the face and head. Our neighbors called the police. I guess they arrested me because I'm bigger than she is and had fewer physical marks.

Karen: My partner, Julie, and I were having problems so we came to the Center for couple counseling. I had a difficult time at first convincing Julie to accompany me but she finally agreed. The counselor that we saw together at the Center explained that couple counseling could make our situation worse and recommended individual counseling.

Jennifer: My HIV case manager suggested that I talk to a domestic violence specialist because I kept coming to my appointments with bruises on my body.

Mike: I moved across the country in an attempt to escape my abusive partner. I was frightened that he'd kill me.

Cheryl: I'm trying to put my life back together after being sheltered. My former partner abused me the entire time that we were together. We saw several counselors and they all insisted that we were both responsible for the problems in our relationship. A friend suggested that I go into a shelter after I was hospitalized following an especially abusive incident with my partner.

Q: Did you know that you were experiencing domestic violence?

Kevin: No, I didn't. When Rick and I partied together, he was often aggressive with me. At first it was confusing but I assumed that it was because of the drugs. Eventually, when he began pushing and hitting me when we were sober, I began to think that it had something to do with me. No matter how hard I tried, nothing changed. I never experienced violence in my family or in any of my previous relationships, so I really didn't know what to make of it. Besides, I'm larger than Rick so it didn't occur to me that it was "domestic violence". I could have fought back if I felt like it...I just didn't want to hurt him.

Ashley: Not really. Rose and I both have tempers. I grew up with a lot of fighting as well. I have four siblings and had to learn how to stand up for myself.

Karen: Somewhere in my mind I did because my ex boyfriend was arrested for domestic violence and some of it felt similar. I filed a restraining order against him and even went into a shelter for a few weeks. It was just different this time because my partner was female. I just couldn't believe it was "domestic violence."

Jennifer: Not at all. I was beaten repeatedly by many of my boyfriends. Violence just seemed to be part of life.

Mike: For the most part I did. I grew up with domestic violence. My mother was battered by my father and my situation was similar in many ways to that.

Cheryl: Not really. No one ever called it that. Everyone I talked to called it a "relationship problem", "communication difficulties", or "codependence." One person told me that I was attracted to abusive partners.

Q: Did you try to get help before coming to the Center?

Kevin: A friend of mine suggested that I call a shelter. I called a hotline at a shelter but they weren't very helpful. I guess it was because I'm male. The hotline counselor treated me like I was an abuser. When she asked me about my wife, I hung up on her.

Ashley: I never thought that we needed any help. I just thought we were under a lot of stress. We blew off steam by yelling at one another.

Karen: Someone at work gave me a brochure about LGBT domestic violence.

Jennifer: I wanted help but there aren't many places for women like me. When my case manager told me that I could get help from people who understood me, I decided to try it.

Mike: I tried but there were no services for gay male victims of domestic violence within 700 miles of where I lived.

Cheryl: I worked with several counselors and was in a domestic violence shelter as well.

Q: Were the police involved? If so, were they helpful?

Kevin: I actually called the police twice. The first time, the officer told us, "You boys need to play nice." They had Rick leave but he came back drunk several hours later and was more abusive than he had been earlier. The second time, they told us that they would arrest both of us if they had to come back again. That really frightened me so I tried to handle it on my own.

Ashley: I was treated badly. The officers kept saying that they had heard it all before. Every time I tried to speak they told me to be quiet and "save it for a judge." Jail was even worse. Processing took seven hours then I sat in a cell for another eight hours before anyone even acknowledged me.

Karen: I haven't had any contact with the police while in this relationship. Julie and I are still together and trying to work things out.

Jennifer: It seemed safer not to call them. I was afraid that the police would harass and arrest me just for being transgender. I have friends who have been jailed without their HIV medications. That terrifies me.

Mike: I called the police once but they refused to respond. The officer that I talked to kept asking if a female was in danger.

Cheryl: No, the police were not involved.

Q: Was the court involved? If so, was the court helpful?

Kevin: I could tell that my public defender was uncomfortable with me because I'm gay. He wouldn't listen to me or look at me. I kept telling him that I was defending myself but he insisted on a plea bargain. I spent 5 days in jail really wanted to get out, so I plead "no contest." I was charged with a felony but advised that it would be reduced to a misdemeanor if I plead guilty. I took the deal so now I have to attend a batterers' group for a year, pay a fine and complete 200 hours of freeway cleanup. It isn't fair but it's better than jail.

Ashley: The judge said that I had a choice of jail or counseling. I was really upset because I felt that Rose should have been arrested too. Now, everytime that we have an argument, Rose insists that I'm to blame because I was arrested. She's threatened to call the police if I don't do what she tells me to do.

Karen: I don't feel that I need help from the court. Even if I did, its hard for me to believe that I could get a restraining order against another woman.

Jennifer: I've been to court in the past and the judges have not been very kind. They call me by my birth name instead of my chosen female name. They also call me "sir" and "son". Its humiliating.

Mike: The court has not been involved with my case.

Cheryl: I never wanted the court to be involved because I'm a lesbian. I'm afraid that I have too much to lose.

Q: Have the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's services been helpful?

Kevin: The judge referred me to the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center. The group I'm in is for people in similar situations. All of the guys in the group fought back and got caught. I prefer the term "survivor" rather than "victim" but I guess that's what I am. We're learning how to stay safe and we all support each other.

Ashley: I still think that Rose needs counseling as well but I've gotten some positive things from it. I'm doing my best to move beyond the whole incident. I don't fight back any longer. I walk away until we've both calmed down. The facilitator and other group members have been really supportive.

Karen: Definitely. I believe that my risk for domestic violence has really decreased. I understand the LGBT cycle of violence and its dynamics. My sexuality has always an issue with both my ex-boyfriend and with Julie. They've accused me of cheating on them with people of both genders. I've learned numerous skills to use when it gets difficult and Julie seems to respond differently as well. She's gotten a lot out of the anger management group that she's in.

Jennifer: I come to group every week and individual counseling as well. I've learned that I'm strong and that I can be proud of myself. It's been really difficult for me but I know that I can have healthy relationships. I can't imagine what it would have been like if I lived in an area that doesn't have services for transgender women.

Mike: Absolutely. In many ways, I feel like they saved my life. I'm grateful that I found services specifically designed for the gay community.

Cheryl: It's the only place I can be completely honest about my situation. They really understand what its like to be me.

Section Three

Recommendations for the State of California

Support the development of a California coalition of LGBT domestic violence service providers, programs and organizations.

- ~ Create a statewide contingent of LGBT domestic violence service providers, programs and organizations that constitute an informed, diverse and strategic work group.
- ~ Foster representation in a statewide coalition from statewide and local, public and private entities.
- ~ Implement mandatory training on LGBT domestic violence issues to state and local service providers, health care personnel and criminal justice entities throughout California.
- ~ Review, recommend and influence public policy and legislative action to improve assistance, treatment, education and prevention of LGBT domestic violence.

Earmark and increase funding for LGBT service providers for care, treatment, education and prevention of LGBT domestic violence.

- ~ Allocate, increase and earmark funds for LGBT-specific programs to develop and provide domestic violence services that will assist, treat, educate and prevent the social epidemic of LGBT domestic violence. (It is recommended that these funds come through direct legislation by the Governor and California State Assembly, the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP), the California Department of Health Services (Battered Women's Shelter Program) and the state's allocation of the Violence Against Women Act/VAWA funds.)
- ~ State distributed funding of prevention and direct service programs must be made accessible to all quality programs regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the client base.
- ~ The LGBT community must be recognized as an underserved population needing dedicated and targeted funding for specifically designed and

culturally appropriate technical assistance, public education, outreach, prevention and intervention programs.

- ~ Funders must support innovative community-based efforts and require projects that claim to work with the LGBT community to provide a historical record of such work in the community in addition to documentation of internal policies and procedures that are inclusive of the LGBT community. The competency of staff and volunteers within funded programs as well as the quality and quantity of their training in LGBT issues and same-gender domestic violence must be documented as well.

Conduct LGBT domestic violence education and outreach to criminal justice and law enforcement agencies.

- ~ Conduct aggressive outreach, training and education to law enforcement and criminal justice organizations and their courts, divisions, precincts and academies throughout California. Training and education must include messages and information to institute or strengthen written policies, procedures and practices that are non-discriminatory toward LGBT populations.
- ~ Create a task force including public and private criminal justice personnel, associations, agencies, unions and service agencies to work in close collaboration with LGBT domestic violence service providers and organizations to recommend and oversee outreach and training efforts.

Inform and educate the state and its local communities.

- ~ Request a report to the Legislature and hold legislative hearings to outline the key issues and epidemiology of domestic violence, inclusive of same gender domestic violence.
- ~ Include key law enforcement, criminal justice and social service personnel in the above-mentioned effort.
- ~ Encourage local coalitions to promote community discussions and initiatives to raise awareness of LGBT domestic violence.
- ~ Conduct an annual Sacramento briefing by constituents, survivors and service providers to inform legislators of concerns and needs of LGBT populations at risk for domestic violence.

California state and local governmental service providers must apply consistent standards when responding to domestic violence.

- ~ Court-ordered batterers' intervention must be consistently mandated for the full 52 weeks as stipulated in the Penal Code at a certified/approved program. Furthermore, batterers' intervention rather than anger management classes must be mandated for perpetrators of domestic violence.
- ~ Restraining orders must be ordered consistently for the full three-year period. Furthermore, Emergency Protective Orders must be issued consistently regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the involved parties.
- ~ Law enforcement and criminal justice personnel must receive increased training in assessment to ensure consistent arrests regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the involved parties.
- ~ Law enforcement and criminal justice personnel must work in close collaboration with LGBT domestic violence specialists in dual arrest cases involving members of the LGBT community.
- ~ Comprehensive training in LGBT domestic violence must be mandated for all health care professionals and standard practice guidelines to appropriately identify, document and intervene in all cases of domestic violence must be established.

Mandate the study, documentation and evaluation of LGBT domestic violence.

- ~ The Governor's Office, the Office of Criminal Justice Planning, and the California Department of Health Services must require all domestic violence programs in California to include information about the gender and sexual orientation of clients in their statistical documentation and recognize the partnerships of LGBT persons as "domestic".
- ~ Include information about gender and sexual orientation in all law enforcement and criminal justice statistical documentation.
- ~ Questions specific to the LGBT community must be included in community and academic studies.
- ~ Fund the California Coalition (see recommendation A) to conduct a thorough statewide victimization survey to properly gauge incidents of abuse in California.

LGBT domestic violence must be understood as a multicultural health crisis.

- ~ Health care professionals and law enforcement and criminal justice entities must be properly trained to understand and recognize the LGBT community as a distinct culture with its own identity, customs, language and history while understanding and recognizing the impact of sexual orientation and gender identity on other factors of diversity.
- ~ LGBT services and prevention efforts must recognize and respond to California's changing language, race, class and cultural diversity by providing LGBT culturally sensitive public awareness and intervention products, documents and services.
- ~ LGBT outreach, intervention and prevention efforts must provide services and public education across the entire life span of the individual from first relationships in youth to relationships among elders.
- ~ Domestic violence programs must be respectful of diverse family structures including families with recognized and unrecognized legal and/or marital status, individuals and couples with immigration issues, extended non-traditional family structures (including step families) and survivors who are isolated from traditional forms of family support.

About the Authors

Patrick Letellier is co-author of the book, *Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them: Battered Gay Men and Domestic Violence*. He has written numerous articles and book chapters on domestic violence and other topics related to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Mr. Letellier is a freelance writer and can be reached at patrickgl@aol.com.

Susan Holt is a nationally certified domestic violence counselor and program manager of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program. An expert on LGBT domestic violence, she has testified before the California Assembly Select Committee on Domestic Violence. She is a member of the Executive Board of the L.A. County Domestic Violence Council, co-chair of the Council's LGBT Issues Committee, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women. She is the recipient of the prestigious LACE (Lesbian & Bisexual Women Active in Community Empowerment) award, has been honored by California State Senator Sheila Kuehl as well as the mayor and city council of the City of West Hollywood, California. Ms. Holt is profiled in *Who's Who of American Women* and *Who's Who in America*.

Special thanks and acknowledgment to the following individuals for their generous contributions:

Joshua Bobrowsky
Policy & Public Affairs
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center

Delena Couchman
STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center

Benjamin DeLanty, MSW
Breaking New Ground
Mental Health Services Department
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center

Jill Morris
Shelter Technical Assistance & Training
Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women

Lizzette Torres
STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center is the world's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organization with the broadest array of services available anywhere. The Gay & Lesbian Center is a powerful, nonprofit force for civil rights and home to a variety of free or low-cost health, legal, employment, educational, cultural and social programs designed especially for our community. The Center welcomes an average of nearly a quarter-million visits from ethnically diverse youth and adults each year.

STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
McDonald/Wright Building
1625 North Schrader Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90028
323-860-5806
www.laglc.org/domesticviolence
e-mail: domesticviolence@laglc.org

This report was made possible in part by funding from the
California Department of Health Services, Maternal & Child Health Branch