

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN LGBTIQ COMMUNITIES:

UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE FOR BOTH THE VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR



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EXPLAINING THE ACRONYM?

Queer: Is an umbrella term used to be inclusive of anyone whose gender and/or sexual identity does not fit within the 'norm'.

Transgender (trans): A term referring to someone whose gender identity is different to the gender assumed at birth. A person who is transgender may identify as trans or simply as a male or a female.

Intersex: The word intersex is used to describe people born with sex characteristics that don't meet medical norms for female or male bodies.

Gender Diverse: Gender diverse is an umbrella term that acknowledges the different ways that people may identify their gender as. For example, gender-fluid, non-gendered or gender queer.

Cisgender: Is a person whose gender identity matches the gender assigned to them at birth.

Domestic: Referring to intimate (a close romantic though not necessarily sexual) relationships with partners or ex-partners including marriage, defacto partnership, boyfriend/girlfriend and lover/s.

Family: A broader term which extends the types of relationships to include parents and children, extended family (uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins), carer, housemates and chosen family.



WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic and family violence is any type of abusive behaviour used to create fear and gain and maintain control over an intimate partner, ex-partner, family member (including chosen family), carer or member of the same household.

In LGBTIQ:

Partners - can include polyamorous relationships, non-monogamous relationships and non-gendered relationships.

Family - can be chosen family, close friends and adopted family.



MYTH BUSTER!

Substance abuse and mental health issues can contribute to the frequency and severity of abuse in relationships, but it is **not** an **excuse** or a reason for domestic and family violence.

‘Mutual battering’ is **not** domestic violence



WHAT IS THE PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LGBTIQ COMMUNITIES?

Although data is limited, available evidence indicates that LGBTIQ people are as likely as non-LGBTIQ women to be victims of domestic violence, that's about **1 in 3** who have experienced it in a past or present relationship.

For transgender people it may be anywhere between 60-80% of people who have experienced DFV.



WHAT IS THE PREVALENCE OF AOD IN LGBTIQ COMMUNITIES?

Risky alcohol use is higher amongst LGB people than heterosexuals
26.5% v 15.8% (*NDSHS 2010*)

There are significantly higher rates of illicit drug use among LGB people compared to heterosexual people (*NDSHS 2010*)

Smoking rates for LGB people is approximately double that of the general population

Very limited research on AOD use among transgender and intersex Australians



WHAT DO THE STATISTICS MEAN?

LGBTIQ people are at a higher risk of domestic violence and substance abuse than the general population and yet will face more barriers to reporting and getting support

Minority stress may be an underlying mechanism of both substance use and partner violence – both internal and external stressors

Higher rates of comorbidity, depression, anxiety and suicide in LGBTIQ population compared to general population



WHAT CAME FIRST: THE ABUSE OR THE ADDICTION?

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People take drugs to self medicate as a result of the abuse or become addicted to medications prescribed as a result of abuse



This makes them vulnerable to further abuse



Leads to more self/medicating



ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AS A TOOL FOR VIOLENCE

Abuser can use partner's addiction as a constant put down, saying things like *'you're just a junkie', 'you're useless', 'you're a bad parent'* etc.

Abuser can withhold medications or drugs from their partner and use that as a tool for control

Abuser can feed an addicted partner drugs/alcohol to keep them addicted and vulnerable to abuse

An abuser can take advantage of their partner when intoxicated/not fully conscious e.g. sexual assault

Abuser can use partners addiction to stop them from getting help: *"no one will believe you because you're an addict"*



AOD AS A TOOL FOR VIOLENCE

Abuser can justify their actions by saying that they only did X because they were drunk/high

Abuser can put their partner in debt as result of their drug/alcohol use

Abuser can blame their partner for their addiction or say things like *“if you leave me or don’t do X my addiction will get worse”* or blame their partner for their addiction

Abuser can prevent their partner from getting help: *“if you call the cops they will find drugs in our house and you’ll get in trouble”*



HOW AOD EFFECT GETTING SUPPORT AND REPORTING

Fear of going to police for help

Damaged relationships with friends and family

Many support services wont take someone who is under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs

Many AOD services will only address the AOD issues and not go into trauma and DV work



DEALING WITH ABUSE AND THE ADDICTION

Addressing trauma underlying substance use

Dangers of taking away someone's coping mechanisms

The impact of labels and rhetoric: “*I am an addict*”, “*clean*” vs “*unclean*”, “*powerless*”, “*defects*”



TAKE HOME MESSAGES



You tell us...



THANK
YOU

