



Centering Student Voices

Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault & Stalking (DVSAS) on Campus:


Fall 2023 Toolkit for Supporting and Engaging LGBTQIA+ Students



Photo source: canva.com

Centering Student Voices: Toolkit for Supporting and Engaging LGBTQIA+ Students

Table of Contents

- 01** Introduction & Acknowledgements
 - 02** LGBTQIA+ Terms Glossary
 - 06** Strengthening LGBTQIA+ Engagement on Campus
 - 11** Additional Resources
- 

In the Fall of 2023, the National Organization for Victim Advocacy held a series of listening sessions funded by the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) Campus Program. The focus of these “Centering Your Voices” conversations was to highlight and elevate the experiences of LGBTQIA+ college students in the United States and Territories around their experiences of DVSAS and related services on campus.

Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to inform and assist college and university administration, staff, and students with addressing Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking (DVSAS) and support services for LGBTQIA+ students on campus. Colleges and Universities must make an active effort to learn about who encompasses LGBTQIA+ students, what unique dynamics and barriers they experience, and how to provide accessible support services to this population, specifically pertaining to DVSAS. We want to share responses to some frequently asked questions (FAQs) to support campuses and partners in strengthening their work with LGBTQIA+ students. We hope that this information also creates curiosity on campuses to explore "How do these issues/themes show up or--don't--on my campus?"

Acknowledgements

As the Culturally Specific Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Provider, the National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) is honored to present the Centering Student Voices Toolkit Series, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Campus Program. The intention of this project is to center the voices and needs of historically marginalized populations to include, immigrant students, LGBTQIA+ students, military-connected students, and students with disabilities.

The content for this toolkit was developed in part from the brave students who shared their personal experiences, perceptions, and DVSAS experiences during listening sessions hosted by NOVA. We are sincerely grateful for the students who made this possible. We recognize Jorge Iván López-Martínez support in the development of this toolkit and Alteristic for their review.



LGBTQIA+ Terms Glossary

This glossary provides a guide for understanding people's diverse experiences and identities with gender and sexuality. Language is constantly evolving and as such, the terms in this glossary may change over time. This glossary pretends to be a guide on how to understand people's diverse experiences regarding gender and sexuality. These definitions are adapted from the UC Davis [LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary](#). We advise never to impose a term or label on anyone. People are always free to choose whatever label/s they think better reflect their experiences and identities.

Broad terms to describe dimensions of gender and sexuality

Sexuality: The components of a person that include their sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual practices, etc.

Gender Identity: A sense of one's self as trans, cis, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual Orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction or non-attraction to other people. Sexual orientation can be fluid and people use a variety of labels to describe their sexual orientation.

Sex assigned at birth: A medically constructed categorization. Sex is often assigned based on the appearance of the genitalia, either in ultrasound or at birth. Sex assigned at birth is different from gender identity, and sex is not always binary, such as for Intersex individuals.

Gender: A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.

Photo source: canva.com



LGBTQIA+ Identities - Terms used to describe more specific experiences regarding gender and sexuality

Lesbian: Usually, someone who identifies as a woman, whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender. However, some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians, often because they have some connection to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women.

Gay: A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender.

Bisexual: A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender. Some people may use bisexual and pansexual interchangeably.

Trans: The term trans acts as a more inclusive term than transgender for gender non-conforming and non-binary folks.

Transgender: An adjective used most often as an umbrella term and frequently abbreviated to “trans.” Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that one’s internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth.

Queer: An umbrella term used to describe gender/sexual/romantic orientations or identities that fall outside of societal norms. Historically, queer has been used as an epithet/slur against the LGBTQ+ community. Some people have reclaimed the word queer and self-identify in opposition to assimilation [adapted from “Queering the Field”]. For some, this reclamation is a celebration of not fitting into social norms. Not all people who identify as LGBTQIA use “queer” to describe themselves. For example, those of earlier generations are typically averse to self-identifying as queer. The term is often considered hateful when used by those who do not identify as LGBTQIA+.

Photo source: canva.com





Photo source: canva.com

Questioning: The process of exploring one's own gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. Some people may also use this term to name their identity within the LGBTQIA community.

Intersex: An umbrella term to describe a wide range of natural body variations that do not fit neatly into conventional definitions of male or female. Intersex variations may include but are not limited to, variations in chromosome compositions, hormone concentrations, and external and internal characteristics. Many visibly intersex people are mutilated in infancy and early childhood by doctors to make their sex characteristics conform to society's idea of what normal bodies should look like. Intersex people are relatively common, although society's denial of their existence has allowed very little room for intersex issues to be discussed publicly. Hermaphrodite is an outdated and offensive term that has been used to describe intersex people in the past.

Asexual: A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity, despite sexual desire. Some asexual people do have sex and do experience varying levels of sexual attraction. There are many diverse ways of being asexual. A person who does not experience sexual attraction can experience other forms of attraction such as romantic attraction, physical attraction and emotional attraction, as these are separate aspects of a person's identity. These may or may not correlate with each other - for instance, some people are physically and romantically attracted to women. However, others might be physically attracted to all genders and only emotionally attracted to men.

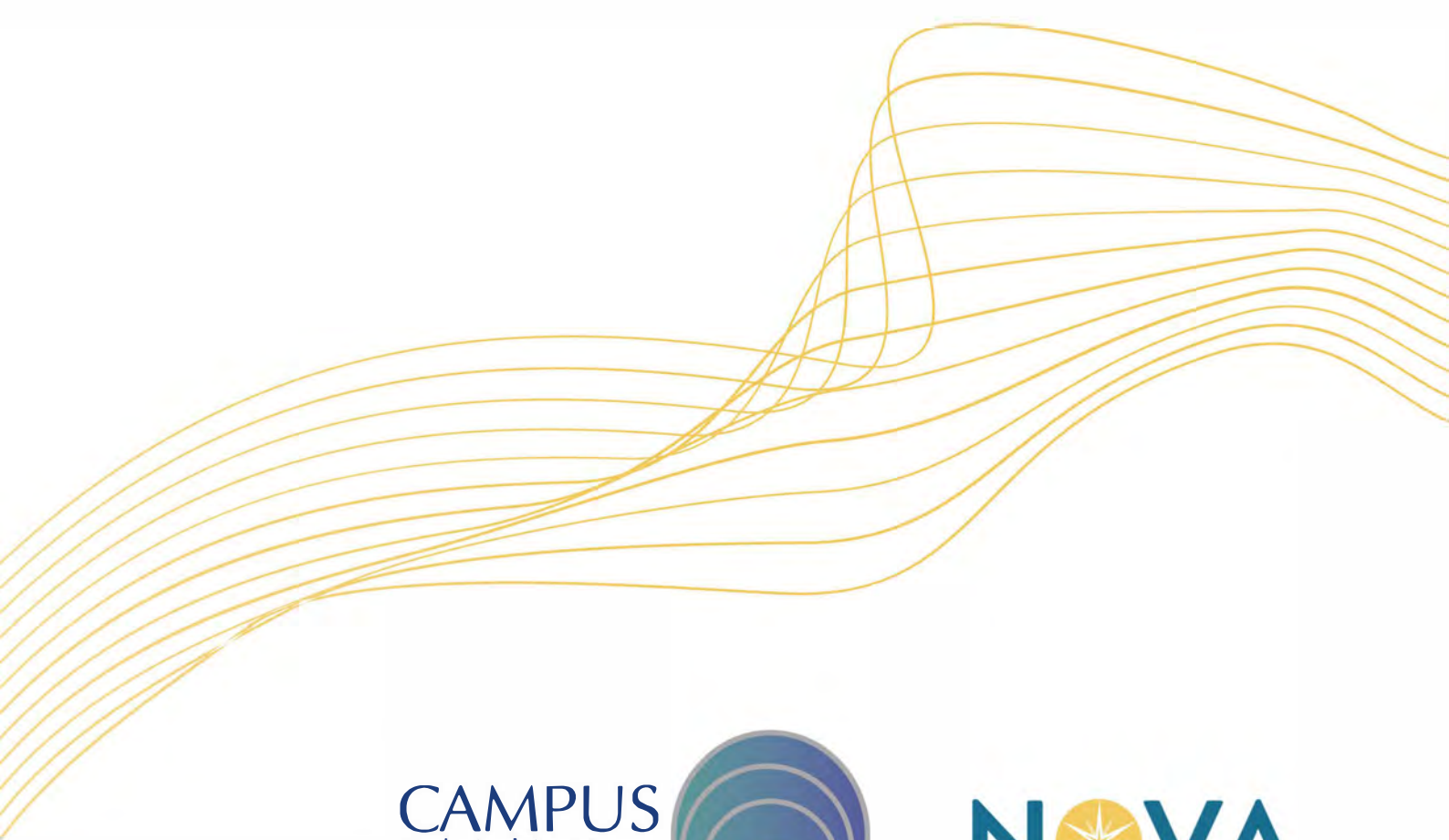
Pansexual: Term used to describe people who have romantic, sexual or affectional desire for people of all genders and sexes. Has some overlap with bisexuality and polysexuality (not to be confused with polyamory).



Photo source: canva.com

Non-binary/NB/enby: A gender identity and experience that embraces a full universe of expressions and ways of being that resonate for an individual, moving beyond the male/female gender binary. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and/or intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world. For some people who identify as non-binary, there may be overlap with other concepts and identities like gender expansive and gender non-conforming.

“+”: The term plus refers to all the identities that are usually not named in the acronym LGBTQIA. It is a political statement that seeks to include all identities and represent the ongoing emergence of new terms for different life experiences.



Strengthening LGBTQIA+ engagement on Campus

Campus programs must remain open and receptive to the changing needs of LGBTQIA+ students in order to better address them. We share these frequently asked questions and answers in the hopes of improving LGBTQIA+ student experiences related to education, victim services, policy, and community engagement on campus:

1 Why should we reach out to campus and culturally specific community organizations to serve as partners in the CCR Team?

"We want to receive support from people who look like us and understand who we are"

Connecting with campus and community organizations is a vital way to meet your student community's needs. Often, culturally specific organizations are better equipped to take the lead or are already doing the work and looking for ways to strengthen LGBTQIA+ student engagement and increase referral pathways.

One place to start is the LGBTQIA+ Student Resources on your campus, which could include formal identity-based or diversity-focused offices or departments, and student-led organizations. It's essential also to consider other identity-specific offices, such as those for students of color housed within Multicultural and/or Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) resources. For campuses that do not have a formal DEI division, office, or resource, community engagement will be vital and allow community partners to cross-train leadership and recommend best practices. These spaces often have unique insights into the lived experiences of QTBIPOC students, some of whom may not engage in LGBTQIA+ general resources or events due to the anticipation of bias.

QTBIPOC: Queer Trans Black Indigenous People of Color. Often used to discuss the ways in which intersectional identities can result in multifaceted systems and experiences of oppression.

Additionally, LGBTQIA+ students within faith-based organizations and student communities on campus may feel the need to “pick between” what some in mainstream society see as competing identities. Campuses can work with their chaplains, student religious organizations, and local organizations (i.e. churches, temples, stewards of sacred lands, mosques, etc.) around faith-based and interfaith services to curb this pattern.

2 How can we build trust and rapport with LGBTQIA+ students in campus settings?

“Focus on meeting our most pressing needs and fostering our joy”

It is vital to first work with the student community to meet their more pressing needs and develop a sense of safety and partnership with the campus and Coordinated Community Response Team (CCR Team). LGBTQIA+ students might have needs that are not directly related to DVSA services but serve to destigmatize help-seeking, foster pathways for referrals, and provide educational spaces centered around the specific experiences of LGBTQIA+ survivors.

Prioritize attending community events, especially those that center on LGBTQIA+ joy, so students can develop trust in low-risk interactions throughout their time in school, not only in the immediate aftermath of victimization. LGBTQIA+ students are often inundated with deficit-based education and outreach when instead they are craving spaces for connection and learning that center joy. By beginning interactions by investing in the wellness of LGBTQIA+ students, we can focus on a strengths-based perspective that authentically builds rapport, while serving their pressing needs by providing things such as a safe place to meet as a group, a self-care event with supplies provided by the campus, a high-profile panel on healthy relationships for LGBTQIA+ History Month, providing a CCR Team member as a staff advisor for establishing a student organization, etc.

Connect with LGBTQIA+ Student Resource Centers (LGBTQIA+ SRC) and Identity-Based offices. These are ideal places to begin building CCR Team partnerships if you don't yet have those voices represented. Connect with both, on campus and community organizations that are often already filling in the gaps. Outreach to these organizations can build meaningful and lasting programs.

3

How can we make prevention and intervention services accessible for LGBTQIA+ students?

"We want to see ourselves in the services offered on and off campus"

There is a need for multiple means of engagement for tailored intervention and prevention services. Even when students participate in outreach and engagement activities during orientation, there can still be a disconnect between LGBTQIA+ students and the full breadth of services provided on campuses, even where tailored programming exists.

LGBTQIA+ students along the spectrum of the coming out journey are in particular need, as they may require more private or off-campus outreach and engagement to mitigate the fear of being outed before they are ready to come out. Some engagement options include strategies on different levels: off-campus, on-campus, confidential, passive, active, mandatory, optional, etc.

LGBTQIA+ students across the Centering Student Voices listening sessions indicated that the perception of community partners is often more favorable than the perception of the institution itself. Community Partners play an essential role in providing off-campus services. They can be brought onto campus to promote their work and create further referral pathways.

To build deliberately inclusive and identity-specific prevention education, campuses should begin with an evaluation of their current prevention education by working with students, peer educators, and campus partners to review current prevention education and outreach efforts to answer the following questions about current prevention efforts:

Coming out: Coming out is the process of voluntarily sharing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity with others. This process is unique for each individual and there is no right or wrong way to come out.

What perspectives are missing? What does a “generalist” perspective cost you in terms of outreach? In what ways are the materials **cis-heteronormative**? Do images of people reflect the full spectrum of gender and sexuality? Are your images of people both racially and ethnically reflective of your community? When using art and other graphic design in materials, do your sources reflect the communities you serve? Are materials/images contributing to any confirmation bias?

Cis-heteronormative/cisnormativity: Attitudes and behaviors that incorrectly assume gender is binary, ignoring genders besides women and men, and that people should and will align with conventional expectations of society for gender identity and gender expression. Cisnormativity often combines with heteronormativity to create societal expectations of behavior.


When materials, outreach, and education only speak in generalities, the most marginalized members of campus life will rely on historical exclusion and self-select out, despite institutional perspectives being “all-inclusive”. People with privileged identities will continue to utilize services and attend prevention programming and events regardless of generalist perspectives, particularly when they naturally fit into what is considered a “generalist” experience and/or identity.

Once an evaluation of current programming has been completed, consider hosting focus groups, listening sessions, key stakeholder interviews, etc. to learn more about the students' experiences and perspectives. It is vital to tailor your prevention content in order to be deliberately inclusive and ensure students see themselves reflected in your programming

4 How can campuses encourage LGBTQIA+ student involvement in policy development and assessments?

“If you’re inviting us in, we expect you to listen and take our ideas into consideration”

Every campus has a different structure or mechanism by which students can impact policy development and assessment. The CCRT should ensure that LGBTQIA+ students are aware of such opportunities for campus-wide policy involvement.



When developing or reviewing policies, it is necessary to have begun the ongoing practice of relationship-building before policy involvement to center the holistic needs of students. Students are not required to share their perspectives, experiences, and expertise, and are often doing so at a significant mental health and social risk.

Campuses should manage expectations when approaching LGBTQIA+ students for their feedback. LGBTQIA+ Student Organizations may very well have experienced significant institutional betrayal in the past and may reject the request, particularly if this request is made during first contact with campus LGBTQIA+ student life. Campuses should be transparent with the student populations that agree to provide data and feedback. The student groups should be told concretely how their experiences will be used in inform prevention initiatives. It is also a great idea to circle back with the students who provided the data with a thank you and a copy of the final product, material, or activity they helped to build.

Campuses should also be mindful of the multiple student involvement and representation avenues. For example, peer educators working within prevention education in DVSAS are ideal candidates for policy review roles, and this opportunity can also offer career development opportunities. Some campuses may have Social Work and/or Public Policy departments with dedicated faculty teaching topics around policy review, and could work with allied faculty members to complete annual policy reviews as one of the projects in their syllabi.

Finally, consider expanding assessment and data collection to audit current data points to ensure methods for data collection are culturally relevant, and coincide with diverse backgrounds and participants.

Additional Resources

LGBTQIA+ founded and led organizations have created valuable resources that provide specialized expertise. Many of these resources provide additional supportive context to student perspectives that surfaced in the listening sessions.

We recommend checking out the work and resources that organizations like **FORGE, SUNY Spectrum, Prevent Connect LGBTQIA+, AVP, Campus Pride** and other are creating to strengthen tailored DVSAS prevention initiatives and response.

The work of ending gender-based violence and LGBTQIA+ hate is intertwined profoundly and can feel like a colossal task. Thanks to the rich legacy of LGBTQIA+ educators, historians, and policy experts, there are recent trainings and data that we can rely on as we continue the slow work of tailoring to our unique campus contexts. We stand on the shoulders of giants and can honor that legacy by acknowledging those histories and carrying on the never-ending journey.

Recommended tool to address Trans and Non Binary students' needs in DVSAS response, victim services, and prevention strategies

We recommend that campuses utilize FORGE's comprehensive Self-Assessment Tool: "Is Your Agency Ready to Serve Transgender and Nonbinary Clients?." This tool is comprised by a series of questionnaires that allows you to assess the current strengths and challenges that service providers have when serving Trans and Nonbinary clients. Not all sections will be relevant to the campus environment; however, this assessment offers practitioners of all kinds of tools to center transgender and non-binary students in all operations and implementations. When utilizing this checklist, campuses should ensure that they also account for students' intersectional needs, identities, and histories. [Self-Assessment Tool - Is Your Agency Ready to Serve Transgender and Nonbinary Clients?](#)

Resource Guides and One-Pagers

Supporting LGBTQ+ Stalking Victims: A Guide for Victim Advocates - This guide provides basic information about the dynamics of stalking and safety planning, co-occurring crimes, specific tactics used against LGBTQ+ individuals, safety planning strategies that support LGBTQ+ stalking victims, and issues to be aware of when supporting LGBTQ+ victims. This guide cites research when possible, but stalking research is limited, and LGBTQ+ stalking research is even more so.

Fact Sheet on Injustice in the LGBTQ Community - This fact sheet created by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center provides a succinct summary of injustice in the LGBTQ community, providing additional support to the findings of the Fall 2022 Centering Student Voices Listening Sessions.

New data: LGBT people across all demographics are at heightened risk of violent victimization - This data brief on the heightened risk of victimization faced by LBGTQIA+ contains recommendations on addressing this issue from an evidence-informed perspective.

References

Barz, G. & Cheng, W. (Eds.) (2019). *Queering the Field: Sounding Out Ethnomusicology*. Oxford University Press.

FORGE. (2021). Self-Assessment Tool: “Is Your Agency Ready to Serve Transgender and Non-Binary Clients?”. <https://forge-forward.org/resource/self-assessment-tool/>

UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center. LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary. <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>



CAMPUS
Technical Assistance
and Resource Project



NOVA

This project is supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-21-GK-02203-CAMP awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.