



MEDIA RELEASE

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs releases Annual Report on LGBT Domestic Violence: Domestic Violence declines in 2007 but may be spiking in 2008 as the economy worsens

For Immediate Release

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October 20, 2008

New York – Today, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) and 37 of its member organizations across the country released their report on *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Domestic Violence in 2007*. The 50-page report, released annually by NCAVP, examines data compiled from thousands of LGBT people who experienced intimate partner violence during the year 2007. The report found that, in 2007, reported cases of domestic violence declined by 13% but that domestic violence in LGBT relationships is still vastly unreported. Reporting regions include: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Colorado, Chicago, Boston, Kansas City, New York City, Columbus, Philadelphia, Houston, Virginia, Seattle, and Milwaukee. In addition to the quantitative information, the report includes narratives from survivors, data analyses from local LGBT community groups, recommendations and tips for service providers, and a state guide on LGBT access to domestic violence orders of protection.

“October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month which is an excellent opportunity for LGBT people to talk about the reality that violence and abuse do happen in our relationships,” said Sharon Stapel, Executive Director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP). “It is also critically important that LGBT communities know that there is support available if they are in a violent

relationship,” concluded Stapel. “Although we are heartened to see a drop in the number of reports of LGBT domestic violence across the country, we know that the numbers are drastically under-reported and that we have seen a sharp spike in domestic violence-related calls at NYC AVP in October 2008 as the economy worsens. We believe that NCAVP’s report will provide not only vital information about domestic violence in our communities but also vital referral information for victims of domestic violence.”

Traditional domestic violence programs do not always offer services specific to LGBT victims of domestic violence, which may prevent some LGBT victims from seeking services. One lesbian survivor described her experience coming out to a service provider. “She seemed more surprised than I was that my girlfriend was being abusive and she kept saying “he” even after I told her this was my girlfriend. They seemed very reluctant to let me into shelter and said they rarely take women without kids.” This report provides referral information to LGBT-specific anti-violence programs around the U.S. and Canada. Almost all of these programs provide crisis intervention services for LGBT people experiencing domestic violence.

NCAVP documented nearly equal percentages of calls from men and women with 5% of reports coming from transgender victims. Over 75% of calls came from victims identifying themselves as gay or lesbian, with 12% identifying as heterosexual, 7% as bisexual, and the remainder self identifying as queer or questioning. Callers accessing NCAVP reported weapons as part of the abuse 7% of the time and callers reported sexual assault occurring 9% of the time as a part of the abuse. 18% of callers reported police involvement in their cases.

This ability to access appropriate support for LGBT survivors of intimate partner abuse is further complicated by violence and bias that many LGBT people face outside of their relationships. “Many LGBT individuals experience hate-motivated violence, harassment, mistreatment and bullying as a part of their daily lives. This terrifying reality can make any violent or controlling behavior within a relationship seem like a minor issue by comparison,” said Avy Skolnik, AVP’s coordinator of NCAVP. “This is dangerous, in part, because intimate partner violence can be deadly.” In 2007, NCAVP documented five DV-related deaths.

“I’ve been with my boyfriend for 2 years,” commented one survivor in the report. “He’s been violent for a while so I don’t know why I let him stay. One time, he beat me up pretty bad, destroyed my cell phone, and threw my computer out the window. Luckily I wasn’t hurt too badly this time but I am worried about what he might do next time.”

One of the reasons why it might be difficult for some LGBT people to recognize that they are experiencing abuse may be related to a dearth of information and/or role models. One survivor commented in the report that “My family blamed the abuse on my being a lesbian and told me it was my fault.”

Additionally, intimate partner violence can be difficult for LGBT communities to publicly acknowledge and address at a time when there is a struggle for legal recognition of LGBT relationships. “People often feel immense pressure to keep quiet about any relationship problems they are experiencing. But LGBT people, just like straight people, deserve to be in relationships free of violence and fear. And if we experience abuse from someone we are dating or from a long

term partner, we deserve the same access to support," remarked Terra Slavin, Lead DV Staff Attorney at the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center.

The data in the report is derived from an intake tool that NCAVP member organizations – primarily local LGBT victim services organizations - utilize when directly working with victims of domestic and intimate partner violence and is submitted to NCAVP for analysis.

PDF versions of the 2007 Domestic Violence Report are available at www.ncavp.org or at www.avp.org along with previous editions of NCAVP's reports on hate-motivated and domestic violence. For additional and/or regional contact information, please call 212-714-1184.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) addresses the pervasive problem of violence committed against and within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) and HIV-affected communities. NCAVP is a coalition of community-based organizations that document and advocate for victims of anti-LGBT and anti-HIV/AIDS violence/harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, police misconduct and other forms of abuse. NCAVP is dedicated to creating a national response to the violence plaguing these communities and supporting existing anti-violence organizations and emerging local programs in their efforts to document and prevent such violence.