

STAYING SAFE



Serving the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,
Queer and HIV-affected Communities

February 27, 2012

Pick Up Violence and LGBTQ Communities

AVP has recently heard concerns about incidents of pick-up violence against and within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. Individuals are often reluctant to report such incidents to AVP due to stigma around sexual activity. Survivors of pick-up violence often feel an extra sense of shame or a fear of reporting because they engaged in anonymous sex and fear being blamed or arrested and therefore may not report this violence to the police or to community based organizations. Therefore, pick-up violence is one of the least discussed forms of violence committed against LGBTQ communities.

Many pick-ups happen without incident. However, violence can occur when someone picks up or cruises others with the intent to harm. This can result in verbal harassment, physical and sexual violence, robbery, and even murder. Pick-ups can be arranged through internet cruising and phone applications in addition to public or private places, like bars, bathrooms, and private homes.

Below are our tips for our communities about staying safe. If you are a survivor of pick up violence, you can call AVP's **24-hour bilingual (English/Spanish) hotline at 212-714-1141**. Please share these with friends and report pick up violence to AVP when it happens.

Staying Safe

- **Have a safety plan (AVP can help):** let someone know your plans, such as who you'll be with, an address of your meeting place, the phone number of the person you are meeting, and if your plans change. Brainstorm in advance people you feel comfortable sharing this information with, and ways that those people can support you.
- **Meet a pick-up in a public place:** Discuss what activities you are comfortable with and the ones that you are not.
- **On bathrooms and other public spaces:** Be aware that incidents can occur in these locations. Be aware of others in the restroom, stay near the exit if possible, use single stall restrooms where available, and if you feel uncomfortable find a different restroom to use.
- **Be aware of your surroundings:** locate establishments to seek help if you feel unsafe.
- **Trust your instincts:** if you feel threatened or unsafe at any point, remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible.
- **You can say no:** No matter who initiates or how far you've gone, you can stop at any time for any reason.
- **Use words** to alert bystanders of what's going on and to frighten (but not anger) an assailant.

- **Move towards** a “safer place,” like a more public space.
- **Self defense:** use your body to defend yourself or get away from an assailant.
- **Leave a trail and use your tech:** program AVP’s hotline information into your phone; let people around you know when you are leaving a place; text yourself or friends about where you’ll be or where you are; save messages on Facebook, MySpace, OKCupid, Grindr, etc.
- **Get involved!** To help keep our communities safe, get involved with AVP’s community organizing work. Help develop our programs and projects to bring safety for all communities.

Getting Support

- If possible, **consider medical attention** after any incident; violence can create many physical and emotional issues.
- **Document the incident:** take photos of any injuries; keep records of emails, texts, calls.
- **Take care of yourself** by utilizing supportive friends, partners and family.
- **AVP is here to support survivors** of pick up violence and all forms of violence. If you have witnessed or experience violence, we encourage you to call our **24-hour bilingual (English/Spanish) hotline at 212-714-1141** where you can speak with a trained counselor or online on [our secure reporting form](#).

Find out more about the New York City Anti-Violence Project at our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).