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## **LGBTQ Crime Victims Neglected by Nation's Victim Support System, Says Landmark Report**

**Washington, DC---**The National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs today released *Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Victims of Hate Violence and Intimate Partner Violence*. This groundbreaking report, the product of a 2009 nationwide survey of mainstream victim assistance providers and anti-violence programs serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community, describes widespread gaps in victim services for LGBTQ victims of crime and recommends steps to improve both the services and their accessibility.

The *Why It Matters* survey found that LGBTQ victims do not have consistent access to culturally competent services to prevent or help victims recover from violence. For example, most respondent organizations lack outreach to LGBTQ victims, LGBTQ cultural competence training for staff, LGBTQ-specific victim services policies and practices, and collaboration with LGBTQ providers. Too often, mainstream victim assistance agencies do not provide a culturally sensitive response to these victims, and LGBTQ-specific anti-violence programs either lack resources to meet the need or simply do not exist. As a result, LGBTQ victims suffer disproportionately from violence and its aftereffects.

"This first-ever report reveals major deficiencies in our nation's response to LGBTQ crime victims," said Jeff Dion, acting executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. "We hope our collaboration with NCAVP will begin a long-overdue process of addressing the serious problems this report describes."

In addition to deficiencies in LGBTQ-specific outreach, training, and services, only six percent of survey respondents reported that the majority of the victims they served were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people. Further, the types of services these agencies offer to victims differ significantly.

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Solving these problems, the report argues, requires eliminating the obstacles that prevent LGBTQ victims from reporting crimes and accessing victim services. Law enforcement agencies often underestimate the levels of violence against these victims, and the victims—fearing discrimination and further consequences—often hesitate to report intimate partner or hate-crime violence or to seek victim services.

The report recommends increased support for LGBTQ-focused training, education, and prevention for service providers and first responders, as well as further study to determine the specific needs of LGBTQ victims and the prevalence of crimes against them. It also recommends increased collaboration among LGBTQ anti-violence programs and mainstream victim assistance providers, changes to ensure equal access to state and federal protections for LGBTQ crime victims, outreach to increase public awareness of the extent and impact of the victimization of this community, and increased state and federal funding for these efforts.

“*Why It Matters* offers a roadmap for a journey our nation must take to address the serious gaps in services for LGBTQ victims of violence,” said Sharon Stapel, executive director of the NYC Anti-Violence Project, which coordinates the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. “At a time when the severity of hate-violence against LGBTQ people is increasing, when new federal legislation demands closer attention to hate crimes and the gaps in services are widening as programs lose funding, this report offers significant solutions to meet the urgent need for better victim services for LGBTQ communities.”

To download the full report (*Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Victims of Hate Violence and Intimate Partner Violence*), visit [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org) or [www.avp.org](http://www.avp.org).

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*The National Center for Victims of Crime, established in 1985, is the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the National Center has led this nation's struggle to provide crime victims with the rights, protections, and services they need to rebuild their lives. The National Center's National Crime Victim Helpline, 1-800-FYI-CALL, is a lifeline for tens of thousands of victims who, each year, receive one-on-one support to understand the impact of crime, deal with its consequences, access victim compensation, develop safety plans, navigate the criminal justice and social services systems, learn about their legal rights and options, and find the most appropriate local services.*

*The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCVAP) is the nation's largest anti-violence coalition addressing the pervasive violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and HIV-affected communities throughout the United States. NCAVP, coordinated by the New York City Anti-Violence Project, is dedicated to supporting local strategies addressing anti-LGBT violence and to fostering a national response to anti-LGBTQ violence. Members document and advocate for victims of anti-LGBT violence/harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, police misconduct, and other forms of victimization.*