

TRANSGENDER YOUTH AND DATING VIOLENCE

What does being transgender mean?

Transgender people often feel that the gender they were born with or given at birth doesn't "fit." "Transgender" is an umbrella term covering diverse kinds of gender expression. Youth who call themselves transgender may also call themselves transsexual, cross-dresser, gender queer, butch, boi, drag king, drag queen, gender non-conforming and others. Transgender youth are in a gender minority rather than a sexual minority - being transgender doesn't mean you are gay or lesbian.

How is the transgender youth experience different?

- Transgender youth report much higher rates of harassment and assault than male and female peers.ⁱ
- Nearly all, 92%, of transgender youth report often hearing sexist remarks by peers in school, and 79% report often hearing sexist remarks from faculty or staff.ⁱⁱ
- Nearly all, 89.5%, of transgender youth report feeling unsafe in school because of their gender expression compared to less than half of their male and female peers.ⁱⁱⁱ

How does being a transgender youth affect dating?

- Since transgender youth often experience severe discrimination and rejection, they often look for validation in an intimate partner. And they may think an abusive partner is better than none at all.^{iv} One study showed 50% of transgender individuals were raped or assaulted by a romantic partner.^v
- Because transgender youth often experience physical violence at home and from peers, they may believe that "it's normal" for "people like me" to live with abuse.^{vi}
- Since transgender youth often feel conflicted about their sexual identity, they are more likely to put themselves at risk for HIV and other infections by not negotiating safe sex with partners, having compulsive sex and sharing needles when injecting hormones or using drugs.^{vii}

Very often, trans young people have to rely on sex work regardless of whatever other skills they have.

- Ray Carannante,
Gender Identity Project

Unique barriers to getting help and their consequences

- Reports indicate that 1 in 5 transgender individuals "need or are at risk of needing" homeless shelter assistance. However, most shelters are segregated by birth sex. Transgender youth often face discrimination, even from agencies that serve their LGB peers.^{viii}
- Most domestic violence shelters are geared towards adult women. The services and staff don't meet the needs of transgender young men and women. Some shelters refuse to admit transgender youth.^{ix}
- Transgender homeless youth are three times more likely than other homeless youth to engage in survival sex, which is sex in exchange for money, shelter, food, drugs or hormones. Some transgender homeless youth will trade sex just to have a place to stay for the night.^x
- The average age for transgender youth to enter prostitution is 11-13.^{xi}
- Gender non-conforming teens are at high risk for suicide.^{xii} The risk increases with violence, since teen victims are over five times more likely to attempt suicide than those with no history of abuse.^{xiii}

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship..

free from violence and free from fear.

ⁱ Joseph G. Kosciw. The 2001 National School Climate Survey: The School-Related Experiences of Our Nation's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth. 2001. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. <www.glsen.org>.

ⁱⁱ Id.

ⁱⁱⁱ Id.

^{iv} Michael Munson. "Trans Survivor Tips." FORGE Trans Sexual Violence Project. <http://www.forge-forward.org/handouts/Trans_survivor_tips.pdf>.

^v Diana Courvant and Loree Cook-Daniels. "Trans and Intersex Survivors of Domestic Violence: Defining Terms, Barriers, & Responsibilities." National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Republished at <<http://www.survivorproject.org/defbarresp.html>>.

^{vi} Id.

^{vii} Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS in Virginia: Challenges for Prevention and Care. Virginia Department of Health, Division of HIV/STD. <<http://www.vdh.state.va.us/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/DAta/Profiles/EPI%20Profile%202000.pdf>>.

^{viii} Nicholas Ray. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness." National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. National Coalition for the Homeless. 2006. <<http://www.thetaskforce.org/>>.

^{ix} Lisa Mottet. Local Efforts Underway to Open Homeless Shelters to Transgender People. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Transgender Civil Rights Project. *Transgender Tapestry* #105, Spring 2004. <<http://www.ifge.org/Article197.phtml>>.

^x Id.

^{xi} Francis T. Miko and Grace Park, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*. July 2003.

<<http://www.usembassy.it/pdf/other/RL30545.pdf>>.

^{xii} Shannon Wyss. "Gender Non-Conforming Youth and Sexual Assault." Men Can Stop Rape. Republished at Survivor Project.

<<http://www.survivorproject.org/wyss.html>>.

^{xiii} Silverman et al., 2001.