

**Addressing Intimate Partner Violence in
LGBT2SQ+ Communities Across BC**

Safety Planning with LGBT2SQ+ Survivors

The purpose of this resource is to support you to understand specific considerations for safety planning with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Two-Spirit, and Queer (LGBT2SQ+) people experiencing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), as well as to challenge you to think about barriers to this work that might exist in your practices and organizations.

Guiding Principles

- The goal of safety planning is to help LGBT2SQ+ people improve their sense of safety by addressing the complexity of their safety needs and outlining strategies to help reduce future incidents of IPV and abuse.
- Effective safety planning must consider the wider backdrop of oppression and violence experienced by LGBT2SQ+ people and all of the intersecting identities of the survivor and their experiences with interpersonal and institutional oppression.
- Services designed to address cisgender men's violence against cisgender women may not be responsive to LGBT2SQ+ people's experiences of violence and abuse.
- Allow survivors to define what safety means for them, as well as have space for where those definitions may come from and how true this feels for them.

- Safety is not solely about managing and removing risks, but can also include increasing support, connection, etc. Honour that all people deserve to take some risks, as long as this doesn't put their (or their children's) lives in jeopardy.
- Your goal as a service provider is to provide information for the person to make informed choices, rather than make choices for them.
- Ensure that you are building on the strength of the survivor. Acknowledge the resilience and courage it has taken to get to this stage.

Specific Considerations when Working with LGBT2SQ+ Individuals

- Ask all survivors what pronouns they and their partner(s) use (not just those who you perceive to be LGBT2SQ+).
- Consider the limitations of IPV risk identification and assessment tools designed for heterosexual/cisgender relationships. These tools often do not address the unique forms of abuse in LGBT2SQ+ relationships. (For more information, please refer to EVA BC's Specific Forms of Abuse in LGBT2SQ+ Relationships resource).
- Acknowledge that disclosing IPV in a LGBT2SQ+ relationship and asking for help can be risky.
- Discuss previous experiences and fears with respect to support services and response systems.
- Respect confidentiality concerning the gender and sexuality of the survivor, and their partner(s).
- What LGBT2SQ+ inclusive services exist in your community/region? For example, does this person have access to safe, accessible, and affordable housing?

- What questions are relevant to ask? Preface each question with an explanation for why you are asking it. Be aware and respectful of questions relevant to survivors' gender and sexuality.
- What social support does the person have in place? How connected are they to other people in the LGBT2SQ+ community? How accessible are their social support networks to their abusive partner? How can safety planning reflect the realities of small communities, and increase safety even if the survivor remains in contact or in community with their abusive partner?

How has the experience of IPV impacted the survivor's mental health and coping strategies?

- What access do they have to legal protection? Is it safe for this person to call 911, if needed? Recognize the reality that the person may not want to call the police due to historical and ongoing discrimination within the criminal justice system.
- Many LGBT2SQ+ people have experienced discrimination in health care settings and may not feel comfortable going to the hospital or accessing health services for medical attention. Are there relevant services that may feel safer for this individual? Depending on the situation, going to the hospital may be in the survivor's best interest and a plan on how to support them in that process may be the best alternative.
- If the survivor is engaged in sex work, what are their unique safety needs, and in what ways are they already managing their safety?
- What might need to be included in an emergency safety bag (e.g., gender-affirming products and clothing, legal name change documents).
- Check in with the person to see how they feel about the safety plan. Does it make sense for them? Is the format accessible to them?

Considerations and Complexities

Some LGBT2SQ+ people have not experienced safety. Systemic violence and oppression can leave some LGBT2SQ+ people feeling as though they do not have control over their safety. How does safety planning change when this is the case?

How might services that are often associated with safety be less safe or even increase risk for LGBT2SQ+ people, especially Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, Muslim, People of Colour (QTBIPOC), Two-Spirit, disabled, poor, and immigrant or refugee LGBT2SQ+ people?

Depending on power dynamics and an individual's level of comfort or safety with you, they may not feel they can be honest with you and/or they may agree with any of your suggestions even if the suggestions will not work for them. Be aware of the power you hold as a service provider. How much are you directing the process? Make space for the survivor's voice whenever possible.

If the survivor is Indigenous, is there a local resource or a person in their community who can support with safety planning that may be more connected to Indigenous ways of knowing? Ask the survivor if they would like to be connected to a culturally specific service, if one is available.

Deepening Your Practice

- Be mindful of the balance between the necessity of safety planning and the best interests of your client. How open are they to making a safety plan with you? What is their level of risk of IPV? Offer to work with the survivor to make the process as meaningful for them as possible within the limitations that exist.

Self-Reflection Questions

- How do you define safety? What are the characteristics of safety?
- How do you define risk? What kind of risks do you think are okay and not okay?
- What services/supports do you associate with creating safety? How might they not be as safe for LGBT2SQ+ people? What about for LGBT2SQ+ people with multiple intersecting identities?

 www.endingviolence.org

 EndViolenceBC

 EndViolenceBC

 The Ending Violence Association of BC

ENDING VIOLENCE
Association of BC

 **BRITISH COLUMBIA**
Supported by the Province of British Columbia