

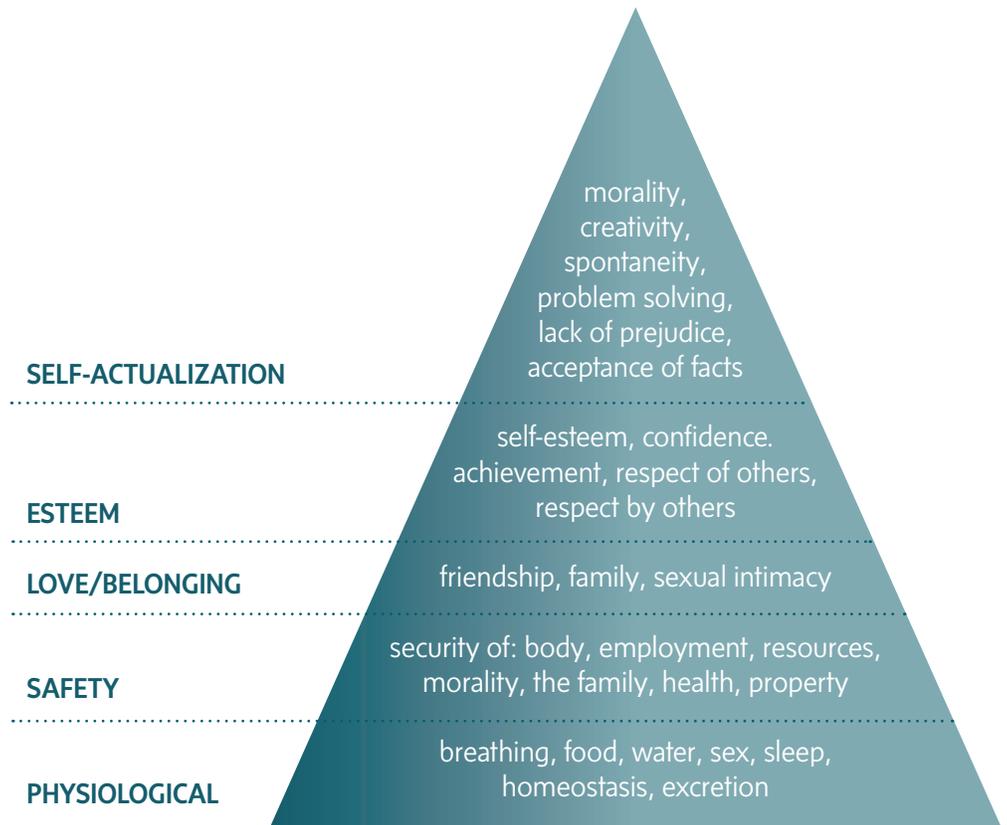
Maslow's Hierarchy

VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDERS' FACT SHEET

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Psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed his hierarchy of human needs in his 1943 paper, "A Theory of Human Motivation." He theorized that basic needs for food, water and sleep must be met before a person can focus on their safety needs, including housing and health. Only once these physiological and safety needs are met can someone begin to address their needs for love and belonging, which come before self-esteem needs. Only when all of those more basic needs are met can someone afford to focus on such self-actualization needs as creativity and spontaneity.

A trans survivor who had told a victim services provider she needed help filing for victim compensation didn't call the provider back. The provider concluded that survivor was no longer interested in obtaining help, unaware that the only cell phone number the victim could give her belonged to a person she was temporarily living with and who could not be relied upon as a messenger. Once a third party explained the situation, the advocate was able to make repeated calls until she was finally able to reach and assist the victim.



Maslow's Hierarchy can be very useful when working with transgender survivors of violence. Because of rampant discrimination and prejudice, trans people are far more likely than non-trans people to be homeless, lack health insurance or employment, or for other reasons be focused on needs even more basic than safety and health. That means a victim service provider needs to be prepared to help a trans survivor meet their basic survival needs first. Some of the community resources you should be aware of include:

- **Where can someone access free food? Where are the homeless meal sites and food banks?**
- **What transportation options are there for someone who needs help getting to a meal site or food bank?**
- **If a domestic violence shelter isn't available or appropriate, what homeless shelter will house trans people? (Will that environment be reasonably safe?)**
- **Does your community have any "safe houses" or other resources that can house a trans survivor who is homeless?**
- **If the survivor doesn't have a phone, can you help them obtain a free or prepaid one so that you can conduct follow-up?**

Service providers may also want to keep a small collection of shelf-stable foods like crackers, peanut butter, and sardines or tuna to offer a hungry survivor.

Maslow's Hierarchy also suggests why some adults seem incapable of problem-solving or being creative. These abilities can only emerge when a whole range of other human needs have been met first. A person who experienced neglect and/or abuse in childhood – which happens more frequently to trans people – will have spent their childhood struggling to meet their own physiological and safety needs. Focused on these levels, they will have missed the higher developmental milestones of developing people skills, self-esteem, and more complex thinking, putting them at a distinct disadvantage unless or until they receive intensive remedial help.

