



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24th, 2014

LGBT Advocates Commend New VAWA Non-Discrimination Guidance, Urge Other Federal Agencies to Follow Lead

As advocates for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, we applaud the Department of Justice for issuing strong implementing guidelines for the historic non-discrimination provisions in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), ensuring that LGBT survivors of violence receive equal services and treatment free from unlawful discrimination. The recently released [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about the new provisions are precedent-setting and will be a guide for other federal agencies on how to implement LGBT non-discrimination provisions. These provisions mark the first ever explicit protections from discrimination for LGBT people under federal law.

This guidance is a significant step forward because it makes clear that federal tax dollars under VAWA can't be used to discriminate against LGBT people. If a grantee receives any funding under VAWA, *all activities* of that entity are covered by the non-discrimination mandate (including employment), as well as activities that aren't related to or funded by the Department of Justice. This is hugely important because VAWA funding is disbursed to many agencies and programs around the country, including many rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, legal services, housing programs, education and prevention campaigns, courts, prosecutors, police and sheriff's departments, as well as state agencies that administer VAWA funds.

As part of this guidance, the Office of Violence Against Women in the Department of Justice (OVW) announced a framework for analyzing the limited conditions for services that are segregated or specific to gender and prohibited justifications based on overbroad assumptions or past practice. In the limited case where gender-segregated services are proven to be essential, meaningful comparable services must be provided. The policy is also historic because it is the first time a federal agency has clearly stated that non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity means that all transgender people are to be housed and provided with other services according to their self-identified gender. The guidance makes clear that transgender people can't be turned away or treated differently just because another client complains about being around a transgender person, and that staff cannot ask invasive personal questions to get a transgender person to "prove" their gender.

We urge the Department of Justice to formalize this historic guidance in binding regulations, as is standard practice with other major civil rights laws. We look forward to other federal agencies following the lead of the Department of Justice and applying similar interpretations of other laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Media contacts:

[New York City Anti-Violence Project](#)

Sue Yacka

syacka@avp.org

212.714.1184 x 26

[National Center for Transgender Equality](#)

Vincent Paolo Villano
villano@transequality.org
202-903-0112

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
Mark Daley
mdaley@thetaskforce.org,
Direct: 202.639.6325
Cell: 202.379.8318

GLBTQ Domestic Violence Project
Curt Rogers
Crouters@gmdvp.org
617-354-6056

Human Rights Campaign
Michael Cole-Shwartz
michael.cole-schwartz@hrc.org