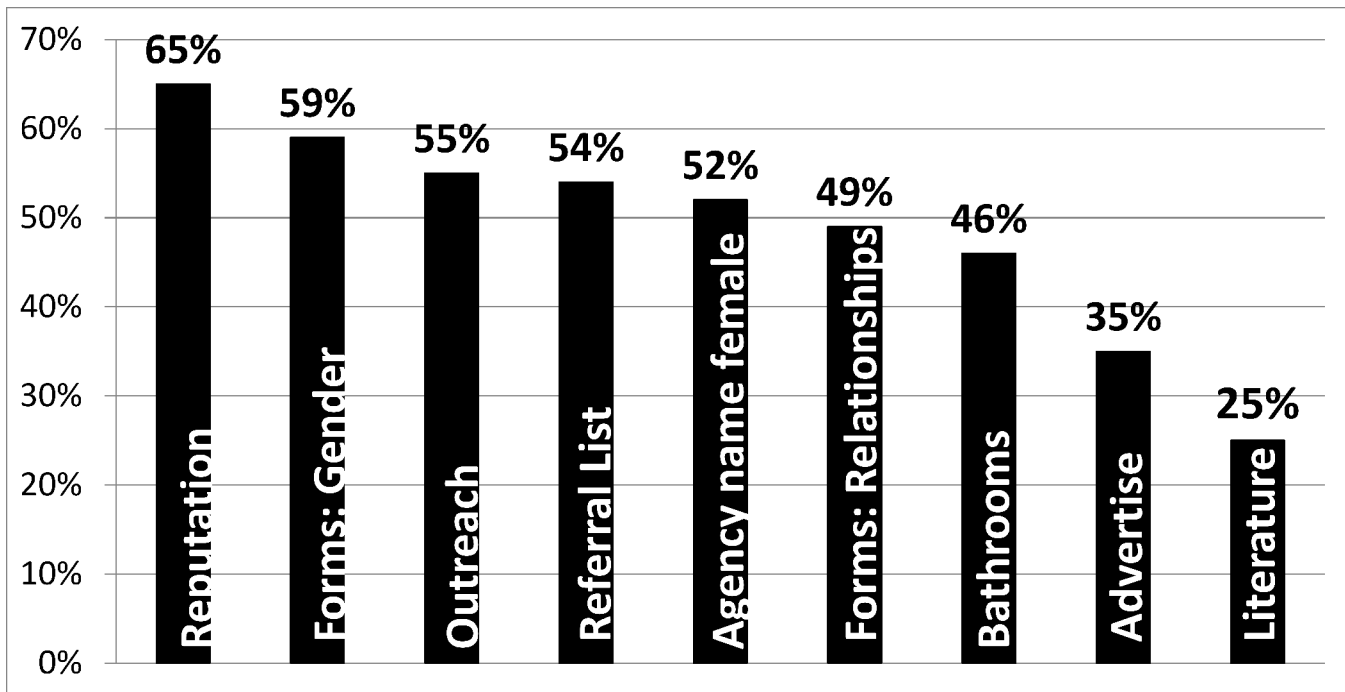


What is important to trans people when seeking victim services?

In a 2011 FORGE survey¹, 1,005 transgender² and gender non-conforming people ranked how important various factors were in their decisions whether or not to seek services at a victim services agency they had not previously used. The chart shows the percentage of trans respondents who noted that particular factor was “extremely” or “very” important in their decision-making. This data may help agencies prioritize their efforts to become more trans-welcoming.



1. Reputation

The most important factor trans people consider when deciding whether to access an agency’s services is the “reputation” that agency has among other trans people. 65% of respondents noted that reputation was “extremely” or “very” important to them. Obviously, it’s hard to quantify an agency’s reputation, but we suggest agencies identify and publicize “endorsements” from satisfied past trans clients and/or take deliberate, public steps to address past less-than-stellar experiences (be prepared to tell the community what you’ve learned, and proactively advertise what trans-welcoming steps you have now taken).

2. Trans-friendly intake forms

Although you usually need to get transgender survivors in the door before they can see your intake or other forms, it’s clear that the first document they see at your agency may have a make-or-break potential with transgender clients. 59% of our survey respondents rated intake forms that provided more than “male” and “female” options as the 2nd most important factor.

¹ 2011 FORGE data from “Transgender Individuals’ Knowledge of and Willingness to Use Sexual Assault Programs,” a survey approved by the Morehouse School of Medicine’s Institutional Review Board. Results have been internally processed, but not yet published.

² Throughout this document, we will use fluid language of “trans,” “transgender,” and “gender non-conforming.” We honor and recognize the complexity and multiplicity of gender identities. We use these words in their broadest meanings, inclusive of those whose identities lie outside of these terms often limiting terms.

3. Active outreach to transgender community/individuals

One survey respondent, when talking about a local rape crisis center, said: "I don't know if it's trans friendly. I never see them at community events." If trans people are seeing your agency name and people from your agency at events or in ads, they may develop a more positive opinion of your agency.

4. On a trans groups referral list

Many (but not all) local and state transgender organizations maintain referral lists, with each organization setting its own standards and procedures for how an agency can be listed. Some trans groups will have an informal list of referrals and others may have a published list, but many trans people will specifically seek out trans organizations just to ask for referrals to trans-welcoming and trans-informed providers. Do you know the name of a transgender organization in your area? Have you reached out to them to introduce yourself and see if they have a referral list?

5. Agency name isn't female

When an agency's name implies they may only serve one gender, such as the Women's Resource Center or Karen's House, many trans people of all gender identities hesitate to even call. One survey respondent said, "It's called the WOMEN'S crisis line. I'm not sure if it serves trans men or women under the umbrella of women."

6. Intake forms: relationship options

In many cases, intake or other forms have options like "married" "single" "divorced" "widowed" on their forms, and may not have options like "partnered" or "in a civil union" or other options that may be inclusive of people who are not heterosexual or who may not be able to (or want to) be legally married. Trans people pay attention when an agency's intake form seems not to value their relationships.

7. Gender-neutral bathrooms

Since many trans people do not identify as one of two binary genders, they may not feel comfortable entering a bathroom marked "men" or "women." Similarly, many trans people have experienced discrimination – stares, comments, and abuse – when accessing gendered bathrooms. When agencies don't have the ability to create single-user gender-neutral bathrooms, signs and policies can help make gendered restrooms safer for trans clients.

8. Advertise in LGBT Press

Advertising in the LGBT press sends the message that your agency cares enough about serving T or LGBT people that you are willing to literally invest funds to reach them and serve them.

9. Waiting room literature

If your agency does have magazines, brochures or other written material in a waiting room, it is important for trans people to see something that might be focused on them. Subscribing to a national LGBT magazine, in addition to others, is a good way to show both trans people and LGB clients that you know they exist and welcome them into your agency. A free way of showing support is to request trans-specific (not-geographically linked) brochures from FORGE.

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