

SAFETY PLANNING

Tipsheet #3

Advocates can help with safety planning. Medical advocates are already prepared to assist with safety planning related to sexual violence and medical concerns. When working with trans/nonbinary survivors, advocates should continue to use empowerment-based advocacy, working together with the survivor to identify their safety concerns and strategies that work for them.

Trans/nonbinary survivors may have unique concerns about their safety. The following provides an overview of some considerations for safety planning.

Agencies may want to consider asking the following questions to be included in their referral documentation. Having this information allows staff to make more successful referrals that minimize harm to trans/nonbinary clients.

Safety from abuser/offender

- Where might they see the person?
- What information does the person have about them?
 - Is there a risk that the abuser may try to use that information to hurt the survivor, such as outing them at work or following them to events?

Physical Safety

- Does the person have affirming clothing to wear if theirs was taken or destroyed during the assault or exam?
- Does the person have the tools to present their appearance in a way that feels safe for them?
 - For example, having binders, makeup, wigs?

Emotional Safety

- What support does the person need to navigate their trauma responses?
- What community support can the survivor access?
- Will others know about the assault? How does the survivor feel about that?

Physical Safety

- Does the person have a safe way to get home?
- Does the person have a safe place to stay?
- Have their medical needs been met?
- What other resources do they need to be physically safe? Consider things like relocation and continuing access to healthcare.

Emotional Safety

- Did the media report about this crime? If so, were the person's correct name/pronouns used? Was this public disclosure non-consensual and what implications does it have for their safety?
- How can the survivor cope with feelings of self-blame or other negative thoughts after assault?
- What privacy concerns does the survivor have? Consider that these may include both privacy related to the violence and related to their gender or sexuality.

Tech Safety

In addition to concerns about how the abuser may use technology to continue to cause harm, trans/nonbinary survivors may be concerned about how their information will be available in general – including in electronic court documents and who will have access to electronic health records.

Trans/nonbinary people have experienced higher rates of online harassment, including doxing and swatting, which can also include threats of sexual violence. Survivors may have already faced this or be targeted if others find out about the assault.

Other types of violence

Many trans/nonbinary people have experienced multiple forms of violence in their lifetime. In addition to the sexual assault, advocates may need to assist with safety around:

- Hate-motivated violence
- Neighborhood violence
- In-community violence
- Intimate partner violence
- Family violence
- Workplace violence

Legal options

- What information on legal rights and choices does the survivor want?
- How can the survivor increase their safety if they must navigate the legal system? This may include considerations like:
 - Does the survivor have affirming identification?
 - Will legal proceedings out the survivor?
 - Does interacting with courts or law enforcement feel safe?
- Are there justice-oriented options that can be shared, in addition to legal options?

More Resources

Advocates can learn more about safety planning with trans/nonbinary survivors:

- Supporting LGBTQ+ Stalking Victims: A Guide for Victim Advocates (SPARC & FORGE)
<https://forge-forward.org/resource/supporting-lgbtq-stalking-victims-a-guide-for-victim-advocates-sparc/>
- Safety Planning Guide
<https://forge-forward.org/resource/safety-planning-tool/>
- Weathering the Storm: Safety Planning for Natural Disasters with Trans/Nonbinary Survivors webinar:
<https://youtu.be/EGeJzv4nUPI?si=udXDftPpeni0EXJP>
- Safety Planning for Disasters and Intimate Partner Violence blog post:
<https://trans-survivors.com/2023/07/18/safety-planning-for-disasters-and-intimate-partner-violence/>



This tip sheet is part of a series focusing on medical advocacy.

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FORGE provides training and technical assistance. Contact us to learn more about providing support to trans survivors.