

# RESPONDING TO HATE CRIMES



## A COMMUNITY RESOURCE MANUAL

A Resource from the National Center for Transgender Equality  
Written 2005 and updated July 2009



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# RESPONDING TO HATE CRIMES: A COMMUNITY RESOURCE MANUAL

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# RESPONDING TO HATE CRIMES

## INTRODUCTION

Hate crimes are devastating events, both for the victim and for the community in which they occur. How we respond to them, as transgender advocates and allies, is very important. This manual provides you with some of the tools to create an effective response to a hate crime after it has happened in your community.

This manual is designed to help you develop a comprehensive and integrated response to a hate crime. This involves working with the victim, friends and family, and the media; educating law enforcement officials; and coordinating with local activists, concerned community members, and sometimes with national organizations. Addressing each of these areas is essential in order to respond effectively to hate crimes.

We strongly recommend that, before engaging in any public discussion of a crime as a hate crime, activists do their best to determine that bias was, in fact, one of the motives behind the crime.

Additionally, we also recommend that activists be aware that legal definitions of hate crimes can vary from state to state and that there are specific conditions which must occur before the federal hate crimes law applies.

### WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?

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Defined simply, a hate crime is a crime motivated by malice toward someone's identity, perceived identity, or affiliation with a specific group. A common indicator that hate is a motive is the use of slurs such as "queer" or "faggot" that attack someone's gender identity, expression or sexual orientation. (Perpetrators of hate crimes often do not distinguish between gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.) Another indicator can be heightened or extreme violence.

People and communities sometimes face multiple forms of discrimination. Hate crimes are often directed toward a transgender person's gender identity or expression, but can also be targeted toward his or her sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, citizenship status, or class. Transgender people of color, and others who experience more than one form of oppression, may be at a higher risk for hate crimes. Non-transgender people can be the victims of hate crimes because they may appear to be transgender, because they have a non-gender conforming expression or because they associate with or advocate for transgender people.

From Mara Keisling, Executive Director, National Center for Transgender Equality

It happened in Washington, DC. It can happen anywhere.

Over the course of several days in August 2003, we had two murders and another transgender woman severely injured in an attack—three seemingly unrelated crimes. There had been three additional murders of transgender women that we knew of here in the twelve preceding months.

I still remember each of the murder victims:

Mimi Young  
Ukea Davis  
Stephanie Thomas  
Bella Evangelista  
Emonie Spaulding

When I say “we” had these murders, I mean we transgender people. It really felt that way. I hadn’t known any of the victims personally before their deaths, but there was so much violence aimed at transgender people that it felt like it was aimed at all of us. Like other people, I felt numb and scared and helpless and very angry. A lot of folks came together and we all did the best we could supporting the families and friends, working with the police, managing the media, and getting to know each other, all in pretty awful, very tense circumstances.

In DC, we didn’t need to start from scratch—there had been too many hate murders and other deaths of transpeople here before, and community veterans like Earline Budd had quite a lot of experience in this horrible business. Even with experienced leaders like Earline being involved though, we were all scrambling to do things that needed to be done: vigils, media coverage, comforting the community, monitoring the police and the media. In some ways it was not a typical situation in that most transgender communities don’t face responding to three apparently unrelated hate murders in a short period of time. But in other ways it was very typical.

It was then that we knew we had to create a resource for people to use in these situations, so we could bring the lessons we learned that August to bear on subsequent situations to make the painful process of responding to hate violence a little less difficult and a lot more impactful in memory of the victims. Since that August, NCTE has too frequently received calls from activists around the country looking for assistance in responding to hate violence. Hopefully this manual will help them respond more effectively and build stronger, safer transgender communities around the country.

A couple months later I was in Baltimore for a community meeting and was asked how we had managed to get so much visibility of the DC murder victims. I replied that, with so many murders, the visibility had taken care of itself. I was stunned to hear that the community in Baltimore had counted more than ten murders in the same one year time period and there was hardly a mention in the papers.

That terrifying August I attended a vigil for Emonie Spaulding, a young transwoman the age of my son. I asked her best friend what one thing she would want people to know about Emonie. She said, “Emonie was a beautiful person and she was loved.” That has stayed with me as Emonie’s memory has stayed with her family and friends. It is our hope that this manual helps us remember Emonie and other beautiful people who are victims. But more importantly, by effectively responding to these crimes and shining light on the needless devastation they cause to victims and their whole communities, we can all continue to improve the world and save additional beautiful people from being victimized and even murdered for being who they are.

## WHAT IS A HATE CRIMES LAW?

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A hate crimes law is a law that categorizes violent crimes motivated by bias against types of people as hate crimes. These laws often provide for the tracking and recording of these crimes, training for law enforcement and sometimes for enhanced penalties for people found guilty of hate crimes. [Note: NCTE does not support penalty-enhancement bills.]

As of December 1, 2006, the following states have transgender-inclusive hate crimes laws:

- California (1998)
- Colorado (2005)
- Connecticut (2004)
- Hawai'i (2003)
- Maryland (2005)
- Minnesota (1988)
- Missouri (1999)
- New Mexico (2003)
- Pennsylvania (2002)
- Vermont (1999)

Information on hate crimes laws and links to the texts of laws can be found through the Transgender Law and Policy Institute: <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/hatecrimelaws/index.htm>.

Hate crimes laws can often be strictly limited in scope. Even when a crime is horrific, it may not meet the legal definition of a hate crime in your jurisdiction. Hate crimes laws have specific legal limitations and meanings that may be different from how advocates understand the crime. Prosecutors may also choose not to pursue a crime as a hate crime for a variety of reasons.

You do not need a hate crimes law in your area in order to discuss a crime as a hate crime if bias was clearly a motive. When working in a jurisdiction without hate crimes laws, it is helpful to refer to “hate motivated crimes.” Because the term “hate crime” has a legal definition, using it when it does not correspond to the laws in your area can be confusing to the public and troublesome for law enforcement officers. However, you are always free to educate people about the ways in which hate is a motive behind the violence that trans people face.

Ultimately, you can educate the public and law enforcement about anti-transgender discrimination and anti-transgender crime and violence even without a hate crimes law.

## **WHY CREATE A SYSTEMATIC RESPONSE TO HATE CRIMES?**

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Hate crimes against transgender people occur at alarming rates. A well-organized public response to hate violence is part of the process of making society aware of these crimes and of the bias that underlies them. Through education, it is possible to change anti-transgender social attitudes and beliefs that support violence against transgender people. Responding to a specific hate crime does not replace the need for activists to address the violence and discrimination faced by many people in everyday life.

At the same time, however, hate violence and hate crimes are attempts to hurt people not just physically, but also emotionally, psychologically and as members of a community. Hate is targeted at destroying people's identities and at dehumanizing them. Publicly responding to anti-transgender hate crimes is part of affirming the humanity of transgender people.

## **WHO IS INVOLVED IN RESPONDING TO A HATE CRIME?**

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There are a number of people to consider when responding to a hate crime, including:

- The victim of the hate crime and family members
- Law enforcement officers who are working to resolve the case
- The trans community
- The general public
- The perpetrator of the crime

We will discuss each of these in detail in the pages that follow.

Working with Hate Crime Victims, Family and Friends

In working with crime victims, families, and friends, approach all interactions with a courteous and respectful manner.

### **RESOURCE**

**For information about Victim/Witness services and advocacy that are available for victims of hate crimes, please see page 14.**

# WORKING WITH HATE CRIME VICTIMS

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Transgender victims of hate crimes need support on a number of levels, including reestablishing a sense of physical safety and control, being listened to and emotionally validated, and knowing that they are supported by their community. Assistance from the transgender community can help a victim of a hate crime feel less isolated and regain a sense of power and safety.

## WORKING WITH HATE CRIME VICTIMS

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- Your work as an advocate should be oriented toward helping the crime victim to feel safer and more in control of the situation. Allow crime victims to have plenty of time and opportunities to make informed choices about what they should do. Stress that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to feel after a crime. Assist the victim in accessing appropriate medical and mental health care and offer to go with the person if an advocate is needed or would provide a feeling of safety
- If the crime involved sexual assault and the victim is considering have a rape kit done, the advocate should try to locate a medical facility that has a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). This is a registered nurse (R.N.) who has advanced education and clinical preparation in forensic examination of sexual assault victims. SANE programs can be found at <http://www.sane-sart.com>. If the local rape crisis center is not transgender-aware, an advocate may want to offer to go with the victim to help deal with any transphobia that comes up at the medical facility.
- Offer assistance to the hate crime victim in reporting the crime to the police. Hate crime victims may be reluctant to do so for fear of being mistreated by the police. Discuss options with the crime victim, but do not pressure the person to make a report. If the crime victim has also been subject to previous and directly related harassment or crimes, the person should consider reporting those incidents, also. Offer to assist by accompanying them if they would prefer it.
- Be prepared to do some educational work with the police (see pages 12-14). Police may be uneducated about trans hate crimes and may lack awareness of basic principles of respect towards trans people.
- Help the victim find ways to feel safe and supported by accessing networks of friends, family, community resources, and trans-educated counselors and crisis services. Community crisis programs may also need transgender education.
- An advocate may want to call around to community crisis service programs and assess their level of transgender awareness and find out what types of services they provide.
- Help victims consider whether to speak with the press, and, if they decide to do so, to prepare for interviews and other media contacts (see pages 20-25). While media attention to a hate crime is often painful for a victim, publicity may help rally the community or locate the perpetrator.
- Help victims learn about their legal rights and locate transgender-aware representation if needed. Contact national transgender organizations or local GLBT bar associations for referrals (see page 19).
- Assist the victim in connecting with victim’s rights groups and state or federal victim/witness assistance programs.

Community activism may not be appropriate for all victims of hate crimes. The extent of community involvement will vary from person to person depending on personality, time, resources and other forms of support that are available. Decisions about reporting the crime and about working with community activists should ultimately be left up to the individual crime victim(s).

## **WORKING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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Families and friends may be important sources of support for victims of hate crimes and for activists. If possible, first discuss with the crime victim whether or not to work with family and friends.

Keep in mind that family members and friends can also be deeply traumatized by hate crimes. Family and friends should be approached with care and respect. You may find it helpful to work with all or only some of the family and friends. Who you choose to work with depends heavily on whether or not family and friends are willing to be supportive of the crime victim.

Remember that different family members and friends can have very different attitudes. Their attitudes toward transgender people or the victim's transgender identity can change because of the hate crime or as a result of the education you do about transgender issues.

The following are important areas to consider when approaching family members and friends.

- Whether the victim is able express preferences about working with family and friends
- Whether family and friends know the victim's transgender identity
- How the family feels about the victim's transgender identity
- How the family feels about transgender people in general
- Who the crime victim considers a family member
- Religious beliefs and practices
- Language differences
- Race and ethnicity
- Cultural beliefs and practices
- Economic status

## **APPROACHING FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

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If the victim has died or is unavailable, one representative of your group should make an initial approach. In order to develop a positive relationship to family and friends, you should carefully:

- Gauge the level of acceptance the family has toward the crime victim's transgender identity. Remember that attitudes among family members may differ from person to person.
- Find out how verbal and visible the family wants to be in organizing activities that follow the hate crime.
- Determine whether the family is willing to talk to the media. Help the family develop talking points when working with the media and remind the family members that they can refuse to answer questions and be very selective about whom they speak with.
- Make note of what name the family wants used when referring to the victim. In general, activists should use the name that the victim prefers and uses publicly. However, family members may prefer a different one to be used. Activists should be prepared to respectfully engage in dialogue with family members about their reasons for wanting a different name to be used for the victim and about the importance of honoring the victim's lived identity. Check with the victim, if possible, to see what she/he prefers.



- Determine the family’s familiarity with transgender issues and terminology. It may be appropriate to share information about transgender people with them.
- Find out if the family members wish to meet with other members of the transgender community.
- If the crime victim has been killed, discuss the family’s plans for a funeral or other plans they have for remembering the victim. Ask whether they are planning a private remembrance or if the community may participate in mourning their loved one. If needed, you may consider referring them to the local Victim/Witness Office for help in applying for assistance or reimbursement of funeral/burial expenses.
- Discuss holding a vigil for the victim and how the family wants to participate.
- Let the family take the lead role in any police investigation. The transgender community should follow the family’s lead and should be willing to terminate contact with the family if requested.

Even if certain family members and friends object to a public discussion of transgender hate crimes, you can still pursue a process of educating the public so long as you treat the hate crime victim and the immediate family with the utmost respect. Do not attempt to speak on behalf of the family without clear permission.

## **RELIGION, LANGUAGE, RACE, ETHNICITY, CULTURE, AND ECONOMIC STATUS**

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Working with crime victims, family members and friends requires attention to many parts of people’s identities, beliefs, practices and social and economic situations.

Poverty and economic vulnerability may affect a crime victim’s willingness to report a crime or to seek public attention. Family members and friends may be similarly affected in their willingness to work with activists around the hate crime.

With the crime victim’s assistance, if possible, you may wish to contact the victim’s local religious community (church, synagogue, temple or other institution) and/or local cultural organizations. Religious and cultural groups can often provide support, forums for organizing and education, and information on religious and cultural beliefs and appropriate practices.

If translation services are needed in order to communicate with family members or friends, local religious or cultural groups may be able to provide assistance. An important part of demonstrating respect for crime victims and families is correctly spelling and pronouncing names and taking the time to communicate carefully.

More broadly, activists will need to develop, over time, a degree of cultural competency. Cultural competency is more than just cultural awareness or sensitivity. It involves recognizing and correcting one’s own biases and changing one’s behaviors to accommodate different cultural beliefs, conventions, and values. In order to begin developing basic cultural competency, stay alert to how a wide range of interactions take place so that you can begin understanding basic cultural practices, such as whether or not it is appropriate to take off one’s shoes before entering a house, or whether it is respectful to enter a place of worship with one’s head uncovered.

There are also more complex cultural patterns; for example, in cultures in which direct confrontation is typically avoided and in which people seek consensus rather than negotiation and debate, it may be vital to avoid seeming “pushy” and recognize that an uncompromising attitude may be viewed quite negatively. Cultural competency is an important skill for activists to master as they work to bridge communication gaps between trans people (who often have more than one community in which they function), the victim’s own various communities, the police, and the media.

# DEALING WITH THE PERPETRATOR

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In responding to a hate crime, you will most likely have situations in which you will be called upon to speak about the perpetrator. In some instances, you may have to deal with him or her face to face, such as in a courtroom setting. This can be unsettling and fraught with emotion. Think carefully about how you will respond.

In general, when asked to speak about the perpetrator, a good guideline is to speak about what the perpetrator did and not about who he or she is. Avoid all stereotypes of race, socioeconomic status, religion or other characteristics. Remember that this person may well have family members who are grieved and troubled by this crime as well. You can condemn acts of violence and call for accountability for those who perpetrate crimes without doing violence yourself.

## RESOURCE

**In some states and jurisdictions, a victim may choose to participate in an alternative form of action, such as a Restorative Justice program. While relatively rare in the United States, they do exist and provide opportunities for the victim and perpetrator to come together and heal their differences in a safe environment. This program must be entered into by both parties entirely voluntarily and both must share the goal of bringing about reconciliation. The perpetrator must take responsibility for his/her crime and take action to restore the situation. See [www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org) for more information.**

# WORKING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

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After a police report of a crime has been made, you may need to work with law enforcement.

Law enforcement personnel include a wide range of individuals who work within the criminal justice system, including police officers, prosecutors, and victim advocates who work with the district attorney's office. Developing positive channels of communication and education with police officers and prosecutors allows you to make law enforcement officials aware that transgender people deserve equal protection and respectful treatment from police and the criminal justice system. A positive relationship also sets the stage for any future work on crime prevention.

Some law enforcement personnel may have only limited or predominantly negative contact with transgender people and a limited knowledge of transgender issues.

If the crime does not appear to be taken seriously, law enforcement personnel should be reminded of the following principles:

- Even in jurisdictions without hate crimes laws, criminal law protects and applies to transgender people in the same way that it protects and applies to non-transgender people.
- Being a transgender person is not a crime, nor is being transgender an invitation to theft, sexual assault, or other forms of violence.
- A transgender person should not be assumed to be involved in prostitution or other sex work.
- A transgender person who is involved in sex work is nonetheless also deserving of protection from crime, including sexual assault.

Your first point of contact may be the officer in charge of the investigation. Your communications about the crime, the investigation, and about subsequent opportunities to educate local law enforcement officials are likely to begin with that officer. The investigating officer will most likely be the person through whom you initially contact different parts of the police department, if the department has, for example, a gay and lesbian or GLBT liaison unit.

## ASSIST THE POLICE BY OFFERING

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- **Information:** Provide all information that you think will help the investigation. If you have evidence that hate was a motive behind the crime, bring it to the investigating officer's attention. Your role is to provide information; be aware that it is up to the investigating officer and prosecutors to determine whether the crime is legally considered a hate crime.
- **Contacts:** Offer to assist the police in making contacts within the transgender community that might be helpful in the investigation.
- **Training:** Offer to provide a training to police on trans issues.

## ASK THE POLICE TO

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- **NOT blame the victim or add insult to injury:** The police should treat the crime, the victim and the transgender community seriously and respectfully. Ask that they keep in mind that the victims, regardless of their gender identity or expression, did not “deserve” the crime or bring it on themselves. Ask that they use respectful language (transsexual or transgender, not “he-she” or “tranny”), chosen names, correct genders, and correct pronouns.
- **Give you the opportunity to educate:** If the police are uncomfortable or confused about transgender issues, ask that they allow you to help educate, train, and provide resources to them. The educational needs of law enforcement personnel can range from basic
- “Transgender 101,” in which you explain what transgender means and address myths and stereotypes about transgender people, to more detailed discussion of the social, economic, and civil rights issues faced by transgender communities. Add resource box for Teaching Transgender
- **Discuss ways to prevent future hate crimes:** Ask that the police work with you and local or national organizations to figure out strategies to prevent future hate crimes. Ask them to send a clear message to the larger community that the police have no tolerance for hate crimes and to help you reach out and educate people about transgender issues.
- **Respect the privacy concerns of transgender individuals.**

If a victim feels that the police are not taking the crime as seriously as they should or are being abusive to the victim, the individual should consult with a victim/witness advocate, a community anti-violence group or an attorney as soon as possible.

## WHAT IF A POLICE OFFICER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR A HATE CRIME?

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Police officers do not have the right to harass, assault or rape anyone in their custody and are subject to the laws of their jurisdiction. When a crime is committed by a police officer, you have the right to report that crime to the police review commission, to that officer’s superiors, and to your elected representatives.

## EDUCATING LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL ON PRIVACY

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The privacy of transgender people should be respected in the same way as that of non-transgender people. This applies during both the criminal investigation and any subsequent trial.

Hate crime victims and/or their advocates should raise their privacy concerns with police and courthouse staff as early as possible in order to increase the likelihood that such concerns will be addressed.

## PRIVACY DURING THE INVESTIGATION:

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- Police officers should not ask for intimate details of a person’s anatomy or sexual conduct unless clearly required as part of a criminal investigation.
- Identity documents should not be demanded in order to “prove” sex or gender identity, and detentions or searches should not be conducted to determine an individual’s sex or gender without strong, clear and legitimate reasons.

- Because transgender people remain vulnerable to social prejudice and discrimination, it is important to preserve the privacy of a transgender individual's gender identity during and after a criminal investigation.

## **PRIVACY IN THE COURTROOM**

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*Adapted from Chris Daley, Some Courtroom Concerns of the Transgender Community, Transgender Law Center.*

- For someone who does not openly identify as transgender, there is a reasonable fear that their transgender status will be revealed to other people in the courtroom. It is possible that someone else in the courtroom may only know this person by the name and in the gender he or she is asking the court to recognize. It is very important that transgender people are shown respect by being addressed by the correct name and pronoun.
- In rare cases, the gender of the transgender person is a contested fact in a case. More often, however, it is not. Even in cases where it is a contested fact, there is no reason that a transgender person should be addressed by an old name or a birth-assigned gender. However, it is common for some party in the courtroom (the judge, an attorney, the court reporter, a bailiff, etc.) to address a transgender person by the wrong name or pronoun out of ignorance or bias. In addition to personally showing respect to transgender people in the courtroom, a judge should use the transgender person's preferred name and pronoun, and request (and, if necessary, require) that everyone else do the same.

### **RESOURCE**

**The United States Department of Justice has a program called the Office for Victims of Crime. Their sole focus is assisting victims. They have a number of resources available, including training programs, information for victims about their rights and more. See <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc> for more information.**

## **WORKING WITH THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AND A VICTIM/WITNESS ADVOCATE**

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Once the investigation has been completed, the police detective(s) will submit the report to the District Attorney's (DA) Office to determine if there will be a prosecution. You can assist the victim and/or family by speaking with the Deputy DA reviewing the report. If charges are filed, a victim/witness advocate should be assigned to work with the victim and/or family through the court process.

The victim/witness advocate can help to explain the court system, set up appointments or interviews with the Deputy DA assigned to the case, and assist with completion of the Victim of Crime paperwork and restitution.

A victim/witness advocate can also assist with the special needs of the client and serve as a liaison to the DA. A victim/witness advocate may also work with concerned community organizations and activists.

## **VICTIM/WITNESS PROGRAMS AND ADVOCATES**

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Programs to help crime victims and witnesses exist in all counties. If a crime is federal, then it is best to contact the local Department of Justice office or the Attorney General's Office and ask for the victim services unit.

Typically, victim/witness programs are found in the District Attorney's Office, the Probation Department or in various non-profit organizations. They will be able to assign an advocate to help crime victims and family members work with the criminal justice system.

Victims and/or family members should contact the victim/witness program of the county in which the crime was committed. Victims and/or family members can still request an advocate to help, even before a suspect is charged with the crime. A good rapport with an advocate can be helpful in many ways and, after a criminal investigation, the victim/witness advocate is often the only consistent contact a victim or family member will have throughout the criminal court process.

Victim/witness advocates provide services that include:

- crisis intervention
- providing case status information
- guiding people through the criminal justice system
- assisting in the crime victim restitution process
- assisting in the victim of crime application
- court support
- employer notification and intervention
- direct counseling
- property return
- notification of family and friends
- transportation assistance

Advocates may also provide other services. Most of these services are provided to crime victims after charges have been filed by District Attorney's office in the county the crime was committed. However, victim/witness advocates can assist victims of crime with applications and referrals, even if a crime is not ultimately charged.

# WORKING WITH THE TRANS COMMUNITY

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Community organizing is an essential part of responding to hate crimes and preventing them in the future. Visible political organizing can help make it clear to law enforcement personnel, political and community leaders, the media, and the community more generally that people care what happens to transgender individuals. This can lead to a better atmosphere for transgender people and to concrete organizational and legislative changes for transgender rights.

Community organizing can mean both gathering concerned individuals within the community and bringing together community, state-wide and national groups. This section addresses how and why to organize community meetings, speak-outs, rallies, and vigils. It also addresses issues to consider when local activists work with national organizations.

Be respectful of the needs of the victim. Community organizing can be a balancing act between respecting the privacy and safety of the victim and publicly responding to violence in your community.

## WORKING LOCALLY

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Anti-transgender hate crimes affect many people in the community in many different ways. It is important to create avenues that allow people to feel connected to the community response. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Keep people informed with accurate, timely information. You might create an email list and/or phone tree to distribute information regarding the crime and the victim's status and to keep people updated on community responses. You can also pass information on to local organizations to distribute to their members.
- Give people a chance to be heard. Hold a community meeting, a "speak-out," or a rally where people can gather and respond both emotionally and politically to the hate crime.
- Allow people to grieve. In the case of a death, hold a vigil where people can mourn the victim.
- Create meaningful opportunities for people to take action. Hate crimes can serve as a motivator for us to make our communities safer in the future.

## LOCAL ACTIONS AND EVENTS

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Actions and events can and should be used to increase support and visibility for your community's response to the hate crime in question. Actions also provide spaces for people to come together and express their emotions about an incident, or call on community leaders to create change. Following are some sample actions that your community can take.

For all types of local actions and events, you will need to balance two important concerns. Actions and events should happen in a timely fashion, as soon as it is clear what kind of community response is needed. At the same time, however, you will need to do advance planning and publicity.

## **Community Meeting**

Community meetings give trans people and allies an opportunity to discuss local incidents and organized responses. They also provide space for people who are looking to get more involved in a community response to find more information and participate in the process. At the same time, they provide opportunities for public education and awareness.

The purpose of community meetings is to share information and to plan an organized response from the community. They can also be times to address the community's needs after a hate crime.

After a hate crime in the community, people often feel vulnerable or afraid. To address these concerns, you might also hold a community meeting to provide discussion time with a mental health professional who has experience in crisis intervention or to hold a self-defense training. These steps can help people regain some of the confidence they lost and gain skills to deal with future crises.

## **Public Events**

Speak-outs, rallies, and vigils pull the community together and give people a forum to voice anger, frustration, grief and fear. They can work in conjunction with community meetings, which allow for organizing and planning, by providing forums for public expression. Like community meetings, they can also help to educate people about the problem of anti-trans violence and get people involved in working on solutions to this problem.

When holding a public event of any kind, it is important to pay attention to the following things:

- Locate an easily found location that is accessible to public transportation and to people with different levels of mobility.
- Obtain any necessary permits you may need from your local government.
- Make sure that people will be able to hear and be heard; you may need to find a sound system that you can use. You may also need to locate American Sign Language interpreters or language translators to be sure that everyone can participate fully.
- Give people as much notice as is possible for the event.
- Disseminate your publicity as widely as you can, reaching as many people as you can. E-lists, phone trees, flyers, newspaper listings and websites are an excellent way to do this.
- Make a security plan in which you decide how you act if the media is present, if there are disruptive people or if the police seek to stop the event. You should designate security volunteers ahead of time. You may also wish to be in communication with sympathetic local law enforcement.

Below are ideas for three kinds of events that you might hold. These three types of action can have very different tones and can be organized in very different ways. Be sure to choose an event that will work best for you and your community. For example, a rally requires a large number of people to have maximum public visibility and impact. Speak-outs and vigils can be smaller but also have strong symbolic meanings and provide a space for emotional reactions to a hate crime.



### ***Public Speak-Outs***

A speak-out is an event that allows local communities to come together and speak openly about their thoughts and feelings regarding a hate crime and general treatment of trans people in the community.

Speak-outs provide safe places to express these emotions and allow for information-sharing between members of the community. They can also serve as a way for the media to hear more from the community, although you may choose to not have media present. The purpose of a speak out is to allow people to openly share a variety of perspectives on what happens in order to raise public awareness of the issues.

### ***Rallies***

A well-organized, energetic public rally can make it clear to the media, local officials, and the general public that a large number of people are actively concerned about hate crimes and are demanding change. Both the size and the content of a rally are important. Rallies can generate a great deal of excitement about fighting for social and political change.

The purpose of a rally is to send a targeted message to the public by drawing many people and media attention.

### ***A Vigil***

Vigils are memorials for people that have been victims of hate crimes. They are often held at the site of the crime or some place that was important to the victim. The purpose of a vigil is to provide a space for people to grieve the loss of a friend, family member, or community member.

## **THE TECHNOLOGY DIVIDE**

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It is helpful to pay attention to the differences between people's access to technology. The internet has opened opportunities for communities to organize, but many people may have irregular, limited, or no access to computers, or may be unaware that they can use the computers in their public library. Some parts of the community may rely on getting information through phone trees, leaders in their social circle, and/or flyers in their local neighborhood.

## Meeting and Event Planning Worksheet

Purpose of the meeting:

*Define in 1-2 sentences what the purpose of your event or meeting is.*

What are your goals?

*What specifically do you want to accomplish by the end of the event/meeting?*

- 
- 
- 
- 

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### What location will you use?

Do you need a permit for that location?  Yes  No      If yes, where do you get it?

Is the location handicapped accessible?  Yes  No

**Will you need microphones or a sound system?**  Yes  No

Is one installed in the facility?  Yes  No      Do you have permission to use it?  Yes  No

If not, where will you get one? \_\_\_\_\_

Which languages do you need translated? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will you contact for interpreters/translators? \_\_\_\_\_

### How will you publicize the event?

Is there a website you can use?  Yes  No      Who could create one? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will coordinate publicity? \_\_\_\_\_

### Who will lead the meeting?

Facilitator:

Speakers:

- 
- 
- 

What topics will you cover?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**Are there other supplies that you need?**

For example, candles for a vigil, brochures for an anti-violence organization, etc.

**People to contact:**

Name	Phone	E-mail	Contacted

## THE ROLE OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Working with national organizations may bring additional resources to the table. These resources can include staff, expertise, national contacts, greater political clout, media attention, and money. Responses to hate violence in your community should be driven by the needs of the local community, as well as the needs of the victim.

When resources from national organizations are brought in, we recommend that you:

- Be clear with national organizations about community wants and needs.
- Keep the majority of media attention focused on local people and activities.
- Ask national organizations to focus their resources on building local institutions and resources.

### ***National Organizations to Contact***

These national organizations all work with transgender people and may be helpful to you.

#### **National Center for Transgender Equality**

NCTE is a social justice organization dedicated to advocating for the equality of transgender people.

[www.nctequality.org](http://www.nctequality.org)

202.903.0112

#### **Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation**

GLAAD promotes fair, accurate and inclusive media representation of LGBT people and events.

[www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)

Los Angeles: 323.933.2240 New York: (212) 629-3322

#### **National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs**

NCAVP provides support to communities currently responding to violence.

[www.ncavp.org](http://www.ncavp.org)

212.714.1184

#### **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**

The Task Force is a national progressive organization working for the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

[www.nglhf.org](http://www.nglhf.org)

202.639.6308

#### **National Youth Advocacy Coalition**

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition is a social justice organization that advocates for and with young people.

[www.nyacyouth.org](http://www.nyacyouth.org)

202.319.7596

# REACHING THE GENERAL PUBLIC

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*Information found in this section has been adapted from resources of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), with permission and gratitude.*

You will primarily interact with the general public in response to a hate crime through the news media. It is important to remember that your message is not just to a reporter but to the people who see, hear or read the resulting story. Below are a number of ways for you to reach the people in your local area by connecting with the news media.

Media coverage in response to a hate crime brings widespread recognition to the very serious problem of violence against transgender people. However, media coverage can be inaccurate, uninformed, and disrespectful. Too often, friends, family and transgender community members feel that this unfair and unbalanced media coverage further degrades the victim of a hate crime. It is important to work with local and national media in order to ensure fair, accurate and inclusive reporting of anti-transgender violence.

The victim, community organizers, family, and/or friends can be selective about working with the media. You can decide in advance which media outlets you want to work with. In planning whom to work with, for example, you might choose to avoid media outlets that have a history of sensationalizing transgender people. Or a victim may refuse to have direct and potentially negative contact with that media outlet, and send a press release, instead. On the other hand, you may choose to spend your energies developing strong positive relationships with sympathetic media outlets.

This section emphasizes ways you can work with the media to promote a positive, unbiased message about the hate crime and about transgender people and communities.

In educating the media about transgender people and issues, remind them that fair reporting includes the following characteristics:

- It identifies individuals by their chosen name and gender and uses appropriate pronouns.
- It uses accurate terminology and language that reflects transgender individuals' identities and life experiences without sensationalizing or pathologizing them.
- It avoids prejudices, stereotypes and misconceptions, such as the belief that a non-transgender sexual partner must have been “tricked” into a relationship with a transgender person.
- It uses up-to-date information about transgender communities, medical issues, politics, legislation, and civil rights from transgender organizations to correct possible misconceptions.

## **MEDIA'S USE OF LANGUAGE**

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Standards for journalistic writing can be found in stylebooks such the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook. In 2006, the Associated Press updated their recommendations for covering transgender people:

Use the pronoun preferred by the individuals who have acquired the physical characteristics of the opposite sex or present themselves in a way that does not correspond with their sex at birth.

If that preference is not expressed, use the pronoun consistent with the way the individuals live publicly.

## ORGANIZING WITH THE MEDIA

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Four common ways of taking action with the media are through media advisories, press releases, Op-eds and press conferences. Media advisories are generally used to inform the media of an upcoming event or press conference, and provide only basic “advisory” information. Press releases allow you to provide the media with background and commentary on news items and relevant quotes from individuals and institutions. Op-eds are opinion pieces for print media intended for you to express your positions on issues, people or events. Press conferences allow you to work directly with the media, share your positions on an issue, and answer questions from the media.

### MEDIA ADVISORIES AND PRESS RELEASES

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For both media advisories and press releases:

- Always include the phone number of a designated media contact so that reporters can easily follow up.
- Stay brief, to-the-point, and preferably within one page.
- Head the page with the release date. Writing “For Immediate Release” will indicate that the media can use the information immediately. If you want to delay the release of information to the public, use an embargo date instead: “Embargoed for Release Until Time and [Date].”
- Close all releases/advisories with an endstamp (a symbol that indicates the end of the document), such as “###.”
- Make sure that your media contact has received the material. Be prepared to send another copy if requested, provide more information, or discuss the contents.

#### Media Advisory

*(See Sample, page 23)*

In a media advisory, address each of the following points:

- **What:** What kind of event will you be holding, and what is its purpose? (e.g., a press conference to address the recent rise in hate crimes in Washington, DC).
- **Who:** Who will be speaking, presenting or in attendance? Highlight high-profile figures such as politicians, celebrities, academics, or local or national activists.
- **When:** Indicate the time and date of the event.
- **Where:** Indicate the exact address and cross streets of the event, unless location is well known and unambiguous (e.g., on the steps of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, DC).
- **Why:** Note briefly the relevance of the issue and any compelling statistics (e.g., “Hate crimes are on the rise throughout the country. Our local community has seen five anti-transgender hate crimes in the past three years.”).
- **How:** Include event contact information (often different from the media contact information).

#### Press Release

(See Sample, page 25)

A press release can be written in the following way:

- **First Paragraph:** State the issue in question directly. Identify who, what, where, when, and why to be as clear as possible.
- **Body Paragraph(s):** State your main points in order of importance. Briefly provide essential supporting data and quotes by your designated spokesperson.
- **Final Paragraph:** Provide basic information about your organization.

## OP-ED

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Develop an op-ed in the following way:

- Focus on no more than two main points, providing supporting details for each.
- Check the editorial guidelines of the venue for word limits. Op-eds are generally 500-800 words.
- Anticipate deadlines. Plan for an op-ed review process that can take up to 10 days.
- Be clear about your timing: when is the ideal time for your op-ed to be published?
- Think about what tone the op-ed should be written in, and who should write it. What messages will the tone and the writer's identity or institutional affiliation send?

## SENDING INFORMATION TO THE MEDIA

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- Fax, or a combination of fax and email, is the best method to send advisories, releases, and op-eds to the media. Email alone can be ineffective. You can locate fax numbers and email addresses on most media outlets' websites or mastheads.
- Follow up with a phone call to make sure your item was received and to answer any questions. A phone call is especially important when you are trying to get the media to attend specific events such as press conferences. Make your follow-up calls in the morning; journalists are typically on deadline in the afternoons and they may not be receptive to a phone call.
- Learn the deadlines for submissions and how they correspond to upcoming issues of a newspaper.

## PRESS CONFERENCES

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Press conferences are a good way to get media coverage on a particular hate incident and to ensure that the media is paying attention to the community reaction and response.

Smooth and careful organization is essential for a press conference: a disorganized and poorly planned event will have the press question your professionalism and put into doubt whether they will contact you about stories in the future.

### Timing and Planning

A press conference should last no more than 30 minutes. However, there should be substantial planning at least one week before the event. Below is a detailed breakdown of how to plan a press conference:

#### One Week Before Press Conference

- Reserve a room. Choose one that will accommodate your expected audience but will not look empty if attendance is low.
- Pick a convenient date and time. Usually days in the middle of the week and between 10 am and 2 pm are best.
- Prepare written materials, including written statements and press kits.
- Create any visuals for cameras and video that illustrate your message.
- Check on audio/microphones and electrical outlets for the event.

#### Three Days Before AND the Day Before

- Send out written announcements to:
  - Assignment desks for television
  - Radio and newspapers
  - Alternative press
  - Weekly calendars
  - Other supportive groups

#### The Day Before

- Decide firmly on the order of speakers and their topics.
- Call all prospective media and encourage their attendance.
- Send a media advisory to the wire services so that you will be listed in their “daybooks” (a daily listing of press conferences and events).
- Walk through the site so that you are familiar with it.
- Type up materials for press packets including names and titles of speakers.
- Assign liaisons to greet press people and hand out press packets.

#### That Morning:

- Make last minute calls to assignment desks and desk editors.
- Double-check the room.
- Rehearse the press conference with the principal speakers.



During the press conference:

- Have a sign-in sheet for reporters' names and addresses.
- Hand out press kits, including a written list of participants.
- Arrange one-on-one interviews on request.

### **Model Press Conference Structure**

Overall Style:

- Maintain a professional appearance.
- Stay focused on your key points.
- Be aware of time. Reporters and journalists are usually working on strict deadlines.
- Be concise and direct, and use plain language.
- Remember that you are communicating to the public.

Overall Agenda:

- Open with an introduction, thanks to sponsors, and the general message.
- Describe the issue.
- Speakers present for 2 to 3 minutes, each with a clearly defined message.
- Invite questions. Answers should be informative, but concise and stay on the message. Do not get into arguments or debates.
- Finish by directing the press to where they can get additional information.
- Distribute handouts.

### **PRESS KITS**

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You may wish to create a press kit to be distributed to the media. A press kit gives journalists materials to refer to when writing their story after the press conference.

A press kit may contain the following items:

- **Organization Fact Sheet and Contact Sheet:** a one-page sheet about your organization, including contact information for the designated press spokesperson. If you are not part of a formal organization, this could be a few paragraphs about your group and why you came together along with your contact information.
- Copies of any other articles about the crime, if there has been previous media coverage.
- Your press release.
- A one-page fact sheet on transgender hate crimes: this might include statistics from the most recent National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs National LGBT Hate Crimes Report (available online at [www.ncavp.org](http://www.ncavp.org)).
- The Associated Press Stylebook recommendation for covering transgender people, noted at the start of this chapter.
- A copy of the statement from the victim or family member, if available.

Sample Media Advisory

MEDIA ADVISORY

For Friday, December 2, 2005

Contact: Simon Aronoff, (202) 903-0112, saronoff@nctequality.org

## Vigil to Honor Murder Victim \_\_\_\_\_, Local Transgender Woman

(Washington, DC) – Family and friends of \_\_\_\_\_, joined by members of the local transgender community, will gather for a candlelight vigil at the site of her murder. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, a 24-year old transgender woman was murdered early this morning on the 2000 block of Main Street.

Transgender women are harassed, attacked and murdered with horrifying frequency in Springfield. Nationally, it is estimated that one transgender woman is murdered each month in a hate crime.

Police are still investigating Ms. \_\_\_\_\_'s murder. A second victim injured in the attack was treated and released earlier today.

What: Vigil to honor slain transgender woman \_\_\_\_\_

Where: 2012 Main Street  
Springfield

When: Friday, December 2, 2005, at 6:00 PM

Speakers: Maria Hernandez, Springfield Transgender Coalition  
Mara Keisling, National Center for Transgender Equality

Editors: For resources on how to accurately and fairly portray transgender people in the media, please visit Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's resources at [http://www.glaad.org/media/resource\\_kit\\_detail.php?id=3061](http://www.glaad.org/media/resource_kit_detail.php?id=3061)

###

Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

For Friday, December 2, 2005

Media Contacts:

Christopher Daley, Co-Director

Transgender Law Center

(415) 771-7304

Justice for Gwen Delayed, Not Denied

Coalition of Eight Local, State and National LGBT Groups

Frustrated by Mistrial But Optimistic

(San Francisco, CA) — Twenty months after the brutal slaying of Gwen Araujo, a transgender teenager from Newark, the jury deadlocked on whether her attackers were guilty of first or second degree murder. According to the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, none of the jurors were willing to settle for the lesser offense of manslaughter—despite efforts by defense attorneys in the case to argue that Gwen's killers were somehow justified because she did not disclose her transgender identity to them. The prosecutor already has stated that he will re-try the three defendants: Michael Magidson, Jose Merel, and Jason Cazares, for murder.

"Because the defense team tried to make this a trial about Gwen's gender identity instead of the defendants' conduct, a lot of us were anxious about this verdict," said Christopher Daley, Co-Director of the Transgender Law Center. "Even though I am disappointed by the delay in achieving justice for Gwen, I am heartened that these jurors refused to let these young men escape responsibility for their horrific choices."

Representatives from Community United Against Violence, Equality California, Gay-Straight Alliance Network, The Horizons Foundation, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, San Francisco LGBT Community Center, and the Transgender Law Center thank the Alameda County District Attorney's office for their diligent efforts in prosecuting Gwen's murderers and their determination to not rest until justice is done.

"We are relieved that the prosecutor is committed to retrying these defendants," said Tina D'Elia, Hate Violence Prevention Program Director at Community United Against Violence. "This is the first prosecution of a hate crime against a transgender person under California's hate crime statute," D'Elia added. "This case confirms the need for such a law. I am sure that the jury's refusal to buy into the so-called 'transgender panic' defense will offer some comfort to Gwen's family because the jury recognized Gwen's humanity and stayed focused on the facts."

This case also highlights the importance of protecting transgender youth. "One of the most profound lessons that must be learned from Gwen's murder is that hate crimes are preventable and education is the key to prevention," said Carolyn Lamb, Executive Director of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network. "Students, parents, teachers, administrators and advocates need to continue to push California school districts to implement effective transgender inclusive anti-bias curriculum at all age levels."

People interested in supporting efforts to eliminate anti-transgender bias from Bay Area public schools are encouraged to make financial contributions to the Gwen Araujo Memorial Fund by visiting [www.horizonsfoundation.org](http://www.horizonsfoundation.org) or calling Julie Dori at (415) 398-2333, ext. 103

###

Tina D'Elia, Program Director

Community United Against Violence

(415) 773-5506 x364

Carolyn Lamb, Executive Director

Gay-Straight Alliance Network

(435) 552-4220

## RESPONDING TO HATE CRIMES CONCLUSION

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Hate crimes committed against transgender people have both a chilling and galvanizing effect on our community. They cause us to recoil in fear, or to collapse in grief, yet they may also cause us to rise up in anger or resolve. It is extremely important that we, as activists, react to these events with every appropriate emotion, and also with carefully planned actions.

While the media, police, or even local officials may portray us as deserving of whatever violence befalls us, we must be able to react to this kind of further abuse as a community and in ways that are constructive, clearly demonstrating the very best principles of dignity, justice, and humanity. We must be ready and able to make the connections between communities and ideologies that are necessary to awaken in others a desire to join us in our resistance to violence. We also must be ready and able to step forward as proud transgender people to help other communities fight injustices that they face, too, to build coalitions and ongoing partnerships that will strengthen our cause, as well as the cause of social justice.

Hate-motivated violence stems from a wide range of sources, including pervasive bigotry, misdirected anger and irrational fears. We can combat hate over the long term through both education and legislation. We need to reinforce attitudes and behavior that create a social atmosphere of understanding, acceptance, and respect for all people.

We hope this manual will aid in this effort of responding to violence motivated by bias. When we work together, we can bring humanity and compassion to a community in a time of need and hopefully create a better and safer society for us all.

### RESOURCE

**The Remembering Our Dead website has faithfully recorded the available names and information of trans people who have been murdered as a result of hate crimes and other acts of violence.**

**There is information on their website about those who have been killed as well as resources for activists. See <http://www.gender.org/remember/index.html#> for more information.**



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(202) 903-0112 ▪ [ncte@nctequality.org](mailto:ncte@nctequality.org) ▪ [www.nctequality.org](http://www.nctequality.org)