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Article

Abuse Prevention for Gender-Inclusive Environments

Madison Rojas • July 31, 2023

As organizations entrusted with the care of minors and vulnerable adults know all too well, sexual abuse remains a serious issue affecting millions of individuals each year. Particularly vulnerable is the LBGTQ+ community. Studies show that those over the age of sixteen are nearly four times more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to experience violent victimization, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault.[1]

Within the LGBTQ+ population, the statistics for transgender and gender-expansive individuals are particularly alarming. Per a 2018 Human Rights Campaign Foundation report nearly 70% percent of youth in this category have received unwanted sexual comments, jokes, and gestures.[2] A staggering 55% of transgender males and 47% of transgender females have experienced physical threats or harm directly related to their gender identity and 32% of nonbinary youth have also faced similar threats or harm due to their gender identity. [3]

Considering these risks, Beazley has collaborated with Praesidium, the national leader in abuse risk management of sexual abuse of vulnerable populations, to provide access to expert knowledge and targeted solutions to help Safeguard policyholders strengthen their gender-inclusive abuse prevention efforts.

What is gender inclusivity?

Gender inclusivity is the practice of creating environments and experiences that are welcoming, affirming, and accessible to people of all gender presentations, identities, and expressions. Gender inclusivity is often understood in contrast to cisgender-normativity, which refers to the assumption that everyone is cisgender (their gender identity matches the biological sex they were assigned at birth). Cisgender-normative environments can be exclusionary and even hostile to people who are transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, or non-binary. In contrast, gender-inclusive environments are designed to ensure that everyone feels safe, respected, and supported regardless

of gender identity or expression.

How can an organization assess its risk with regard to gender inclusivity?

Organizations have immense responsibility to foster safe environments for all consumers served, including transgender and gender-expansive individuals, particularly with regard to the two primary categories of abuse: adult-to-consumer and consumer-to-consumer abuse. To mitigate this risk and prevent the sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults while upholding public trust, organizations should consider the following questions:

- How are we currently equipped to create a safe, gender-inclusive environment?
- What changes may be needed to reach or obtain our goal of a safe, gender-inclusive environment?
- What local or state laws are in place that may either support our efforts and/or impact any policy changes? Have we included perspectives from key stakeholders (i.e., legal counsel, board leadership, insurance carrier, funders, members of LGBTQ+ community)?

How can organizations strengthen their gender-inclusivity and abuse prevention programs?

Abuse prevention strategies should aim to minimize or mitigate opportunities for access, privacy, or control and proactively manage and supervise higher-risk activities. The following are minimum expectations designed to mitigate risk and prevent abuse within organizations:

- Implement and standardize policies on boundaries.
- Screen for abuse risk beyond conducting background checks.
- Deliver the right training at the right time for the right audience.
- Emphasize effective monitoring and supervision practices.
- Implement systems for responding and reporting internally and externally.

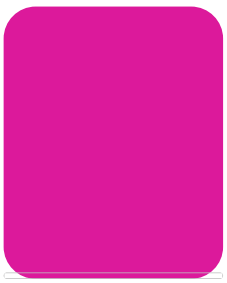
Beyond these basics, organizations should focus on the following tools to ensure they are appropriately fostering a gender-inclusive environment:

- **Policies:** Organizational policies should define clear guidelines on acceptable behavior in programming that apply to all, rather than policies that only target one group or dimension of diversity
- **Screening and selection:** In addition to assessing for abuse risk and key performance skills, evaluate each applicant’s comfort or familiarity with interacting and working in gender-inclusive environments.
- **Training:** Aim to systematically train everyone and equip them with knowledge and skills in abuse prevention and how to respond to

incidents of discrimination, harassment, and suspected abuse.

- **Monitoring and supervision:** Balance the need for consumer privacy, bodily autonomy, and integrity, with formalized monitoring and supervision procedures that manage higher-risk activities and environments.
- **Internal feedback systems:** These systems should ensure that consumers and staff have multiple methods of sharing concerns or information regarding incidents or issues of inappropriate behaviors and misconduct.
- **Consumer participation:** Provide consumers and parents/guardians with information and resources to educate and empower them on the organization's commitment to gender inclusivity and safeguarding practices.
- **Responding:** Beyond the possibility of externally reporting incidents, organizations should also appropriately respond by comforting victims, interrupting inappropriate behavior, and evaluating practices to reduce the chance of a future incident.
- **Administrative practices:** Organizations should implement standardized abuse prevention practices and respond to any drift from that standard of care and goal of gender inclusivity.

Organizations can foster safe, gender-inclusive environments for all consumers supported or served in their programs by implementing abuse prevention standards that prioritize the safety of all individuals. We challenge you to take a look at your clients organization's policies, procedures or training methods and determine what steps they can take to make their organization safer for those they serve.



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1 Andrew R. Flores et al., Victimization rates and traits of sexual and gender minorities in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017.Sci. Adv.6, eaba6910 (2020).
2 https://www.hrc.org/resources/2018-gender-expansive-youth-report
3 https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/#physical-harm%C2%A0

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