



Responding to sexual violence against trans women of colour from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:

A PRACTICE GUIDE

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide has come from research exploring experiences of sexual violence for trans women of colour from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds living in Australia. In the course of the research, trans women of colour contributed as investigators, workers, stakeholder committee members, and research participants.

The guide shares learning from the research. It is not a checklist. The learning comes from a review of existing research, and findings from interviews and photovoice with 31 trans women of colour, online posts on sexual violence experiences of trans people, and a survey of trans and cisgender women.



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Sexual violence is a pervasive and damaging experience in many women's lives. We found that trans women experience higher rates of sexual violence than cisgender women, with trans women of colour and those who are sexuality diverse at highest risk. Trans women of colour from a CALD background, as well as women who identify as lesbian, bisexual or queer, experience additional prejudice, discrimination and risk of violence due to the intersections of gender, sexuality, social class, race and religion.

There are existing guides and resources that discuss responses to sexual violence against women. Our intention is to complement these resources, identifying the strategies that can be incorporated into existing responses to address the specific needs of trans women of colour from CALD backgrounds. These include responses by policymakers, healthcare practitioners, the police and the legal profession.

RESPONDING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST TRANS WOMEN OF COLOUR

Women's specialist sexual violence services have long histories of community development and education, of providing support for women, and of encouraging self-help and self-determination. General practitioners and other healthcare professionals, as well as the police and legal profession, provide vital support for individuals who experience sexual violence. It is essential that such services and agencies are accessible and visible to and inclusive of trans women and those who are sexuality diverse, with attention paid to the needs of trans women of colour and those from a CALD background. There are positive implications for trans women's overall health and wellbeing when trans women feel included and accepted within such services. The key features of inclusion in relation to policy and practice are outlined below.

*Sexual violence is everywhere.
I've had this cloud over me that sexual violence is real and
it's happening all the time around me and it's happening
to me as well.*

Fiona

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Ensure policy and practice documents and clinical guidelines use language that is inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity when discussing sexual violence against women. This means being inclusive of transgender and non-binary gender identities, as well as queer identities.
- Ensure healthcare providers, legislators, police and policymakers are knowledgeable of the implications of the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, and other categories of difference (such as age, social class and religion) in the experiences of sexual violence for trans women of colour from a CALD background.
- Consider that trans women of colour from a CALD background who have experienced sexual violence may need greater support from the justice system when first reporting incidents of sexual violence to the police, and navigating the court processes.
- Recognise the vulnerability and needs of trans women who are sex workers when addressing sexual violence, including violence prevention, police response and support for women. As a first step, fully decriminalise sex work in every Australian state and territory.
- Properly resource policy and practice evaluation to include community interviewers in a range of languages, and surveys translated into the first language of participants and administered orally, so that the experiences and impact of sexual violence for trans women who do not speak English is collected.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

- Review intake and other forms so that they are inclusive of gender, sexuality and race.
- Train staff about gender and sexuality diversity, how to use gender neutral pronouns, how not to misgender people—and build confidence about what to do when you do misgender someone.
- Review broader service aims/models of care to consider whether or not the service is or can be inclusive of trans women, and then take steps to operationalise the outcome of the review.
- Provide non-gendered bathroom facilities, and trans and gender diverse-specific literature and health resources.
- Support gender transitioning, including through the facilitation of access to hormone therapy, which serves to reduce the risk of transphobic violence.
- Sexual violence prevention and support programs need to engage with, and be co-designed by, multicultural women's services and LGBTIQ services, as well as women leaders from CALD and queer communities.
- Ensure migrant services are accessible, visible and inclusive to trans women and those who are sexuality diverse.



*It's literally, I was at a place
where I feel at home in my
body and non-traumatised.*

Lin

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES TO ADDRESS PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS:

Inclusivity in health, sexual violence, legal and migrant support services

- Use correct name and pronouns: Ask trans women their name and pronoun: “What is your name?” and “What is your pronoun?”
- Ensure intake forms use inclusive language and collect information about how a person describes parts of their bodies. A good example of an intake form can be found below
- Ensure preferred language (e.g. title, name, gender, pronouns) is accurately recorded and utilised in follow-up visits
- When referring trans women of colour to other healthcare or support services, refer only to inclusive and safe services—for example, those with gender diversity policies
- Create affirming healthcare and support service spaces; show you care. This includes visible cues such as trans-specific literature and posters in your reception and clinic rooms, which include images of trans women of colour
- Include inclusivity statements on your webpages or social media pages (e.g. Facebook page, Twitter, Instagram)
- Ensure bathrooms are single-occupancy and gender neutral
- Provide annual trainings in transgender cultural competency for all staff. Highlight how the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, and other categories of difference (such as age, social class and religion) shape experiences of sexual violence and broader health for trans women of colour, from a CALD background. Ensure all new staff receive training within one month of hire
- Ensure hard copy and online sexual violence support websites are inclusive of trans women of colour from CALD backgrounds:
 - include diversity in images
 - use plain English
 - provide translated support materials

- list sexual assault and counselling support services that are LGBTIQ inclusive, and particularly support groups for trans women of colour
- ensure interpreters are available on request, and that this is advertised on all websites and promotional material
- outline available support for court preparation and navigation of the justice system
- Recognise and address racism and other discriminations that inhibit trans women of colour from engaging with LGBTIQ community support structures and organisations
- Ensure migrant services are accessible, visible and inclusive to trans women of colour and those who are sexuality diverse. This includes ensuring employment programs, education and training (e.g. English language lessons), migration advice and crisis services are available to support and build capacity among trans women of colour from CALD backgrounds
- Increase consultation with trans women of colour and LGBTIQ communities with planning, development and evaluation when addressing health needs, service design and delivery

Being a culturally responsive, gender-affirming and trauma-informed clinician or service provider

- Avoid making assumptions about trans women of colour and those who identify as sexuality diverse. Meet the individual needs of trans women by adopting of patient-centred care
- Be culturally responsive to the needs of trans women of colour through awareness of how culture can impact on understandings of sexual violence and affect access to, and utilisation of, sexual violence support services
- Provide adequate and accurate information to enable a person to make an informed decision regarding potential medical treatment to affirm their gender
- Ask permission before touching trans patients and give clear



information about any procedures that you need to perform

- Avoid asking invasive questions about gender, genitals or gender-affirming procedures if they are not relevant, or brought up by the patient
- Apologise if you make a mistake. For example, say, "I apologise for using the wrong pronoun/name. I did not mean to disrespect you. I'll make sure not to do it again"
- Register to be listed as a gender-affirming doctor



Helpful resources for healthcare professionals, police, and service providers that support trans women of colour

Gender affirming intake form:

https://www.transhub.org.au/s/TH_Affirming-intake-form.pdf

Best practices for frontline staff:

http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/13-017_TransBestPracticesforFrontlineStaff_v6_02-19-13_FINAL.pdf

ACON provide a trans-specific website with resources for trans people and healthcare professionals:

<https://www.transhub.org.au/>

Tips for using inclusive and respectful language:

https://transhub.org.au/s/Brochure_WordsMatter.pdf

Gender and sexuality inclusive posters:

<https://www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/news/new-posters-to-celebrate-lgbtqi-people-and-stand-up-to-discrimination>

Register to be listed as a gender-affirming doctor:

<https://www.transhub.org.au/join-doc-list>

Details on informed consent for gender-affirming medical treatment:

<https://www.transhub.org.au/clinicians/informed-consent>

Inner City Legal Service in NSW provides free, state-wide specialist legal service for transgender people who have experienced domestic violence:

https://www.iclc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/srp_tt.pdf

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ANROWS acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging. We value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and knowledge. We are committed to standing and working with First Nations peoples, honouring the truths set out in the [Warawarni-gu Cuma Statement](#).

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White roses represent new beginnings, new life. I feel like I have a new life now, I'm a woman now, and, you know, I'm a different person than who I used to be. I'm much more authentic. I'm much more real.

Gabriella