

NEWS RELEASE

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The Network/La Red Releases First of its Kind Community Needs Assessment: Survivor Stories: Learning from LGBTQ/T Communities in MA

Survivors tell us what they need when they feel unsafe in their relationships.

[Thursday, September 24, 2020—Boston, MA]—Massachusetts non-profit The Network/La Red (TNLR) released Survivor Stories: Learning from LGBTQ/T Communities in MA today, a report on their 2019 LGBTQ/T community needs assessment. The assessment asked LGBTQ/T residents of Massachusetts how they feel about safety in their relationships, where they went to for support when feeling unsafe, and to share their experiences accessing support.

“Safety was defined as the freedom in your relationship(s) to be yourself and make decisions about your life, your time, your body, and how you exist in the world,” says Sabrina Santiago, MSW, Co-Executive Director at TNLR. She went on to say, “using a broad definition of safety allowed us to reach folks who identify as survivors but also folks who may not use that language to describe their experiences.”

Of the 3,084 contributors to the assessment, 81% experienced fear for their safety in a relationship within the last five years, with higher numbers reported by South Asian people (100%), transgender women/transfeminine people (94%), Southeast Asian people (90%) and people with disabilities (76%). “Research indicates that partner abuse occurs in 25-54% of LGBTQ/T relationships depending on which subcommunity is being looked at; this higher number is likely a reflection of the desire of survivors to share their experiences and the lack of places to do so,” says Beth Leventhal, Co-Executive Director at TNLR.

The assessment revealed that survivors are often not believed and are blamed for their abuse when reaching out to friends and family. As one survivor stated, “My fear wasn’t physical, so I was constantly doubting whether I deserved to feel fearful, I was constantly belittled by people who told me what I experienced wasn’t abuse and I was diluting the rhetoric for other survivors.”

When it came to accessing service from mainstream domestic violence programs survivors reported numerous experiences of blatant homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, as well as fear of not being seen as a survivor because of their identity. As one survivor described, “I stopped reaching out after pretty much every service I reached out to either “couldn’t help”, [or] was transphobic or ableist.”

Survivors reported a strong preference for LGBTQ/T-specific partner abuse services over mainstream (cisgender/heterosexual) domestic violence services. But ahead of domestic violence programs, survivors chose to go to friends, family, and therapist/mental health providers. “This speaks to the need for more education in our communities about what partner abuse is and what kinds of support and resources survivors need”, says Charly Robles, Survivor Leadership Associate at TNLr.

Survivors described their experiences getting support from family, friends, and providers, their fears about asking for support and the types of support they want or wanted. “There is a clear message here,” says Jenn Ho, Capacity Building Manager at TNLr. “Survivors want compassionate support from friends and family, they want to be believed, and to be trusted to make their own decisions. From providers they want competency and knowledge of LGBTQ/T survivors and community and knowledge of the unique experiences of survivors from our communities.”

According to Robles, “Survivors know what they need from their communities. This report illustrates what we have always believed – that survivors are not only the experts on their lives but also need to be the leaders in this work.”

There will be a virtual community launch of the report on October 15th, 2020. Visit www.tnlr.org or follow us on FB, IG, and Twitter @thenetworklared for more information and to download your copy of the report, Survivor Stories: Learning from LGBTQ/T Communities in MA

About The Network/La Red:

The Network/La Red (TNLR) is a survivor-led, social justice organization that serves survivors of partner abuse from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, polyamorous and SM communities. Formed in 1989, the organization offers survivors support via a crisis hotline, support groups, court accompaniment, housing assistance and advocacy. TNLr also provides community trainings, educational materials, technical assistance to create more LGBTQ/T-inclusive partner abuse services, and does survivor led organizing to end partner abuse. For more information about the organization, and its services, visit our website, www.tnlr.org. For our crisis hotline call 800-832-1901