Secondary Victimization and Reporting Harassment

A LGBT crime survivor may experience increased discrimination or stigma from others who have learned about his or her sexual orientation as a consequence of the victimization. Such secondary victimization, which can further intensify the negative psychological consequences of victimization, is often expressed explicitly by representatives of the criminal justice system, including police officers and judges. It also extends outside the criminal justice system. If their sexual orientation becomes publicly known as a result of a crime, for example, some lesbians and gay men risk loss of employment or child custody.

Even in jurisdictions where statutory protection is available, many gay people fear that disclosure of their sexual orientation as a result of victimization will result in hostility, harassment, and rejection from others. Secondary victimization may be experienced as an additional assault on one's identity and community, and thus an added source of stress. The threat of secondary victimization often acts as a barrier to reporting a crime or seeking medical, psychological, or social services. (by Gregory M. Herek)

When someone informs you they have been harassed:

Step 1: Ask if they are safe. Assess the situation regarding safety.

Step 2: If the person is not safe, immediately call Campus Security. Campus Security will respond and assess if the police, a counselor, and/or the Student Affairs professional-on-duty should be contacted for further assistance.

Step 3: Inform the person that you will protect their confidentiality to the best of your ability and will not tell anyone their name without their permission in order to avoid secondary victimization.

Step 4: Make sure all identifying information is not revealed while communicating with others, even IWU Safe Zone members, about the incident.

Step 5: Suggest that the person file a bias incident report through the Office of Judicial Affairs (students) or Human Resources (employees). Students can also seek assistance from the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and Dean of Students Office. You can also suggest that the person seek help with Counseling and Consultation Services (student) or another counselor (employee) in order to process what happened. (See contact information on the following page.)
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Helpful suggestions:

1. Do not handle the situation alone if at all possible. Try to refer the student to the Dean of Students Office, Counseling and Consultation Services, or Campus Security.

2. When communicating with the police, do not expect or assume that they will be sensitive to the issues of LGBT people. In fact, it is likely the police have had little sensitivity training or exposure to LBG students regarding reporting of harassment. Make sure that the person(s) assigned to your particular case understands that the identity of the student can not under any circumstances be revealed, without their permission, to the general public or media. Police reports need to be purged of all identifying information (name, address, phone, etc.) before it is released to the media and general public.

Campus Security
(309) 556-1111

Dean of Students Office
(309) 556-3111

Office of Judicial Affairs
(309) 556-3541

Counseling and Consultation Services
(309) 556-3052

IWU Human Resources
(309) 556-3536

Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
(309) 556-3412