

*LGBTQ and
Mainstream
Organizations
Funders*

*LGBTQ Domestic Violence
Targeted Recommendation:*

**Ensure family-
provider wages and
benefits in order to
recruit and retain
qualified staff
members from diverse
LGBTQ communities.**



Recommendation: Ensure family provider wages and benefits

Rationale

While LGBTQ people encounter the same socioeconomic vulnerability faced by other people who share their race, ethnicity, sex, age, and disability, they also must confront challenges stemming directly from trans-, bi-, and homophobia. These challenges include a higher risk of homelessness when they are young, less access to family financial or other supports, harassment and discrimination at school and at work, and the long-term consequences of having been historically denied the economic benefits of marriage.ⁱ

LGBTQ people are likely to be the only or the primary breadwinner in their household. Further, LGBTQ people have less access to the extended-family supports that can help bridge a troubled financial time or reduce the need to pay for certain kinds of assistance. For example, LGBTQ people are less able to rely on family to contribute money to offset costs of unexpected illness or other expenses, to help with childcare, or to otherwise assist with daily life events. An LGBTQ worker's income must be sufficient to meet all their real-time expenses, plan for retirement, *and* handle any "rainy day" costs.

Domestic violence (DV) agencies and anti-violence nonprofits may not be aware of how much they rely on spouses' salaries and benefits, family wealth, or other supports to buttress their staff members' economic stability. By underpaying workers, organizations undermine their ability to employ and retain staff members from diverse backgrounds who cannot rely on family wealth or a partner's income to make working for very low wages viable.ⁱⁱ

Many DV and anti-violence nonprofits have trouble recruiting and retaining qualified LGBTQ staff. Connecting the dots between the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that LGBTQ people face, and the low wages anti-violence nonprofits pay helps explain why: LGBTQ people (along with anyone else who needs to make a family wage) literally cannot afford to work in the field.

Recommendations for Organizations

1. Review pay scales and benefit packages and establish family-provider compensation. Consider the costs of housing, degrees required, childcare, and other expenses incurred by your staff as providers for a household.
2. Do not rely on spouses' healthcare benefits or pay when establishing wages.
3. Establish an "ethical bottom line" for pay and benefits.
4. Ask "Could a survivor leave an abusive relationship on our wage scale?" Adopt this question as part of your organization's criteria for establishing wage levels.

5. Use tools such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator to evaluate compensation packages for your area.
6. Be transparent about your organization's pay scale, internally, externally, and in job announcements.

Recommendations for Coalitions

1. Conduct a compensation review with your member organizations.
2. Evaluate compensation (wages and benefits) against regional family-provider wage indexes.
3. Build program directors' knowledge regarding the importance of adequate employee compensation to overall mission.

Recommendations for Funders

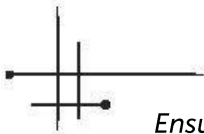
1. Invest new funds in improving compensation for current anti-violence program staff before increasing the number of full-time employees.
2. Evaluate proposed salary and benefit budgets for their likelihood to provide sufficient compensation to recruit and retain a diverse staff that represents the client/participant constituents the agency proposes to serve.
3. Educate organizations about the importance of robust benefit packages (e.g., long- and short-term disability, retirement, health benefits) and adequate wages to the ability to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Resources

- [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#)
- ["All Right, We Need to Talk About Nonprofit Salaries"](#)

ⁱ Lee Badgett, M. V., Durso, L. E., & Schneebaum, A. (2013, June). *New patterns of poverty in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community*. Retrieved from <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGB-Poverty-Update-Jun-2013.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ For example, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence [2015 Wages and Benefits Survey](#) reported that 84% of advocates responding to the survey relied on some form of outside support to make ends meet, such as a second job, WIC, subsidized housing, food stamps, food banks, or family. The Texas Council on Family Violence 2012 [salary survey](#) indicated the average wage for part-time staff in domestic violence programs was \$9–10 per hour. The Indiana Coalition Against DV 2013 [salary survey](#) indicated a similar wage of \$24,561 for an advocate. These wages would qualify a family of three for food stamps, and place them at or below the poverty level according to the MIT living wage calculator.



Ensure Family Provider Wages

One in a series of targeted recommendations from the LGBTQ Domestic Violence Capacity Building Learning Center intended to improve policy, research, intervention and prevention efforts regarding LGBTQ DV.

The LGBTQ DV CBLC is a project of the Northwest Network for Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse with foundational partner the National Coalition of Anti Violence Programs

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