

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX AND QUEER (LGBTIQ) DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (DFV) PROGRAMS



What is the intake process?

There will be two intake officers at Relationships Australia NSW who will be taking referrals. These two intake officers will be the same people throughout the intake process and have completed LGBTIQ inclusivity training.

This will make sure clients are working with the same people and not having to constantly repeat their stories.

After we have a list of potential participants we will host an information night for them.

Through our intake and assessment processes we will determine who the primary aggressor is. Services can refer an individual or couple (if the relationship is dyadic however these groups are also open to people in non-monogamous relationships).

The practice of non-monogamy is arguably more prevalent in LGBTIQ communities than it is in the wider heterosexual community.

The practice of polyamory is just one example of non-monogamy, where LGBTIQ individuals enter into relationships with multiple partners with the knowledge and mutual consent of all involved. Consequently if you have a client who is in a polyamorous relationship with multiple partners and you don't know who the survivor is and who the perpetrator, our rigorous intake process will determine this.

Full assessment of potential participants for groups occurs through two pre-group interviews. The purpose of assessment is to assess the needs of each person, their suitability for components of the program, and to address safety issues.

How/why are these groups different from existing groups (i.e. mainstream DFV groups)?

Our understandings about domestic violence have traditionally been developed from and viewed through a cisgender heterosexual framework. Historically, attempts to understand domestic violence in LGBTIQ relationships have involved super-imposing cisgender heterosexual models onto these relationships and/or comparing the relationship violence with cis-male-cis-female intimate violence.

Our groups will cover a lot of the same content as existing groups e.g. tactics of oppression; however where it differs is that we provide a safe space from discrimination and where people can talk openly about their relationships and identity and build upon equitable relationships skills. But we also look at issues such as identity, discrimination, internalised phobias, minority stress, lateral violence and the extra layers of complexity when looking at relationships that sit outside the hetero-norm.

How many groups in total are there?

The following six groups will be delivered:

- LGBTIQ men's survivor group (8 weeks)
- LGBTIQ men's perpetrator group (18 weeks)
- LGBTIQ women's survivor group (8 weeks)
- LGBTIQ women's perpetrator group (18 weeks)
- LGBTIQ mix gender group survivor group (8 weeks)
- LGBTIQ mix gender group perpetrator group (18 weeks)

These groups will occur, depending on the number of group participants (there may be some changes to the schedule in that case).

Will there be an information night for professionals who want to know more or want to refer their clients?

We will be working with interested referral sources on an individual basis to determine eligibility. If you want to refer you clients please contact lgbtiq@ransw.org.au or 1300 LGBTIQ (1300 542 847).

For questions related to the group programs and research please contact research@acon.org.au or research@ransw.org.au.

Which group should gender diverse clients attend?

The mixed gender group is open to everyone and is a place for non-binary identifying people and for people who feel more comfortable in a mixed gender group. We are also running groups by gender to determine if we need to have separate gender groups when running future interventions for our communities.

If a client aligns with either a male or female identity, regardless of the gender assigned to them at birth, they can attend whichever group they feel aligns with their current gender identity or the mixed gender group.

What support is available for children?

If our group participants are carers for children who have also been affected by DFV then we will have either a children's support group or a therapeutic camp. The running of a children's support group or a therapeutic camp will be dependent upon on the number of children and their particular needs.

Why were the three test sites (Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle) selected?

Although we would have liked to have offered these group programs across more sites, due to funding and resources these three sites were chosen.

These locations have been picked because both ACON and Relationship Australia NSW have offices in these areas. The ACON and Relationships Australia NSW offices have the facilities and trained staff to run groups in safe and inclusive spaces.

The diversity in group location will also allow the researchers to explore differences and similarities in the experiences of DFV among LGBTIQ people, who live in different regions.

When do the groups start?

Start dates are yet to be confirmed and will depend entirely on the recruitment of suitable participants. All groups will begin this year; we can start groups once we have group numbers.

The provisional dates are:

- Sydney perpetrator group: August/September
- Sydney survivor group: August/September
- Wollongong perpetrator group: November
- Wollongong survivor group: October/November
- Newcastle perpetrator group: November
- Newcastle survivor group: August/ September.

How many participants will participate in each group?

We are aiming to recruit an average number of 10 participants per group.

Who is eligible to participate in these groups?

- All participants must be over 18 years old.
- There is no limit as to when they have experienced DFV (we will take people still in an abusive relationship and people who were in one 20 years ago if they are still affected by it).
- Either the participant or their partner must identify as LGBTIQ
- People must have parallel support (all group participants are offered additional support through RANSW or ACON counselling)
- Participants must have a sufficient amount of English to be able to participate in a group setting.
- Participants must live within a reasonable distance of the groups and be committed to finishing the duration of the program.
- Participants experiencing the following situations should not attend the program:
 - » Alleged or convicted perpetrators of sexual abuse with children.
 - » People with unmanaged psychosis.
 - » People who are better suited to one on one counselling.
 - » Any participant attending a session whilst intoxicated.

What does the research entail?

Participants will be invited to participate in short surveys and qualitative interviews conducted by ACON and Relationships Australia NSW to assess the impact of the group program they are attending. Participating in the research will be confidential and voluntary.

What's involved for participants who participate in the research?

- Completing a short survey prior at their first group session.
- Completing a follow-up survey at their final group session. They will also be invited to provide contact details for an interview after their final group session, and/or follow-up surveys 3 months and 6 months later;

How will confidentiality be managed?

Group participants will receive an information sheet for each step of the evaluation of the research project and we will conduct the consent process.

At each stage of data collection, a research professional will describe the informed consent process, and provide the participants an opportunity to reflect on this procedure, and ask questions.

Data collection will not take place without the participants' full approval. Participants who are not able to legally provide consent will not be present in the group processes having been screened out of the program. Participants in the Perpetrator and Survivor groups will be over 18 years of age and legally able to give consent.

Completing the survey will indicate tacit consent. Survey respondents may also refuse to volunteer at follow up time points for interviews, and this will be managed with confidentiality. Participants will have the opportunity to remove themselves from the research and at any time can submit blank questionnaires to the research team to revoke their consent.

Only the research team will view the raw data, and this will be de-identified. The surveys will be collected and analysed by a researcher who is not involved in running the group, and who has received LGBTIQ Inclusivity training. Any identifying information will be removed from the surveys before they are analysed and all survey responses will be analysed collectively, so no individual response can be identified.

For the interview process, an information sheet and consent form will be used again. This paperwork explains the process in detail, the implied risks, support services, signed consent, and a revocation of consent form. Participants will also have this process explained to them verbally, be provided an opportunity to reflect and ask questions, and providing consent will also be verbally gained on the audio file of the interview.

How will you guarantee safety?

The perpetrator program is heavily evaluated due to the safety issues involved. The sources of evaluation are:

- Participants attend 2 pre-group interviews;
- Participants complete pre-post questionnaires;
- Participants complete an end of group evaluation questionnaire;
- Facilitators conduct a weekly de-brief and discussion of progress of each participant;
- Facilitators complete regular evaluations throughout the program and discuss them at supervision;
- Support workers contact and interview partners; and
- Participants attend three counselling sessions throughout the program.

For the perpetrators group, we will be offering support and having contact with their affected partner (ex or current), we will offer the partner (ex or current) a place in the survivors group or other support options such as one-on-one counselling or regular check-ins to gauge their safety.

Why is this only a one-off?

ACON in partnership with Relationships Australia NSW was successful in obtaining a grant from Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

This project will develop, deliver and evaluate tailored survivor and perpetrator intervention programs specifically for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) people.

The project is only funded for one roll out of the groups (pilot), however the findings and recommendations will be made publicly available for services who may want to deliver specific LGBTIQ groups or want to make existing groups more inclusive of these communities. We will be applying for more funding in the future to continue running these groups.

What further information can we give to our clients about what to expect?

It may be helpful to talk to your client about what group programs are like and what sort of support they can expect to receive.

There will be two co-facilitators that are community identified and trained in LGBTIQ inclusive practice who will be running each group. These co-facilitators will guide and support participants through the program content week by week. Each group will run consecutively across an 18 or 8 week timeframe with each weekly session being two and half hours long.

Group programs use a psychoeducational format to support LGBTIQ people to discuss the impact that violence has on them and their relationships, to build resilience and confidence to make life changes and work towards relationships that are respectful and caring.

It may also be helpful to direct your client to the following websites to gain an understanding of ACON and Relationships Australia NSW's broader work.



acon.org.au



sayitoutloud.org.au



relationshipsnsw.org.au

If you have any further questions please contact:

lgbtiq@ransw.org.au

1300 LGBTIQ (1300 542 847)