

## Fostering a Welcoming Environment Brief Case Study

**Step 1: Review the following brief case study. IMPORTANT NOTE: The case study ends *at the beginning* of an intake appointment and does not describe what a full intake with an LGBTQ client would likely entail.**

A woman sees a poster in a community center with an image of a same-sex relationship and the words – “*No one deserves to be abused.*” She makes a mental note of the local domestic violence agency website address and stops by the public library to look up the website. She clicks on the link called “*Are you safe in your relationship?*” and finds information about domestic violence, including domestic violence in relationships among people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning. She decides to call the hotline number to ask for help.

The Hotline Counselor is warm, caring and attentive. The woman shares that her boyfriend has been physically, financially and sexually abusive for the past 3 years. She wants the abuse to stop, though she is not sure she wants to leave the relationship. The Counselor listens and reflects back what she hears without making assumptions about the caller and her situation. The Counselor helps her with basic safety planning and tells her how to schedule an intake appointment with an Advocate.

On the day of her intake appointment, the woman enters the office and finds it to be a warm space. A poster on a wall says, “*We are committed to providing the best possible services to all domestic violence victims/survivors regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability/disability and health/mental health status.*” There is also a bright rainbow flag hanging and brochures about domestic violence, including domestic violence among people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning. She fills out a few forms, including one that asks, “What is your sexual orientation?” The options for responses include: bisexual, gay, heterosexual, lesbian, questioning/unsure, and decline to answer. The form also asks, “What is your gender identity?” The options for responses include: female, male, transgender (female-to-male), transgender (male-to-female), and decline to answer. She leaves both questions blank.

When the Advocate begins the intake, she tells the woman that the agency has a non-discriminatory policy and reiterates that they serve all victims/survivors of domestic violence. Throughout the intake, the Advocate respects and reflects back the language the woman uses to describe herself and her relationship. The Advocate tells the woman she is glad she reached out for help and that no one deserves to be abused. The client then reveals that her abusive partner is a woman, not a man. She explains that she wasn’t sure how the Advocate would react, but she felt she could share this information at this point, based on her positive experiences with the organization so far...

**Step 2: Discuss this question: What did the organization, Hotline Counselor and Advocate do well in providing accessible services to this woman?**