

Centre Against Abuse: “Sexual violence affects every demographic and every community, including the LGBTQ+ community”
OUTBermuda: “Survivors of sexual violence must be believed irrespective of their sexuality”

June 28, 2020 – This week, Centre Against Abuse (CAA) reconfirms its commitment to all victims of sexual violence and confirms collaboration with OUTBermuda to enhance services available at CAA.

CAA wants our community to understand that sexual violence affects every demographic and every community, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning community (LGBTQ+).

CAA defines sexual violence as any type of unwanted sexual contact, ranging from sexist attitudes and actions to sexual assaults and murder. CAA has a mandate to assist all survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault above the age of 18, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Our role is to provide support and safety for all our clients in a non-judgmental caring environment. We encourage those in the LGBTQ+ community who are over the age of 18 and have experienced sexual assault as an adult or during childhood, to contact us for assistance if someone requires support.

CAA and OUTBermuda recognise that LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence face many discriminatory practices and personal prejudices. This often leads to a hesitancy to seek help from the very resources that are supposed to help them (e.g. police, hospitals, lawyers and counsellors). Compounding this, the USA Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), confirms that sexual violence occurs in the LGBTQ+ community at a rate higher than that of the heterosexual community. The Human Rights Campaign states that *“As a community, LGBTQ+ people face higher rates of poverty, stigma, and marginalization, which put us at greater risk for sexual assault. We also face higher rates of hate-motivated violence, which can often take the form of sexual assault. Moreover, the ways in which society both hypersexualizes LGBTQ+ people and stigmatizes our relationships can lead to intimate partner violence that stems from internalized homophobia and shame.”*

With this in mind, CAA is encouraging our community to have conversations that will build an understanding and support to LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence.

Sexual violence in the LGBTQ+ community is something that we all must work together to address and prevent. If someone shares that they have been sexually assaulted, CAA recommends that you utilise the following supportive mechanisms:

- Listen and believe them, and reassure them that it was not their fault.
- Keep their disclosed information and circumstances confidential (unless it requires mandatory reporting) and never pressure them to do something beyond their level of comfort.
- Encourage them by sharing CAA resources that are available.
- Offer your support by attending a first session with a counsellor and also ask how else you can support them

CAA and OUTBermuda are working together to ensure that the LGBTQ+ community in Bermuda have confidence in the infrastructure and support provided to all victims of sexual violence; both the CAA and OUTBermuda are excited to be collaborating on opportunities to enhance services available to all survivors of sexual violence. You can contact Centre Against Abuse on 292-4366 or via email to book an interview with CAA counsellors on info@centreagainstabuse.bm

With respect to the recently reported news that the Director of the Department of Public Prosecutions has decided to not proceed with prosecuting the alleged assailants in a reported sexual assault, OUTBermuda supports the survivor's request to have said decision judicially reviewed. It took tremendous courage for this survivor to report his experience and we look to see justice served. OUTBermuda is encouraging our community to step up and speak out about unfair discriminatory practices that deliberately disenfranchise or maintain a status quo that results in services being biased against those victims from the LGBTQ+ community. It is everyone's duty to demonstrate respect and dignity to all – survivors of sexual violence must be believed irrespective of their sexuality.

About Centre Against Abuse: CAA provides crisis support services to all adult victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. Its website is www.CentreAgainstAbuse.bm. CAA's mission is to educate the community by providing building blocks for healthy relationships in Bermuda. (Registered Charity #146)

For inquiries, contact:

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About OUTBermuda: OUTBermuda promotes and supports the wellbeing, health, dignity, security, safety and protection of the LGBTQ community in Bermuda. Its website is www.OUTBermuda.org. Through its mission, OUTBermuda helps advance human rights, and the promotion of equality and diversity relating to the LGBTQ community in Bermuda. (Registered Charity #973)

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