



How to care for survivors of **gender-based violence**

A guide to gender-based violence



What is gender-based violence (GBV)?

GBV is an umbrella term for any **harmful act** that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on a person's socially ascribed **gender**.

GBV includes acts that inflict **physical, sexual or mental harm** or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in **public** or **private**.



Indicators and signs of possible GBV



Level of self-image

- Feeling ashamed
- Feeling worthless
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling contaminated



Somatic level

- Dizziness
- Headache, stomach ache
- Constipation, hemorrhoids
- Period disorder
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI)



Social level

- An unmotivated loss of interest in hobbies or activity.
- Reducing contact with their social circle.
- An unmotivated change in behaviour, such as becoming more introverted.

Key Messages

Use a survivor-centered approach by practicing:



RESPECT

All actions you take are guided by respect for the survivor's choices, wishes, rights and dignity.



SAFETY

The safety of the survivor is the number one priority.



CONFIDENTIALITY

People have the right to choose to whom they will or will not tell their story. Maintaining confidentiality means not sharing any information with anyone.



NON-DISCRIMINATION

Providing equal and fair treatment to anyone in need of support.



HEALTH SERVICES

If health services exist, **always** provide information on what is available. Share what you know, and most importantly explain what you do not. Let the survivor decide if they want to access them. Receiving quality medical care within **72 hours** can prevent transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and within **120 hours** can prevent unwanted pregnancy.

Provide the opportunity for people with disabilities to communicate to you without the presence of their caregiver, if wished and does not endanger or create tension in that relationship.



LGBTIQ+

LGBTIQ+ individuals are often at increased risk of harm and violence due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Actively listen and seek to support all survivors.

If a man or boy is raped it does not mean he is gay or bisexual. Gender-based violence is **based on power, not someone's sexuality.**



PERPETRATORS

Anyone can commit an act of gender-based violence including a spouse, intimate partner, family member, caregiver, in-law, stranger, parent or someone who is exchanging money or goods for a sexual act.



SURVIVORS

Anyone can be a survivor of gender-based violence – this includes, but isn't limited to, people who are married, elderly individuals or people who engage in sex work.

Protect the identity and safety of a survivor. **Do not** write down, take pictures or verbally share any **personal/identifying information** about a survivor or their experience, including with your supervisor. Put phones and computers away to avoid concern that a survivor's voice is being recorded.



DO'S

DO allow the survivor to approach you. Listen to their needs.

DO ask how you can support with any basic urgent needs first. Some survivors may need immediate medical care or clothing.

DO ask the survivor if they feel comfortable talking to you in your current location. If a survivor is accompanied by someone, do not assume it is safe to talk to the survivor about their experience in front of that person.

DO provide practical support like offering water, a private place to sit, a tissue etc.

DO, to the best of your ability, ask the survivor to choose someone they feel comfortable with to translate for and/or support them if needed.



DON'TS

DO NOT ignore someone who approaches you and shares that they have experienced something bad, something uncomfortable, something wrong and/or violence.

DO NOT force help on people by being intrusive or pushy.

DO NOT overreact. Stay calm.

DO NOT pressure the survivor into sharing more information beyond what they feel comfortable sharing. The details of what happened and by whom are not important or relevant to your role in listening and providing information on available services.

DO NOT ask if someone has experienced GBV, has been raped, has been hit etc.



Examples of what to say

*Does this place feel OK for you?
Is there another place where you would feel better? Do you feel comfortable having a conversation here?*

*Would you like some water?
Please feel free to have a seat.*

You seem to be in a lot of pain right now, would you like to go to the health clinic?

I will try to support you as much as I can, but I am not a counselor. I can share any information that I have on support available to you.

Everything that we talk about together stays between us. I will not share anything without your permission.

How can I support you?