

January 19, 2016, NEW YORK—Legal Services NYC, the largest civil legal services provider in the U.S., released today a report entitled [Poverty is an LGBT Issue: An Assessment of the Legal Needs of Low-Income LGBT People](#). The report is the first of its kind in the nation and provides insight into the civil legal challenges and discrimination faced by low-income members of the LGBT community. It analyzes survey data from more than 300 low-income LGBT New Yorkers on a range of legal issues related to violence and harassment, housing, income and disability assistance, immigration, health care, family, employment, education, and veterans' rights. In addition to identifying key challenges, the report provides a series of concrete findings and recommendations to improve legal services for low-income LGBT people.



## POVERTY IS AN LGBT ISSUE:

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LEGAL NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME LGBT PEOPLE

Press coverage: [TakePart.com](#), [The Advocate](#), [The Nation](#), [Next Magazine](#), [New York Nonprofit Media](#)

“The public doesn’t usually associate poverty with the LGBT community. Unfortunately, that perception is wrong: poverty is a huge problem for many LGBT people. Yet there are far too few legal resources to address the challenges and discrimination faced by low-income LGBT individuals,” said **Cathy Bowman**, LGBT & HIV Unit Director at Legal Services NYC’s Brooklyn office.

“Our goal with this report is to raise awareness and generate action to fight poverty in the LGBT community,” said **Adam Heintz**, Director of Pro Bono Services at Legal Services NYC and a primary author of the report. “Mainstream legal services organizations and LGBT groups each have a vital role to play in that fight. Legal Services NYC was very fortunate to have hundreds of low-income LGBT people share their experiences with us for this report. We owe it to them to make sure their voices—which have so often been ignored—are heard now.”

The report’s findings were taken from a survey of 310 low-income LGBT people, along with additional data from community members, experts, and other sources.

Findings of the report include:

• **Low-income LGBT people face many of the same challenges as others living in poverty:** LSNYC’s survey found that 62% of low-income LGBT New Yorkers had difficulty paying for a basic need in the past year. Analysis of every civil legal practice area explored uncovered a substantial need for services.

• **Legal challenges are exacerbated by discrimination, harassment, and violence:** Survey respondents reported discrimination, harassment, and violence in a range of contexts. Transgender respondents described particularly pervasive discrimination.

• **Anti-LGBT harassment in public places is common:** 39% of survey respondents reported being verbally harassed in public for being LGBT in just the past year.

• **Violence against low-income LGBT people is rampant:** 50% of low-income LGBT New Yorkers surveyed reported experiencing violence.

• **LGBT people struggle to get the public assistance they need:** 32% of respondents said they experienced problems with public assistance or social security in the past year, including applying and receiving benefits and housing.

• **Low-income LGBT people are suffering from the housing crisis in New York:** 44% of respondents reported that they had housing repair needs that went unmet in just the last year. Another 12% reported housing problems related to their LGBT identity, again in the prior 12 months alone.

• **LGBT people face employment discrimination:** 8% of all survey respondents and 26% of transgender respondents have faced problems with employment in the past year alone. These figures include only people actively seeking work—not those who stopped working or job-searching because of their difficulties. The report provides a series of findings and recommendations about the civil legal needs of LGBT people based on this and other data.

The report recommends a dramatic expansion in services for low-income LGBT people and concludes that legal services organizations must take special care to welcome and serve LGBT clients.

“Legal Services NYC’s work to protect the rights of LGBT people is an integral aspect of our mission to serve low-income New Yorkers,” said **Raun Rasmussen**, Executive Director of Legal Services NYC. “We are proud to share this first-of-its-kind report and hope that it will galvanize efforts to increase vital legal services for those in the LGBT community who are living in poverty.”

Read the full report [here](#).

**About Legal Services NYC:** Legal Services NYC fights poverty and seeks justice for low-income New Yorkers. For more than 45 years, we have challenged systemic injustice and helped clients meet basic needs for housing, access to high-quality education, health care, family stability, and income and economic security. LSNYC is the largest civil legal services provider in the country, with deep roots in all of the communities we serve. Our neighborhood-based offices and outreach sites across all five boroughs help more than 80,000 New Yorkers annually. LSNYC prevents evictions, saves homes from foreclosure, and preserves thousands of subsidized and rent-regulated housing units. We tackle consumer scams and help those in need to obtain critical state and federal benefits. We protect the rights of low-income students and ensure that children with special needs have access to meaningful education. We help vulnerable New Yorkers, including people who are elderly or disabled and those with HIV, gain and keep public health insurance and other benefits. We secure safety and financial stability for survivors of domestic violence, including adjusting immigration status to put these survivors and their families on the path to citizenship. We fight for the rights of veterans and those who are LGBTQ. LSNYC addresses the underlying causes of our clients'™ problems through all forms of advocacy, including litigation and legislative reform. We partner with scores of community based organizations, elected officials, public agencies and the courts to maximize our effectiveness. Our work helps to achieve equal opportunity and economic and racial justice for low income New Yorkers throughout the City.

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