

# ADDRESSING AN EPIDEMIC OF ANTI-TRANSGENDER VIOLENCE: WHAT CITIES CAN DO

In 2014, at least 13 transgender people were murdered in the United States, and at least 19 were murdered in 2013. Their deaths were gruesome—involving gunshots, burning, strangulation and beating—and many have gone unsolved.

As of Transgender Day of Remembrance this year, at least 21 transgender people have been murdered. These totals represent only the known victims; there may very well be countless other victims of fatal anti-transgender violence whose deaths we will never know about because police, the press or family members have consistently misidentified them based on their assigned sex and name at birth.

The brutality and scope of this violence is terrible, and it has a disproportionate effect on transgender women of color. Among the 53 known transgender victims from 2013-2015, 46 (87%) of these were people of color; at least 46 were women. The average age of all of the victims at the time of their death was less than 31 years old. A conservative estimate shows that transgender women face 4.3 times the risk of becoming homicide victims than the general population of all women.

Given the intersections of racism, sexism, and poverty in the lives of the people most vulnerable to anti-transgender violence, it is a tremendous challenge to unwind the social and economic factors that put them at such heightened levels of risk—however, it is critical that we try. Some of the issues are actually relatively easy to tackle, such as correcting the misreporting and underreporting of these hate crimes.

Hate crimes reporting is the single most heavily weighted element rated on the MEI. Every city that scored 100 points on the MEI reported hate crimes to the FBI, but we know for a fact that significant underreporting occurs. The vast majority of jurisdictions either fail to report their data or inaccurately report that they have had no hate crimes in their jurisdiction. An analysis of the FBI's Hate Crime Statistics, 2013 report, the most recent data available during our research period, showed that at least three high-profile anti-transgender murders went unreported despite evidence that the perpetrators were clearly motivated by the victim's gender identity.

Building better relationships between the transgender community and the police is absolutely critical. According to the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National LGBTQ Task Force, **22% of transgender people who had interacted with police reported bias-based harassment from police, and nearly half said they were uncomfortable turning to the police for help.**

The MEI asks cities to have LGBT liaisons in the police department to ensure that the police are more accountable to the LGBT community and more aware of the ways in which the LGBT community's concerns about interactions with the police are unique.

A liaison can be called to a scene of a suspected hate crime to ensure the situation is handled with the gravity and sensitivity it requires, they can be a source of knowledge to other officers about things like proper pronoun usage and when using a legal name is or

isn't appropriate, and they can provide context about the social conditions that make transgender people particularly subject to discrimination and violence.

Other policy recommendations address anti-transgender discrimination in other facets of life in order to alleviate the discriminatory pressures that can push transgender women, particularly of color, toward situations like survival sex work which put them at extreme risk of violence.

These recommendations include passing non-discrimination laws, ensuring health care coverage includes gender-affirming care, focusing on transgender-specific employment placement and training programs, and implementing inclusive bullying protections in schools.

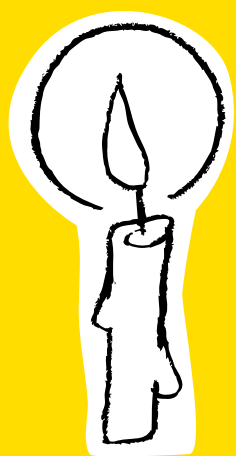
All but one of these policy recommendations have been addressed by the MEI since its inception. The exception is transgender-specific employment placement and training programs.

**To that end, next year's scorecard will reflect an additional bonus item under the Municipal Services Section entitled "City provides services to/supports transgender-specific programming."**

These points will be awarded for employment programs, post-incarceration reentry programs, violence prevention programs, and other transgender-specific programming that isn't captured by one of the existing municipal services criteria evaluating city services for LGBT homeless, LGBT elders, LGBT youth, or people living with HIV or AIDS.

There is no simple answer to curbing this disturbing trend of anti-transgender violence, but the policies articulated by the MEI offer an important place to start. For more information on the causes of and responses to anti-transgender violence, please visit <http://www.hrc.org/trans-violence>.

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