

Transgender advocacy groups launching national survey

By Staff Reports
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Discrimination in housing, health, employment compounds problems for trans men, women who also often suffer hate-based violence.

Following what transgender activists say was one of the most violent years on record of assaults on transgender people, the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force have announced that the two organizations are teaming up on a comprehensive national survey to collect data on discrimination against transgender people in housing, employment, public accommodations, healthcare, education, family life and criminal justice.

So far in 2008, at least three young gender non-conforming people of color have been murdered, including California junior high school student Lawrence King, who was shot in public during the school day, Simmie Williams in South Carolina and Angie Zapata in Greeley, Colo.

The murders “come in a year in which we are still working to include transgender provisions in a federal bill to protect lesbian, gay and bisexual workers from discrimination in employment,” said Mara Keisling, NTCE executive director.

Keisling said hate crimes against transgender people suggest multiple points of vulnerability that can compound each other: Discrimination in employment may lead to unstable housing situations that in turn can leave transgender people at the mercy of public programs and public officials who may not respond respectfully or appropriately to them.

These stressors add burdens in a healthcare system that is often unprepared for transgender people’s needs, and the list goes on, Keisling said.

She said data from the survey “will help us sort out the combination of forces that leave transgender people vulnerable to unemployment, homelessness and violence.”

Jaime Grant, director of the Task Force Policy Institute, added, “There is so little concrete data on the needs and risks associated with the widespread discrimination we see in the lives of the transgender people we know. This data will help point the way to an appropriate policy agenda to ensure that transgender people have a fair chance to contribute their talents in the workplace, in our educational systems and in our communities.”

NCTE and the **Task Force** have partnered with Pennsylvania State University’s Center for the Study of Higher Education to collect and analyze the data. Organization leaders said applying rigorous academic standards to the investigation will strengthen any case made to legislators, policy makers, healthcare providers and others whose decisions impact the lives of transgender people.

A national team of experts in survey research and transgender issues developed the questionnaire, which can be completed online at <https://online.survey.psu.edu/endtransdiscrim>.

“This is an absolutely critical national effort,” Keisling said. “We urge all transgender and gender non-conforming people to take the survey to help guide us in making better laws and policies that will improve the quality of life for all transgender people. We need everyone’s voice in this, everyone’s participation.”