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Recognizing Gay Homicide

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Introduction

One of the most critical components of examining gay homicide is to accurately recognize and label cases as gay. Law enforcement officials often do not identify the sexual orientation of victims or offenders, except in certain cases which may qualify under the legal definition of hate-crime.

The purpose of labeling cases as gay is to facilitate research of this sub-category of homicide and to explore its unique dimensions and qualities. While limited research has been conducted on hate-crime homicide, no known studies exist on more general areas of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender homicide.

It should be noted that the term "gay" used herein refers to only one of four categories, that of a gay male victim.

What direct factors indicate a homicide is to be labeled "gay?"

- The victim acknowledged engaging in same-sex sexual behavior
- The victim self-identified as being gay
- A family survivor identifies the victim as being gay
- A close personal friend of the victim identifies the victim as gay
- A report of the murder is published in a gay or lesbian newspaper
- Gay Crime Victim Advocates receive phone calls identifying the victim
- Victim was last seen at a gay community event, or gay night spot

Victim previously verbalized, or displayed, sexual identity confusion. As a result of the preliminary study, it has become evident that common attributes of these crimes exist. While no single element identifies a homicide as gay, the more factors present, the greater the likelihood the victim is gay.

The following are elements typical in cases of gay homicide:

- The victim is male
- The death does not occur on the offender's turf
- No sign of forced entry to house or vehicle exists
- The body is found in a sleeping area of the home
- The victim is partially clothed or nude when found
- The death is not caused by the use of a firearm
- Signs of "overkill" or arson are evident
- A robbery, not in a place of business, occurred as part of the homicide