



CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice

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Media Release

Online Dating Safety and the Role of the TTPS in Protecting LGBTQI+ People

CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice has noted media reports about instances of people being robbed and physically assaulted, after an in-person meeting with someone they encountered through an online dating app. We maintain that such attacks are serious acts of violence that no one should experience.

People have been using online dating services to search for and interact with a potential romantic or sexual partner since the 1990s, but such services gained popularity in the 2010s with the accessibility of smartphones, which put computers into the hands of everyday consumers. In a society like ours, meeting new people interested in romantic or sexual relationships has always been a risky proposition for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) people. In the absence of available or welcoming in-person venues, some LGBTQI+ people prefer to use the internet to build relationships and form communities.

Sadly, while dating apps make it easier to find partners, they may also expose users to exploitation by ill-intentioned individuals, emboldened by the perception that our society tolerates violence against LGBTQI+ people. Through the [2023 Insights Report](#) of CAISO's Wholeness & Justice Programme, we understand this sense of impunity to derive from "negative attitudes towards the LGBTQI+ community, the absence of legal recognition or protective laws, and the dearth of community-sensitive systems for care and redress."

CAISO encourages LGBTQI+ people who experience any kind of violation to report these attacks to the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service (TTPS). At the same time, CAISO calls on the TTPS and its Gender-Based Violence Unit to fulfil their obligations to take every violation and targeted act of violence based on gender or sexuality, seriously. It is imperative that the TTPS treats these reports with due diligence, ensures they are appropriately accepted, and pursues thorough investigations without bias. CAISO stands ready to support the TTPS and GBV Unit to develop LGBTQI+ sensitivity training for the Police Academy and continuous training for current police officers.

LGBTQI+ people who need support navigating systems for reporting and redress should reach out to the Wholeness & Justice Programme via phone: (868) 282-2476 or email wholenessandjustice@caisott.org. Wholeness & Justice also offers clinical (psychosocial) support to community members who experience a violation.



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As community members continue to connect via digital platforms, we urge that they do so safely. Consult the safety tips provided by the respective dating apps or the following **Online Dating Safety Tips** available on CAISO's online channels:

- Do your research – verify their information and schedule a zoom or video call to confirm their identity.
- Meet in a space you feel safe, comfortable, or that is LGBTQ-friendly (or bring a friend with you so they can see who you are meeting). This could be a public or shared space. We know that as LGBTQI+ people, not all public spaces feel safe so try choosing a location where you feel safe.
- Make sure the meeting location has multiple exit points and be aware of them during the meet-up.
- Share details about your meet-up with a reliable friend(s): send your location, take photos of the environment and person (if possible) and let others know where you are.
- Safeguard your space - don't meet in your (or their) living space until you establish trust.
- Have a 'safe' & 'distress' word to share with friends.
- Stay ready - walk with protection - condoms, lube, gloves, dams, etc.

For more details on these safety tips, visit CAISO's social media pages: @CAISOTT (Instagram / X) and @CAISO (Facebook).

CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice is a feminist civil society organisation that seeks to mobilise a forward-thinking, visionary, and human rights approach to wholeness, justice, and inclusion for Trinidad and Tobago's LGBTQI+ communities, through developing analysis, alliances, and advocacy. CAISO runs a programme called Wholeness and Justice that expands access by LGBTQI+ people in Trinidad and Tobago to wholeness, justice, and social services. The programme responds to violations through legal and psycho-social support by delivering clinically competent, trauma-informed interventions that enable healing and resilience. Find out more information on our website: caisott.org.

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