

Procedure and Policy Recommendations From the Trans Community Shelter Access Project at The 519

These are some procedural guidelines that can be integrated into existing operating procedures:

1. On site assistance with services like job skills programs, employment, housing, legal issues, ID clinics, addictions and abuse counseling, health services appropriate to the trans persons transition needs and a recognition of trans specific goals by counselors (i.e. changing ID, keeping doctor/therapist appointments, attending trans specific support groups).
2. Private and/or semi-private sleep and shower arrangements when requested or available.
3. Behavior-based discharge policies that apply to all residents.
4. Ongoing training for staff, residents, housing workers and counselors by members of the TG/TS community or a City endorsed agency and ongoing outreach to the trans community.
5. Privacy/Confidentiality: trans status kept confidential from others unless permission given.
6. Intake conversations: inform residents of trans inclusion policy and zero tolerance for discrimination.

Based on years of experience working with the shelter system we have found that these are common effective policies:

1. A policy of respect: people should be treated according to their self-defined gender.
2. Zero tolerance for other residents humiliating or harassing trans residents.
3. Compliance with Toronto Shelter Standard 4.7 to support Transsexual/Transgender(TG/TS) and Intersexed people to access services that the individual identifies will best preserve their own safety and dignity
4. Inclusion of "gender identity" in the shelter's existing non-discrimination policies.

In our experience the following policies have not served staff, non-trans residents or trans residents well in the long term in the shelter/hostel environment:

- Surgery, dress or appearances-based policies.
- Rules that only apply to trans residents.
- TS/TG and Intersexed residents asked to disclose their medical history (other than what's asked of other residents, i.e. prescription meds).
- Policies that isolate TS/TG and Intersexed residents from other residents, i.e. private or semi-private sleeping/showering areas should be optional not mandatory.

We are aware of the specific challenges faced by different shelters and offer these policies as guidelines only.

For support in implementing new policies you can contact our Policy Consultant Alec Butler at 416-392-6878 extension 315 or trans_policy@yahoo.ca