

Hear from insightful  
youth and adults,  
sport and community  
leaders about how  
you can recognize  
and reduce barriers  
to participation in  
sport and physical  
activity for trans and  
genderqueer youth.



# *Trans+Sport*

*Changing Spaces into Safer Places*



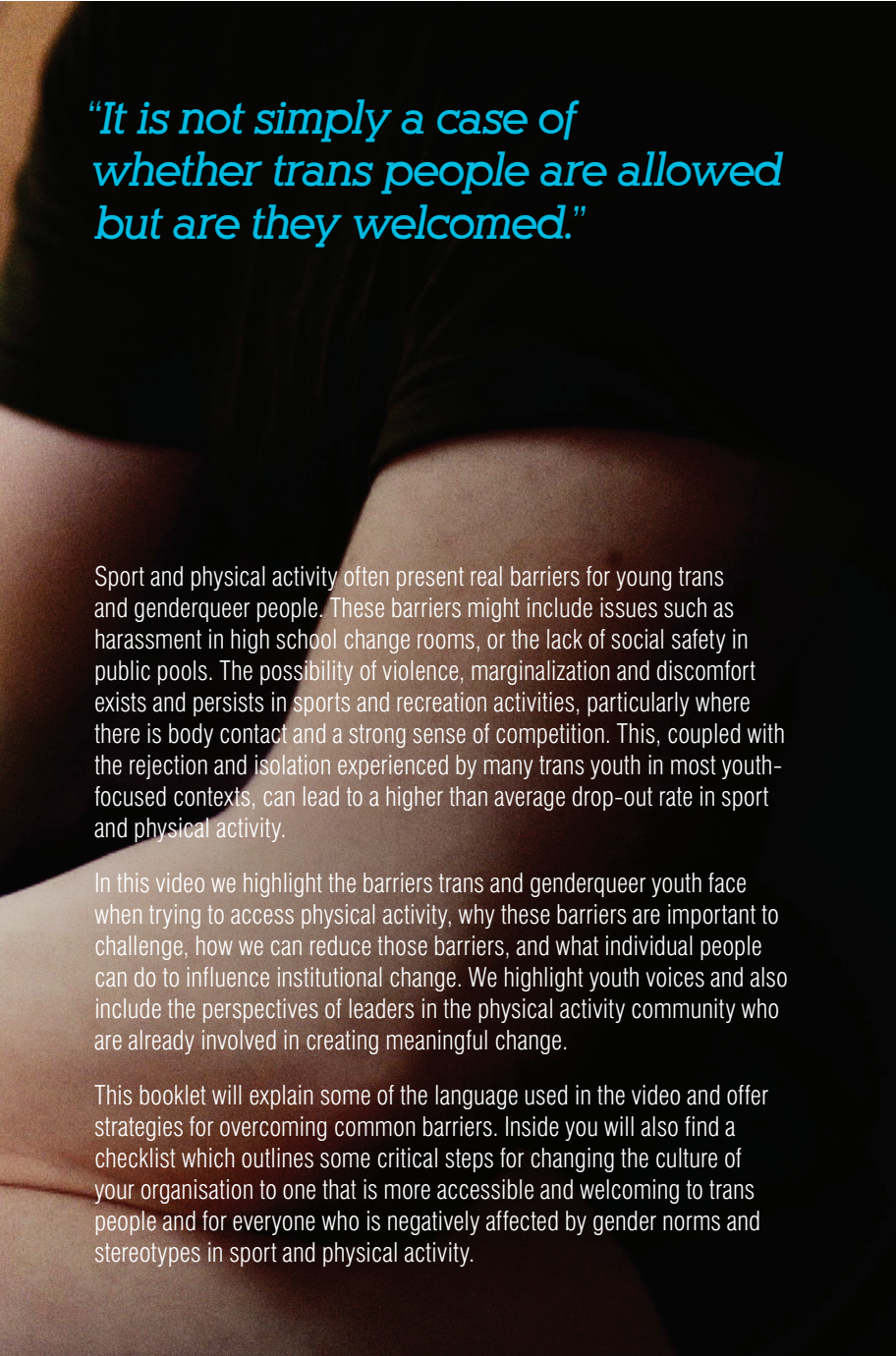
**CHURCHSTREET  
COMMUNITY CENTRE**



**TORONTO COMMUNITY  
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*“It is not simply a case of whether trans people are allowed but are they welcomed.”*

Sport and physical activity often present real barriers for young trans and genderqueer people. These barriers might include issues such as harassment in high school change rooms, or the lack of social safety in public pools. The possibility of violence, marginalization and discomfort exists and persists in sports and recreation activities, particularly where there is body contact and a strong sense of competition. This, coupled with the rejection and isolation experienced by many trans youth in most youth-focused contexts, can lead to a higher than average drop-out rate in sport and physical activity.

In this video we highlight the barriers trans and genderqueer youth face when trying to access physical activity, why these barriers are important to challenge, how we can reduce those barriers, and what individual people can do to influence institutional change. We highlight youth voices and also include the perspectives of leaders in the physical activity community who are already involved in creating meaningful change.

This booklet will explain some of the language used in the video and offer strategies for overcoming common barriers. Inside you will also find a checklist which outlines some critical steps for changing the culture of your organisation to one that is more accessible and welcoming to trans people and for everyone who is negatively affected by gender norms and stereotypes in sport and physical activity.

# SOME HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

It is important to acknowledge the cultural lenses that shape this particular definitions list: an English-speaking, urban, Canadian community centre serving diverse populations. Language constantly evolves within LGBTQ communities, both locally and abroad, so please use this as a guide. Individuals may use different words to describe themselves or use the terms in a slightly different way than they are described here.

**Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming:** An umbrella term used proudly by some people to defy gender restrictions and/or to deconstruct gender norms.

**Trans:** An umbrella term for a person whose gender identity does not match society's expectations of someone with their physical sex characteristics.

**Two-spirit:** A term based on interpretation of words used in different Aboriginal cultures to refer to a person having both a male and female spirit. It can include Anglo/North American ideas of both sexual orientation and gender identity. It also includes significant spiritual and cultural layers.





**Queer:** An umbrella term used proudly by some people to defy gender or sexual restrictions. This is also one way some people identify themselves as members of the lesbian, gay, bi, and/or trans communities or cultures. The term is not reclaimed by everyone and may be hurtful for some.

**Cisgender/Cissexual:** A person who is not trans: whose gender identity, behaviours and appearance are in harmony with what their culture expects from a person with their external sex characteristics.

**Ally:** A person with particular privileges who is guided by oppressed communities and learns how best to fight oppressions, like able-ism, ageism, audism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, etc.

**Equity:** The practice of ensuring that everyone has access to services, supports and opportunities and that they can achieve economic, political and social equality. Equity involves honouring and accommodating an individual's or groups' needs.

**Marginalization:** Excluding whole groups of people from meaningful participation and confining them to the outer edges of society.

**Oppression:** The obvious and subtle ways dominant groups unjustly maintain status, privilege and power over others.







# HOW TO REDUCE THE BARRIERS

To begin to make your organisation more accessible to trans and genderqueer youth, you will need to address both the physical and the social needs of this community.

Physical needs include and are not limited to: accommodation in terms of team rooms, washrooms, change rooms and showers (this means both providing all gender spaces as well as private change and shower facilities in segregated spaces); accessible lockers (these are often located in gender segregated areas); consideration when choosing team and travel uniforms; and cost (due to systemic discrimination trans youth are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, street-involved or homeless).

Social needs include and are not limited to: respecting peoples preferred names and pronouns, providing staff education on trans and genderqueer people to ensure a clear understanding of the rights and needs of these communities, contemplating and communicating how accommodations will look in your organization, and developing a policy on gender inclusion and communicating it throughout your entire organization.

These recommendations are by no means exhaustive. For more general information or to inquire about training contact The 519 Church Street Community Centre or visit our website [www.The519.org](http://www.The519.org)

*“Base your opinion of others on their character and their sportsmanship.”*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. **How do I know what pronouns and name someone prefers?**

Ask! It is always better to ask than to assume. And if someone introduces themselves with a new name, use that when referring to them. If you are not comfortable asking then use a gender neutral pronoun such as 'they.'

It is good practice when doing any group introductions where people are asked to share their names to ask everyone to share their preferred pronoun as well. Keep in mind, many people have never been asked to share their preferred pronoun so you will need to preface this activity with a brief explanation of why you are asking and the importance of paying attention to the pronouns shared.

Keep in mind that not all folks are out in every sphere of their lives. So, it is a good idea for you to ask when and where, if ever, it is okay for you to refer to them by their preferred name and pronouns.

## 2. **Don't trans people have a competitive edge in sport because of their unique histories or hormone therapies?**

Many people believe that trans women have a competitive edge because of their history living in a body labelled as male and that trans men may have an advantage if they are on testosterone. This myth assumes that all men are naturally better at sports than women; this is of course absolutely false and devalues women's athletic ability.

For those in elite sport it is valuable to know that many studies have shown any advantage trans women may have had disappears soon after hormone replace therapy begins. Further, trans men who choose to take testosterone, as a part of their transition process, have hormone levels equivalent to cisgender male athletes.



### 3. What if my organisation can't afford to make the changes you're recommending?

First, it is important to know that since the passing of Toby's law (the act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and expression) in June 2012, all service providers in Ontario are obligated to respect the gender identity and gender expression of every one who seeks their services. So, there is an onus on you to make your organisation accessible to trans, genderqueer and Two Spirit communities.

Second, many of the recommendations we are making cost little or no money, especially if you get creative. Respecting people's names and pronouns, developing sound policy, reconsidering your team uniform and educating your staff, coaches, administrators, etc. should be accessible changes for most organisations to implement. It is not always possible to provide an all gender or private change and shower space, but it is possible to make the spaces which do exist more welcoming to trans, genderqueer and 2 Spirit youth by explicitly stating who the facilities are for. Also, if you are in a facility with more than one male and female washroom it is easy and inexpensive to make one of your existing facilities all-gender.

### 4. If someone shares with me that they are a trans man does that mean they have a vulva/vagina?

They may have a vulva and vagina and they may not. It is never possible to tell what someone's anatomy is just by knowing their gender identity. It is never okay to ask someone about their genitals - what they look like now, in the past, or their plans for the future.

***“Be inclusive no matter what  
and get beyond the labels.  
Knowledge and information  
confront fear and ignorance. “***

# CHECKLIST

YOUR ORGANISATION CLIMATE CHECKLIST	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. Our organisation has and implements a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity/expression.			
2. Our organisation has and implements an anti-bullying policy that includes gender identity/expression.			
3. Our members, volunteers, teachers, students, etc. know about laws and organisation policy protecting everyone from discrimination or bullying because of gender identity/expression.			
4. Our organisation's leaders participate in training on making our sport and physical activity space safe and inclusive for members of all gender identities/expressions.			
5. Our organisation has and implements a policy enabling trans people to participate and use washrooms and locker rooms according to their gender identity.			
6. Team uniforms are gender-neutral or participants can wear uniforms according to their gender identity			
7. Expectations for respectful good sports behavior are communicated to everybody, including spectators.			
8. All league communications use language that is inclusive of diverse families, friendships and gender identities.			
9. Our organisation collects information on member's gender only when absolutely necessary.			

**Take a look at your Not Sures, try to find the answers.  
What can you do to turn those No's into Yes's?**



# RESOURCES + CREDITS

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Everyone who participated in our community survey. The youth team who helped shape this great project.





# Trans+Sport

*Changing Spaces into Safer Places*

Trans+Sport is a documentary short that highlights many of the barriers trans and genderqueer youth face in accessing sport and physical activity. Through interviews with youth and adult leaders, viewers will gain a better understanding of why it is important to challenge these barriers, how individuals can create change, and the impact creating safer spaces will have for everyone in your community.

Included in this video package is a short booklet complete with common definitions and frequently asked questions to help further an understanding of trans and genderqueer communities. Also included is a checklist to help your organization identify answers to questions such as: Are our policies clear and effective? What changes can we make to enhance the safety of our spaces?

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