



Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care

Ending Homelessness in Connecticut | Email: ctboscoc@gmail.com | Website: www.ctbos.org

Policy on Ensuring a Safe Healthy, Inclusive, Affirming and Discrimination-free Environment for LGBTQI Individuals

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Introduction

Connecticut law [prohibits discrimination](#) in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit transactions on the basis of sex, transgender status, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and civil union status. Retaliation against someone for filing a discrimination complaint is also illegal. The [Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities](#) is tasked with: enforcing human rights laws that ban illegal discrimination; monitoring compliance with state contract compliance laws and with laws requiring affirmative action in state agency personnel practices; and establishing equal opportunity and justice for all persons in Connecticut through education and outreach activities. [HUD's Equal Access to Housing Rules](#) also prohibit certain forms of discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Intersex individuals (LGBTQI) individuals.

The intent of this policy is to: support compliance HUD's Equal Access Rules and with laws prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQI individuals; and to promote strategies to provide all individuals who interact with the Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care (CT BOS) and the agencies funded by CT BOS with a safe, healthy, inclusive, affirming and discrimination-free environment.

CT BOS wishes to acknowledge the work of the New York City Department of Social Services in Developing Policy and Procedure #DSS-PD-2017-01, which CT BOS used to develop this policy.

Terminology

LGBTQI Definition

LGBTQI is an acronym used to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Intersex communities. It is important to keep in mind that LGBTQI individuals may use a wide range of language to describe themselves. The best practice is to recognize that individuals are the best people to determine their own identities and to reflect the terms which individuals use to describe themselves. Staff should use the terminology preferred by each individual. The list of terminology below is not intended to be exhaustive. CT BOS acknowledges the evolving nature of language and encourages continuously updating terminology to reflect new preferences.

The following list includes definitions of all the terms that are contained in the **acronym LGBTQI**:

Lesbian: Typically refers to someone who identifies as a woman and who is attracted to women.

Gay: Typically refers to someone who identifies as a man and who is attracted to men. This term is sometimes used generally to refer to the LGBTQI communities as a whole or as a label for people who are homosexual.

Bisexual: A person attracted to the same and opposite genders. This attraction may show a preference for one gender over another.

Transgender: Is an umbrella term used to describe individuals whose sense of being male, female, or another gender (gender identity) and/or outward appearance of gender (gender expression) is different from what is typically associated with their birth sex.

Questioning: A term often used to describe a person who does not know whether they might be lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, or intersex, or identify with those terms.

Intersex: Describes people who are born with anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male. Some intersex people may identify as transgender, and others may not.

Additional Useful Terminology

Ally: In this context, the term “ally” means a supporter of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and intersex people.

Birth Sex or “Assigned Sex”: Refers to the sex a person was given at the time of birth. For many transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex people, this sex does not match how they feel and may not match their biological traits.

Cisgender: Is a term that means “not transgender.” Cisgender means that a person identifies or expresses their gender in a way that matches their birth sex.

Gender Expression: Describes the external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, mannerisms, and speech patterns.

Gender Identity: A person’s internal sense of their gender. For example: someone’s sense of being male, female, gender non-conforming, or another gender. For transgender people, their gender identity is typically different than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Dysphoria: The distress a person feels when their internal sense of self does not match the sex that they were assigned at birth.

Gender Non-Conforming or “Genderqueer/Gender Variant”: A person who does not conform to cultural expectations of men or women.

Gender Transition: A gender transition is when someone decides to bring their external gender expression in line with how they see themselves on the inside. This can involve legal changes, social changes and/or medical changes. Transgender individuals may or may not begin or continue a medical process of hormone replacement therapy and/or gender confirmation surgery.

Heteronormative: Behavior that conforms to typical cultural male or female gender roles and expectations. This kind of behavior is often seen as normal and rewarded.

Heterosexual: Describes people who are attracted to people of the opposite gender. Also referred to as “straight”.

No Gender: Someone who does not identify with a particular gender.

Pansexual: A person who is sexually attracted to people of all or many gender expressions. Often described as “you love who you love”.

Queer: An umbrella term that refers to identities that are outside social norms when it comes to gender identity or sexual orientation. It is also used to refer to people who are attracted to all or many gender expressions, similar to “pansexual”. Queer is a reclaimed term with formerly derogatory connotation and should not be used unless a person identifies that way.

Same-Gender Loving: A term used by some who may not identify with the terms gay or lesbian but engage in same-sex behavior.

Sex or “biological sex”: Refers to biological and physiological characteristics associated with a particular gender, such as organs, hormones, or chromosomes.

Sexual Orientation: The desire for love or sexual activity with people of the opposite sex, the same sex, or people of various identities. Terms like lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, heterosexual, and same-gender loving refer to sexual orientation.

Two-Spirit: A term used in many First Nations/American Indian communities. Two- spirit people are often seen as a third gender.

Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment Policy

CT BOS is committed to: treating all individuals who interact with the CoC and the agencies funded by the CoC with dignity and respect; and to ensuring that the CoC operates in compliance with human rights and anti-discrimination laws and regulations.

a. Professionalism and Staff Conduct

CT BOS expects that all staff and contractors at CT BOS funded agencies will model appropriate and affirming behavior at all times, as defined by their agencies' codes of conduct and in this policy. Discomfort felt by staff and/or clients about gender, perceived gender, or sexual orientation cannot affect the respectful offering and provision of appropriate services, or the respectful treatment of co-workers, clients and community partners. Under no circumstances is any staff member or contractor to attempt to convince an LGBTQI client, co-worker or community partner to reject or modify their gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression. Additionally, it is not appropriate to ask questions regarding sexual practices, except as necessary for clinical assessment or reporting abuse. Authorized staff may inquire about sexual orientation, transgender status or intersex status only for the purposes of collecting demographic information or as necessary to provide affirming customer service. Clients must be told that disclosure of this information is voluntary and will not affect eligibility for assistance.

b. Confidentiality and Privacy

All clients, staff, and community partners have a right to privacy, and CT BOS expects that all staff and contractors will respect this right. CT BOS expects that staff and contractors will:

- Treat sexual orientation, transgender status, and intersex status, information about a person's anatomy or medical history, and names other than the client's preferred name as confidential information.
- Never disclose such information without the client's permission, unless such disclosure is required to properly serve the individual and is consistent with federal, State and local law.
- If a client grants permission to share this information, do so in a professional and respectful manner.

c. Collection of Demographic Information

CT BOS and/or its funded agencies may collect demographic information about sexual orientation and gender identity. Answering these demographic questions would under all circumstances be

completely voluntary and any such information gathered will only be used for analytic purposes. This information will not affect eligibility for assistance.

d. Titles Names and Pronouns

Once a preferred name has been established staff should always address individuals by their preferred name in addition to their preferred title (e.g., Ms./Miss/Mrs./Mr.), and preferred pronoun (e.g., he/she, him/her, his/hers, they/theirs), regardless of their birth sex, whether the individual has undergone a legal name change, or what their gender expression is at the time, and without requiring identification or other forms of “proof” of gender identity.

Remember that:

- If you are unsure what title and name a person wishes or what pronoun they prefer, ask, “How would you like me to address you?”
- Having learned the title, preferred name, and pronoun chosen by an individual, refusing to refer to that person by the correct title, name and pronoun is a form of harassment and will be considered discrimination by CT BOS.

e. Gender Separated Facilities

[HUD’s Equal Access Rules](#) prohibit most single sex projects. Where single sex facilities are permissible, it is the policy of CT BOS that all individuals have the right to access such facilities consistent with their gender identity and gender expression. Clients should be placed in facilities according to their gender identity and/or expression. No one should be denied access to a gender-affirming facility because of birth sex. Every effort must be made to place individuals where they feel safest, and where the service provider can ensure appropriate and culturally competent delivery of services.

Additionally, all single occupancy restrooms must be made available to people of all genders. In situations where an individual does not identify as male or female or when gender expression does not match traditionally male or female roles or expectations, this individual is welcome to use the single sex facility they feel most closely aligns with their gender identity or use a single occupancy facility if available. Clients, staff, and visitors are entitled to use the facility that matches their gender identity or expression most closely and are entitled to do this without being required to show identification, medical documentation or any other form of proof or verification of gender.

f. Gender Separated Programs and Activities

Some programs, activities, and facilities are gender specific. Everyone has the right to be free from harassment and to participate in gender specific programs and activities that correlate with how they identify.

g. Safety

LGBTQI people may be subject to increased harassment, bullying, or violence. Protecting the safety of all clients, staff, contractors and community partners is paramount. All incidents involving harassment, bullying, discrimination or violence against LGBTQI clients should be documented and addressed appropriately. Often times, discrimination is subtle and is not documented. It is important to make sure documentation is prompt, accurate and comprehensive. Staff members who observe harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, transgender status, or any other protected identity trait should take action immediately and document such action in relevant case notes and/or incident reports in accordance with their agency's policies. Clients who feel unsafe in a particular program may raise the issue with program staff, CT BOS or the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (see [Violations](#)).

h. Health Care

LGBTQI clients may need access to health services such as gender-affirming medications or surgeries or services or products that don't match their documented gender. Staff should make every effort to connect residents with affirming providers for any such medical needs and should reach out to their supervisors for any assistance. Clients may contact CT BOS with any issues regarding accessing medically necessary care in CT BOS programs. (For contact information see [Violations](#))

i. Dress Code

Staff and clients should never be required to wear clothing or meet grooming standards that are inconsistent with their gender identity or expression, or be forbidden from wearing clothing consistent with their gender identity or expression. Holding employees or clients to different dress and grooming standards based on gender or perceived gender is considered by to BOS to be discriminatory.

j. Violations

Any employee or contractor of a CT BOS funded agency who discriminates against, harasses, or violates the rights of LGBTQI individuals, or retaliates against any individual who opposes such

action, is subject to disciplinary actions as well as sanctions and penalties imposed by the funded agency, the courts, the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the CT Department of Housing. CT BOS may monitor recipient, subrecipient and contractor compliance with this policy and human rights and anti-discrimination laws and regulations. When making decisions regarding project funding, the CT BOS Steering Committee may consider a pattern of non-compliance and/or failure to promptly and adequately address non-compliance.

Complaints of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or the creation of a hostile work environment may be reported to any of the following:

- The [CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities](#)
Phone: [860-541-3400](tel:860-541-3400)
Connecticut Toll Free: [1-800-477-5737](tel:1-800-477-5737)
TDD: [860-541-3400](tel:860-541-3400)
- CT BOS Grievance Committee in writing via e-mail (ctboscoc@gmail.com) or by phone at (917)449-3918. CT BOS can also assist in determining how best to make a report directly to a provider agency.

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