



Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care

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

Implementing the Equal Access Rule and CT BOS LGBTQIA+ Policies

HOUSING
INNOVATIONS



Learning Objectives

- ▶ Understand the terms encompassed within the LGBTQIA+ umbrella
- ▶ Learn about requirements of HUD's Equal Access Rule
- ▶ Learn about CT BOS LGBTQIA+ policies
- ▶ Understand how to create safe and inclusive projects through good policy and practice



Why are LGBTQIA+ protections necessary?

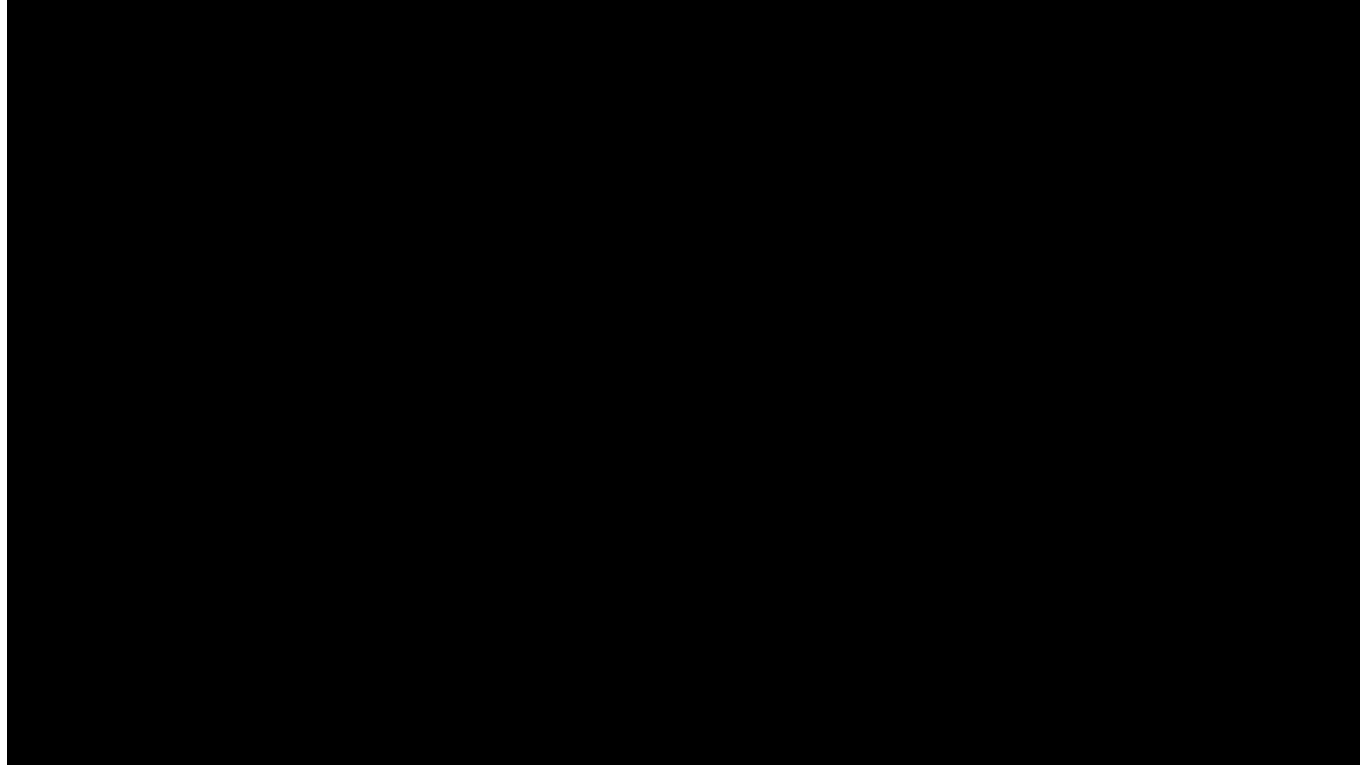
To hear George's story, visit <http://transgenderlawcenter.org/programs/truth/truth-videos>

Discrimination at CE Access Points and Shelter Entry

- A Coordinated Entry employee tells a single father that the only shelters that take children don't accept men.
- A shelter employee learns that a potential client is a trans woman and makes reference to surgery as a requirement for entry.
- A Coordinated Entry employee ignores a potential client's self-reported gender, enters a different gender in the system and directs someone to an inappropriate placement based on the person's voice or appearance.
- A shelter employee refuses to enroll someone "because they would make other participants uncomfortable or feel unsafe."

Discrimination in Housing Placement

- Management of housing projects or facilities fail to address complaints from LGBTQIA+ individuals regarding harassment by other residents.
- Project staff unnecessarily disclose an individual's transgender status.
- At housing enrollment, a case worker requires a lesbian-identified individual to follow special procedures or forces the individual into an inappropriate placement.



Understanding Terms

Language: Using Appropriate Terms

Gender Identity:

- Internal or innate sense of being male, female, or another gender
- May or may not match their assigned sex at birth

Gender Expression:

- External expression of gender identity (note that many times people do not feel they can safely express their gender identity)
- Exhibited through: behavior, clothing, hairstyle, body language, and voice

Sexual Orientation:

- Physical or emotional attraction to people of same or different gender as self, or more than one gender
- Distinct from one's gender expression or identity

Language: Using Appropriate Terms

Transgender:

- Umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex
- Occasionally, an individual may determine they no longer identify as transgender after they transition.

Transitioning (Gender Transition):

- Process that some (but not all) transgender people go through to begin living as the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex assigned to them at birth.
- Transitioning does not require medical treatment.

HUD's Equal Access Rule

In effect since October 21, 2016

Equal access is provided in all HUD assisted programs regardless of sexual orientation, marital status or gender identity

Must place and serve individuals in accordance with self-reported gender identity

May not ask intrusive questions or require “proof” of gender identity

Must update policies and procedures to reflect the above

Must take non-discriminatory steps to address privacy concerns

CT BOS LGBTQIA+ Policies

Model

Model appropriate and affirming behavior

Ask

Only ask for information you need

Maintain

Maintain confidentiality and privacy

Ask

Ask name, pronouns, and title—do not assume

Take

Take immediate action when you see harassment, bullying, violence, or discrimination

Place

Place on self-reported gender identity and defer to client decision for gender expansive identities

Make

Make dress codes gender neutral

Connect

Connect residents with gender affirming healthcare providers whenever possible

What if someone doesn't identify as male or female?

▶ Some clients may not identify themselves as singularly male or female

BUT

▶ The only shelters in your geographic area serve either 'male' or 'female'

▶ How should you resolve?

- ▶ Explain that the project is set up in a binary way, serving only women, or only men, as applicable;
- ▶ Tell the client you understand that gender may not be binary; and
- ▶ Ask the client to specify which gender-based placement would be most appropriate for them

CT BOS Policy: Serving All Families

- When projects serve ANY families with children, they must serve ALL families with children.
- That includes families of any composition type: single dad, single mom, same-sex couples, opposite-sex couples, multi-generational, and non-romantic groups who present for services as a family
- For more information, visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/1529/how-is-the-definition-of-family-that-was-included/>

Creating Safe Spaces and Practices

- ▶ **When trying to access services, people will ask:**
 - *Is this a place where I can be myself, or will I have to hide who I am?*
 - *Is this a place where I will experience violence from people around me—employees, volunteers, or other residents?*
 - *Will the people who work here understand what I need?*
 - *Am I safe enough here to stay off the streets tonight?*
- ▶ **Make sure you have visible materials that communicate “all are welcome here”**

Thanks to True Colors United for these images!



Consider your Participant Agreement

Thanks to The Network/La Red for this example!
For more, go to:

<https://www.tnlr.org/en/training-education/>

SAMPLE DOCUMENT:

Communicating Anti-Discrimination Policy to Clients

(Project Name) welcomes individuals who are heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender queer and/or gender non-conforming of different races, classes, religions, ages and backgrounds. I will be respectful of the other program participants and staff. I understand that any oppressive or abusive language or actions are not acceptable. If I have any questions about this policy, I can ask a staff member to explain it to me.

If a program participant or staff member is acting in an abusive or oppressive way towards me, I know that I can report this behavior to a staff member. If I feel that the issue has not been addressed, I can then report it to the project coordinator, _____. If the issue has still not been appropriately addressed, I can bring the issue to the executive director, _____.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Asking About Names

- ▶ 1. Legal Name: _____
- ▶ 2. Name You Use: _____
- ▶ 3. What is your current gender identity? (Check or circle ALL that apply)
 - Female
 - Male
 - Gender that is not singularly 'Female' or 'Male' (e.g., non-binary, genderfluid, agender, culturally specific gender)
 - Transgender
 - Questioning
 - Decline to answer
 - Do Not Know
- ▶ 4. What pronouns do you use? (he/him, they/them, she/her, she/they, ze/zim, etc) _____

Asking About Gender

- ▶ 1. Legal Name: _____
- ▶ 2. Name You Use: _____
- ▶ 3. What is your current gender identity? (Check or circle ALL that apply)
 - Female
 - Male
 - Gender that is not singularly 'Female' or 'Male' (e.g., non-binary, genderfluid, agender, culturally specific gender)
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- ▶ When and how do I ask about sexual orientation?



Creating Safe Shower and Bathroom Spaces

- Access is based on gender identity
- Increase privacy, when possible, by:
 - Installing temporary or permanent curtains
 - Installing locks, doors or partitions to toilet stalls
 - Single-use facilities are gender neutral, meaning anyone can use them
 - Increase privacy through staggered shower times for those who request more privacy

Addressing Conflict

- ▶ Be proactive. The moment of conflict shouldn't be the first time your staff are thinking about conflict resolution.
- ▶ Don't target the more cooperative harassed individual to make changes. Focus on the aggressor.
- ▶ Staff training should incorporate multiple ways to address and resolve impermissible conduct among residents
- ▶ **Conflict resolution should not involve expulsion of the victim of harassment.**



Scenario: Sleeping Arrangements

I run a 50 bed emergency shelter for men. My project is housed in an old firehouse and only has congregate sleeping and bathroom facilities with no privacy for any clients. One of the men staying in the shelter comes to a volunteer staff person and tells the staff person he is transgender (identifying as a trans man). This is new information to me. Do I allow him to continue using the same facilities as other clients?

1. Not only can you allow it, but you are required to do so.
2. Do not isolate clients based on their transgender status.
3. A client may request an accommodation (in this case perhaps requesting a bed assignment near the staff workstation or access to space set aside for highly vulnerable clients) however, staff may not impose or require a client accept an accommodation.
4. Treat all clients that are eligible, in this case anyone identifying as male, with the same services, staff, questions, and setting that all other clients receive.

Scenario: Placement in Facilities

- ▶ I run a domestic violence project that serves women. We house residents in two separate buildings on the same property. All residents have access to the same services but I've decided to house transgender women in one building and cisgender (i.e. non-transgender) women in the other building. I did this because I'm worried about triggering traumatic experiences for residents of the project as they begin to rebuild their lives.

Can I require some women to live in a different building, room, or project because of their transgender status?

Scenario: Non Binary Identities

- ▶ At my women's shelter, where everyone sleeps in a room with 3 roommates, a person is referred to the project by an outreach worker. When they arrive, the individual refuses to pick male or female and says they don't identify with either. What should I do?

Where to Begin?

- Is your agency compliant with CT BOS LGBTQIA+ policies?
- Does your agency have an anti-discrimination policy?
- Does it include gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation in the list of protected attributes?
- Is it posted publicly?
- Are your staff, volunteers, and contractors trained on this policy? How often?

Where can I get more information?

▶ Read more about terminology:

- ▶ <https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-transgender-people-the-basics>
- ▶ <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf>
- ▶ Deadnaming: <https://www.healthline.com/health/transgender/deadnaming#if-you're-the-one-being-deadnamed/>
- ▶ Non-binary: <https://www.psychom.net/nonbinary>

▶ Find trainings and other practical materials:

- ▶ <https://truecolorsunited.org/out-work/training-education/network/>
- ▶ <https://hudexchange.info/resource/4951/equal-access-staff-training-scenarios/>
- ▶ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4959/equal-access-for-transgender-people-supporting-inclusive-housing-and-shelters/>
- ▶ <https://www.tnlr.org/en/training-education/>

▶ Read about being a good trans ally:

- ▶ <https://www.glad.org/transgender/allies>

How do I maximize the support I can provide to clients?

- ▶ Find Connecticut-based LGBTQIA+ services at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Programs-and-Services/Finding-Services/LGBT-Services>
- ▶ Utilize Connecticut's fair housing materials: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/online-complaint
- ▶ Get familiar with Connecticut state laws on name changes: <https://transequality.org/documents/state/connecticut>

Where Can I File a Complaint?

▶ File complaints at the **federal** level:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opportunity/online-complaint

▶ Or Call 1-800-669-9777

▶ File complaints at the **state** level:

<https://portal.ct.gov/CHRO/Commission/Commission/Contact-Us>

▶ Or Call 1-800-477-5737 (TDD: 860-541-3400)

▶ File complaints with **CT BOS Grievance Committee** by emailing ctboscoc@gmail.com or call 917-449-3918

Thank you for participating today!

