



# SNAPSHOT

## Trans-Inclusion in Mental Health & Addictions Services

Trans people face disproportionately high rates of mental health and addictions issues, yet face many barriers to care including violence, harassment and discrimination. This snapshot provides mental health and addictions service providers with information and best practices for trans-inclusion. Including trans people in services is not just important in order to provide services to those who most need it, but a legal obligation under the Ontario Human Rights Code.\*

### TERMS

#### GENDER IDENTITY

Each person's internal and individual experience of gender.

#### GENDER EXPRESSION

How a person publicly present or expresses their gender.

#### TRANS

An umbrella term that describes people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman.

[\(the 519, Creating Authentic Spaces\)](#)

### IMPLEMENTING TRANS-INCLUSIVE POLICIES IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

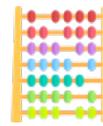
Organizational policies set standards of practices and procedures to uphold its mission and mandate, communicate parameters for clients and staff, and lay groundwork for upholding human rights as per law. Below are examples of how your organization can be more inclusive of transgender people.

- Include LGBTQ inclusiveness throughout all organizational policies.
- Include gender identity and gender expression in anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies.
- Have an inclusion policy for gender segregated spaces and programs that specifically states a person's gender is the gender with which that person self-identifies.
- Ensure that policies regarding medications include protocols for hormone therapies that ensure privacy and access to these medications and access to needles and syringes where needed.

### CONCERNS AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES IN HEALTH CARE REPORTED BY TRANS PEOPLE:

- Services wouldn't know enough about trans people to help.
- Fear of silent harassment (being stared at, whispered about).
- That their trans-specific healthcare would be stopped.
- Fear of physical violence.
- Being misgendered (i.e. using pronouns that do not correctly reflect the gender they identify with).
- Hearing hurtful, demeaning or insulting language about being trans.

[scottishtrans.org](http://scottishtrans.org)



### THE NUMBERS

#### Mental Health & Addiction Numbers for Trans People:

12.3%

reported past-year use of illicit drugs associated with a high risk of harm to the user

5-6x

more likely to report cocaine and amphetamine use

1.5x

more heavy episodic drinking (HED) than general population

[\(Trans PULSE, 2017\)](#)

35.1%

seriously considered, and 11.2 % attempted, suicide in the past year

[\(Trans PULSE, 2015\)](#)

60%+

experience depression

[\(Trans PULSE, 2011\)](#)

#### Access to Care for Trans People:

1 in 10

refused care in ER due to being trans

40%

experienced discriminatory behavior from family doctor

21%

avoided ER when they needed it due to being trans

[\(Trans PULSE, 2014\)](#)



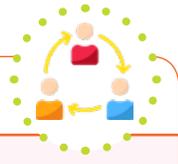
# BEST PRACTICES FOR TRANS-INCLUSION

In addition to trans inclusive policies, there are best practices that can be implemented on the organizational level and through direct service provision.



## ORGANIZATIONAL

- Assess policies regularly.
- Hire LGBTQ people.
- Train all staff on LGBTQ competency.
- Post signage that the agency is an LGBTQ positive space and does not tolerate discrimination.
- Intake spaces should be gender neutral. Sign in sheets should only ask for preferred names.
- Have a process for documenting and using names/pronouns that may differ from ID.
- Sleeping arrangements, bathrooms, showers etc should all be gender of choice. Have these spaces be gender neutral/private when possible.
- If toiletries and hygiene supplies are provided, ensure that what is needed is available.
- Collaborate with LGBTQ organizations.



## SERVICE PROVISION

- From intake to discharge use preferred pronouns and names.
- Uphold confidentiality.
- Be prepared with LGBTQ specific referrals and resources.
- Use gender neutral language.
- If standardized service provision tools do not allow for multiple gender identities, give that person other opportunity to say their preferred pronoun/name.
- Keep in mind that you cannot assume someone's gender or sex by looking at them and that trans status is not dependant on presentation or "surgeries".
- Follow client's lead on what services they need. Do not focus on or avoid conversations about trans subjects.
- Foster understanding of gender identity with all clients.



## EXAMPLE OF TRANS-INCLUSION IN GENDER SEGREGATED SERVICES

### RENASCENT

Re nascent offers gender-specific residential substance abuse treatment. In order to be inclusive of transgender and gender non-conforming clients, Renascent partnered with Pieces to Pathways (P2P) a peer-lead substance use support program for LGBTQ2SIA youth to conduct an organizational audit and develop recommendations for how Renascent could make their services more trans-inclusive. Renascent implemented many of the recommendations including a policy of allowing clients to enter the gender-specific program of their choice. At Renascent this means access to gender-specific programs is not dependent on presentation or surgeries, and allows for greater inclusion for people who are non-binary. In addition to the overall policy, Renascent implemented a number of other changes including: removed gender specific signage from their single stall washrooms, modified their website and other

descriptive materials to be trans-inclusive (eg. "Our women's centre welcomes those who self-identify as female"), and held trainings for staff and clients on trans issues. Overall, staff and clients report that the changes at Renascent have been positive. Recounting the impact of implementing trans-inclusiveness at Renascent, a staff member described a workshop given to clients in their women's program on gender and trans issues and that the women were so receptive to changes and proud to be part of building a more accepting environment at Renascent. At the end of the workshop, and after seeing their peers' positive response a woman raised her hand and disclosed that she was trans. Sharing this story, the Renascent staff pointed out "including trans people in services doesn't negatively impact the community, it actually builds it".

\* Under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* people are protected from discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and gender expression. Trans people should be recognized and treated as the gender they live in, whether or not they have undergone surgery, or their identity documents are up to date. Organizations are liable for any discrimination and harassment that happens. They are also liable for not accommodating a trans person's needs unless it would cause undue hardship. They must deal with complaints, take steps to prevent problems and provide a safe, welcoming environment for trans people. ([Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2014](#))

Icons sourced from Flaticon • Last updated August 2018

