

Stickin' out as

TRANS

**HOMOPHOBIC
AND TRANSPHOBIC
HATE, BULLYING
AND
HARASSMENT ARE
NOT TOLERATED**



griffin centre
EVERYBODY COUNTS

Gender and Sexual Identity

Being trans or genderqueer is about our gender identity and expression. Being lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) is about who you are attracted to physically and emotionally as well as your sexual identity. This is not necessarily related to our gender identity and gender expression as trans or genderqueer folks. Our identities are often included in the names of many organizations and communities (LGBT). Unfortunately these places are not always trans positive. As agencies come to recognize the specific strengths and challenges trans and genderqueer people experience, hopefully they will create spaces where we are all genuinely acknowledged and welcomed.

Because we do not necessarily feel as if we fit into the gender boxes that society gives us, power is taken away from us and we are at a high risk for violence and discrimination.

Yet, it is important to realize that because our identities as trans folks also overlap with how we belong to other marginalized groups such as refugees, poor or low income people and HIV positive people, we experience violence and discrimination in different ways.

In the end, despite the oppression we face on a daily basis because of our gender identity, there are definitely things that we can do to help us deal.

Useful Definitions

gender identity

Describes how you see your gender. This may or may not match your biological sex.

genderqueer

Includes a variety of identities that challenge male or female gender roles and presentation, “play” with gender, and make the categories of gender irrelevant. It is often a political identity, with the goal of changing society’s attitudes towards gender.


transphobia


The idea that us trans and genderqueer folks are inferior. Also means fear or hatred of trans and genderqueer folks. Transphobia is not our fault!

WASH ROOM AND CHANGE ROOM WORRIES?

Generally public washrooms and change rooms have either male or female signs on them, leaving a lot of us with little choice of where to go. Even though we have a right to be there, we are often made to feel as though we are trespassing, or even that we deserve harassment and violent treatment when we are simply trying to use the bathroom or change room.

Tips for avoiding violence and harassment:


 Although washrooms can make us feel uncomfortable, we have a right to be there, and **acting confident** about that right lets others know that as well.

 **Bring a friend** who understands our difficulties in these spaces and is willing to stand up for us if anyone gives us trouble.

As trans and genderqueer folks, it is often difficult to ask for our rights when we know that in the larger society, we are not valued because of our gender identity. Asking for our rights also means that we have to let other people know that we are trans, which not everyone is comfortable with. (For information on making a report and dealing with transphobia in our schools see another fact sheet in this series, “Dealin’ in school”).

The Ontario Human Rights Code states that we should have access to washrooms and change rooms in our lived gender (so a trans woman living as a woman can use a women’s washroom and change room even if her identification still says “M” or “Male”).

The Code also has written about “The Duty to Accommodate”, which means that employers, unions, landlords and service providers (including schools and gyms) legally have to make efforts to accommodate our request for a separate space to use the washroom or change if we do not feel safe.

 We should not have to do this but some people **carry a letter** from a doctor, therapist or support group facilitator that says that we are trans and that it is appropriate for us to be using the washroom or change room that we are using, regardless of the sex on our ID.

For more strategies see:

Peeing in Peace: A Resource Guide for Transgender Activists and Allies
www.transgenderlawcenter.org/pdf/PIP%20Resource%20Guide.pdf

DEALING WITH THE POLICE:

As trans and genderqueer folks, we may have anxieties around dealing with the police because they have the power to ask for our ID and to strip search us.

Trans and genderqueer folks may especially be afraid to expose our bodies to police because it is our bodies that are not generally accepted by society. On top of this, strip searches are done by our legal sex on our ID: male officers search folks with M, female guards search folks with F. Because we don't always fit into these categories so neatly, **there are ways to make strip searches a bit more respectful of our gender identities.**

The name and sex indicated on our ID is usually the name and sex that we were given at birth. But this does not necessarily match the way that we feel about our own gender identity or the name that we use now. It can be scary to show the police our ID if we know that it does not represent who we are, but if the police ask us for our ID and we have it, we have to show it to them. This does not mean that the police can insult, harass or discriminate against us based on our gender identity if our name and/or gender do not match up.

ID'S AND STRIP SEARCHES

When the police tell us that they are going to strip search us, if we feel comfortable enough, we should let them know that we are trans and that we are aware of Toronto Police strip search procedures which entitle us to three options in being searched:

- 👉 by male officers only 👉 by female officers only
- 👉 a split search – female officers above the waist, male officers below or vice versa

For the Toronto Police Services Strip Search Policy visit
www.the519.org/programs/trans/resourses/TPAP-Strip_Search_policy_TPS.pdf

If we've followed these steps and the police still don't let us choose, or if the police harass us, we are not alone. A 2003 US survey of trans people found that 1 in 4 had been harassed or abused by a police officer. If this happens to us, we have the option of making a report (see another pamphlet in this series, "Bringing it back to the cops").

Doing sex work? How to protect ourselves

As trans and genderqueer sex workers, we have a lot on our plate. Transphobia and negative attitudes towards sex work mean that we are at high risk for violence and that we are sometimes turned away from the services and programs we need. It also makes it difficult for us to ask for and find support when we experience violence and harassment.

Sex work is seen as dangerous work and is looked down on, but the work itself isn't dangerous, wrong, or bad. Sex work is illegal and as a result, we do not have the job protections that many other professions have. Without those protections, sex work can put us into dangerous circumstances where we might face violence and harassment.

However, there are things that we can do:

Staying Safer

- Work in the area where our friends, other sex workers or other trans folks know us
- Check the bad date/bad trick list (available at Maggie's and various shelters, also online at www.spoc.ca/bad.html) – and try to avoid doing business with the johns on the list
- Although a bad date may be listed in a past year, this doesn't mean they're not still out there, or continuing to be violent. So it's important to check the entire list

Reporting a Violent Client

If we decide we want to report a client who has been violent towards us, here is what we can do:

Write down:

- 📌 the date and time
- 📌 if it was an in-call, out-call, car or street client
- 📌 how they found you (ad, internet, yellow pages, etc.)
- 📌 their race, height, weight and age
- 📌 the kind of clothes they were wearing
- 📌 a description of their apartment/house, or if it's a car date, a description of their car (esp. license plate number)
- 📌 their phone number, internet handle or e-mail address

Report it:

- 📌 Call the Sex Professionals of Canada (SPOC) Bad Date Reporting Line (416-519-1456)
- 📌 Call the Toronto Police Services Bad Date Hotline (416-808-0000)

OTHER STUFF TO CHECK OUT:

Where can we turn for support when we need it? Check out the list below. It's a good idea to find out what these agencies do in advance, so that if we need support we know who to call.

Griffin Centre - ReachOUT Program

Counselling and weekly drop-in groups to hang out and meet other LGBTQ2IQQ youth

416-222-1153 ♦ www.griffin-centre.org

Fred Victor Centre – trans-positive shelters (women's and co-ed)

416-368-2642 ♦ www.fredvictor.org

Maggie's Toronto

416-964-0150 ♦ www.maggiestoronto.com

PASAN – Prisoners' HIV/AIDS Support Action Network

(collect calls accepted from prisoners in Canada)

416-920-9567 (Toronto) or 1-866-224-9978 (Toll Free) ♦ www.pasan.org

Sex Professionals of Canada - Bad Date Reporting

(Collect calls accepted)

416-519-1456 ♦ www.spoc.ca

SHOUT Clinic

416-927-8553 ♦ www.ctchc.com/site_st/home.html

Toronto Police Services - Bad Date Hotline

416-808-0000

Trans Programme, The 519 Church Street Community Centre

416-355-6778 ♦ www.the519.org/programs/trans/index.shtml

**What does “LGBT2IQ” stand for?
Check out these guides for more information:**

About “GLBTQ” and GLBTQ Youth: from The Safe Schools Coalition
www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-glbtyouth.html

**Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools:
from Gay-Straight Alliance Network**
www.gsanetwork.org/BeyondtheBinary/btbonline.pdf

**Info and Support for GLBTQ Youth:
from Advocates for Youth**
www.advocatesforyouth.org/youth/info/glbq.htm

Resources used in creating this Fact Sheet:

Human rights tribunal sets trans strip-search policy
www.xtra.ca/public/Toronto/Human_rights_tribunal_sets_trans_stripsearch_policy-1765.aspx

**From Peeing in Peace: A Resource Guide for
Transgender Activists and Allies**
www.transgenderlawcenter.org/pdf/PIP%20Resource%20Guide.pdf

Ontario Human Rights Code on Gender Identity
www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/gender_identity

Sex Professionals of Canada: Bad Client List
www.spoc.ca/bad.html

The Happy Transsexual Hooker
www.the519.org/programs/trans/hooker.shtml

**Toilet Training: A Film by Tara Mateik
and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project**
www.srlp.org/films/toilettraining

FINDING OUT MORE:

Griffin Centre

A non-profit charitable mental health agency providing flexible and accessible services to youth, adults and their families.

Our mission is to promote positive change for vulnerable youth and adults with mental health challenges and/or developmental disabilities and their families. We are dedicated to delivering innovative services and developing creative partnerships that enhance lives and communities.

ReachOUT

A creative, inclusive & accessible program for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBT2IQ) youth in north Toronto.

Includes drop-in groups, community outreach, counselling, art & skills exchange. We offer a safe space for all youth that reflects the diversity of our queer and trans communities.

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This fact sheet is one in a series of four. To find other fact sheets in the series, please download them at www.griffin-centre.org or contact ReachOUT.

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