

Quick Guide for Referring Gender Diverse People to External Resources

There are many legitimate reasons that gender diverse people may not wish for information relating to their gender identity to be included when formally being referred to outside resources. Organizations that have not had the opportunity to educate themselves about serving gender diverse populations may misinterpret this information when it is provided, impacting the quality of care they receive.



- **For this reason, the FIRST STEP to consider when referring people to outside services is: Ask the person what, if any, information relating to their gender (name of use, pronouns, gender identity) they would like you to include in formal referrals. You can also consider any notes attached as well!**

Tips for Vetting External Resources

Here are some easy questions you can ask an organization in advance of referring a client to get a better idea about their scope of gender-affirming practice.

- 1. If a formal referral form does not include spaces to provide names of use (“preferred” names) or pronouns, call the organization to see if they have any other informal mechanism for collecting this information in advance.**

Pro-Tip: If the organization does not collect names of use and/or pronouns, see if the person you are speaking with is willing to make a creative solution to better accommodate the individual when they arrive.

- 2. Ask if the organization has any formal policies that protect or specifically name respecting gender identity and expression.**

Pro-Tip: This is especially important when referring individuals to resources that have gendered sleeping, bathing, and/or programmatic requirements (EG: “men’s” and “women’s” dorms, bathrooms, support groups, etc.).

- 3. Ask if there are any providers or support staff who have more experience / comfort in serving gender diverse people, and if so, see if it is possible to coordinate care with those providers.**

Pro-Tip: Just because a gender diverse person is accessing a service does not mean that they would prefer to receive services from another gender diverse person. While many gender diverse people do prefer to receive services from people who identify within their own communities, some people may feel “singled out” or reduced to their identity if it’s assumed that they can only be well-served by another trans person, especially if the service is not specifically related to gender. It is important to obtain advance consent for this kind of linkage support.

4. Ask if the staff of the organization has had access to cultural humility training relating to serving gender diverse people.

Pro-Tip: If they have, it may be worthwhile to ask how recent the training was, and if all staff members were required to attend it. If they have not, this may be an opportunity to route them to free, nationally respected training opportunities via the National LGBTQIA+ Education Center: <https://www.lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/>

5. Ask who to contact for follow-up care-coordination as needed, and what their process is for receiving feedback about services.

Pro-Tip: Nurturing professional relationships with colleagues who provide social and medical services outside of your organization is crucial in shifting the quality of care your clients receive. While formal feedback mechanisms like client survey forms and grievances may be helpful tools, being able to have a conversation about a challenging experience individuals may have had will likely be more effective if you can problem solve with someone who you already have even a briefly established relationship with. Being a positive model and assuming good intent can help you better advocate for individuals when harm has occurred, and can help improve the likelihood that individuals will be able to successfully return to access the services they need.



Considerations

• Regional Access

It is not uncommon for people in rural communities to have a limited number of service providers to refer anyone to, regardless of gender. There will likely be cases in which you know that individuals you serve will likely be required to endure less than respectful treatment in order to receive services (eg: strictly gendered shelter services or substance use treatment facilities). If you know that you are sending individuals to a service provider that may be the only one regionally available to them, it can be helpful to map out how they may want to respond if the providers are not affirming. Helping individuals tier their frustration threshold may help them deescalate a frustrating situation that could have otherwise complicated their access to services. It can be helpful for individuals you serve to determine where their own internal boundaries lie in terms of what microaggressions they are willing to tolerate (eg. being misgendered or deadnamed) in order to access a needed resource.



• Care Planning



This can be an exceptionally helpful tool when linking individuals to external resource. From writing down questions and concerns about the service in advance, to bringing a snack or water if you know the wait time is likely to be long, to inviting a friend or advocate to the appointment, mapping out what a client can do to feel prepared before they access a resource can help set them up for successful linkage. Similarly, supporting individuals in developing an after-care plan can also help them successfully cope if they have negative experiences, and celebrate their movement forward when they have good ones.

• Follow-up

This is important whenever we refer people to external resources. Make a plan to check in with them after they attend an external appointment to follow-up on the quality of care they received and provide problem-solving support as needed. Keeping an internal log of which organizations are more skilled in serving gender diverse clients can help you better prepare individuals you serve to anticipate and strategize for successful linkage to services in the future.

