

How can I provide trans competent advocacy?

- Acknowledge their gender identity and treat it as valid.
- Do not disclose that they are trans to someone else without their consent.
- Do not attempt to “correct” a trans person who uses different words for their body parts than what you consider standard. Use the words they are most comfortable with when referring to their body.
- Stand up for trans survivors when they’re being discriminated against or when someone is disrespecting their bodily autonomy.
- Do not make assumptions about their sexual orientation. Transgender people can have any sexual orientation, regardless of how they identify. Sexual orientation and gender identity are separate.
- Do not ask questions that are not relevant to the service you’re providing. (i.e.: asking if they “had the surgery” when they are seeking legal assistance).
- Do not refer to a trans person as a “tranny,” “he-she,” or “she-male.” These words are considered slurs.

For more transgender resources, check out these websites:

FORGE

<https://forge-forward.org/>

Trans Lifeline

<http://www.translifeline.org/>

The TransAdvocate

<http://www.transadvocate.com/>

Trans Student Educational Resources

<http://www.transstudent.org/sites>

This brochure was created by



3030 Merle Hay Rd.
Des Moines, IA 50310
Des Moines: (515) 850-8081
Iowa City: (319) 389-8430
www.thiowa.org
thiowa14@gmail.com



Advocating For Transgender Survivors of Sexual Violence

What is a transgender person?

Transgender (or “trans”) is an umbrella term that refers to people who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. They could identify with a binary gender, like “male” or “female,” identify somewhere in-between those genders, or identify as something totally separate. Transgender people who do not identify with the gender binary are also referred to as “non-binary.” Transgender people may feel very uncomfortable with their bodies, though not all do. They may choose to alter their physical appearance through hormonal medications and surgery to ease their discomfort with their body, or they may choose to make no changes at all. Studies have indicated that 50% of trans people have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime, which means it’s very important for advocates to understand trans issues.

What pronouns should I use on a transgender person?

That’s entirely dependent on how a transgender person identifies. It’s important to always use the person’s preferred pronoun, as refusing to do so is very disrespectful of their identity. Never assume someone’s pronoun based on the way they look. It’s a good idea to ask what someone’s pronouns are when you first meet them. Some people also prefer gender neutral pronouns, like “they/them/theirs” or “ze/hir/hirs.”

Transgender people...

- Present themselves in many forms, so it’s important to never assume how someone identifies based on their appearance.
- Face discrimination and barriers in healthcare, employment, housing, and in the justice system. For instance, 50% of respondents in the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey reported having to teach their healthcare providers about their bodies, with 28% reporting being denied healthcare because they were transgender.
- May not have documentation that matches their name or gender identity. Legally changing your sex marker and name are very expensive, and not easily accessible to every trans person.
- May not be out of the closet. Being out of the closet as a transgender person can be deadly. Trans women accounted for 53% of all LGBTQ homicide victims in 2013.
- May live entirely “stealth,” meaning that no one in their life knows they are transgender.

Transgender survivors...

- May use different words to refer to their body parts than what others expect them to use. Because of this, they may have difficulty explaining the details of an assault.
- Might be disrespected by medical professionals, law enforcement, or other advocates because they are transgender.
- May have problems talking with law enforcement due to traumatic experiences with police that were sparked by their gender identity.
- May have problems accessing medical care due to medical providers’ lack of knowledge about trans issues, previous traumatic encounters with medical personnel, or body dysphoria.
- May have problems accessing services because of their gender identity (i.e.: the local women’s shelter refuses to take a transgender woman because she was not assigned female at birth).