

Eva's Initiatives

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## Trans, Gender Queer and Two-Spirited Youth

### Policy Source and Summary

This policy outlines Eva's Initiatives' position with respect to Trans and Two-Spirited individuals. It also includes how the staff will assist the youth to minimize discrimination and how we will handle discrimination, violence, targeting, sexual assault and hate crimes. Eva's Initiatives requires its services to include Transgender, queer and two-spirited youth and makes a commitment that such clients will be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy.

The sources of this policy are:

- Toronto Shelter Standards
- Eva's Initiatives Guiding principles for Service Delivery – Principle 1 and 2

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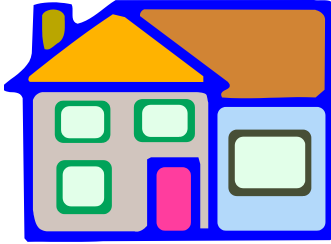
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### Purpose

At Eva's Initiatives we believe all homeless youth have the right to shelter services, to live in a welcoming environment that provides an atmosphere of dignity and respect regardless of their identified gender. In addition, we believe that all staff have the right to work in a welcoming environment regardless of their identified gender.

In the spirit of our organizational mandate for diversity this policy strives to:

- Ensure the rights of trans, genderqueer and two-spirited people
- Create a safe space and positive environment for trans, genderqueer and two-spirited people
- Actively unlearn transphobic attitudes and behaviours



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- Actively dismantle the common barriers to service experienced by trans, genderqueer and two-spirited people
- Contribute to a culture of inclusivity for all service users

### **Policy Statement**

Eva's Initiatives recognizes the intersection of issues of trans youth and homelessness. Trans people are routinely stigmatized, are vulnerable to violence and discrimination and are frequently denied even basic services.

The City of Toronto Shelter Standards requires a policy of inclusion and accommodation for all youth according to the Policy of Non-discrimination with which Eva's Initiatives will ensure compliance.

Eva's Initiatives requires its services to include trans youth and makes a commitment that such clients will be treated with dignity, respect. The same commitment to Non-Discrimination also applies to staff.

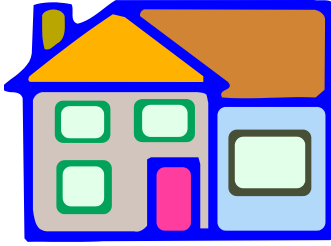
Eva's encourages trans, genderqueer and two-spirit individuals to participate fully and access our services. We will make every effort to see that our structure, policies and systems reflect the total community and promote equitable access for all.

This policy is applicable to all staff, board members, volunteers, service users and visitors to our organization. Staff and board members will use sound professional judgment when interpreting this policy.

### **Procedure**

During Intake, staff will ask youth to self-identify their gender as male, female, trans, gender queer and 2-spirited. This will be done with the utmost tact and respect for the youth and is intended to set a stage for dialogue and communicate our openness to discuss-gender identity further. Youth will be treated as the gender they self-identify.

NOTE: some youth describe their identity as Genderqueer-



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being NEITHER male nor female, or moving between male and female never sticking to just one. Genderqueer youth will face specific challenges in being housed “according to their gender”, since their gender isn’t male or female.

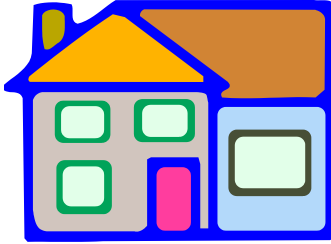
This includes:

- Placing a youth in a female bed if she self-identifies as female or a male bed if he self-identifies as male. In the case of a genderqueer youth, consideration should be made to place the youth according to their stated preference for their safety and comfort.
- The same expectations apply to washrooms and showers.
- Using preferred self-identified name and pronouns (see list in Definitions section)
- Maintaining confidentiality of the youth.

All of this is subject to what is comfortable for the individual. Some youth may only disclose their trans identity under certain circumstances. Every effort will be made to respect the wishes of the youth with respect to their safety in the shelter. This should be discussed openly with the youth during the orientation period. Youth will be informed about trans services in the community.

Targeting is an extreme concern. Targeting involves youth who are singled out by one or a group of other youth and derided, picked on, bullied, attacked or otherwise discriminated against for any reason. Ongoing training and review of this policy will continue to ensure that staff develop heightened awareness and sensitivity about behaviours to prevent targeting and be proactive with concerns and be active in creating an environment free of harassment and discrimination amongst the residents. Staff will also follow the Respect in the Workplace policy as applicable.

Eva's Initiatives holds the position that if someone is raising a concern about the gender identity of an individual, the issue has more to do with the individual voicing the concern and



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not that of the trans person. Failure to follow this policy may result in disciplinary action.

### Policy Expectations

**Eva's Initiatives expects that compliance with this policy will support our goal that our services are responsive and accessible for our clients and staff.**

**Eva's Initiatives will help staff follow this policy by:**

- Keeping the policy and procedures updated.
- Providing orientation and training on this policy to staff and volunteers
- Holding information session when this policy or procedure changes
- Training and coaching staff on how to deal with difficult behaviours and situations
- Provide training as necessary, on diverse communities to assist staff when dealing with uncomfortable situations.
- Including policy-adherence in job descriptions and performance reviews

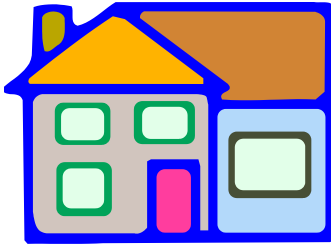
**The consequence of not following this policy can be harmful to Eva's Initiatives, staff and residents may include, but are not limited to:**

- Putting residents, staff and volunteers in unsafe situations
- Being in breach of Eva's Initiatives' contract with its funders
- Having funding reduced or withdrawn
- Having services and staffing reduced
- Progressive discipline procedures when there is deliberate non-compliance

### Definitions

**Cisgender/ Cissexual:** A person whose gender identity matches society's expectations of someone with their physical sex characteristics.

**Crossdresser:** Someone who occasionally dresses in the



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clothing of the “opposite” gender as part of their gender expression.

**Cultural Competence:** refers to the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises four components: a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview, b) Attitude towards cultural differences, c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures.

**Equity:** The practice of ensuring that everyone has equal access to services, supports and opportunities and that they can achieve economic, political and social equality. Equity involves honouring and accommodating an individual's needs.

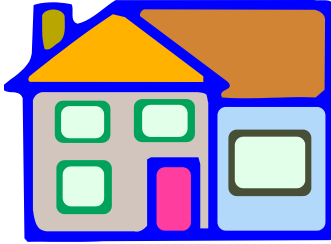
**Gender Expression:** The demonstration of one's gender identity, often shown through clothing, behaviours, interests and/or chosen names.

**Gender/ Gender Identity:** This is how we perceive our identity as male, female, both, or neither, regardless of our physical bodies. It is separate from biological sex.

**Genderqueer/ Gender non-conforming:** An umbrella term used proudly by some people to defy gender restrictions and/or to deconstruct gender norms.

**Intersex:** An umbrella term used to describe a person whose biological sex characteristics don't fit traditional medical definitions of male or female.

**Queer:** An umbrella term used proudly by some people to defy gender or sexual restrictions. This is also the way some people identify themselves as members of the lesbian, gay, bi, and/or trans communities or cultures. The term is not reclaimed by everyone and may be hurtful for some.



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**Sexual Orientation:** the emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to another person(s). It may be fluid over time. The identity a person uses to describe their sexual orientation, i.e., straight, may not reflect their sexual behaviours. (Sexual orientation is not to be confused with a person's gender identity. )

**Trans:** An umbrella term for a person whose gender identity does not match society's expectations of someone with their physical sex characteristics.

**Trans Man (FTM):** A female-to-male trans person

**Trans Woman (MTF):** A male-to-female trans person

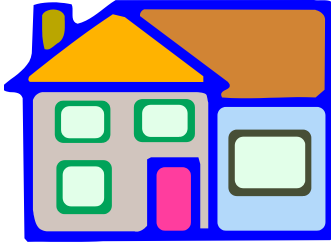
**Transphobia:** A learned dislike, fear and/or hatred of people who are trans, perceived to be trans, or who cross societal gender norms. It is expressed through beliefs and tactics that devalue, demean and terrorize people.

**Transition:** The process trans people go through to overcome physical, legal and social barriers so they can express their self-identified gender. Every person's journey is unique.

**Two Spirit:** A term based on interpretation of words used in different Aboriginal cultures to refer to a person having both a male and female spirit. It can encompass Anglo/North American ideas of both sexual orientation and gender identity (i.e. both a gay cisgender man and a trans-man could claim the identity of two-spirit man). It also includes significant spiritual and cultural layers.

## Links to Other Policies

- Admission Policy
- Involuntary discharge and service restrictions policy
- Respect in the Workplace Policy



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- Collective Agreement

**Appendices**

- Case Management policy
- Project for Open Door- Resource List

**Publication**

- Policies and Procedures Manuals
- Copy to Head Office
- Copy to Hostel Services
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**Policy Inputs**

<b>Issue</b>	Policy Review and Update
<b>Policy Update</b>	Anti Oppression and Diversity Committee
<b>Stakeholder Inputs</b>	Eva's Management Team, 519 Community Centre
<b>Board Review</b>	Maria Crawford, Executive Director
<b>Date of Review</b>	June 2013