



WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH HIV

HIV and Trans Health

WWW.LEGACYCARES.ORG

TRANS HEALTH MATTERS!

The goal of this handbook is to equip those who serve, assist, and work with the HIV/AIDS transgender community. It is not intended to rehearse the basic information already on the World Wide Web alone, but also to perhaps give clarity and helpful information pertaining to a growing community of people. With that being said, there are three foundational objectives of this toolkit:

- **To bring to light an awareness of “a person” through accurate identification.**
- **To enlighten understanding with respectful education**
- **To provide Mental Health Intervention information**

It is vital to give attention to this community because of its increased numbers and visibility. The trans community has boldly stepped onto the stage of everyday life and living in society. Trans people can be seen worldwide on social media, national sports, entertainment, government, etc. “Nearly 1 million people identify as transgender in the United States (US), and transgender people made up 2% (671) of new HIV diagnoses in the US and dependent areas in 2019 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). However, with increased visibility has come the pain of being rejected and even targeted. That battle is ever going and always present. Now pair that fight with the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS. Consider the equation: **Transgender(stigma) + HIV/AIDS (stigma) = fear, anxiety, mental and emotional stress to the tenth power.**

How does this translate as a tool? We should...

Be a sentient servant. Remember you are working with individuals in a community who have been wounded by society. Allow yourself to empathize with what you believe people of trans experience must feel by serving and assisting from their experience.

Be a safe place. Become a place where a transgender person can be transparent, without fear of judgment or criticism. Make your presence a place where the guards can come down.

Be an alleviator. Help alleviate the pain sometimes associated with being a trans person and the anxiety of being HIV positive. Usher the person into discovering who he/she is versus what the stigma presents.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TRANSGENDER?

The first challenge in the transgender community is expressing their gender identity and basic understanding of the terminology. Outdated definitions such as the following are no longer accurate.

- Transgender or Trans: an umbrella term used to describe those who challenge social gender norms, including genderqueer people, gender-nonconforming people, transsexuals, crossdressers and so on (American Psychological Association, 2008). People must self-identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.
- Transgender: Adjective to describe a diverse group of individuals who cross or transcend culturally defined categories of gender. The gender identity of transgender people differs to varying degrees from the sex they were assigned at birth (Bockting, 1999) Obviously, we should establish common terms to bring enlightening awareness of “a person” through accurate identification. Ignorance of what term applies to whom can be very offensive, in the same way, it would be to most people if they were misidentified.
- ***First and foremost, “a person” would be an accurate identification.***
- ***Second, ignorance of what term applies to whom can be very offensive.***

Therefore, it’s important to know the proper term. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the correct terminology for trans identity is as follows:



- **Transgender person- A person whose gender identity or expression is different from their sex assigned at birth.**
- **Transgender man- A person assigned female at birth who identifies as male.**
- **Transgender woman- A person assigned male at birth who identifies as female.**
- **Cisgender person- A person whose sex assigned at birth is the same as their gender identity or expression.**
- **Gender expression- A person’s outward presentation of their gender (for example, how they act or dress).**
- **Gender identity- A person’s internal understanding of their own gender.**

Respectful Education

The keyword to be emphasized in the Terminology is “person.” Transgender people are human beings. Whether be it a transgender man or woman, both qualify as living, breathing human beings. Some would think this need not be verbalized, but the current social atmosphere demands it. Regardless of personal views, one truth that cannot be refuted is transgenders are people. Subliminal dehumanization has seeped into the minds of many people; therefore, the objective is to humanize.

To humanize is to address or portray (someone) in a way that emphasizes that person’s humanity or individuality.

Pathway to humanization through accurate identification:

- To accomplish humanization interpersonal relationships must occur.
- Make the human connection the priority before gender and status!
- Be aware of implicit bias.

The key to dispelling ignorance is acquiring knowledge. Education occurs intentionally and subliminally; therefore, it is important for society to be educated from the standpoint of accuracy and sensitivity toward people who are transgender.

Start by understanding the growing number of trans living with HIV and how to assist them.

- Transgender women are 14 times more likely to have HIV than other adult women.
- Of all new HIV infections in 2021, 2% were among transgender women.
- In some places, up to 40% of transgender women have HIV.

(intheknow.org, 2023)

AIDS Map stated: Globally, overall standardized HIV prevalence was 19.9% for trans women and 2.56% for trans men. Trans women had a staggering 66 times higher odds of being infected with HIV compared with HIV rates with people 15 years and older in the general population, while for trans men, this was 6.8 times higher (March 2022).

Possible Challenges

- Healthcare disparities
- Higher risk of physical violence and persecution
- Trans phobic discrimination and racism
- Stigma of HIV and transgenderism
- Family and social rejection
- Strain on physical, mental, and emotional health

Though all the above are separate, they are also interdependent, in that one can be the byproduct of the other. For example, the discrimination sometimes appears when a trans person is seeking medical help and encounter negative attitudes. This discrimination is the byproduct of the stigma attached to being trans, coupled with HIV.

The stigma is the influence of society, which effects family perception of the trans living with HIV and sometimes rejection follows. One study in India indicated,

“The suicide attempt rate among transgender persons ranges from 32% to 50% across the countries. Gender-based victimization, discrimination, bullying, violence, being rejected by the family, friends, and community; harassment by intimate partner, family members, police and public; discrimination and ill treatment at health-care system are the major risk factors that influence the suicidal behavior among transgender persons.”

This study’s focus is not that of trans living with HIV, however consider the extra added component to their lives. Those who desire to effectively reach the HIV transgender community should have an education that is respectful to the trans population.

The final tool after having obtained an accurate identification and respectful education, is implementing, and applying mental health intervention information.

Mental Health Intervention

Intervention begins the moment the client enters your care. Thus, realize first impressions are critical to a trans client with HIV seeking service.



Therefore, consider the following helpful suggestions:

- Ask if you are not certain how to address the person.
- Examine yourself for preconceived notions how the person contracted HIV.
- Collaborate with the transgender community on how to best help.
- Receive sensitivity education.
- Have a genuine attitude of caring.

The most important components in helping the HIV transgender population are sincere desires to help someone in need, which encompasses having a receptive heart, an open unbiased ear, a non-judgmental attitude, all of which stems from accurate identification, respectful education, and mental health intervention information.

This is not meant to be an in-depth all-inclusive toolkit for servicing the HIV/AIDS community. It is meant to share some suggestions to better equip those seeking to pursue improvement.

USEFUL RESOURCES

HIV and Transgender: What CDC Is Doing

- **Toolkit for Providing HIV Prevention Services to Transgender Women of Color**
- **Implementing HIV Prevention Programs for Transgender Women Training**
- **Transgender Women Involved in Strategies for Transformation (TWIST)**
- **Transgender Status-Neutral Community to Clinic Models to End the HIV Epidemic (TRANSCEND) Learning Collaborative**

Abounding Prosperity

www.aboundingprosperity.org

Access & Information Network

www.aindallas.org

Legacy Counseling Center

www.legacycares.org

LifePath Systems

www.lifepathsystems.org

Metrocare Services

www.metrocareservices.org

Parkland Health and Hospital System

www.parklandhealth.org/parkland-hiv-services-department

Prism Health North Texas

www.phntx.org

Resource Center Support Groups

<https://www.myresourcecenter.org/what-we-do/health/hiv-services>

WPATH (World Professional Association for Transgender

www.wpath.org



LEGACY CARES
4054 McKinney Ave, Suite 102
Dallas, TX 75204
Phone (214) 520-6308
Email Shariyun@legacycares.org

www.legacycares.org