



March 26, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for your interest in our effort to improve services for transgender guests of the Boston Public Health Commission's Homeless Services program. Included in this correspondence is the general *Protocol for Serving Transgender Guests*—developed for use by all staff—and the *Health Services Guidelines for Serving Transgender Guests*—developed for use by our nursing staff. The two protocols were created to assist staff at Woods Mullen Shelter in providing service to transgender individuals in a manner consistent with our overall shelter policy (*Boston Public Health Commission Homeless Services Policy and Procedures*.)

Policies provide overarching guidance, while protocols are limited to unique issues or situations. Two specific policies may be of interest to you—client confidentiality and the Boston Public Health Commission's non-discrimination policy. Transgender clients receive the same confidentiality protection as non-transgender clients. The *Boston Public Health Commission Anti-Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy* protects staff and clients, including transgender individuals.

The Boston Public Health Commission is committed to providing respectful and competent service to the public. In keeping with this commitment, we have collaborated with several agencies around the city to support shelters in improving services for transgender individuals: Emergency Shelter Commission, TransHealth and the GLBT Health Access Project at JRI, Fenway Community Health, BAGLY, and Father Bill's. In fact, in February 2002, nearly 100 homeless shelter staff, including case managers, nurses, and front-line staff, from shelters around the city received training to enable informed and respectful service provision. Training was coordinated by the Boston Public Health Commission and delivered by TransHealth and Fenway Community Health.

The *Protocol for Serving Transgender Guests* and *Health Services Guidelines for Serving Transgender Guests* were developed by a team representing Operations, Health Services, Social Services, and LGBT Health to meet the unique physical and operational parameters of Woods Mullen shelter. It is our hope that other shelters may benefit from our labor and use these protocols as a starting point for their own protocol development. We strongly encourage the adoption of the basic principles contained within the protocols by other residential facilities (e.g. homeless shelters, alcohol and drug treatment programs, domestic violence shelters.) These basic principles include:

- Recognizing transgender individuals according to their gender identity.
- Integrating transgender individuals within the men's and women's facilities, rather than isolating them. Isolation or "special treatment" may attract negative attention from other guests. This means that, in most cases, the safest place for a transgender individual to sleep is in the dormitory corresponding to her or his gender identity.

We will modify these protocols over time, as we learn about their utility, therefore your comments and suggestions will be appreciated. In addition, please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns at (617) 534-2282.

Sincerely,

Kerith Conron, MPH
LGBT Health Coordinator

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**BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
HOMELESS SERVICES**

Subject: Protocol for Serving Transgender Guests
Date: January 22, 2002

Approved:

Richard Weintraub
Director

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to assist staff in providing service to transgender individuals in a manner consistent with Boston Public Health Commission Homeless Services Policy and Procedures.

II. DEFINITIONS

The definitions below may be helpful when discussing transgenderism and transgender health and shall mean the following when used in this guideline.

- A. Gender identity means the internal experience of one's gender.
- B. Gender presentation means how a person demonstrates his or her experience of gender, often through attire, including hair and make-up, and mannerisms.
- C. Transgender individual means a person whose gender identity is different than her or his birth sex.
- D. Transgender woman means a male to female or MTF individual.
- E. Transgender man means a female to male or FTM individual.
- F. Transsexual means a transgender individual who describes him or herself as transsexual, particularly if he or she has altered his or her body with hormones and/or surgery.
- G. Birth sex or biological sex means one's physical body at birth, often categorized as male, female, or intersexed.
- H. Intersexed means a combination of male & female genitalia and/or reproductive anatomy. This term is generally used to refer to infants.
- I. Lower surgery means surgical alteration of one's genitals.
- J. Upper surgery means surgical alteration of one's chest/breasts.

K. Sexual reassignment surgery means surgery to make one's anatomy and gender identity congruent.

III. ACCOMODATIONS

A. Intake and Screening

Transgender guests, as any guest with access concerns, should be triaged to Health Services as they enter the shelter.

B. Accommodations

1. The nurse will discuss accommodations with a transgender guest after medical intake.
2. For the purpose of accommodations, the gender identity of a guest should be determined through conversation, rather than through a physical exam.
3. The nurse will make decisions about sleeping assignments, shower, and bathroom facilities in consultation with the Operations Coordinator.
4. Decisions and rationale about sleeping assignments, shower, and bathroom facilities will be documented in the nurse's notes in the client record and the nursing log.
5. Transgender men and transgender women should be accommodated according to their gender identity and use the corresponding facilities to the fullest extent possible given safety considerations.

Note: The men's shower area in our shelter is completely open, whereas the other options afford greater privacy.

TOILET OPTIONS	
Transgender women	Transgender men
Women's restroom	Men's restroom
Lobby restroom	Lobby restroom
SHOWER OPTIONS	
Transgender women	Transgender men
Women's showers – regular hours	Lobby restroom shower
A private shower in the women's showers may be arranged during daytime hours	A private shower in the women's showers may be arranged during daytime hours
Lobby restroom shower	The men's communal shower may be used regular hours by men who have had upper and lower surgery
SLEEPING ASSIGNMENT OPTIONS	
Transgender women	Transgender men
Women's dormitory -- beds near front desk	Men's dormitory -- beds near the front desk
Women's dormitory	Men's dormitory
A portable bed or cot in the <i>designated access space</i> , in cases of unusual concern about the safety of a transgender guest	A portable bed or cot in the <i>designated access space</i> , in cases of unusual concern about the safety of a transgender guest

6. Transgender men and transgender women may be asked, like any other client, to comply with the dress code, however guests may not be asked to dress in a manner inconsistent with their gender identity. (For example, a transgender man will not be asked to dress like a woman.)
7. The nurse and Operations Coordinator should communicate accommodation arrangements to staff on the following shift.
8. Accommodations are contingent upon availability as with all guests, pursuant to Section III. B of the Boston Public Health Commission's Shelter Rules And Procedures.

D. Late Arrivals

1. A transgender guest should be triaged to the Operations Coordinator when the nurse is not available, as with any guest with access concerns.
2. The Operations Coordinator will make decisions about accommodations.
3. The Operations Coordinator will document the outcomes of these decisions in the general log.
4. For the purpose of accommodations, the gender identity of the guest should be determined through conversation, rather than through a physical exam.
5. A transgender guest arriving after nurses have departed for the evening should be referred to Health Services, as should any late-arriving guest with access concerns.

**BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
HOMELESS SERVICES**

HEALTH SERVICES GUIDELINES FOR SERVING TRANSGENDER GUESTS

Subject: Health Services Guidelines for Serving Transgender Guests
Date: January 22, 2002

Approved:

Richard Weintraub
Director

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist the nursing staff to assess transgender clients with understanding, dignity, and respect and to provide service in a manner consistent with Boston Public Health Commission Homeless Services Policy and Procedures.

II. DEFINITIONS

The definitions below may be helpful when discussing transgenderism and transgender health and shall mean the following when used in this guideline.

- A. Gender identity means the internal experience of one's gender.
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- C. Transgender individual means a person whose gender identity is different than her or his birth sex.
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- G. Birth sex or biological sex means one's physical body at birth, often categorized as male, female, or intersexed.

H. Intersexed means a combination of male & female genitalia and/or reproductive anatomy. This term is generally used to refer to infants.

I. Lower surgery means surgical alteration of one's genitals.

J. Upper surgery means surgical alteration of one's chest/breasts.

K. Sexual reassignment surgery means surgery to make one's anatomy and gender identity congruent.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Intake and Screening

1. Transgender guests, as any guest with access concerns, should be triaged to Health Services as they enter the shelter.

B. Medical Intake

1. The nurse on duty will be the designated person to conduct the initial assessment.

2. For the purpose of accommodations, the gender identity of the guest should be determined through conversation, rather than through a physical exam. Physical exams should be directly related to the provision of health care, in a manner consistent with the provision of care to all shelter guests.

3. The nurse will determine the following:

- a. Hormone therapy
 - i. Prescribed (by mouth or inter-muscular)
 - ii. Need to secure syringes if inter-muscular
 - iii. Street obtained
- b. Lower surgery
- c. Chest anatomy
 - i. Breast reduction
 - ii. Breast implant
 - iii. Breast enhancement

4. Information regarding the client's primary care provider and therapist will be kept in the client's medical record.

C. Accommodations

1. The nurse will discuss accommodations with a transgender guest after medical intake.

2. For the purpose of accommodations, the gender identity of the guest should be determined through conversation, rather than through a physical exam.

3. The nurse will make decisions about sleeping assignments, shower, and bathroom facilities in consultation with the Operations Coordinator.
4. Decisions and rationale about sleeping assignments, shower, and bathroom facilities will be documented in the nurse's notes in the client's medical record and the nursing log.
5. Transgender men and transgender women should be accommodated according to their gender identity and use the corresponding facilities to the fullest extent possible, given safety considerations.

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Note: The men's shower area in our shelter is completely open, whereas the other options afford greater privacy.

6. Transgender men and transgender women may be asked, like any other client, to comply with the dress code, however guests may not be asked to dress in a manner inconsistent with their gender identity. (For example, a transgender man will not be asked to dress like a woman.)
7. The nurse and Operations Coordinator should communicate accommodation arrangements to staff on the following shift.
8. Accommodations are contingent upon availability as with all guests, pursuant to Section IIIB of Boston Public Health Commission Homeless Services Policy and Procedures.

D. Late Arrivals

1. A transgender guest should be triaged to the Operations Coordinator when the nurse is not available, as with any guest with access concerns.
2. The Operations Coordinator will make decisions about accommodations.

2. **The Operations Coordinator will make decisions about accommodations.**
3. **The Operations Coordinator will document the outcomes of these decisions in the general log.**
4. **For the purpose of accommodations, the gender identity of the guest should be determined through conversation, rather than through a physical exam.**
5. **A transgender guest arriving after nurses have departed for the evening should be referred to Health Services, as should any late-arriving guest with access concerns.**