

# Best Practices for Shelter Staff

## To Ensure the Well-Being of Transgender Clients

Austin/Travis County Homelessness Response System



*Always align gendered resources, spaces or programs with each client's self-reported gender. Allow the client to self-select without withholding resources and before checking with supervisory staff.*



### Names and Pronouns:

1. When introducing yourself to someone, **share your name and pronouns**, creating space for the person you are speaking with to share theirs.
2. **Receive these identifiers at face value** without expressing judgment, drawing attention, or questioning them.
3. Moving forward, **use these identifiers** — even if they do not match the resident's official identifying documents.
4. **Addressing mistakes:**
  - If **you** make a mistake, correct yourself and move on without drawing attention.
  - If **a colleague** uses incorrect identifiers for someone, remind them of correct ones, unless it conflicts with the client's desired level of confidentiality.
  - If you notice **another client** using incorrect identifiers for someone, discreetly pull the client who was misgendered/deadnamed aside afterwards, and ask if they would like you to intervene in the future. Follow their guidance moving forward.



### Intake and Client Data:

1. Ensure that **intakes are done in private environments**.
2. **Offer the option of a written form** for intakes in place of a verbal conversation. Don't wait for someone to ask for this option. Offer it as a part of the standardized process for every client.
3. When collecting data, inform clients of their **right to anonymity** or to refuse to answer questions.
4. Be **transparent with clients about who has access** to their data.
5. **Identifiers may change:** if a client wants to adjust their name, pronouns, gender, etc., reflect this change in any used databases without asking unnecessary questions.
  - If a client's gender identity changes after intake, reflect that change in how services are provided in accordance with their wishes.

### Programmatic Guidance:

1. Ensure that residents have access to **clothing** aligned with their gender.
2. Any **private spaces or resources** that will only be used by one person at a time should be kept gender neutral at all times.
3. **Align service provision with the client's self identification** before (not after) checking with supervisory staff. Examples include: Bathrooms, showers and shelter beds.



## Glossary and Key Terms:

### Transgender

People whose gender identity differs from social and cultural assumptions connected to their sex assigned at birth. The term is not indicative of external appearance (e.g. a person's clothing, haircut, body language, voice, etc.), sexual orientation, or how one is perceived in daily life. In this document, the term "transgender" is inclusive of nonbinary, gender diverse, and gender nonconforming individuals.

*Note that the term does not have an 'ed' at the end. The term transgendered should be avoided.*

### Deadname

How some transgender people refer to their given name at birth. To "deadname" someone is to refer to them by their birth name instead of their correct name.

### Misgender

Referring to or addressing someone using pronouns that do not correctly reflect the gender with which the person identifies.

### Pronouns

The third person personal pronouns (such as *he/him, she/her* and *they/them*) that a person goes by.

### Trans Man / Trans Woman

A trans man is a man who was assigned a female sex at birth. A trans woman is a woman who was assigned a male sex at birth.

**Please note:** This list of terms is not comprehensive, and is meant to be used as a starting point for self-learning regarding the language that may be used with or by transgender clients in your program. For more resources, including language resources, please visit



## Trans-Specific Resources:

[AUSTINECHO.ORG/RESOURCE-LIST](https://austinecho.org/resource-list)

**OutYouth** (also provides services for adults) - [outyouth.org](https://outyouth.org)

Food & Hygiene Support Services, Support Groups, General Case Management, Letters of Support (legal and medical), Monthly workshops and events, Free/Low-Cost Individual Counseling

**KIND Clinic** (512-853-9547) - [kindclinic.org](https://kindclinic.org)

All services are free. Includes STI diagnosis and treatment, HIV testing, PrEP and PEP access. Prescribes hormone therapy using informed consent model.

**Vivent Health** (512-458-2437) - [viventhealth.org](https://viventhealth.org)

Medical (Primary and HIV Specialty care), Pharmacy, Dental and Oral Health, Behavioral Health and Substance Use Treatment, Case Management (medical and non-medical), Food Pantry and Nutrition Services, and Housing Services.

**ASHwell** (512-900-3116, Option 1) - [ashwellatx.org](https://ashwellatx.org)

Offers care and compassion to Central Texans living with or at risk of HIV and Hepatitis C. Services include: Case Management, HIV Support Group, Outreach, PrEP and PeP, STI treatment, HEP C and HRT, Gender affirming care, Wellness exams.

**Trans Lifeline** (877-565-8860) - [translifeline.org](https://translifeline.org)

24/7 peer support hotline run by trans people for trans and questioning peers. You can call if you need someone trans to talk to, even if you're not in crisis or if you're not sure you're trans. They do not contact emergency services without a caller's consent. Trans Lifeline has a microgrants program for name and gender marker changes.

