

2023

TRANSforming Fair Housing in St. Louis

New Protections,

New Partnerships &

New Possibilities

for the LGBTQ Community



Metropolitan St. Louis
Equal Housing &
Opportunity Council



digital

“

"I was told by a loan officer that because my social security number had two names, they couldn't include me on the loan..."

"I've had landlords refuse my partner and I because we're gay. I had one landlord hear that I was trans and suddenly called me a freak."

"We've had issues trying to get financing for purchasing a home. One realtor called us f**ts."**

”

**Cover photos:
Richard Reilly**

**Quotes from transgender St. Louisans:
2022 survey conducted by the
Transgender Housing Initiative St. Louis**



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About EHOc



The Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council seeks to ensure equal access to housing and places of public accommodation for all people through education, counseling, investigation, and enforcement.

Founded in 1992, EHOc is the only private, not-for-profit fair housing enforcement agency working to end illegal housing discrimination in the Metropolitan St. Louis area. EHOc operates throughout Missouri and Illinois.

EHOc files fair housing complaints with the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Justice, state and local fair housing enforcement agencies, or in court.

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Letter from EHOC's Executive Director

*Will
Jordan*



In the 30+ years that EHOC has been engaged in the struggle for fair housing, We have seen many ebbs and flows in protections and enforcement. We celebrate recent expansions in federal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These significant changes have already opened up fair housing work that was previously not possible.

But we also know that with every win comes the potential for backlash. This past year has seen an unprecedented number of legislative attacks on the transgender community, with more than 50 anti-LGBTQ bills filed in Missouri alone. Such laws disproportionately harm trans people who are also Black, Brown, disabled, and poor. We know that elections have consequences and laws can be changed, so in our pursuit of fair housing we must do more than change the laws; we must change the culture.

I am proud to stand with our queer and trans neighbors against hate. Those of us who understand what it feels like to be erased or cast out must come together. That's why EHOC is partnering with the experts who have been leading this fight: the people who have been living this fight.

We know that, just like everyone else, our agency has also come up short in the past; so, along with calling on other institutions to make changes, EHOC is also presenting our own commitments to improve and expand our LGBTQ advocacy.

I am eternally grateful for the support of our new partners at SQSH and THISTL. Together we will transform fair housing. And we'll do it with hope, love and unity.

Message to the Queer Community

To be Queer is to transcend labels, to eliminate binaries, to be fluid. Laws, however, are intended to do exactly the opposite. It would be a mistake to believe that any law could ever account for the vast, divergent, shifting notions of what it means to be Queer. The truth is that the "new legal protections" discussed in this report leave out countless members of our community.

To transform LGBTQ+ access to housing requires us to look beyond any laws and find solutions within our own community. Solutions that reflect our community. We invite you to join us in imagining new ways that we can transcend the abuses documented in this report, and move toward a future where we are liberated from trauma. A future where we can simply focus on living our joyous, Queer lives.

Introduction

Recent changes to federal legal protections for LGBTQ individuals have opened a door to new ways of fighting discrimination in housing. In 2022, the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council (EHOC) began a [new LGBTQ Initiatives Program](#) to expand and adapt the organization's existing fair housing programs to address the needs of this newly-protected population.

[TRANSforming Fair Housing in St. Louis](#) was created to assist EHOC and our partner agencies in better understanding the barriers to housing faced by transgender and gender-nonconforming St. Louisans and to recommend changes in policies and practices to reduce those barriers.

At the center of this work are the results of [two separate studies](#) undertaken by two non-profit organizations founded and led by trans and gender-nonconforming St. Louisans:

1) The [St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline \(SQSH\)](#) analyzed data gathered during 55 housing-related calls that had come into SQSH's Peer Support Warmline between 09/29/19 and 05/01/23.

2) [Trans Housing Initiative St. Louis \(THISTL\)](#) conducted a survey, in 2022, of 93 transgender adults in the St. Louis Metro Region on the topic of barriers to housing.

The work of these two organizations represent the [first-ever efforts](#) to specifically study the topic of transgender access to housing and shelter in St. Louis. Their findings will be used by EHOC and partner agencies to [uncover previously-unreported housing issues affecting the trans community and to set priorities for future education, advocacy, and enforcement efforts.](#)

The data collected and analyzed by SQSH and THISTL shows that trans St. Louisans face unique barriers to housing, including explicit anti-trans harassment, gender-based exclusion from shelters, and administrative obstacles associated with changed legal names and gender markers.

At the same time, the data also reveals that trans St. Louisans are negatively impacted by many of the same barriers to housing that are seen across other protected classes in the St. Louis region, such as the lack of affordable housing options and a persistent unmet need for disability accommodations.

Overview

TRANSforming Fair Housing in St. Louis is organized into three sections:

NEW PROTECTIONS

offers an overview of the most significant expansions in federal protections for LGBTQ housing access of the past decade, places them in the historical context of a previous ban on coverage for trans people in the Fair Housing Act, and shares the story of an Beatríz, an EHOC client who used the new legal protections to file a federal complaint against a St. Louis shelter for anti-trans discrimination.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

reviews existing national and Missouri state data on trans housing access and its impacts and presents first-of-its-kind data specific to trans housing and shelter access in St. Louis gathered by the St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline (SQSH) and Trans Housing Initiative St. Louis (THISTL).

NEW POSSIBILITIES

highlights the construction of new trans-affirming housing, proposes new models of queer community outreach efforts piloted by EHOC, recommends actions that governments, corporations, and professional organizations can take to improve trans individuals' access to housing, and lays out EHOC's own commitments to continue forward in this work.

This report was created by the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council (EHOC) with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The primary authors of this report are Keith Rose and Beth Gombos, with additional support from Glenn Burleigh, Shayna Swanson, Emma English, Kepler Zhang, Liam John, and Audra Youmans.

The primary author of SQSH's contributed section is Avi Ivaturi, with design support from Amanda Im and editing support from Luka Cai.

August 2023. St. Louis, Missouri

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New Legal Protections

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) makes it illegal to discriminate in housing sales or rentals or in housing lending, advertising, insurance, appraisals and zoning on the basis of **race, color, national origin, religion, disability, familial status, and sex.**

In recent years there have been some changes in how the law is interpreted by the Supreme Court and how the law is enforced by the new presidential administration. These changes have led to the expansion of the FHA to **prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.**



1. Obergefell v. Hodges

2015 The Supreme Court published *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a decision declaring that the **right to same-sex marriage was constitutionally protected by the 14th Amendment.** The Court reasoned that marriage is fundamental to social order and stands as a symbol of liberty and individual autonomy.



2. Bostock v. Clayton County

2020 *Bostock v. Clayton County* - U.S. Supreme Court decision that **interpreted "sex" discrimination**, in a law similar to the Fair Housing Act, **to include protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.**

Imperfect Protections

Despite *Obergefell* expanding marriage access to same-sex couples in 2015, a federal court in Missouri nonetheless **dismissed** the case of a married **lesbian couple** in 2019 after they were **denied residency in a retirement community.** A corporate policy there **only allowed cohabitation for "one man and one woman, as marriage is understood in the Bible."**

The court ruled there was **no legal remedy** under the Fair Housing Act for the couple's unfair treatment.

However, the **case was later reinstated after the 2020 decision in Bostock.** The parties were then able to reach a settlement to resolve the case.

“



Kalila Jackson
EHO Legal Director

While we fight to expand rights, we also must stay vigilant. We've seen how executive actions and court decisions can be rolled back.

”

Get EHO's
updated
fact sheet on
LGBTQ Rights
& Fair
Housing



New Legal Protections



3. President Biden's Executive Order

2021 President Biden issued EO 13988 directing federal agencies to explicitly **address discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation**, consistent with the 2020 Supreme Court decision in *Bostock*.



4. Expansion of HUD's Equal Access Rule

2021 The Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) released a memo **expanding the Equal Access Rule**, which had originally been created in 2012. HUD declared that **all individuals have equal access to all HUD programs**, including HUD-funded or HUD-insured housing and HUD-funded temporary shelters, **regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status**.

Rights Rolled Back: *303 Creative v. Elenis*

In June 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court **upheld the right of a website designer to discriminate against same-sex couples**.

The Court ruled that public accommodations laws, which are aimed at addressing inequality in the public market, are unconstitutional if they would overly restrict a business owner's right to free speech.

Historical Context: "Transvestite" Exclusion from the FHA

In 1988, **the Fair Housing Act was amended to explicitly exclude trans people** from the law's protections. Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina was worried that new disability protections could be interpreted to also outlaw anti-transgender discrimination, specifically **arguing that "moral problems" such as "transvestism" must be clearly distinguished from the term "handicap"**.

Because the Fair Housing Act never mentioned trans people in its list of protected classes, Helms's advocacy for a narrow interpretation of "handicap" effectively meant that there would be **no alternative route for transgender people to obtain protections under the FHA**. By a vote of 89-2, Sen. Helms's anti-trans campaign was successful, and his amendment to the FHA made trans people the **first group to ever be explicitly excluded from any federal anti-discrimination statute**.

The federal government and the **Dept. of Housing and Urban Development** now have a **responsibility to take affirmative steps** to right this historic and prejudicial wrong, including **earmarking funds** for trans housing initiatives and enforcement.

Beatríz's Story

Enforcing Trans Access to Shelters

Beatríz Gonzalez is many things, including an artist, an entrepreneur, Latino, disabled, a parent of three young children, a non-binary transgender man, and a survivor of domestic violence. In November 2021, Beatríz and his children were searching for shelter. Instead, they discovered how a web of shelter providers' exclusionary policies often overlap in ways that leave no options available to those individuals with intersecting marginalized identities.

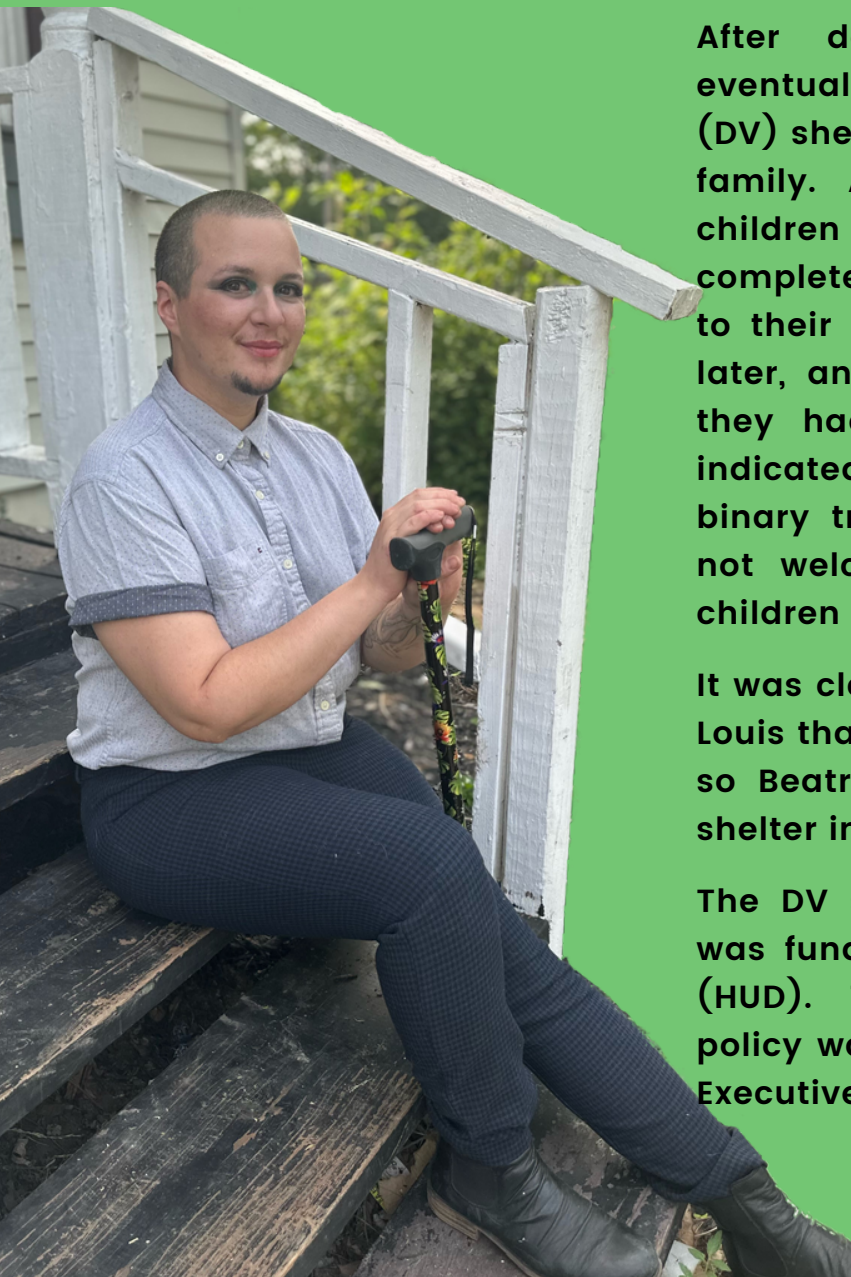
Beatríz had decided that it was time to leave his partner, so he began planning where he would go next and calling social service providers. Early on, a survivors' resource hotline warned Beatríz that there were few options for trans men; he was even encouraged to hide his gender identity to increase his family's chances.

After days of discouraging phone calls, eventually Beatríz found a domestic violence (DV) shelter that said it had an opening for their family. A taxi dropped off Beatríz and the children with their bags of belongings. They completed some intake papers and were taken to their new room to unpack. But a few hours later, an employee came back and told them they had to leave immediately. Beatríz had indicated on the paperwork that he was a non-binary transgender man, and trans men were not welcome at the shelter. Beatríz and the children re-packed their bags.

It was clear that there were no DV shelters in St. Louis that would accept trans men with children, so Beatríz and the family were forced to find shelter in Illinois.

The DV shelter that threw Beatríz's family out was funded in part by the federal government (HUD). The shelter's 'No-Trans-Men-Allowed' policy was a clear violation of Pres. Biden's 2021 Executive Order and HUD's Equal Access Rule.

You deserve to be safe from harm, too.
NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE:
1.800.799.SAFE or Text "START" to 88788



Beatríz was referred by a social service agency to EHOC, where a fair housing specialist gathered information about his experience. After an investigation, in October 2022, an EHOC staff attorney filed a formal complaint with HUD on Beatríz's behalf. As of July 2023, that complaint is still awaiting resolution. Formal complaints such as these can result in financial compensation for the victim and/or non-monetary settlements, such as policy changes or mandatory staff training.

More than a year after he left his partner, Beatríz and the children finally obtained permanent and safe housing. Beatríz has started his own home-cleaning business, "Q Home Services", which specializes in providing decluttering and trauma-informed hoarding-relief services to queer and trans individuals. Beatríz now employs other St. Louis queer and trans people of color.

Beatríz has also become a strong advocate for trans housing rights, sharing his insights to help shape policies.

“ The existing system has a lot of issues that can be easily fixed if the people in power will listen to those they're meant to serve.

Report Housing Discrimination

New legal protections for queer and trans folks are an important step in the fight for housing justice. But at the same time, we know that civil rights mean nothing unless someone is willing to enforce them. You can join Beatríz in helping EHOC bring these new protections to life through filing complaints or becoming a discrimination tester.

EHOC's housing discrimination hotline can guide you through your options and potentially provide free legal support if you believe you have been a victim of discrimination.

Call EHOC at **314-534-5800**

Or submit a form on EHOC's website:

www.ehocstl.org/discrimination-inquiry

EHOC's "[LGBTQ Rights & Fair Housing](#)" fact sheet (p. 5) has examples of unlawful discrimination and an explanation of our complaint process.



Need for Protections

Existing National Data

The need for **increased education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement** concerning housing access for the transgender community becomes evident when examining existing national and state transgender housing surveys.

According to data from the 2015 U.S. Trans Survey performed by the National Center for Transgender Equality, discrimination against transgender people in housing **persisted even after HUD's original *Equal Access Rule* was implemented in 2012.**

Likewise, such discrimination continues even though the FHA has been expanded to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. A lack of enforcement of legal protections has led to ongoing discrimination, eviction, and homelessness within the transgender community.

The 2015 national survey results demonstrate the profound need for further funding of LGBTQ fair housing initiatives:

Among the over 1.6 million homeless youth in the USA, 20% to 40% identify as LGBTQ. Additionally, **20% of transgender individuals have experienced discrimination while searching for a home, with more than 10% being evicted** solely due to their gender identity.

Only **16% of transgender individuals own their home**, compared to 63% of the general population. At least **20% of all transgender people have experienced homelessness** at some point in their lives. But the harms of discrimination are not distributed evenly through the population: the Black Trans Advocacy Coalition reports that a staggering **42% of Black transgender individuals have experienced homelessness.**

For those who become homeless, the pattern of discrimination continues: **70% of respondents who had stayed in a shelter in the past year reported being mistreated** because of being transgender, and 49% reported that they were verbally harassed because they were transgender.

2023 FAIR HOUSING TRENDS REPORT

Private, non-profit fair housing organizations provide the largest support for people alleging housing discrimination.

Sex (including complaints based on *Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity*) **was the 3rd most frequent** basis of **discrimination** (behind disability and race, respectively)

Alternatively, some SOGI fair housing complaints were listed under "other", with "other" broken down into **protected class categories**, including the following primary categories:

- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Gender Identity/Expression**

When these "other" SOGI complaints are **combined**, the joint category of SOGI (**Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity**) **becomes the 3rd highest "other" category** (behind source of income and criminal background)

Home Ownership

63%

of **ALL**
Americans
own their home

16%

of **TRANS**
Americans
own their home

Intersecting Identities

20%

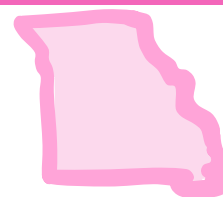
of **ALL**
transgender
individuals have
experienced
homelessness

42%

of **BLACK**
transgender
individuals have
experienced
homelessness

Need for Protections

Existing Missouri Data



Narrowing our scope to focus on the state of transgender housing issues in our own state is key to better understanding the context of the helpline calls analyzed by SQSH as well as the St. Louis trans housing survey results obtained by THISTL.

According to data highlighted by the **LGBT Movement Advancement Project (MAP)**, 3.8% of Missouri's adult population identifies as LGBTQ. Within that number, 26% of LGBTQ adults in Missouri aged 25 and older are raising children, according to reports by Gallup and Williams. A separate 2020 report from Williams states that the **total LGBTQ population in Missouri is more than 217,000**, with about 131,000 LGBTQ individuals in Missouri's workforce.

In 2017, the National Center for Transgender Equality released a report ("USTS-MO") that analyzed Missouri-based surveys from the 2015 U.S. Trans Survey. According to USTS-MO, **31% of transgender Missourians have experienced homelessness** at some point in their lives. At the time of the survey (2015), **22% of Missouri respondents had encountered housing discrimination based on their gender identity in the past year**, with many reporting evictions or denial of residency. Moreover, **20% of those who faced homelessness avoided shelters out of fear of mistreatment** due to their gender identity and/or expression.

USTS-MO found that of Missouri respondents who had visited a place of **public accommodation** where staff or employees knew they were transgender, **27% experienced at least one type of mistreatment** in the previous year. This included 12% who were denied equal treatment or service, **19% who were verbally harassed**, and 1% who were physically attacked because of being transgender.

Only 10% of USTS-MO respondents reported that all of their IDs had the name and gender they preferred, while **76% reported that none of their IDs had the name and gender they preferred**. Significantly, **33%** of respondents who have shown an ID with a name or gender that did not match their gender presentation were **verbally harassed, denied benefits or service, asked to leave, or assaulted**.

217,000
Total LGBTQ
Population
in Missouri

26%
of LGBTQ
individuals
(age 25+)
in Missouri
are raising
children

76%
of trans
Missouri
respondents
reported
none of their
IDs had
preferred
name or
gender

Trans Homelessness in Missouri

31% of transgender Missourians have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives

20% of homeless transgender individuals in Missouri avoided shelters out of fear of mistreatment

New Partnerships

As EHOC expands its work to incorporate new legal protections for LGBTQ individuals, we are committing ourselves to act in partnership with and follow the guidance of local trans-led organizations, who have been doing this work for years.

Two grassroots, trans-led nonprofits gathered first-of-its-kind data to help shine a light on housing barriers for trans St. Louisans.

Their findings, presented here, will be used by EHOC and partner agencies to uncover previously-unreported housing issues affecting the trans community and to set priorities for future education, advocacy, and enforcement efforts.

SQSH

**St. Louis Queer+
Support Helpline**



SQSH is a grassroots, community-based, **queer-led, worker-directed collective** dedicated to facilitating healing spaces and providing holistic support for queer & trans St. Louisans to thrive.

We work towards a liberated St. Louis Metro Area where people of all genders and sexualities live with power, safety, dignity, and abundance.

We aim to **combat interlocking systems of oppression** to radically reimagine an anti-carceral, community-based, queer-centered mental health system, **using a trauma-informed and margins-to-center approach.**

www.theSQSH.org

SQSH's Peer Support Helpline is open Friday to Monday, 1-7PM CT **314-380-7774 (toll-free: 844-785-7774)**

Facebook & Instagram: @theSQSH



THISTL

**Trans Housing
Initiative St. Louis**

THISTL's vision is to build equitable access to **shelter, housing, and homeownership** for transgender and gender-expansive humans.

We are building a network across organizations to **document** housing disparities for transgender and gender-expansive folks, **confront** those disparities, and **design** solutions by **creating new systems** or reforming existing systems.

Trans Housing Initiative St. Louis is a **trans-led organization** committed to tackling systemic injustices in housing that transgender people face in the St. Louis region.

www.thi-stl.org

Facebook.com/transhousingstlouis

Instagram: @transhousingstlouis

contact@thi-stl.com



St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline

Our **mission** is to support and empower the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community through:

1. Non-hierarchical, peer-based emotional support and non-judgmental space-holding, rooted in the principles of **healing justice**, **community care**, and **holistic wellness**;
2. Fostering connections with identity-affirming resources, rooted in the principles of **mutual aid** and **interdependence**;
3. Building community power and systems of feedback and accountability, rooted in the principles of **transformative justice** and **abolition**;
4. Facilitating education and advocacy to uplift queer St. Louisans' stories, rooted in the principles of **oral history** and **intersectionality**.

To carry out our mission, SQSH operates **six core programs**:

- **Peer Support Warmline**, to provide free, confidential, identity-affirming emotional support and resource referrals
- **SQSHBook Resource Database**, to provide community-vetted, transparent resource referrals
- **Storytelling and Advocacy**, to promote systems-change informed by community voices and stories
- **STARLING Collective**, to promote anti-carceral community healing
- **Education for the Queer Community**, to promote intra-community skill-building and peer-based healing
- **Allyship Training for Partners**, to promote knowledge-sharing and cultural humility among other ecosystem stakeholders

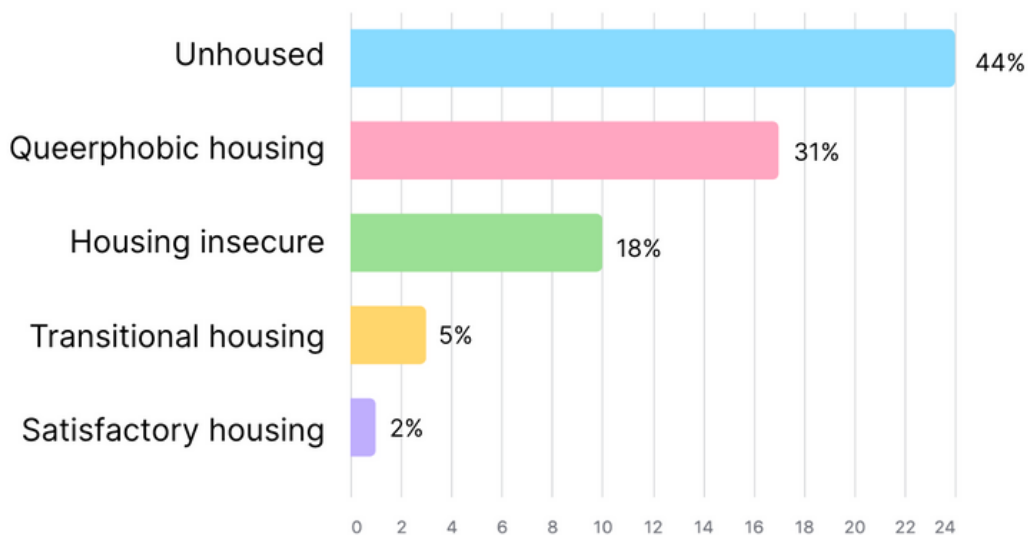


Housing-Related Calls on SQSH's Peer Support Warmline

Over the last three and a half years that SQSH's Peer Support Warmline has been operational, we have taken at least 55 calls from queer and trans folks about housing-related issues. Housing is, without question, a queer issue — queer and trans youth are more likely to end up unhoused due to rejection by their bio-legal families, and the resource landscape in St. Louis is scarce for our queer (especially trans) unhoused and housing insecure siblings.

The following data comes from **55 housing-related calls (out of 347+ calls, i.e. about 16% of all SQSH Helpline calls)** logged by SQSH's Peer Counselors ranging from **09/29/19 to 05/01/23**. Any potentially identifying information has been removed to protect our callers' and volunteers' anonymity. Content warnings include: transphobia/queerphobia, violence, abuse, police, harassment.

Figure 1: Current Housing Status of Callers

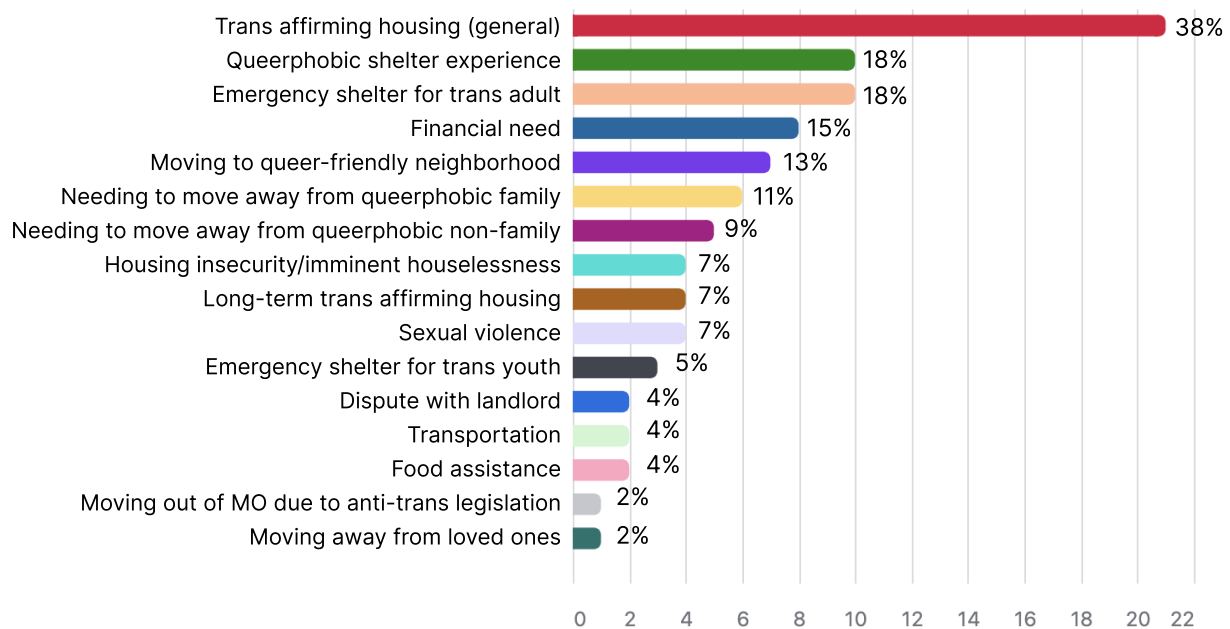


Of the calls SQSH has received about housing, **almost half are from currently unhoused callers**. Of the rest, nearly all callers' housing situation was unsatisfactory in some way, either **because of the people they had to live with** (e.g., bio-legal family, queerphobic roommates) or **because of the housing itself** (e.g., too expensive, not located in a queer-friendly neighborhood).

"How frustrating it is to live in a world where unhoused people can freeze to death when we have empty buildings..."

- SQSH Warmline Caller

Figure 2: Frequency of Housing-Related Topics



While the figure above highlights the most common housing-related topics that came up on SQSH's Warmline calls, what is not captured here are the **feelings-based peer support conversations** that took place alongside the more resource- or solutions-focused topics above. Across the 55 housing-related calls, callers described feeling **"frustrated," "stressed," "overwhelmed," "scared," "confused," "tired," "angry,"** and **"hopeless,"** among others.

Notes about Aggregated Call Topic Data

- Currently, there is **significant variation** in the way each SQSH Peer Counselor fills out call logs. Therefore, there may have been some calls in which housing was discussed but which was not included in this report.
- In some cases, housing issues were **not explicitly named by callers, but were nevertheless described or implied**. These were included in the report when we had enough information to do so.

"Trans callers in need of housing are **some of the most difficult calls**. Anyone in need of housing is usually a person who has been through hell and felt how little value our society sees in them. And now we're going to talk about which of the terrible few options someone *might* have, and we're going to **cut them into shreds and figure out which ones MIGHT be the least hateful and harmful to someone based on whether they are gay, Black, trans or any kind of person the system might see as 'other.'** Instead of being there to tell a caller that they have found help achieving the safety they deserve, I'm telling them that they can choose somewhere that has a higher chance of admission even if the cost is a lesser chance of safety physically or emotionally. **But there is always a cost, a choice that no one should ever have to make.**"

- SQSH Peer Counselor



Snippets from Warmline Calls

Caller A is new to St. Louis and lives in transitional housing. He was feeling sad working 60 hours a week making little money between two jobs. He needs much more to live comfortably, and was **stressed about his future**. A talked about how frustrating it is to live in a world where unhoused people can freeze to death when we have empty buildings, and his experience as a poor gay man. He talked about **how frustrating it is to know he would like it all to be over and his life is pointless** but he does not plan on killing himself or "ending it," as he said, but just finds his existence as pointless, that he's "an extra in the background" and is just coping with that.

Caller B is losing weight from the stress of being unhoused and from having the **downtown tent city raided by cops**. They need support not only with housing, but with healthcare and transportation.

Caller C is making plans to relocate from St. Louis in order to **leave Missouri in light of the Attorney General's ruling** and to leave a toxic living situation with their family. But they don't have enough credit to sign a lease on their own, and they don't qualify for emergency shelter because they have "too many funds."

Caller D is **unhoused, scared, and unsure of what the future looks like**. They said they got themselves into a hole and weren't sure at this point what they could do. **Every little thing is stressful and they are very tired.**

Caller E had already checked almost every resource we have in the SQSHBook. **Everywhere was pretty much full and they were on a lot of waitlists**, and the only places they hadn't tried were too far for them because they didn't have reliable transportation. I was also pretty upset when E and I realized how they couldn't even renew their driver's license when they got a job because they didn't have a permanent address, so it was like **the system made it really hard for them to even try to find a way out of the situation.**

Shelter staff told **Caller F** that **if they can't call him by his dead name they would have to let him go**, according to his psychiatrist. F was very confused about why a psychiatrist could have power over his shelter's director, and **why anyone would think they have the power to decide what name he should be called**. F has dissociative personality disorder, and the shelter told him that he told the shelter to call him by his dead name in one of his episodes. If they listened to him that time during the episode, why couldn't they listen to him now when he corrected his pronouns and name? F felt betrayed and frustrated. **The backdoor of this shelter has a trans flag, but they are not real allies.**

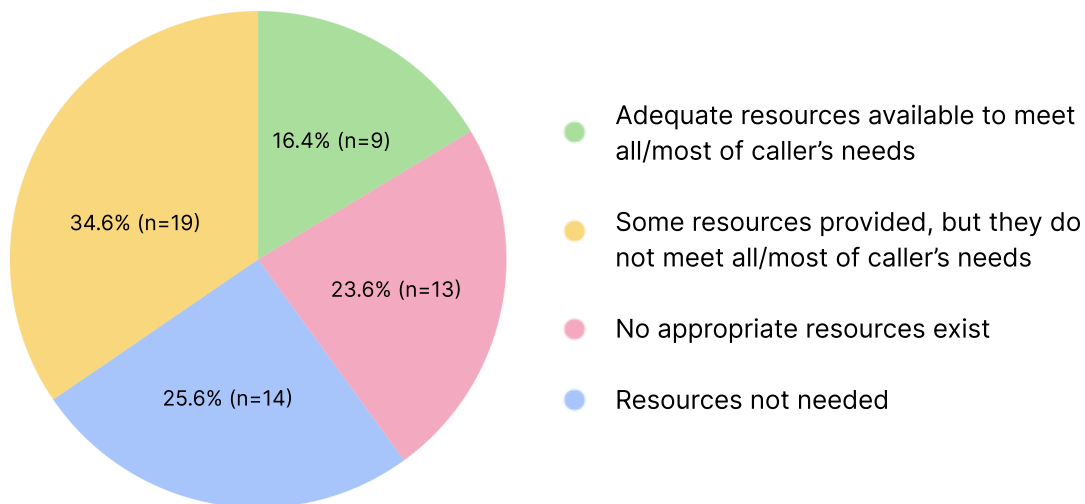


Scarce Queer-Affirming Housing Resources

"A disabled trans woman called because they heard we could help with housing... I had kind of an **immediate heart-sink moment because it's so hard to find housing solutions.**"

- SQSH Peer Counselor

Figure 3: Availability of Affirming Resources



The figure above shows the extent to which appropriate resources were or were not available for SQSH's Peer Counselors to provide to callers based on callers' identities, resource requirements, and access needs. **Only 16.4% of all housing-related calls included at least one successful resource referral** (which constitutes a resource that meets all or most of the caller's needs). In almost **60%** of housing-related calls from queer folks, SQSH volunteers were either unable to provide any resources that were queer-affirming, or were only able to provide some resources that did not meet all/most of the caller's needs.

"St. Louis doesn't have the housing resources that unhoused and housing insecure callers need. I always kind of dread when I get a caller looking for a trans-friendly shelter or transitional housing option, because the only thing I can do is safety plan with them about **how to stay as safe as possible in shelters or housing facilities that, in all likelihood, will misgender, deadname, or flat-out reject them due to their sex assigned at birth.** Queer and trans callers have likely already faced some form of rejection due to their queerness from family, friends, workplaces, etc.

The hurt only cuts deeper when the systems themselves are designed to make queer and trans folks disappear."

- SQSH Peer Counselor



Letter from THISTL's Board/Founders



Trans Housing Initiative St. Louis (THISTL) began with a group of people who have lived and worked in the St. Louis Trans community for years, some of whom have experienced housing insecurity firsthand. There are amazing Trans organizations and housing organizations, but THISTL was created to bridge the gaps between them. Like our transgender community, thistles are tough plants, often growing in harsh conditions, without many resources, in places where other plants could never survive. They are incredibly resilient, and despite all the challenges they face, continue to put beauty out into the world.

Housing instability disproportionately impacts Trans people on a national scale. We gathered data about St. Louis by conducting a first-ever STL Trans housing survey. The data confirmed what we already knew, and also shined a light on other needs. With this data in hand, we have worked to build partnerships and respond as advocates for the Trans community, as well as answering the call from our community for financial literacy and homeownership education.

Too often, trans people have to hide their identity to seek shelter. Landlords deny applications for rentals because of a name change. This doesn't happen to people who change their name due to a marriage or divorce. In situations like this, THISTL can provide secondary background checks so that landlords can see that the applicant has done everything that they're legally required to do to change their name.

Ultimately we know that this data and the work of our partners, like EHOC and St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline (SQSH), are working to ensure our voices are present in the spaces where we can make a difference. This is critical to changing systems that have too long ignored the needs of those most marginalized. We are joined in the fight for Trans liberation.

In Solidarity,

Charlie Blake Charles Buchanan Maxi Glamour Beth Gombos ilia silverman esrig

Charlie Blake

Charles Buchanan

Maxi Glamour

Beth Gombos

ilia silverman esrig

INTERSECTIONS:

43% identify as BIPOC

58% identify as disabled

6% identify as intersex



SURVEY RESPONSES

Have you ever been unable to stay with family members because of your gender identity and/or sexual orientation?

#1 "I was **kicked out** of childhood/family home on my 18th birthday for being queer"

#2 "My **parents disowned me** because of me choosing to transition"

#3 "My mom n grandpa **called cops on me** and kicked me out because i told them [about being LGBTQ+]"

#4 "My family sent me to **conversion therapy as a child** and has basically disowned me as an adult, especially after coming out as transgender"

#5 "I was on the streets and couch hopping after I got ostracized by my biological family."

#6 "I cannot stay with my parents or siblings because they are not okay with the fact that I'm trans and **it would not be safe**"

#7 "When I came out as trans I was told I had less than 24 hours to move"

What strategies do you use to cope?

#1 "Speaking to my inner child and using temp/breathing/friends to regulate my nervous system."

#2 "Speaking to a loved one, walking, crying, journaling, affirmations, showers/baths, candles/incense."

#3 "Self-harm, self care, reaching out to friends, journaling."

#4 "Honestly, I just keep going."

#5 "Art, music, and anything that gets the creative juices flowing."



We understand that this information might be triggering or upsetting, especially to community members impacted by queerphobia / transphobia.

If you want to talk, we encourage you to call the St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline, [314-380-7774](tel:314-380-7774) between Friday-Monday, 1.00 PM to 7.00 PM CT.

Or call the 24/7 Trans Lifeline anytime at [877-565-8860](tel:877-565-8860) for trans peer support.

Economic Marginalization of Transgender Individuals

30% are spending over 50% of their monthly income on rent

**Median Monthly
Rent Payment: \$550**



TRANS EXPERIENCES IN ST. LOUIS

Have you ever had difficulty finding RENTAL housing because of your perceived gender identity and/or sexual orientation?

#1 "I got told that he **wouldn't rent to f****ts.**"

#2 "I was once asked **how many of MY KIND** hang out with me."

#3 "I've had landlords refuse my partner and I because we're gay. I had one landlord hear that I was trans and suddenly **called me a freak**"

Have you ever had difficulty PURCHASING housing because of your perceived gender identity and/or sexual orientation?

"Yes, we've had issues trying to get financing (...) **one realtor called us f****ts.** I was told by a loan officer that because my [social security] had two names, **they couldn't include me on the loan.**"

Several respondents' answers indicate a theme that homeownership is unattainable/unthinkable/unaffordable.

If you have ever had difficulty finding temporary short-term SHELTER for the night because of your perceived gender identity and/or sexual orientation?

#1 "I was told the men's shelter doesn't take trans men, and the women's shelter doesn't either."

#2 "They try to house me (trans male) with the women."

#3 "It was fine when I didn't [tell them I'm trans], but when they found out I was transgender they **mocked me and discriminated against me**, verbally abused me"

#4 "They refused to put me on the male unit and continued to **make snarky comments about me being trans** my whole stay"

#5 "(...) it has [happened] so many times I can't remember"

#6 "Yes, I have been told that I would **need to show them that I had bottom* surgery** in order to be let in."

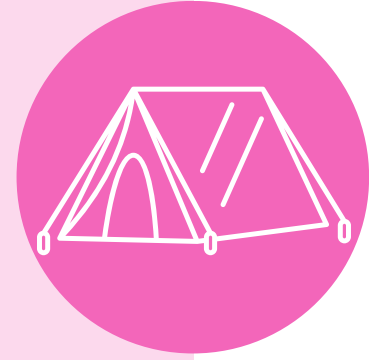
*genital

Impact of Discrimination

...on Health

Increased Homelessness

- A 2018 University of Chicago study found that **LGBT+ young adults experience homelessness at more than 2x the rate of their straight peers.**
- **59% of LGBTQ+ people** have faced some sort of **discrimination or harassment when accessing housing services.**



Health Risks of Living Outside

- **HIV infections** for transgender people are **over 4 times the national average** of HIV infections.
- **Incomplete HIV viral suppression** was **3.84 times higher** for those with **unstable housing**, meaning more **spread and complications** due to **HIV/AIDS** happen for those with **unstable housing.**

Accessibility Needs

- The **risk for having disabilities in the transgender population** is nearly **double** that of the cisgender population. At age 20, transgender adults **27% more likely to experience at least one disability**, increasing to **39% by age 55.**
- **Transgender adults with a disability** were between **two and five times as likely** as cisgender adults with a disability **to experience numerous forms of unmet needs for healthcare**



Access to Medical Professionals

- **24% of USTS respondents did not see a doctor in the past year** when they needed to because of **fear of being mistreated as a transgender person**
- **34% of Black respondents** who saw a health care provider in the past year **reported having at least one negative experience related to being transgender**



Impact of Discrimination

...on Wealth



Homeownership

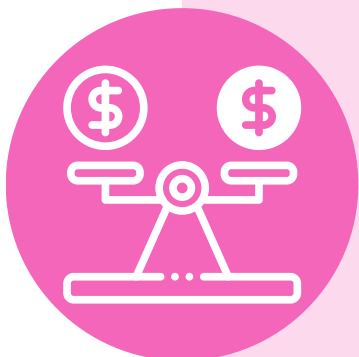
- A 2018 Freddie Mac survey found that **49% of LGBT+ Americans own a home**, as compared to the **national average of 64%**. Among **trans people**, the rate is **nearly half the average**.
- **13% of LGBT+ homeowners in a Freddie Mac 2018 survey said they experienced prejudice when buying a home**, while **nearly half said they feared discrimination in the home-buying process**.

Housing Search

- **61%** of transgender and gender non-conforming respondents in a Yale Journal of Law study **received discriminatory differential treatment in their housing search**:
 - 27% less likely to be **shown additional areas** of the apartment complex.
 - 21% less likely to be offered a **financial incentive to rent**
 - 12% more likely to be told **negative comments** about the apartment and the neighborhood
 - 9% more likely to be quoted a **higher rental price** than people who were not transgender and conformed to typical gender standards.
- A 2017 study from the Urban Institute found that Dallas and LA housing agents were less likely to **schedule appointments** with gay men than straight men.



Employment



- Transgender individuals are more likely to work in criminalized industries. A 2020 **survey of 157 sex workers in St. Louis and Kansas City, MO**, conducted by the ACLU of Missouri and the MO Ho Justice Coalition, found that **38% of respondents identified as transgender**.
- 2015 Trans Survey in Missouri (USTS-MO):
 - 16% of those that **had been employed** reported **losing a job** in their lifetime **because of their gender identity or expression**.
 - 26% of those who **held or applied** for a job during that year reported being **fired**, being **denied a promotion**, or **not being hired** for a job they applied for **because of their gender identity or expression**.
 - 27% of national respondents were **living in poverty**
 - 19% of respondents were **unemployed**.

Dream toward your own New Possibilities with SQSH's 2023 Queer Community Anthology!

This 90-page Anthology is...

- **A creative journey** that strengthens your muscles for radical imagination
- **A compilation of inspiring dreams** shared lovingly by fellow queer St. Louisans
- **An expansive space for you to draw, write, and breathe life into these pages** – so that your dreams become part of our collective story, too!

Queer Futurist Manifestations

Dreaming Towards Liberation

2023 Community Anthology



Scan the QR code for sliding scale cost options and more information



New Possibilities

NEW DEVELOPMENTS



opportunityhousetl.org

In 2023, **Opportunity House**, a new nonprofit that provides low-barrier housing to **young people experiencing homelessness**, partnered with the Tower Grove Community Development Corporation, and began placing LGBTQIA+ unhoused young people into a newly **rehabbed multi-family building** in St. Louis's Tower Grove South Neighborhood. Construction on a **second building** is underway. These units will provide queer and trans young people with desperately needed housing options while at the same time **providing social services** and helping foster a **supportive community**.

In 2023, **DOORWAYS**, an existing interfaith nonprofit that provides housing and supportive services to **people living with HIV/AIDS**, broke ground on a new housing project, located on the new Doorways campus in North St. Louis City. This newest development will contain **39 apartments** set aside for individuals who are **affected by HIV/AIDS and who are homeless** or at risk of being homeless. The new apartments' location within the new Doorways Campus will allow tenants **easy access to** included on-site **case management** and behavioral health **and health** screening services.



doorwayshousing.org

NEW ADVOCATES



 @tentmission_stl

 Tent Mission STL

Tent Mission STL formed in 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 lockdowns, to provide St. Louis's unhoused communities with individual tents for better social distancing.

TMSTL, a **majority-queer-and-trans mutual aid collective**, continues to do **direct street outreach** to their unhoused neighbors by providing food, clothing, survival, and harm reduction supplies, while building long-lasting relationships. Rooted in a **radical queer framework**, Tent Mission has mobilized grassroots activists to take direct action in order to **disrupt the systems that harm** unhoused St. Louisans.

Tazz's Story

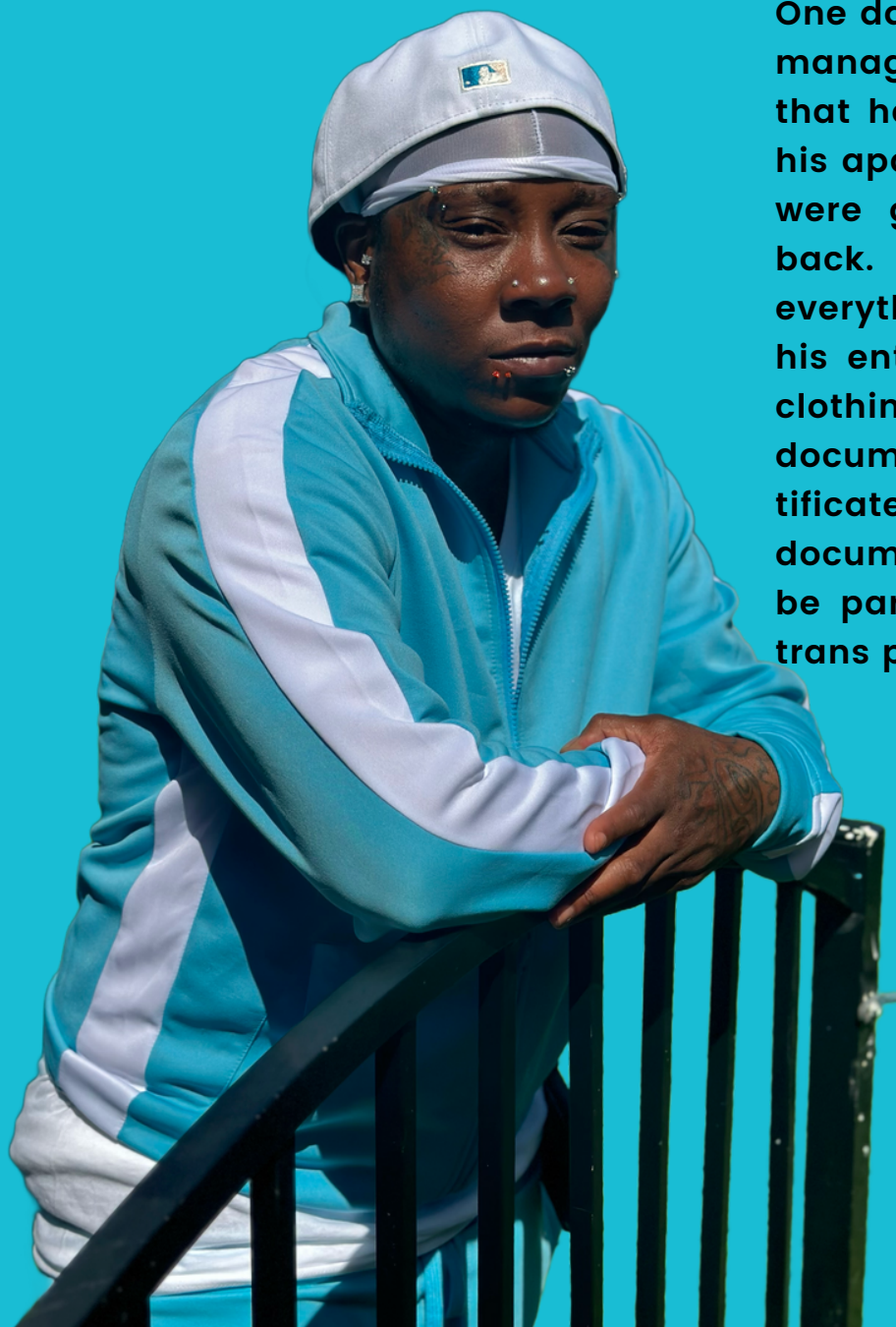
Name Changes & Fair Housing

In early 2022, Tazz, a trans man living in St. Louis City, contacted EHOC to report a pattern of anti-trans harassment from his property manager, including being repeatedly misgendered and treated differently than cisgender residents. With EHOC's help, Tazz soon filed a federal discrimination complaint with the Dept. of Housing & Urban Development.

When the harassment eventually became physical, Tazz was put in the difficult position of having to defend himself against the person who controlled his access to housing.

One day after a dispute with his property manager, Tazz returned home to find that he had been illegally locked out of his apartment, and all of his possessions were gone. He would never get them back. In an instant, along with everything else he owned, Tazz had lost his entire wardrobe of gender-affirming clothing and all of his important documents, including his birth certificate, medical records, and financial documents. Those were items that can be particularly difficult to replace for a trans person.

An illegal eviction disrupted both Tazz's housing and his gender transition.



EHOC staff attempted to file an affirmative lawsuit over the illegal eviction on Tazz's behalf, but Tazz was reluctant to file a case using his former (birth) name and gender, and the local court would not allow Tazz to change his legal name because of the unresolved eviction case on his record. In St. Louis City, it is nearly impossible for a transgender person to change their legal name if they owe money to a former landlord.

Tazz was stuck. He was being asked to choose between giving up his chance to hold the property manager accountable or filing a public lawsuit under his deadname and continuing the cycle of anti-trans harm.

Tazz's experience demonstrated that to properly serve this newly-protected class of transgender clients, EHOC's fair housing work would have to include addressing the unique barriers surrounding legal name and gender marker changes. Using novel legal arguments, EHOC's staff attorney successfully petitioned the state court to allow Tazz's legal name change to proceed despite his unsatisfied rent-and-possession judgment.

Additionally, EHOC staff worked with Tazz's medical providers to both update his legal gender marker to Male and also to qualify him for gender-affirming surgery weeks before a new state ban on transgender healthcare coverage would take effect.

“ ”

I'm grateful that even with everything that happened to me I got the support to get to where I needed for my transition.

You gotta keep the faith and don't let anything stop you.

Name & Gender Marker Changes

EHOC is committed to assisting clients with name and gender marker updates because **we understand that this is an essential component of Fair Housing work in the transgender community.** Clients whose identities do not align with the information on identification documents are more vulnerable to housing discrimination and are less likely to achieve homeownership.

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A New Model: *Service as Outreach*

Challenges facing LGBTQ individuals often go underreported, preventing policymakers from accurately assessing and responding to the community's needs. Decades of erasure and explicit discrimination from all levels of government, as well as nonprofit service providers, have contributed to a **distrust of establishment institutions among many LGBTQ community members**.

Various community outreach initiatives have been created to reduce the underreporting of LGBTQ issues. However, some models of community outreach, while well-intentioned, seem to prioritize the unilateral extraction of data from queer and trans people, which may further exacerbate distrust. Fair housing agencies and providers who wish to be effective in expanding their work with queer populations should recognize these historic dynamics and **take affirmative steps to build trust**.

Free Name & Gender Marker Change Clinics

Hearing from our community partners that the **most frequently requested legal need** in the St. Louis trans community was assistance with obtaining legal name changes, and recognizing the **housing access implications** of not having accurate government IDs, EHOc's legal staff partnered with a queer community organization to **provide this requested service as a form of community outreach**.

In partnership with the all-volunteer **St. Louis Name Change Mutual Aid**, in 2022, EHOc began incorporating on-the-spot, walk-up legal name and gender marker change clinics into our informational booths at regional Pride festivals. Importantly, EHOc's trained staff centered trans-affirming practices and demonstrated queer cultural competency, and individuals who took advantage of the name change services were more inclined to discuss other housing barriers that they had faced.



In one PrideFest weekend, over 100 people completed legal packets for name or gender marker changes.

While receiving name change assistance, community members informed EHOc staff of past housing problems, including **illegal evictions based on gender transition**, difficulties reflecting name changes on deeds, and a **lost housing voucher due to name discrepancies**.

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Rapid Response to Emerging Fair Housing Issues

In an ever-evolving political and social climate, meeting LGBTQ community needs requires fair housing organizations to spot trends and intervene early by distributing updated educational materials and anchoring collaborative advocacy work.

Case Study: Mpox Outbreak

Mpox (f/k/a "Monkeypox"), a virus that causes **smallpox-like symptoms and is sometimes fatal**, has existed for decades. In 2022, a new strain of the virus began to spread around the world, **almost entirely among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM)**. In the United States, **95% of mpox cases were men** (CDC, 2023).

News outlets accurately reported the initial transmission primarily in the queer community, but then shifted to focus on possible spread through linens, towels, and non-sexual contact. The combination of data and means of spread created the discrimination for queer people with fearful roommates. **Closeted people were kicked out of their homes** because they had this new "gay disease." With visible and lasting body sores, elders in the community **feared another AIDS-like crisis** of government inaction and social isolation of queer people. Further, in St. Louis, unhoused people who tested positive had **no respite housing**. Without secure and safe housing, both fear for discrimination and increased risk of spread created a public health crisis waiting to bloom.

Unhoused individuals face an elevated mpox risk due to congregate settings like camps or shelters, along with a higher prevalence of chronic illnesses like HIV, which raises the likelihood of severe or fatal mpox infection (NHCHC, 2022).

94%

of mpox cases were in gay/bi/MSM men

Community members stepped up to get people vaccines, hotel rooms, and to educate people on their rights to housing. Like most health and social issues, housing access lies at the root. On a global scale, researchers found **low quality housing was a risk factor for the transmission of mpox** (Quiner et al., 2017). Across the United States, the queer community stepped up to reduce the harm inflicted by mpox. In collaboration with our community partners, **EHOC created a first of its kind fact sheet specifically addressing fair housing rights in the context of MPOX** and partnered with local public health departments, providers, and grassroots efforts to both educate the public on housing protections as well as to **co-host MO's first mass vaccination event for gay, bisexual, and MSM**.

Mpox & Fair Housing



bit.ly/mpoxfairhousing

MONKEYPOX & FAIR HOUSING

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

INTRODUCTION
On August 4, 2022, the U.S. Health Administration declared a Public Health Emergency in response to increased cases of mpox (f/k/a "Monkeypox") in the United States. Initial studies into the outbreak have found that the vast majority of cases during this outbreak have impacted gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. There are still many things we are not yet known about the Monkeypox outbreak. It is important to remember that violations against people, individuals, and communities from discrimination involving discrimination involving housing.

MONKEYPOX AND FAIR HOUSING

- If you are being housed in a congregate setting, you should consider that you may be at risk of contracting mpox if you are in close contact with someone who has symptoms of mpox.
- If you have been diagnosed with mpox, you have been asked to stay in a shelter or other public housing facility, or you have been asked to stay in a shelter or other public housing facility, you should consider that you may be at risk of contracting mpox if you are in close contact with someone who has symptoms of mpox.
- If you are being housed in a congregate setting, you should consider that you may be at risk of contracting mpox if you are in close contact with someone who has symptoms of mpox.

EXAMPLES OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

- A landlord or public housing provider refuses to accept a person as a tenant or to rent to a person because they are gay, bisexual, or transgender.
- A landlord or public housing provider refuses to accept a person as a tenant or to rent to a person because they are gay, bisexual, or transgender.
- A landlord or public housing provider refuses to accept a person as a tenant or to rent to a person because they are gay, bisexual, or transgender.

RESOURCES FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY MPX

- For more information on fair housing, visit <https://www.ehoco.org>
- In St. Louis, visit <https://www.stlouis.gov>
- To learn about reporting housing discrimination, visit <https://www.fairhousing.org>
- For more information on fair housing, visit <https://www.ehoco.org>

IMPORTANT FACTS TO CONSIDER

- mpox is a viral disease that causes a rash and flu-like symptoms.
- mpox is a viral disease that causes a rash and flu-like symptoms.
- mpox is a viral disease that causes a rash and flu-like symptoms.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

- If you are a victim of housing discrimination, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- If you are a victim of housing discrimination, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- If you are a victim of housing discrimination, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

For more information contact Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council (EHOC) Website www.ehoco.org Telephone 314-334-5800

Policy Goals

Modernize Bank Standards

Banking underwriting standards need to be modernized to easily accommodate name changes during the application process.

Local lenders should review and update their own processes, and advocate for trans-inclusive updates to documents such as Form 1003 (Universal Residential Loan Application).



Create Universal HCV Vouchers



Respondents indicated that housing costs are a major barrier to stable housing.

Universal HCV (a/k/a Section 8) vouchers would provide subsidies for trans folks and members of other protected classes who face wage and income discrimination.

Ease Process to Update Deeds

Trans homeowners often report confusion and difficulty with reflecting their name changes on deeds.

Professional organizations and Recorder of Deeds offices can address this barrier by publishing informational toolkits with plain-language instructions and free legal forms, such as an "Affidavit of One in the Same Person".



Trans-Inclusive Local Housing Rights



Many of the rental housing and shelter barriers reported by transgender St. Louisans also negatively impact other St. Louisans. **County and municipal governments should enact *comprehensive* Tenants Bill of Rights and Unhoused Bill of Rights legislation that also explicitly addresses barriers faced by trans individuals.**

Pass the Fair & Equal Housing Act

The federal Fair & Equal Housing Act would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people in housing by **adding "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as protected characteristics under the national Fair Housing Act.**

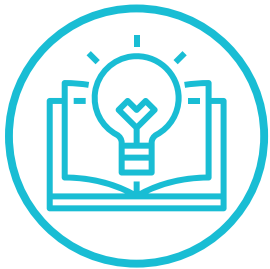


Calls to Action

Expanding accessible, affordable, affirming, and safe housing is critical for the LGBTQ community.

In response, EHOC is issuing the following Calls to Action with the goal of providing stable housing for queer community.

Educate Housing Providers



Landlords and shelter operators must **adopt Inclusive Housing Practices** to ensure equal access for LGBTQ individuals, including enacting **trans-affirming policies** and **training staff** to address queer & trans community needs.

Allocate Funding



More funding must be made available to **trans-led programs** designed to undo the harm caused during decades of anti-trans housing policies. Additional money is needed to **recruit and train trans testers** for FH testing program to identify and combat against discriminatory housing in the St. Louis region.

Expand ID Access



MO General Assembly should eliminate financial hurdles to obtaining accurate IDs by **creating low-barrier fee waivers for state IDs and birth certificates**.

MO State Courts should **remove bureaucratic obstacles** that prevent low-income people from receiving fee waivers when **filing name change cases**.

Improve Existing Affordable Housing



Survey respondents regularly noted the poor conditions of apartments and other affordable housing stock, related to familiar complaints that inspections are insufficient. **Municipal building inspectors should redouble efforts to ensure all tenants have safe and healthy housing, so they can thrive.**

Inclusive Housing Practices

Housing providers and industry professionals looking for concrete, practical steps that can be taken immediately to protect and support queer and trans individuals and also ensure compliance with federal fair housing and civil rights laws, such as the Fair Housing Act, should begin by implementing HUD's Inclusive Housing Practices.

Adopting inclusive practices such as these is important, but understand that merely changing behavior is not sufficient to address the deep, systemic issues impacting the trans community in St. Louis, as revealed by SQSH and THISTL.

Create a Fair Housing Policy Statement

In addition to including transparent policies and procedures, housing providers can **develop and distribute a Fair Housing Policy Statement to all staff, contractors, and anyone working on behalf of the organization.** A Fair Housing Policy Statement could include the following components:

- Organization's policy and the law
 - Example: "Fair housing for all is the policy of this rental facility, and it is the law. The owner/manager, their employees, and agents are forbidden from discriminating against anyone in rental housing because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), disability, or familial status (families with children under 18, including pregnancy and seeking legal custody)."
- Regular, mandatory **training for employees**
 - Example: "We require regular training to all our employees and staff who oversee rentals and housing to ensure compliance with the organization's non-discrimination policy."



they
them

Use Accurate Gender Pronouns

An important part of inclusive language is the use of **pronouns**.

A pronoun is a word that refers to someone who is being talked about (like "she", "he" or "they").

Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze, etc.) specifically refer to the person you are referring to.

She/her/hers and **he/him/his** are a few commonly used pronouns. Some people call these "feminine" and "masculine" pronouns, but many people avoid those labels because not everyone who uses *he* feels "masculine" and not everyone who uses *she* feels "feminine." There are also many other pronouns in use, some of them are more **gender neutral**. Here are a couple options you might hear:

- **They/them/theirs** (Example: Shea ate *their* food because *they* were hungry.) *They* is a pretty common gender-neutral pronoun, and **they can be used in the singular.**
- **Just my name please!** (Example: Ash ate *Ash's* food because *Ash* was hungry.) Some individuals prefer not to use pronouns at all, using **their name as a pronoun** instead.

Inclusive Housing Practices



Engage in Continuous Learning

Housing providers can participate in ongoing education and training to increase their understanding of the types of discrimination that LGBTQ individuals face. Three concepts to ground your continuous education include cultural competence, cultural humility, and unconscious bias.

- **Cultural Competence**

Cultural competence has been defined differently over time. An example definition:

- “The process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.”

- **Cultural Humility**

Cultural humility differs from cultural competence, mainly in that it establishes that the process of learning about other people and their cultures is ongoing and lifelong.

- **Unconscious Bias**

Attempting to acknowledge unconscious biases can help you identify them and take action to address them.



Feedback and Complaint Reporting Systems

Provide information on how to report housing discrimination. Ensure that information on how to report housing discrimination because of **race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), disability, or familial status** is accessible and available to all members of the housing community in writing and posted publicly. Provide this information via electronic and paper communications upon entry into the community and on an ongoing basis.

Below are best practices for feedback and complaint reporting:

- **Employ mechanisms for resident/client feedback.** Design and distribute anonymous surveys, delivered via email directly to tenants/clients or through mail or available onsite during key interactions (i.e., filling out an application or touring a property) so that people can provide honest and direct feedback about a particular experience, process, or aspect of the housing community.
- Use feedback to make changes. **Review the feedback routinely and consistently with staff, document actionable items, and make plans to address the feedback.** Ensure transparency and communicate the feedback and how it was incorporated into the decision-making and policies of the housing community. This will encourage the continued submission of feedback since providers of the feedback will know that it is being heard and incorporated. All tenants and residents must receive the same treatment when placing a complaint to the landlord or management company (i.e., maintenance complaint, complaint about another resident) and receive a response within a timely manner.

Inclusive Housing Practices

Develop Inclusive Forms

Incorporating inclusive language is a way of communicating to ensure that all people are respected, included, and valued. It takes into consideration, for example, all races, genders, sexual orientations, gender identities, and disabilities. On application forms, **if you are required to collect demographic data, allow applicants to write-in or self-identify their gender** and their relationship to other occupants or emergency contacts. If possible, consider not asking these questions at all. **Respect the decision of applicants** if they choose not to disclose their gender identity.



APPROPRIATE questions for housing application forms:

- **First Name / Last name**
- **Pronouns**

INAPPROPRIATE questions for housing application forms:

- **Gender identity**
- **Sexual orientation**



Create an Inclusive Culture

In addition to legal requirements, communities can take extra steps to create an inclusive culture. Ideas include the following:

- Hire a **diverse staff** who represent the diverse resident community that you have and/or that you are hoping to build.
- **Partner with local organizations, such as LGBTQIA+ community organizations, to solicit feedback and advice on creating inclusive communities and to stay informed on community news and events.**
 - Consider tabling at local **Pride events** to spread awareness among LGBTQIA+ individuals about your housing community.
- Demonstrate your commitment to creating an affirming LGBTQIA+ environment through **visual displays**, such as posters, pride flags, or other décor that indicate that your community is an actively supportive environment.
- Develop clear systems, policies, and norms to combat harassment and address interpersonal conflicts within your housing community.
- Develop systems of addressing conflicts through **mediation practices**.
- Learn to be an **active bystander**. For example, if you hear an individual being discriminated against because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, actively disrupt the discrimination by directly objecting to the discriminatory conduct, telling an authority figure, or otherwise supporting the individual being discriminated against.

EHOC's Commitments

Along with calling on others to take action, EHOC is committing ourselves to be part of the solution as well. In the coming year, the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council will:

Deepen our partnerships with THISTL and SQSH, including the creation of **a coalition** dedicated to expanding LGBTQ housing access in St. Louis.

Develop **trans-affirming educational and training materials** for housing providers and professionals.

Offer **LGBTQ housing access trainings** to shelter providers, landlords, realtors, and mortgage lenders.

Recruit, train, and pay queer & trans housing discrimination **testers**.

Adapt our testing practices to meet the needs of trans and gender-nonconforming testers.

Continue to incorporate **name and gender marker change services** into our fair housing work.

Support LGBTQ+ staff & interns by **implementing queer & trans-affirming practices**.

EHOC welcomes you or your organization to partner with us in this essential work.

TRANSforming St. Louis

Liberation does not happen in a vacuum. To achieve the futures that our community members deserve, we must think beyond housing, too. Check out these additional folks who are transforming St. Louis.

SQSH is leading projects to build our community's capacity to heal and manifest liberated queer futures, including building local capacity for peer support & queer leadership.

Maxi Glamour, co-founder of THISTL, uses nonbinary drag to destroy rules about gender.

Black Transcendence is building Black trans power and helping others rise.

Freedom Community Center is transforming notions of justice and collective healing.

MO Ho Justice Coalition is decriminalizing and destigmatizing our bodies and our work.

Glossary

LGBTQ+ Terms



Non-Binary Person

- A person who does not identify as male or female (male/female are the two ends of the gender spectrum).

Gender-Neutral

- Language used to describe “all gender” or unisex spaces, (i.e., gender-neutral or all gender bathrooms), language about relationships (spouse or partner, instead of wife/husband or boyfriend/girlfriend), etc.

Transitioning (Gender Transition):

- Process that some (but not all) transgender people go through to begin living as the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex assigned to them at birth.
- Transitioning does not require medical treatment.

Transgender

- Umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth.
- Occasionally, an individual may determine they no longer identify as transgender after they transition.

Trans Woman

- Someone who lives or identifies as a woman, even though they were assigned male at birth may or may not have undergone medical treatments.
- Sometimes referred to as “Male-to-Female” or “MTF,” but these terms may not be preferred as they can over-emphasize that the person was born male rather than her current identity.

Trans Man

- Someone who lives or identifies as a man, but was assigned female at birth. May or may not have undergone medical treatments.
- Sometimes referred to as “Female-to-Male” or “FTM,” but these terms may not be preferred as they can over-emphasize that the person was born female rather than his current identity.

Knowing these common terms can help you stay accurate and respectful when discussing trans and gender-expansive issues.

Glossary

LGBTQ+ Terms (cont.)



Assigned/Designated Sex at Birth:

- Frequently a binary designation of “male” or “female”.
- Based on the person’s internal or external anatomy at birth.
- Assigned at birth, typically by a medical professional (e.g., sex listed on birth certificate).
- May or may not correspond to one’s gender identity.

Cisgender

- Refers to a non-transgender person.
- The prefix “cis” means “matches”. So, cisgender means that one’s sex assigned at birth “matches” one’s gender identity.

Gender Identity

- Internal or innate sense of being male, female, or another gender.
- May or may not match their assigned sex at birth.
- May not be visible based on outward appearance.

Glossary adopted from
“Equal Access for
Transgender People:
Supporting Inclusive
Housing and Shelter”,
made available via
HUD Exchange

Gender Expression:

- External expression of gender identity (note that many times people do not feel they can safely express their gender identity).
- Exhibited through: behavior, clothing, hairstyle, body language, and voice.
- Does not always correspond to a person’s gender identity.
- May change over time or even day-to-day.

Sexual Orientation:

- Describes who an individual experiences physical or emotional attraction to.
- Distinct from one’s gender expression or identity.

Gender Non-Conforming

- Someone who does not conform to traditional gender roles or stereotypes.
- Traditional roles and stereotypes vary based on different cultural and societal ideals.
- Individuals may be perceived as having a different gender than their outward appearances (behavior, clothing, hairstyle, body language, voice).

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LGBTQ Fair Housing Resources

Equal Access for Transgender People:

Supporting Inclusive Housing & Shelters

- This guide focuses on project-level policies and procedures, requirements and recommendations specific to single-sex facilities, and resources for creating practical documents like signage, intake forms, and other written policies and procedures.



HUD's LGBTQIA+ Fair Housing Toolkit

- "The LGBTQIA+ Fair Housing Toolkit is to educate housing providers, tenants, applicants and other housing consumers on LGBTQIA+ fair housing protections to advance housing equity for LGBTQIA+ individuals."



Equal Access Agency Assessment Tool

- "This Equal Access Agency Assessment Tool provides specific action steps for HUD recipients and sub recipients to meet the requirements of the Equal Access Rule in shelters and other facility settings."



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The Trans Lifeline 877.565.8860

- "Trans Lifeline provides trans peer support for our community that's been divested from police since day one. We're run by and for trans people."

Trevor Project, thetrevorproject.org 866.488.7386

- "We provide information & support to LGBTQ young people 24/7."

SAGE, sageusa.org 877.360.5428

- "[SAGE] ensures that LGBTQ+ elders and older people living with HIV nationwide can access welcoming aging services and supports regardless of where they live. Our mission is to build a world where LGBTQ+ people can age with dignity and respect."

National Black Justice Coalition, nbjc.org 202.319.1552

- "The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) is a civil rights organization dedicated to the empowerment of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender loving (LGBTQ/SGL) people, including people living with HIV/AIDS."

National Center for Transgender Equality, transequality.org 202.642.4542

- "The National Center for Transgender Equality advocates to change policies and society to increase understanding and acceptance of transgender people. In the nation's capital and throughout the country, NCTE works to replace disrespect, discrimination, and violence with empathy, opportunity, and justice."

HRC Emergency Relocation Funds, hrc.org

- "We are maintaining a list of resources and organizations that may provide emergency funding to individuals and families impacted by anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, to relocate or to access care or services outside of your current state of residence. Many of the organizations are new and are only taking applications at this time."

St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline, thesqsh.org 314.380.7774

- "Want an empathetic, non-judgmental listening ear? Call the St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline (SQSH) to chat with a trained LGBTQIA-affirming peer counselor."

for more resources,
check out...

SQSHBook.com



The SQSHBook is a queer-centered, community-owned database of 1,200+ resources throughout the St. Louis region and beyond, compiled from various local resource lists and vetting efforts by the St. Louis LGBTQIA+ community and SQSH's partners. Use SQSHBook to find resources for housing, food, healthcare, socio-emotional support, and more – submitted by queer St. Louisans!



"I have been told that I would need to show them that I had bottom* surgery in order to be let in."

*genital

"Sleeping in the park once and the cops picked me up and spent an hour arguing over what shelter to take me to. They sent me to the men's, and having to be misgendered on top of being questioned on why I was even there... I felt disgusting."

"The only shelter offered to me was a women's shelter. The men's shelters were full, and I didn't want to stay with a bunch of strange women. I stayed in a vacant building instead."



**Quotes from transgender St. Louisans:
2022 survey conducted by the
Transgender Housing Initiative St. Louis**





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Equal Housing &
Opportunity Council**

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