



November 23, 2020

As legal advocacy organizations who represent transgender people experiencing homelessness, we write to remind you that under clear and long-established Connecticut and federal law, equal access means housing transgender women in women's shelters and transgender men in men's shelters.

Discrimination because of transgender status, gender identity, or gender expression is prohibited. As the Supreme Court has explained, a transgender woman is a woman who was identified as a male at birth but now who identifies as a female and a transgender man is someone assigned female at birth who identifies as male. This means that a transgender woman must be housed in a women's shelter with access to facilities provided by the shelter—including bedding, restroom, and shower access—on equal terms with other women housed there. The same rule applies for a transgender man.

The need for transgender people to have fair and equal access to shelters is dire. One fifth of transgender individuals experience homelessness at some point in their lives due to discrimination or family rejection. Of those who sought access an emergency shelter, nearly one third have been turned away because of their gender identity.

We know you all work hard to ensure that shelters are open to all who need them. This must include the transgender people, and especially transgender people of color, who are among our most vulnerable population, experiencing violence on the streets at unacceptably and disproportionately high levels. The best way to protect the rights of transgender people experiencing homelessness is to have a clear inclusive policy, regular training for staff, and a prompt and proportional response to any improper or hostile conduct from other shelter residents towards a transgender person. We are happy to help you draft such a policy. There are terrific resources from the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), <https://cceh.org/provider-resources/lgbtq-resources/>; and the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, <https://www.ctfairhousing.org>.

Please contact us if you have any questions or if we can otherwise support you in providing necessary emergency services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We thank you for your commitment to providing shelter, protection, and dignity to all those in need.