

## **Anti-oppression Policy Vision:**

The AIDS Committee of Ottawa (ACO) accepts service users, volunteers and staff as they self-identify. In the spirit of anti-oppression, ACO commits to creating an affirming and nurturing environment, within which it expects service users, volunteers and staff to treat each other with dignity and respect. Through its education and prevention programming, ACO participates in and challenges the larger community to claim the optimal wellness of the whole person, particularly those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, marginalized persons and the communities in which they live.

## **AIDS Committee of Ottawa gender identity / expression policy**

People have an internal sense of gender which may or may not conform to their physical sex and they also have a sense of how they wish to express it. This policy honours the choices of individuals in both these areas.

Some examples with which people describe their gender identity and / or gender expression include:

transsexual, transgender, trans man, trans woman, trans fag, tranny fag, trans dyke, tranny dyke, MTF, FTM, genderqueer, pre-op, post-op, non-op, gender-neutral, two spirit, genderfucker, poly-gendered, boi, tranny boi, trans partner, man, woman, gender variant, gender non-conformist, transsexual man, transsexual woman, drag king, drag queen...

For ease of use, this document will use the term “trans” throughout.

There are three components to this document:

1. Statements outlining our philosophy of anti-discrimination, definitions, eligibility for services and participation, and confidentiality;
2. Creation of trans positive environments;
3. An identification of educational needs, outreach strategies and support services that foster trans inclusion.

### **1. Philosophy**

#### **1.1 Non-discrimination and inclusion:**

This policy reflects ACO's commitment to anti-discrimination practices in relation to all trans people (service users, volunteers, and employees). ACO will promote a climate that affirms, nurtures and includes trans people in all aspects of the organisation. ACO will not discriminate and will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of gender identity / expression.

ACO commits to ensuring trans people play an active role in the definition of their needs and how they will be met.

#### **1.2 Definitions:**

Definitions and identities used here are evolving and describe evolving concepts. People scribed by these terms may or may not accept them

##### ***Gender identity:***

Gender identity is the self-defined sense of oneself as woman or man, feminine or masculine, both or neither.

**Gender expression:**

Gender expression is the way one expresses one's self-defined gender identity

**Two spirit:**

Prior to colonization, various First Nations communities viewed gender as a continuum between masculine and feminine. This continuum is reflected in the person's intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual self place within themselves and their community.

Today some aboriginal people identify with Two Spirit as meaning gay, lesbian, bi, trans, intersex, seeking and questioning individuals.

Overall, this term brings together people who walk with a balance of male and female energy and honour the gift that that brings.

**1.3 Eligibility for services and participation in the organization:**

Being trans is not in any way related to an individual's eligibility for services, volunteering, or employment. ACO will provide trans service users with the same access to services as all other service users in accordance with their gender identity / expression. Candidates for volunteer and staff positions will not be discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity / expression, and will be given the same consideration as all other candidates. Refusal to work with a service user, volunteer or co-worker on the basis of their gender identity / expression will not be tolerated.

**1.4 Confidentiality:**

Disclosure is a personal choice. The gender identity or history of any service user, volunteer or employee of ACO is considered confidential and private and will not be disclosed without the expressed permission of the individual. However, funding guidelines require that the gender of service users must be recorded for statistical purposes only.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission states, "An employer or service provider who legitimately requires and collects personal information that either directly or indirectly identifies a person's sex, as being different from his or her gender identity, must ensure the maximum degree of privacy and confidentiality. This applies in all situations and circumstances including employment records and files, insurance company records, medical information, etc."  
([http://ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/gender\\_identity](http://ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/gender_identity))

ACO's Confidentiality Policy states: "ACO recognizes the need to ensure all reasonable privacy and safety to those it serves. Credible service is based on trust, respect, sensitivity and competence." The confidentiality of volunteer information is protected by Section 5-150 of ACO Volunteer Policies. The confidentiality of staff information is protected by the AIDS Committee of Ottawa Confidentiality Policy, under section "Definitions".

ACO's Confidentiality Policy further states: "Service users must understand from the outset that some information may be shared with the officers, personnel, and volunteers of ACO who maintain the services of the agency and who have a reasonable need for specific information in the performance of their duties. The conditions under which confidential information will be disclosed will be explained to anyone working in any capacity with ACO." ACO's Confidentiality Policy gives extensive detail of how information will be stored, how it will be disposed of, etc. Read the full Policy for a more complete understanding.

**2. Creation of trans positive environments****Preamble**

ACO recognizes the fundamental human right to express one's gender identity.

ACO is committed to creating a social and physical environment that is welcoming, comfortable, affirming and safe for trans people by increasing the range of social and physical resources available for trans and non-trans service users, staff and volunteers.

ACO will ensure that all staff, volunteer, and client orientations will include content regarding trans people and ACO's trans inclusion policy.

## **2.1 Physical Environment**

ACO will develop new or revise existing literature (pamphlets, booklets, policies) to include content inclusive of trans people. ACO will ensure the presence of pictures, symbols and posters inclusive of trans imagery.

## **2.2 Social Environment**

ACO expects its service users, volunteers and staff to refer to trans people by the gender pronoun they identify with. When a person has not self-identified and the personal preference is not obvious, then gender pronouns should be avoided. If none of the commonly used pronouns are applicable this should be equally respected.

ACO commits its volunteers and staff and encourages its service users to increase their knowledge and understanding of trans issues. ACO commits to providing ongoing opportunities to do this.

## **2.3 Bathrooms**

ACO encourages its service users, volunteers and staff to use the bathroom of their choice.

## **3. Education, Outreach and Support Services**

### **Preamble**

Trans people will be accepted in the education, outreach and support services they choose.

### **3.1 Education and Outreach**

ACO will initiate and maintain a trans inclusive and trans positive approach in all its public education and outreach programs.

ACO commits to linking with partners and advocating for community-wide education on trans issues through its current and future association with all organizations appropriate to our mandate.

### **3.2 Support Services**

ACO will initiate and maintain a trans inclusive and trans positive approach in all its support services programming.

The Living Room commits to internal education for staff and service users. The Living Room also commits to internal advocacy for trans service users and to the creation of a trans positive environment as outlined above. The Living Room commits to ensuring trans service users play an active role in the creation of support services that meet their needs.