



LGBTQ Youth: 4 Ways You Can Prepare to Safely Access Housing Services

- 1. CREATE A SOLIDARITY PLAN** with a trusted friend, family member, or community advocate who you are comfortable telling that you're planning to go to a shelter or attempt to access help with housing. This person should be prepared to help advocate that you receive services safely and with respect. Sometimes a teacher can be a good choice, however, be aware that teachers and many other professionals who work with people under the age of 18 are "mandatory reporters," which means they're obligated by law to report known or suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect. Mandatory reporting laws vary by state, but typically would also include other school personnel like principals and coaches, health care providers like doctors and nurses, social workers and other mental health professionals, and police. Whoever you make a solidarity plan with, be sure to discuss how you will stay in touch and when you'll check-in.
- 2. IF YOU AREN'T SURE WHERE TO GO, CALL THE NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE.** This confidential hotline and website is the national communication system for runaway and homeless youth and offers private and non-judgemental support. You can access this resource by calling 1-800-RUNAWAY or visiting 1800runaway.org.
- 3. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. PRINT THIS HANDOUT OR TEXT/EMAIL IT TO YOURSELF SO THAT YOU'LL HAVE THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO SELF-ADVOCATE.** Consider sharing this with the person you create your solidarity plan with as well. As an LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, you are legally protected from mistreatment, harassment, and discrimination when receiving services funded by the federal government, and in many states, there are nondiscrimination laws protect LGBTQ youth as well.¹
- 4. IF ANY OF THE RIGHTS OUTLINED IN THIS DOCUMENT ARE VIOLATED, BRING IT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER.** Intentional or not, discrimination sometimes happens and is never okay. However, when discrimination occurs, it's sometimes the result of a service provider not understanding the law or not having received the proper training on serving LGBTQ youth. Youth experiencing homelessness should never be put in the position of educating providers on how to best meet their needs, but sometimes this is the easiest and fastest way to resolve the issue. If you believe the discrimination may be unintentional, consider sharing this document with another staff member, or ask to speak to the program director. If this does not resolve the situation, or if you believe the discrimination was intentional, take the additional step of reporting the situation to someone else:
 - First, notify the person you've identified for your solidarity plan, so that they can help advocate for you.

¹ LGBTQ people are protected from discrimination in housing and public accommodations by state law in the following states and territories: CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, IA, IL, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, NH, NM, NJ, NV, NY, OR, RI, PA, VT, and WA. See more: https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_laws/public-accommodations

- Next, email reportdiscrimination@truecolorsunited.org with your name, age, the name and location of the program you're receiving services through, and a brief description of your experience. Anything you share with us will be confidential unless we believe your safety is at immediate risk. We can help you determine some next steps and potentially intercede on your behalf.

Know Your Rights Under HUD's Rules:

HUD'S EQUAL ACCESS RULE requires equal access to HUD-funded programs without regard to a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING TRANSGENDER YOUTH, receiving housing or homelessness services [must be provided services and housed according to their gender identity.](#)

- It is illegal for any homeless facility to segregate or isolate transgender individuals solely based on their gender identity.
- Transgender individuals *cannot* be subjected to intrusive questioning or asked to provide anatomical information or documentary, physical, or medical evidence of the individual's gender identity.
- Placement and accommodation of an individual in temporary, emergency shelters and other buildings and facilities with physical limitations or configurations that require and are permitted to have shared sleeping quarters or shared bathing facilities must be made in accordance with the individual's gender identity.

There is a list of all HUD-funded organizations at www.hudexchange.info/grantees. Enter the name of the program you receive services through in the search box titled, "Find a Grantee Page," to see if it comes up as a HUD-funded organization.

Know Your Rights Under HHS's Rules:

DISCRIMINATION IS PROHIBITED IN HHS-FUNDED RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAMS. Program regulations require that youth homelessness services are delivered in a manner that is:

- Sensitive to the diverse experiences of male, female, and transgender youth and **consistent with the gender identity of participating youth**; and
- Respectful of the complex social identities of youth (i.e., race, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion/spirituality, gender identity / expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical or cognitive ability, language, beliefs, values, behavior patterns, or customs).

- Additionally, conversion therapy, or practices which seek to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of youth and young adults, is illegal in runaway and homeless youth settings.

Visit acf.hhs.gov/fysb/grants/fysb-grantees to find out if the program you receive services through is funded by HHS. Use the interactive map on this page by hovering over your state and clicking “Runaway and Homeless Youth” on the box that pops up. This should take you to a webpage with a list of all HHS-funded youth homelessness services in your state.

What About Programs That Aren't Funded By HUD or HHS?

If the program you participate in is not listed on either of the websites linked above, it's likely that it does not receive HUD or HHS funding. **That doesn't mean you aren't protected from discrimination.**

Get in touch with us at reportdiscrimination@truecolorsunited.org with your name, age, the name and location of the program you're receiving services through, and a brief description of your experience. Anything you share with us will be confidential unless we believe your safety is at immediate risk. We can determine what legal rights you may have and potentially intercede on your behalf.

Visit truecolorsunited.org/coronavirus for resources and advice on serving LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness during the coronavirus pandemic.

Visit nlchp.org to learn more about the legal rights of people experiencing homelessness across the United States.