



# Meeting the Needs of Transgender People in Disaster Situations

Despite federal law prohibiting discrimination based on sex (which includes gender identity/gender expression), transgender people often face discrimination which prevents them from safely accessing shelters in an emergency situation. By taking a few easy steps, disaster aid workers can ensure that everyone impacted by an emergency evacuation is afforded safety and care without fear of discrimination.

## Tips: Interacting with Transgender Evacuees

1. Be discreet about bringing public attention to someone who may be transgender.
2. Consider not using gendered salutations, such as “sir”, “ma’am”, “Mr.”, “Ms.”, “gentleman” and “lady”, in your speech, especially if there is any possibility of perceived ambiguity in the person’s gender expression.
3. Discreetly ask the evacuees how they want to be identified (including their personal pronouns, name, salutations, etc.).
4. Never ask a transgender person deeply personal questions about surgery, genitalia, their “real” name, or anything else not relevant to meeting their needs as a disaster evacuee.
5. Proactively provide options to the evacuees on who can do a pat-down search if one is needed for security purposes.
6. Treat transgender people with the same respect and dignity as you would any other person.

## Tips: Providing for the Safety and Security of Transgender Evacuees

**Providing private areas** in shelter spaces for the changing of clothing is a critical consideration which can aid in the prevention of sexual violence and identity-based violence. This includes making sure there are spaces for people who are not male or female.

**Ensure that transgender people will be housed in spaces that align with their gender identity, even if their legal documentation does not align with that gender identity.** This also does not mean that transgender people should be given different or unequal accommodations as other individuals. Shelters have a legal obligation to provide equal service to transgender people based on their gender identity. **Do not involve law enforcement** in a situation where a trans person is using services that align with their gender identity or if they have been given permission by staff/volunteers to use certain facilities.

**Establish adequate protective measures for transgender individuals** as identity-based hate crimes are still a common occurrence against this community. This includes having staff/volunteers conduct rounds and checking in with people when appropriate to ensure safety.

All facilities utilized for disaster survivors/victims **should ensure that transgender individuals in those spaces have access to the proper facilities based on their gender identity.** This includes restrooms, showers, housing, and other facilities. Transgender people should not be made to use separate facilities from others sharing their gender identity. If other individuals in the facility have a problem with using the same restroom, shower, housing, or other facilities they should be offered a different option.

Transgender people may have **hormone replacement prescriptions** on their person that include injection supplies. Often, a person will discard the prescription labelling that their supplies come with, not considering that they may need documentation of their prescription during a disaster situation or unplanned evacuation. These items should not be confiscated.

Ensure that information about the recovery process is distributed to transgender people in the community by partnering with nonprofit organizations that serve this community.

## **Reporting Mistreatment or Discrimination**

Transgender people should know, and believe, that they are empowered to report concerns without fear of retribution or loss of assistance.

Make sure it is widely known that Community organizations and individuals can also contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Office of Equal Rights (1-800-621-3362) to file a complaint of discrimination.