

# Office of Supportive Housing Sexual and Gender Minority Services Emergency Housing Standards Addendum

## **DEFINITION**

Sexual minority is a term used to refer to gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual identified people. Gender minorities may include individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression may be different from their assigned gender at birth. For example, gender minority individuals may refer to themselves as transgender, trans-sexual, cross-dressing, or transvestite. Gender minorities may represent or express their gender identity through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

## **GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT**

The mission statement of OSH is to plan for and assist adult individuals and families in moving toward independent living and self-sufficiency, with the end goal of households thriving in safe and stable housing located in supportive communities. In addition, all individuals/families seeking services with OSH and contracted emergency housing service providers must be treated with dignity and respect. This includes lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender individuals. OSH is committed to complying with the Philadelphia Fair Practice Ordinance as amended in 2002. OSH and providers are prohibited from discriminating against persons on the basis of their gender identity or sexual orientation, as well as race, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, or marital status and all other protected cases as stipulated in the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance.

*“It is expected that this policy will function as an addendum until the OSH Emergency Housing (Shelter) Standards are revised and the language provided in this document is incorporated.”*

## **CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITY**

OSH and emergency housing service providers will enforce all dress codes fairly and equally for everyone. Clients will have the right to dress in accordance with the gender with which they self-identify. OSH and Emergency Housing Providers will support the decisions made by transgendered clients to access services in the gender they identify as best preserving their safety. Clients should receive services/placement consistent with their self-identified gender.

## **STAFFING**

OSH staff, emergency housing service provider staff and case management staff, will be trained on policy, procedures, sensitivity and overall client issues. “This training is mandatory.”

## **CONFIGURATION OF SHELTER SPACE**

### **PRIVACY**

Space permitting, OSH and all contracted emergency housing service providers will maintain at least one private restroom and private shower facility for clients whose personal needs require a high level of privacy while bathing, toileting and dressing. If such space cannot be made

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available OSH and service providers will make every effort to accommodate this need. For example, developing bathroom usage schedules to accommodate privacy.

#### **SAFETY**

When placing clients and assigning them to a bed or room within an emergency housing facility, clients' perceptions of their safety must be taken into account. It is essential that placement and bed assignment decisions be made in the context of a conversation between client and intake worker or case manager both at OSH intake and at the placement site. On a case-by-case basis, individuals, couples and families may be determined to be at serious risk of physical or psychological harm. To the extent possible it is expected that OSH/Provider staff will attempt to house the at-risk individual or family separately to provide adequate safety and security. Secure areas may include separate bedrooms, access to private bathroom facilities and recreational areas that are under staff supervision.

#### **INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT**

OSH and Emergency Housing providers will create and maintain a welcoming environment in all OSH facilities and during the Intake and Assessment process and ensure privacy, confidentiality and use sexuality inclusive language. Examples of sexuality inclusive language are: Replacing the use of the term "sex" with "gender; or asking the client, "How do you self-identify your gender."

OSH and contracted service providers will inform all incoming consumers of the shelter's non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy, including its protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender consumers. OSH and emergency housing service providers will accept and support the client's self-identification of his/her gender irrespective of physical appearance, surgical status, or documentation of identity.

OSH and contracted service providers will consider placement by taking into account where the client will be safe, their preference as well as availability. OSH will provide sexual and gender minority couples and families with children equal access to couples' shelters and family shelters respectively, subject to availability.

#### **CASE MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

OSH and contracted service providers will conduct all case management interviews in a private area. Service providers within the OSH emergency housing service system will accept the client's self-identification of his/her gender irrespective of physical appearance, surgical status, or documentation of identity. OSH and emergency housing service providers will support transgender clients in their self-identified gender in the delivery of case management and supportive services.

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH CODES AND LAWS**

OSH and emergency housing service providers will prominently display in all facilities, including intake areas and shelters, the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations Anti-Discrimination posters as well as OSH produced posters regarding sexual and gender minorities.