

# TRANS-SPECIFIC SHELTER SUPPLIES

## TIPSHEET #7

Any survivor may enter shelter with just the clothes on their back, without the supplies and resources they may use every day. For transgender and gender non-binary survivors, having access to specific supplies is not only important in maintaining a positive sense of self and mental health, but is also critical to their day-to-day safety.

## 7 Tips For Stocking Up On Trans-Specific Supplies

### 1. Clothes, shoes, and underwear.

It's important for all survivors to have access to clothes that fit their body/size. Many—though not all—trans women are taller, more broad-shouldered, and wear larger shoe sizes than non-trans women, while many—though not all—trans men are smaller, wider through the hips and thighs, and wear smaller shoe sizes than non-trans men. Meanwhile, non-binary individuals may wear clothing of many different sizes and styles. Having access to clothes, shoes, and underwear that match a person's sense of self is of grave importance to most trans and non-binary people, so it's important for gender-integrated shelters to stock these items in a diversity of styles and sizes—those traditionally designed or marketed for women and men, and also those that are more unisex or neutral.

### 2. Hats, head coverings, and wigs.

Many trans women, trans men, and non-binary people use hats, head wraps, scarves, and/or wigs to help them look and feel more aligned with their gender identity. Stock a wide variety of knit caps, baseball hats, head scarves, head wraps, and—if possible—wigs that residents may choose from.

#### “ Gender-integrated shelters: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

We have clothing that people can choose from, and anyone can choose what they like.

#### ✓ HELPFUL TIPS

##### Acquiring Trans-related Supplies:

- Add these detailed items to your shelter's donation list
- Connect with a local trans organization or LGBT community center. Many have clothing banks and would be glad to donate clothing and other supplies.
- Keep gift cards or petty cash on hand for this purpose

### 3. Toiletries.

Toiletries are often unnecessarily gendered. When stocking up on deodorants, shampoos, soaps, toothbrushes, combs, razors, and other regularly used hygiene products, consider buying “uni-sex” or not overtly gendered products. Scentless products are good to have on hand not only for non-binary residents but also for anyone with chemical sensitivities. Keep in mind that a person of any gender presentation may need access to razors and menstrual-related products. Keeping all toiletries in one place and accessible to everybody is better for all residents—trans and non-trans alike—than separating toiletries for people of different genders.

### 4. Makeup.

For many trans and non-binary people, makeup can be essential not only for presenting themselves in a way that helps them feel fully themselves but also in providing safety from the disproportionate violence experienced by people who are seen as being gender nonconforming; therefore, including makeup in a shelter’s list of toiletries is an important trans-friendly step. Be sure to have a variety of makeup for all skin tones and skin types, including foundation—which is often essential for trans women who need to cover facial hair shadows. When soliciting donations for your shelter, explicitly encourage the donation of makeup, specifying foundation and other products for full face coverage.

### 5. Body modification materials.

Many trans and non-binary people use specific items to help their bodies appear and feel more aligned with their gender identity, such as breast forms, hip pads, gaffing devices (which flatten the genital area), binders or chest compression shirts, packing devices (which augment a genital bulge), and stand-to-pee devices. These items are not easy to stock, since they are often expensive, highly personal, and body-specific in terms of sizing, but shelters can maintain a list of local and online trans organizations and stores that carry them, and help trans and non-binary survivors obtain needed supplies (via accompanying them home to get their own supplies, or finding other methods to secure needed items).

### 6. Medications.

Many—but not all—trans and non-binary individuals utilize hormonal supplements, including testosterone or estrogen pills, patches, gels, or injections. Hormone medication is considered medically necessary by the American Medical Association and many other medical professional organizations.<sup>1</sup> Trans people are also at increased risk for HIV, depression, and other mental health conditions.<sup>2</sup> As with anyone seeking shelter, trans and non-binary survivors may

#### “ Gender-integrated shelters: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

All case managers get petty cash, and we will pay for those things up to a certain cost. If it gets above a certain cost, we’ll reach out to [a local LGBT organization] in order to get what the client needs. We did just get a binder for a trans man. The case manager shopped with him online to get it, and we paid for it out of petty cash.

<sup>1</sup> American Medical Association, “American Medical Association Revolution: Removing Financial Barriers to Care for Transgender Patients” (2011), retrieved from <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/member-groups-sections/glb-t-advisory-committee/ama-policy-regarding-sexual-orientation.page>.

<sup>2</sup> Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, and Justin Tanis, “Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey” (Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011), retrieved from [http://www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf).

not have their medications with them or have access to a physician or health clinic. They may have also lost their job and, in turn, lost insurance coverage for these costly medications.

Shelter staff should be prepared to help coordinate access to hormones and other medications. A best practice is for a shelter to maintain relationships with physicians or clinics that are able to assess the health of residents and write prescriptions for existing or new medical conditions. Be sure you have pre-screened providers for trans competency, to ensure survivors will not be exposed to additional abuse or disrespect.

## **7. Room dividers and/or curtains in shared bedrooms and bathrooms.**

In the case of shared bedrooms and bathrooms, shelters can add room dividers or dividing curtains to afford more privacy between beds and in areas where residents may be disrobing. Avoid providing room dividers only in the case of trans and non-binary residents; instead, treat all residents equally in their need for privacy and space.

**Some of the supplies above may seem gratuitous, yet each of these items can not only help trans and non-binary survivors feel more comfortable in their own skin—and sometimes even keep them from becoming suicidal—but they can also provide greater safety in a world that often responds violently to the breaking of “gender rules.” Obtaining trans-related supplies also offers the opportunity for building relationships with local trans and/or LGBT organizations, who can offer donations and help locate appropriate suppliers.**

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