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# GROUND RULES

SPEAK AND LISTEN WITH RESPECT

MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

STEP UP, STEP BACK

HOLD QUESTIONS FOR PAUSE BREAKS



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## A LOOK AHEAD

- SisTers PGH: Who we are and what we do
- Basic terminology around TLGBQ+ identity and experience
- The Trans/queer housing crisis and how we can fight it



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## Who is SisTers PGH?

SisTers PGH is a **BLACK** and **TRANS**-led 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that serves **QTBIPOC** (Queer Trans Black Indigenous People of Color) within Southwestern PA.



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## What do we offer?

- **Project T:** Pittsburgh's Trans-led Transitional Housing program



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## What do we offer?

- **Grow To Succeed**

Vital program based on the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) traditional steps and principles of sober living but structured around a queer and Trans lens.



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## What do we offer?

- BroThers PGH
- TGNC Youth Collective
- Emergency support
- Drop-in center and computer lab
- The Name Change Project
- People's Pride



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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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# TERMINOLOGY



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## **BIOLOGICAL SEX/ASSIGNED SEX**

A medical label used to categorize people according to their chromosomes, hormones, genitalia and secondary sex characteristics (breasts, body hair, etc.). Usually assigned at birth as “male” or “female” by a doctor, though there are many variations outside of that socially-constructed binary (i.e. intersex).

## **BINARY**

Term to describe an assumed duality. Usually in reference to the socially constructed gender binary of man/woman and sex binary of male/female.



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## GENDER

A socially constructed identity centering around notions of “masculinity,” “femininity” and “androgyny,” which includes aspects of identity and expression.

## GENDER EXPRESSION

The way an individual conveys (or is perceived as conveying) their gender, including their choices in clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, communication patterns, social roles, etc.



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## GENDER IDENTITY

A person’s own understanding of themselves in gendered categories such as woman, man, boy, girl, transgender, genderqueer, etc. How an individual feels inside and believes themselves to be.

## CISGENDER

Term used to describe an individual whose assigned biological sex aligns with their expected binary gender identity. Considered to be opposite of “transgender.” *Example:* A person whose sex assigned at birth is “female” and identifies their gender as girl or woman.



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## TRANSGENDER OR TRANS

An identity label used to describe a person whose gender identity does not align with the socially expected one according to their sex assigned at birth. Often used as an umbrella term to include people who transgress gender norms: cross dressers, genderqueer people, Trans women, Trans men, etc.

## GENDERQUEER

An identity label sometimes claimed by people whose gender identity does not fit into the culturally accepted man/woman binary. May be characterized by the desire to challenge norms of gender roles and expression, to “play” with gender and/or to express a fluid gender identity.



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## GENDER EXPRESSION

The way an individual conveys (or is perceived as conveying) their gender, including their choices in clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, communication patterns, social roles, etc.

## GENDER DYSPHORIA (FORMERLY REFERRED TO AS GENDER IDENTITY DISORDER)

A diagnostic label included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) to describe when a person identifies as a different gender than the one they were assigned based on their birth sex. This diagnosis is usually required so a trans person can receive hormone replacement therapy, sex affirmation surgery and/or revised gender and sex markers on their identification.



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## QUEER

An umbrella identity term used by people who do not conform to norms of heterosexuality and/or the gender binary. A reclaimed slur, often used with a political connotation.

## PASSING

Being perceived by others as the gender you are aiming to present as. Usually used to describe if a Trans person is able to live convincingly and publicly as the gender they identify as.



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## TRANSITION

The process of changing one's sex or gender, socially (e.g. changing one's name, clothing, makeup, hair, pronouns) and/or medically (e.g. hormones and/or surgery).

## TRANSPHOBIA

Negative attitudes and feelings, ranging from aversion to hatred, toward people who identify as or are perceived to be Trans. Can be present in institutions such as religion, the education system and the law, and also internally in individuals that may or may not identify within the trans community.



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**PRIVILEGE**

A "system of advantage" that gives people from more powerful social groups access to resources and opportunities that are denied to others (and usually gained at their expense) simply because of the groups they belong to.

**PREJUDICE**

To hold an adverse opinion or belief without just ground before acquiring specific knowledge; often against people or groups of people who are perceived as being "different" or having "different values."

**DISCRIMINATION / BIAS**

When prejudiced feelings or beliefs move into the realm of behavior, and people are denied equality of treatment. Can be conscious and deliberate or it can be unconscious and unintentional.

**SEXISM**

The cultural, institutional and individual beliefs and practices that benefit men and/or masculinity, subordinate women and/or femininity, and denigrate values and practices associated with women.



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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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# HOMELESSNESS AND THE TLGBQ+ COMMUNITY



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## HOMELESSNESS AND TLGBQ+ YOUTH

- According to the Williams Institute, **40% of homeless youth** identify as TLGBQ+: between 500,000 and 1.6 million youth in America experience homelessness each year.
- A study of more than 350 runaway and homeless providers throughout the US found four top causes for homelessness among queer and Trans youth: (1) **family rejection** resulting from sexual orientation or gender identity; (2) physical, emotional, or sexual **abuse**; (3) aging out of the **foster care system**; and (4) financial and emotional **neglect**.



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## HOMELESSNESS AND TLGBQ+ ADULTS

- Sexual minority adults are **twice as likely** as the general population to have experienced homelessness in their lifetime.
- A higher proportion of transgender people report experiencing recent homelessness than sexual minority and cisgender straight people.
- The majority of sexual minority people experienced homelessness for the first time as an adult.



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## What's needed?

- Street outreach, homeless shelters, transitional living programs, and other housing programs and services should be **free of bias and harassment** and provide access to **culturally competent** services that affirm TLGBQ+ identities
  - Analyze how staff are **screened** before being hired
  - Provide professional development to current staff; care must be **trauma-informed**
  - Connect youth to community resources and services that are **affirming and safe**
  - Expand public awareness about queer youth issues and **decrease stigma** associated with their identities



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## On the Criminal Justice System

- Black and Latino people, people with a disability, and members of the TLGBQ+ community are **disproportionately represented** in the criminal justice system.
- This is especially true for Trans people and queer women. And while incarcerated, these individuals are subject to particularly inhumane conditions and treatment.
- These formerly incarcerated people also then typically return to low-income communities where affordable, accessible housing is scarce. There is currently a national shortage of 7 million affordable rental units available to extremely low-income people.



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## On Criminal Records

- For TLGBQ+ people with a criminal record, discrimination based on their record combined with already high rates of discrimination can make finding employment and housing even more challenging.
- Given the harassment, violence, and disproportionate discipline that queer students experience in educational settings, combined with the high rates of discrimination in the workplace, programs that allow those with a criminal record to pursue education are incredibly important.
- States commonly place some restrictions on the ability of people to change their names due to concerns about fraud or evasion of law enforcement. For Trans people with criminal records, these restrictions can create hurdles to rebuilding one's life.



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## What's needed?

- Legislation like Fair Chance Housing (PA Senate Bill 912)
  - Federal, state, and local laws provide only a patchwork of protections against discrimination and none of them consider that many Trans and queer folks have criminal records simply because they were trying to survive. They also do nothing to protect us from abusive landlords, building managers, and housing authorities.



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## What's needed? continued

- Parole reform
  - Once released from prison, if someone is placed on parole or probation, they are often required to adhere to strict and unnecessarily burdensome requirements and regularly meet with a parole or probation officer. There have been cases in which a Trans person's dressing in accordance with their gender identity has resulted in a violation of parole terms.
  - Travel limitations can be particularly onerous for Trans people and people living with HIV, particularly those in rural areas. These folks may not be able to access competent, respectful medical care without traveling.



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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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## SOURCES

**National Coalition for the Homeless**

[nationalhomeless.org/issues/lgbt](https://nationalhomeless.org/issues/lgbt)

**Williams Institute**

[williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-homelessness-us](https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-homelessness-us)

**Youth.gov**

[youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth/homelessness](https://youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth/homelessness)

**University of Florida Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Affairs**

[lgbtq.multicultural.ufl.edu](https://lgbtq.multicultural.ufl.edu)

**Justia.com**

[justia.com/lgbtq/criminal-justice](https://justia.com/lgbtq/criminal-justice)

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