

Guide for  
service providers  
supporting trans+  
and non-binary  
immigrants and  
refugees

AGIR: ACTION LGBTQ+ AVEC LES IMMIGRANT.ES ET RÉFUGIÉ.ES

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**In Honour of**

Liberia Aceves Castaneda  
August 1958 - August 2022

Ilyana Chris Cohen  
November 1995 - November 2021



## Acknowledgements

This guide was developed and led by members of the trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugee community. The guide developers carry both their own experiences as well their experience from working on the ground with their own people.

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## Credits

### Advisory committee

Alina  
Teresa Kattackal, intervention  
worker, ASTTEQ  
M.A  
M.E  
R.E  
R.Z

### Special Advisors

Anais Zeledón M. intervention  
worker, ASTTEQ  
B.E  
M.C  
M.M  
Nora Burke

### Graphics and layout

Iyan Hayadi

### AGIR's individual support team advisory committee

Adam K  
Cynthia Beaudry  
Mehdi  
Noé Ventura Solís

### Khawaja Sira and Hijra culture and history

Jannat Ali, Transgender Activist  
/Performing Artist, Executive  
Director - Track-T, Founder  
of First Trans Pride Pakistan

### Muxe or Muxe culture and history

Amaranta Gómez Regalado, muxhe  
activist and social anthropologist,  
Mexico.

### General direction

Iyan Hayadi

### Coordinating and writing

Dylan Montemayor  
Iyan Hayadi  
Mariam Mannai  
Will Jammal

### Interviews and data analysis

Dylan Montemayor  
Will Jammal

### Translation

Olivia Siino  
Mariam Mannai

### Revision

Ahmed Hamila  
Amanda Siino  
Cynthia Beaudry  
Javi Fuentes Bernal  
Mariam Mannai  
Olivia Siino  
Iyan Hayadi

*Note: To respect contributors' safety, confidentiality, and identity concerns, the preferred names used above are chosen by the people themselves.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Land acknowledgement

AGIR's work takes place on unceded Indigenous lands. These lands, colonially known as Montréal, have been stewarded by many different Indigenous peoples throughout history. The primary stewards of the lands have been the Kanien'kehá:ka, also known as the Mohawk Nation, one of the six First Nations in the Haudenosaunee confederacy, and the Anishinaabeg peoples. These lands are known as Tiohtià:ke in Kanien'kéha and Mooniyang in Anishinaabemowin. We are grateful to the Kanien'kehá:ka and Anishinaabeg peoples, as the stewards of these lands and waters, for their continued and generous care for the places we now call home. The colonizing forces that tried to remove Indigenous peoples from these lands also tried to destroy the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations that had previously existed in these communities.

We want to work in a way that respects and honors the continued connections to the past, present, and future in right relationships with Indigenous peoples here. Without erasing the differences in our histories and present experiences of oppression, we also know that the struggles of the Indigenous peoples of these lands are linked to our struggles as LGBTQ+ refugees. As LGBTQ+ migrants and refugees, many of us have been driven from our own lands by the impacts of colonization, a colonization that, similarly, sought to oppress and eliminate the diverse genders and orientations that previously existed in our own ethno-cultural communities. For many of us, our homelands are also still being colonized. Colonization forces people to migrate as refugees and asylum seekers, and then participate in the system of colonization of other Indigenous peoples. We do not have the answers and we are in the imperfect process of learning and making

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mistakes, but we know we can have no liberation without that of the Indigenous peoples of this land. In solidarity.

## About AGIR

AGIR: Action LGBTQ+ avec les immigrantEs et les réfugiéEs is an autonomous non-profit organization, by and for the LGBTQ+ migrant community in Montréal. Overall, AGIR's mission is to protect and defend the legal, social, and economic rights of migrants (asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, and those with undetermined status) from lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQIA+) communities, all in a perspective of solidarity.

To accomplish our mission, AGIR works through a by-and-for approach, which means that people with lived experience as LGBTQIA+ migrants and refugees are not only at the center of our work, but also leading it. This model enables us to be uniquely responsive to evolving community needs across the diverse identities within the community. AGIR is the only organization with this specific mandate in Québec. Specifically, our work aims to provide LGBTQIA+ migrants and refugees in need of Support Services (Individual Support Services, Group Support Services, and Social Activities); and offer Education and Public Awareness Services to those supporting this community.

AGIR was born in 2008 during the collective dialogue of various members from the MultiMundo Coalition, a coalition of ethnic and racialized LGBTQ organizations (and their allies), who worked to address the issues of LGBTQ ethnic and racialized communities (GLAM, Helem, Ethnocultural, Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique, etc.). AGIR officially became an association in 2009 and transitioned into a non-profit organization in 2011. AGIR's work was to address the specific needs of LGBTQ+ migrants and refugees in Montreal. Until 2019 we were entirely volunteer run, in 2021 we had two full-time staff, and now we are over 10 staff. We offer our services in French, English, Arabic, and Spanish. Since the start of the pandemic, we also offer our services virtually to those outside the Greater Montréal

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area. The focus of our support work is in the Greater Montréal area but we also support LGBTQ+ migrants and refugees in the rest of Québec, as the need emerges. Due to limited capacity, we only have a physical presence in the Greater Montréal area.

## **Structure and use of the guide**

To facilitate the use of this guide, we added a glossary of terms and additional resources at the end of the guide. We also included some scenarios to help professionals have some concrete examples for applying this knowledge to their work.

To the best of our ability, this guide is written using inclusive language for better representation, and with a desire for anti-oppressive language. As inclusive language is in perpetual evolution, the modalities used in this document can still be improved. In addition, it is important to note that the different terms and usages in this guide reflect different uses, varying according to the geographical contexts and preferences.

## **Objective of the guide**

The guide is primarily addressed to professionals working in any role supporting trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees. It is intended as a toolkit that contains information and resources to assist them. As for any other community, the challenges could change with time, depending on circumstances, as we have majorly witnessed in the example of COVID-19. It is important that professionals continue educating themselves to stay up to date.

Professionals supporting trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees work in diverse institutions like hospitals, health clinics, legal clinics, organizations, language schools for newcomers, foodbanks, shelters, etc. Professionals such as

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social workers, case workers, nurses, doctors, psychologists, and receptionists can use this guide to provide more appropriate services to trans+ and non-binary refugees and immigrants, to ultimately positively contribute to their wellbeing and quality of life. Nonetheless, we think this guide will be useful to anyone in any profession who wants to improve their services for trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees.

## **Motivation and relevance of the guide**

Through AGIR's support work, the team has supported many professionals from diverse organizations and institutions by sharing information and resources in workshops and consultations (by phone, email, etc.) to improve the support trans+ migrants and refugees receive.

During these consultations or workshops, many professionals expressed challenges in finding information and resources specific to trans+ and non-binary migrants' and refugees' realities, and how to respond with appropriate support. Many also expressed that it would be helpful to have specific written material that they could pass on to colleagues and other professionals, as well as distribute within their organizations or institutions.

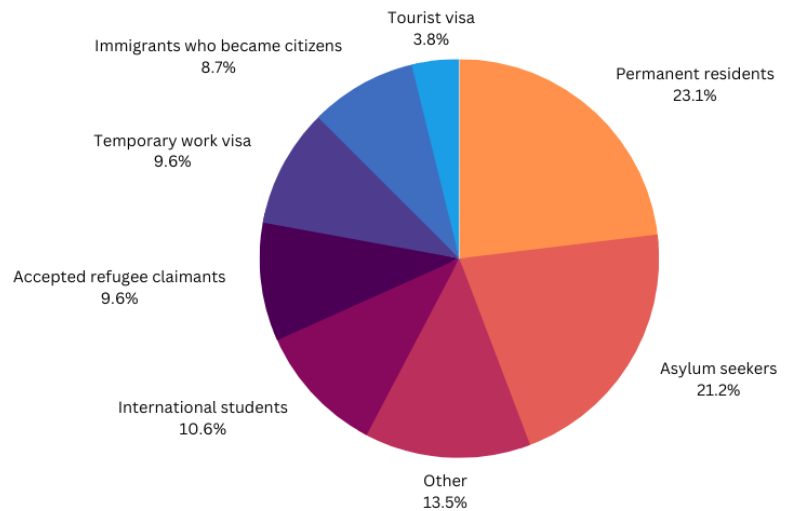
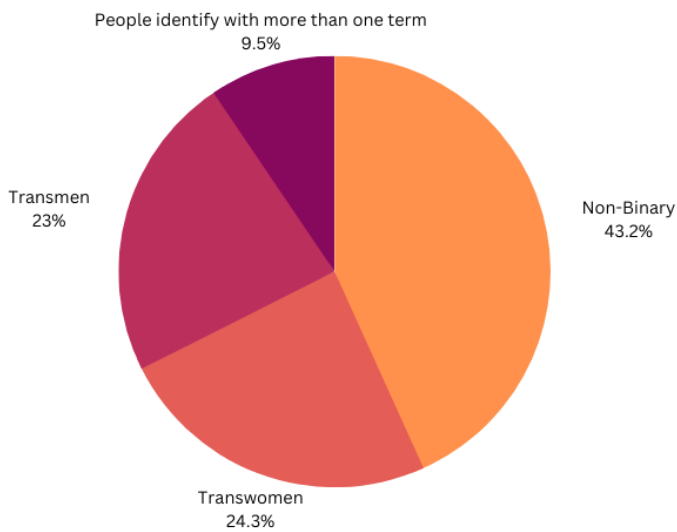
Additionally, our Support Team is in the unique position of both observing the challenges faced by trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees, and continuously receiving feedback from trans+ and non-binary members on the support methods that they think would work best for them.

This guide provides a view of the current situation of trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees in Québec by highlighting some of their challenges, and how best to support them.

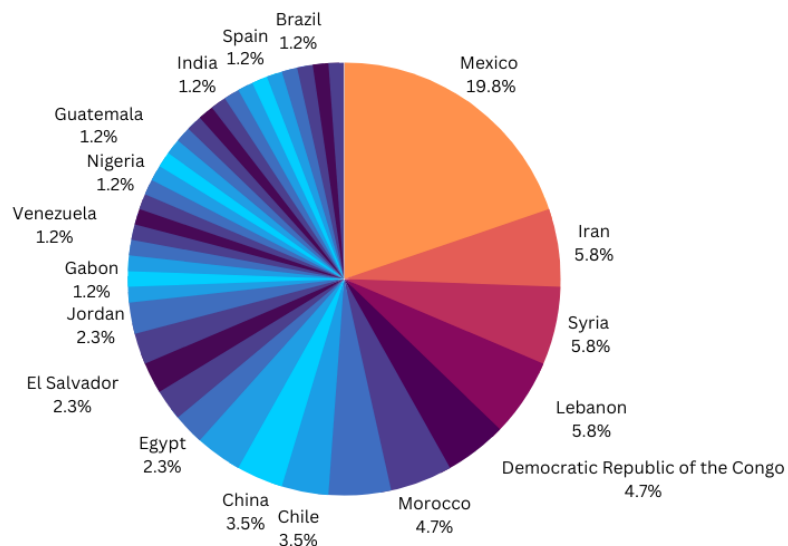
Between January 2021 and January 2023, a total of 90 people identifying as trans+ or non-binary have accessed AGIR’s services. Below are charts representing the breakdown of those who accessed services based on gender identity, immigration status, and country of origin.

***Breakdown by gender identities***

***Breakdown by migration status***



***Breakdown by country of origin***





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## Our Process

Drawing from both their own personal experiences and their on the ground experiences supporting their community, this project was led by four AGIR team members from the trans+ and non-binary immigrant and refugee community. They worked to develop this guide to benefit their own community.

The team interviewed professionals working with trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees both within AGIR and within partner organizations. Within AGIR, our team interviewed four community support workers and two community members. External to AGIR, the team interviewed two community support workers in other organizations, consulted with two community members, and sought knowledge regarding terminology from trans+ or non-binary people in communities outside of Canada. Overall, this project involved 19 trans+ or non-binary migrants and refugees, from leadership to consultation to revision, etc; it is a project that is truly by and for the community. AGIR has respected all contributors' preferred names and gender identities as well as their chosen anonymous names due to safety concerns.

## What this guide is not



- This is not a guide on how to immigrate to Canada or Québec.
- This is not a guide for legal advice.
- This is not a guide for medical advice.
- This is not a guide on the legal name and gender change process.

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## What this guide is



- A resource to educate yourself on the needs of trans+ and non-binary migrants and refugees
- Resources specifically for various service providers to support their services to trans+ and non-binary migrants and refugees

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# TERMINOLOGY

## Terminology and culture

The terms trans+ or non-binary are mostly used in western contexts. AGIR supports people coming from across the world who may, or may not, know and use these exact terms. Moreover, they might be identifying with terms that are from their culture or country of origin and in their language.

It is very important for professionals to refer to people in the ways they ask. Attempting to lecture or correct someone to use western terminology may result in a lack of understanding of the person's needs and a loss of trust. This can push them to use terms that do not really fit who they are. Listening to a person without assumptions or trying to fit them into boxes will have a positive impact on supporting them.

## Example of trans+ communities in other cultures

To provide some additional context on gender diverse concepts in other cultures, here are some examples shared with us by people from those communities:

### ❖ **Khawaja Sira and Hijra communities**

For decades, the LGBTQ+ community has suffered through a prolonged battle full of tribulations amidst a history of oppression and injustice in Pakistan - a Muslim country with a blend of social, cultural, and religious practices and traditions. Many people around the globe have misconceptions or lack awareness regarding the Khawaja Sira Culture, which is an Indigenous culture that is deeply rooted in the subcontinent's history since the Mughal Era of the 16th century.

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The term Khawaja Sira derives from Urdu and Farsi as a title for trans+, non-binary, and gender nonconforming officials in the Mughal court. Khawaja Sira were part of the mainstream culture during the Mughal era since they had exclusive access to both male and female Harem (royal palaces). For example, they were appointed to key positions in the army, engaged in strategic decision making, participated in the performing arts and taught etiquette to the children of royal families. Throughout their history and into the present, people have believed that Khawaja Siras' prayers and curses are answered by God, and that they are bestowed with the ability to bring fertility and good fortune to a family.

In South Asia, Hijra or Khusra are considered as a subculture of their own with specific rituals, norms, and traditions. This culture was developed and improvised after a criminal tribal act in 1871 passed and contributed to the genocide of the Khawaja Sira community. They were criminalized and people were getting arrested. The governing forces alleged that the Khawaja Sira community were men who were pretending to be women by using female gender expressions. In addition to that, the community was excluded from the census during the colonial era. As a result, the wider Khawaja Sira community shelters and supports trans+ people who are shunned by their families, but there are also subcultures that act as family structures to support their survival. Trans+ people's survival depends on those family structures, also known as Guru Chela Culture or Hijra Culture.

In order to survive, the community developed their Indigenous family system based on the concepts of Guru, meaning Teacher/Mentor/Father, and Chela, meaning, Child/Student. They adopted their own norms and rituals like Bedai and Toli. They successfully aligned art with opportunities to earn a living, to be activists, and to sustain their community culture. They developed their own language named Farsi Kalam to communicate safely and mitigate risks.

Since colonization until the present, these communities' social status and quality of life have deteriorated due to having been pushed further into the margins of society and forced into panhandling or sex work to survive. The community became a target of abuse, whether it's from the general public or the police.

## ❖ Muxhe or Muxe<sup>1</sup> communities

Muxhe or Muxe<sup>2</sup> is a gender identity belonging to the Indigenous, pre-Columbian, Zapotec culture of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, Mexico. The term connects to the Spanish word for woman in the 16th century: *mujer*, *muyer*, *muxhe* (Miano, 1999).

Unlike the Spanish language, the vocabulary of the Zapotec culture of the Isthmus does not have feminine or masculine binary gendering (Cabral, 2015).<sup>3</sup> For example, in Spanish, *el* or *la* (masculine and feminine) are the only articles used, while Zapotec culture has a non-gendered article, *ti*. *Ti* is a neutral article because it does not put gender before it, but rather lets the nouns after it have more freedom while only supporting them grammatically. *Ti* allows the expression of the gender identity “*Ti muxhe*” to flow, whether it is exercised from a feminine or masculine role, questioning the existing gender binary concepts.

The Zapotec language teaches us that the genders are broader. For example, in Zapotec, we can say: *Ti cama* (a bed), *Ti yoo* (a house), *Ti caballu* (a horse), *Ti bichoxhe* (a tomato), *Ti bicu* (a dog), *Ti gùna* (a woman), *Ti Nguiu* (a man), *Ti Nguîu* (a lesbian), *Ti Muxhe*.

Originally, the Muxhe people are born and inhabit the isthmus of Tehuantepec. However, some are born in other parts of the world, including what is now considered the United States or Canada. They can claim their Muxhe identity by ethnic family origin. Muxhe people travel the world as migrants looking for opportunities, as activists defending their identity, artists showing their culture, or simply for pleasure and bliss.

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<sup>1</sup> For academic purposes, the most widely accepted writing is Muxe with X and for the groups and social movements of the communities of the Tehuantepec isthmus, Muxhe with XH is used as a way of breaking with discursive hegemonies and institutional rules.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this text and from the combination of the author’s experience as an activist and social anthropologist, they use the term Muxhe as a way of reinventing and revitalizing languages.

<sup>3</sup> In "De Córdoba, Fray Juan, (1578) Spanish-Zapotec Vocabulary, 1942 edition, National Anthropology Institute and History, p: 220-309"

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## ACCESS TO SERVICES

### Access to services at immigrant and refugee settlement organizations

While there are many organizations that specialize in supporting immigrants and refugees, many professionals working with them have challenges providing support that addresses the intersections of being an immigrant or a refugee and being trans+ or non-binary.

Sometimes, organizations working with immigrants and refugees are the first to receive newcomers, including trans+ and non-binary newcomers. Many of these organizations frequently refer people to AGIR. As such, many of AGIR's supported members accessed services from these organizations, which has allowed us to identify the gaps in the services provided

**One of the largest gaps we have identified is not accounting for the intersection of migration and trans+ and non-binary identities, and thus specific needs, when providing referrals to other services.**

*Example:* When referring trans+ or non-binary individuals to a family doctor, case workers and nurses miss the importance of referring them to a doctor who has experience working with trans+ or non-binary people. Even though a doctor might have experience working with immigrants and refugees, it is important to also check if they have experience in working with trans+ and non-binary people. If not, trans+ or non-binary people have to start over to find a doctor that can address their gender affirming needs, which is especially difficult considering language and other barriers they may face. This results in lengthening the already arduous process of accessing gender affirming care. Some of the trans+ and non-binary newcomers who have faced this challenging limbo expressed that it took them years to access the health care they actually needed.

Rather than attempting to provide a universal approach, services must be tailored to adequately address an individual's needs and realities. Service providers need to be aware or open to hearing about community members' realities, develop partnerships, and refer people to the appropriate support.

### ***Creating safer spaces for client disclosure***

Some of our members experience extremely hard and life-threatening situations based on their gender identity before fleeing or immigrating. Unfortunately, this leads to some feeling unsafe to express their needs related to gender identity. It is important for professionals to think of creative ways to foster a safer space in their working environment. Some of the examples that we have seen from professionals are:

- Putting an LGBTQ+ flag in a visible place at the office or desk
- Wearing a rainbow flag pin with reassuring phrases in languages commonly spoken by community members.
- Expressing at the beginning of the session that services are provided to all newcomers equally regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity, etc.

Even though there is a flag that represents trans+ and non-binary identities, we recommend the LGBTQ+ rainbow flag. From our experience most trans+ or non-binary newcomers are more familiar with the rainbow flag than with other more specific flags. Some may not be familiar with a rainbow flag at all, so having a phrase can be more helpful.

Pin examples with different languages:



## *The Waiting Room: Creating safety starts before the appointment*

Making trans+ and non-binary users feel safer should start well before meeting directly with social workers or professionals. Ideally, it should happen from the beginning of the visit, which includes the reception and waiting areas.

When newcomers access services at immigration or refugee organizations, often people from the same or similar cultural or religious backgrounds have the opportunity to meet one another (e.g., in common areas, waiting rooms, etc.). While this could be a benefit for many newcomers, providing the opportunity to meet other people who could be going through similar challenges, this is often not the case for trans+ and non-binary newcomers. Many of our supported members expressed that waiting rooms are a triggering space for them. This includes being stared at, whispered about, or even asked inappropriate questions by other people in the room. When a receptionist walks in calling the person by their deadname (their non-preferred name and gender, often the legal name and gender that appear on their identity document), it commonly results in additional harassment.

By the time a supported member reaches a service provider's office, they will have possibly already endured a lot of harassment. Given the effect this will have on the appointment, we recommend service providers use the beginning of the appointment for a check-in. As a professional, understanding the bigger picture of what a trans+ or non-binary person goes through while trying to access services could help you advocate, educate, de-escalate and create a change within your workplace to not only offer better services, but also build a safer environment. Some of the things that could be helpful to implement are:

- Adding preferred name and gender sections in forms and client data systems. If you are facing institutional challenges with this, suggest creative solutions while also pushing for systemic change. For example: use the pop up menu function in your online filing system.
- Training staff and receptionists in only calling people with their chosen name and gender.



- Developing inclusive and safer guidelines in many languages that could be put on the walls of common areas.
- Intervening when you notice any harassment or inappropriate language or behaviors toward trans+ and non-binary people while reminding everyone of the space guidelines.

As an organization or an institution, you could develop the safety of your space by making your complaint process clear and accessible. You could have it somewhere visible, in many languages, and have examples of what people could complain about, including discrimination against sexual orientation or gender identity. This would help trans+ and non-binary people know that it is possible for them to write a complaint regarding discrimination based on gender identity or expression.

**Summary of recommendations on access to services at  
immigrant and refugees settlement organizations:**

- Develop the safety of your workplace environment for trans+ and non-binary newcomers.
- Call people by their chosen name and gender whether it's in private appointments or in-front of a room full of people.
- Have general space guidelines in a visible place, in different languages, and indicate respecting trans+ and non-binary people clearly in the guidelines.
- Make space at the beginning of the appointment to check in about safety in your workplace.
- Advocate for the safety of trans+ and non-binary people in your organizations or institution.
- Build appropriate services for trans+ and non-binary newcomers.
- Have a complaint form in a visible place, in many languages, and make it possible for people to know that they could complain about discrimination based on gender identity or expression.

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## Access to services through organizations working with LGBTQ+ people

After trying to access their needs within organizations working with immigrants and refugees, many trans+ and non-binary people find themselves having to look for more specialized services that address their specific needs. At this point, they often start reaching out to LGBTQ+ organizations. As such, LGBTQ+ organizations are the second most common places that refer people to us.

Sometimes, trans+ and non-binary people get referred by LGBTQ+ organizations to a service only to find out they can't access it or that there are challenges for them to access it. Reasons can include their immigration status, missing specific requirements, or missing documentation. For example, some trans+ and non-binary refugees fled their country of origin without many of their documents and can't get a copy or return to have it reissued.

**Again, trans+ and non-binary newcomers could find themselves in a situation where their needs are being addressed from one angle but not the other.**

As we mentioned in the previous section, it is important to provide support that addresses the intersections of being an immigrant or a refugee and being trans+ or non-binary.



### ***Example: Referrals for changing legal name and gender***

Many legal and administrative procedures are designed for Canadian born citizens, including the legal name and gender change process. Some LGBTQ+ organizations refer trans+ and non-binary newcomers to that process not realizing that its requirements might not fit their situation. For example, a requirement like an

original birth certificate might not be possible for people who fled their country and left many things behind.

### *Example: Referrals for medical services*

Referring trans+ or non-binary people to medical services without understanding the medical coverage that they may or may not have in relation to their immigration status can have significant negative consequences. For a person to arrive at a clinic only to be denied access due to their migration status causes a lot of distress. The disappointment is particularly severe for people who have been repeatedly referred from place to place in attempting to access their needs. Working on building knowledge in relation to trans+ and non-binary newcomers' needs could help to lessen waiting periods, reduce individuals from being repeatedly referred from one place to another, and minimize negative consequences on people's mental health.

### *Sensitivity and discretion around migration status*

At the same time, it is important to be sensitive when asking people about their immigration status. In particular, people who are non-status (i.e., without immigration status in Canada) may be scared to be reported to immigration authorities. **If the service you are providing doesn't require you to know a person's status, then there's no need to ask for this information.** If it is needed, explain why you are asking the question and guarantee that the information will be kept confidential, regardless of status. As with any other confidential matters, use discretion to ensure privacy.

For example, if you are working in an open busy area with many people coming in and out, do not ask for their information out loud, rather take them aside and do it in a quieter, more private space.

**Summary of recommendations on access to services throughout organizations working with LGBTQ+ people:**

- Consider the intersection of being a newcomer and trans+ or non-binary people while offering services.
- Educate yourself on the different access trans+ and non-binary immigrants or refugee might have or not have based on their immigration status.
- Be sensitive when asking about immigration status and ensure a confidential environment.
- Follow the leadership of trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees working on their own issues, and work in solidarity with them.

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## Access to health care services

Gender affirming care is one of the first things that many trans+ and non-binary newcomers try to access upon arrival. As such, proper access to health care services plays a crucial role in their wellbeing.

Many trans+ and non-binary people experience many emotions when navigating the Canadian medical system for the first time. As their journey fleeing or immigrating likely included lots of waiting time and struggles, many experience shock or disappointment upon discovering that access to health care is not a straightforward process. This is particularly true when it comes to gender affirming care, where wait times can be particularly long. Many trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees have waited their whole lives to access such care and to live as their true identity, only to have to wait yet again, this time, in a new place that they had put all their hopes into.

### *What health care providers can do:*

As health care providers, there are many things that you could do to ease and reduce the barriers to accessing appropriate health care for trans+ and non-binary people. For example:

- Being attentive and patient even if you don't understand all the time.
- Avoiding automatically assuming a person's medical needs based on a category you think they belong to.
- Working to build knowledge about the things you get asked about often. Example: Which clinics offer certain surgeries? What are the steps to accessing hormone replacement therapy? How does immigration status affect access to gender affirming care?
- Working to stay up to date to support emerging needs that you are receiving. Access to medical care can vary greatly according to current circumstances, as we have seen with COVID-19. It is important to be aware of the impact on trans+ and non-binary newcomers' access to medical and gender affirming care.
- Building bridges between the different essential services to avoid your patient being repeatedly transferred from one place to another.
- Building a network of services that also strives to support trans+ and non-binary people in order to exchange knowledge and strategies in

providing gender affirming and trans+ and non-binary inclusive care. If you decide to make a resource list, ensure it's up to date, especially when it comes to medical services, as they are constantly changing.

- Building a safer space for trans+ and non-binary people not only inside your office but in your institution as a whole. This is essential - particularly when trans+ and non-binary people are accessing care for something as vulnerable and personal as gender affirming care.

**Patience and active listening** is key to helping you not only to better understand people's needs but also to ensure the person in front of you feels cared for. This could contribute to helping them be more relaxed and trusting during their appointments. While this might seem like a basic skill to practice during any support work, you could find that you might need to put more effort into it. Building safer connections might be more difficult as a result of trans+ and non-binary newcomers experiencing discrimination before they fled or immigrated as well as it being an ongoing struggle that they continue to encounter in Canada. This affects their trust while receiving services.

### ***Providing referrals to other health care providers***

Before referring someone whom you are supporting for medical care or gender affirming services, it is important to verify if they will actually be able to access it. For example: Is the health coverage that is connected to their immigration status supported in the clinic that you are sending them to? Does this place have lots of stairs and the person you are supporting uses a wheelchair? Will they have interpretation services at the appointment?

The effects of going all the way to a place to access a medical service only to find out it isn't possible has both mental health and financial consequences. A metro pass might seem like an insignificant expense for some, but for a trans+ or non-binary newcomer who is on welfare, every dollar counts. It is even harder for trans+ and non-binary immigrants or refugees who can't access welfare due to immigration status. Unfortunately, in some cases, we have supported members who have walked long distances rather than taking transit, skipped meals or canceled other important appointments in order to be able to afford the cost of transportation. AGIR provides metro passes as much as possible to reduce barriers to accessing our activities. Some organizations and institutions follow the same

strategy. If your organization is not currently doing so, you might also consider offering metro and bus passes.

### *Some types of gender affirming care*

Gender affirming care is important to many trans+ and non-binary people. Referring them to appropriate places where this type of care is within their domain would save the person you are supporting lots of pain rather than referring to just any clinic. Some of the most common gender affirming care requests that we have gotten:

- Gender affirming surgeries like vaginoplasty, breast augmentation, facial surgeries, mastectomy, hysterectomy, metoidioplasty, phalloplasty, etc.
- Hormone replacement therapy (HRT).
- Laser hair removal services that are trans+ and non-binary friendly.
- Support letters from psychologists or other professionals to access surgeries or hormones.
- Trans+ or non-binary voice training.



The majority of these services are costly and not all of them are covered by medical care, especially the services provided for trans+ feminine people. Upon learning this information, many trans+ and non-binary newcomers go through a feeling of shock and pain. Part of this shock comes as a result of how Canada is shown in the media to the rest of the world as the heaven with all possibilities for trans+ and non-binary people. Based on this image, people endure all the struggles of the journey to get to Canada with the hope that all their needs will be met once they arrive. Understanding this reality helps professionals grasp where this sense of huge disappointment is coming from.

The process of waiting to access gender affirming care can take years. For some, learning that they have to wait until they gain a certain immigration status to access specific gender affirming care services adds more pain to their experience. This could mean long years of waiting while enduring ongoing discrimination

everywhere they go. **Health care professionals supporting trans+ and non-binary newcomers have a crucial role in advocating for improved access to services.**

Gender affirming services aren't only offered by plastic surgeons or endocrinologists. For example, trans men may need to access hysterectomy surgery by seeing a gynecologist. At the same time, trans+ and non-binary people may need to access medical care for issues unrelated to gender affirming care. Just like everyone else, trans+ and non-binary people could need to access gynecologists, obstetricians, or urologists for all sorts of other reasons. To many people, going to gynecologists, obstetricians, or urologists could be vulnerable, embarrassing, or scary. For trans+ and non-binary people, it might be increasingly so, as they might have to explain their gender, and more scary if they must do so through a language barrier.

Trans+ or non-binary newcomers with language barriers might need to rely on interpretation services while accessing health care. This service is important to ensure people are able to explain their needs properly and consent to care. It is also important to hire interpreters who are also trans+ and non-binary affirmative.

As a professional supporting trans+ and non-binary newcomers in diverse domains, learning about some of these medical needs will help you better support people. It will also help you gain a bigger picture to assist you in creative problem solving throughout the gaps in services.

**Summary of recommendations on access to health care services :**

- Understand that each person's needs are unique to them. Example: Some might want hormone replacement therapy and others not.
- Develop a resources list and work on keeping it up to date.
- Educate yourself and build your knowledge on questions you get very often.
- Connect with other organizations and institutions working with trans+ and non-binary newcomers.
- Before making a referral ensure that they will be able to access it (based on their migration status or other factors)



## ❖ Accessing health care services prior to arriving to Canada

Naturally, health care professionals take a client's medical history to best assist their needs. This is no different when it comes to gender affirming care. Some trans+ and non-binary people started their journey to actualizing their identity before arriving to Canada. It is important to respect and keep this in mind while assessing needs. Building a continuous, harmonious relationship between what they have accessed in the past and what they need to access when they arrive is essential to trans+ and non-binary newcomers' wellbeing. There are significant consequences for people's health when that is not taken into consideration. For example: if people have accessed hormone therapy treatment prior to arriving in Canada, then they might urgently need to continue receiving it, especially if they have had surgeries that impact their body's production of hormones.

While there isn't enough advancement as there should be in the domain of health care for trans+ and non-binary people worldwide, it is important not to exclude people's valuable knowledge that comes straight from their experiences. **Many trans+ and non-binary newcomers carry extraordinary knowledge from experiences they have gained from different parts of the world while going through their journey into who they are.** It is important for professionals to respect this knowledge even if they are highly experienced health care providers.

As some services for trans+ and non-binary people aren't available in other countries, some people may have self-medicated prior to coming to Canada. This could also mean that someone could have been on hormone replacement therapy for years but never gotten a blood test to check their hormone levels. Some people may have also gotten unregulated surgeries but never got proper post-surgery follow ups. In those cases, it is possible that a delay in accessing medical services could put their health at risk.



### Summary of recommendations on accessing health care services prior to arriving to Canada:

- Take into consideration people's medical history in terms of gender affirming services.
- Respect trans+ and non-binary immigrants' and refugees' journeys and knowledge.
- Assess if a delay in gender affirming care could be a risk to people's health.

### ❖ Access to gender affirming services in relation to immigration status

While information about access to services like legal aid, welfare, or general health care according to immigration status is readily available, it is not the same case when it comes to accessing gender affirming services. As it's not a straightforward topic to research, this has become one of the most popular questions we get from service providers. For that reason, we have prepared a simple table of access to gender affirming services according to immigration status.

The following acronyms will help you navigate the table:

- RAMQ: Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec.
- GRS clinic: Gender reassignment surgery clinic.
- HRT: Hormone replacement therapy.
- IFHP: Interim Federal Health Program.





Health				
Status	Health	Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)	Surgeries (GRS clinic)	Notes
Canadian citizen residing in Quebec	RAMQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Permanent Residents	RAMQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Protected persons (Accepted refugee claimants)	IFHP / RAMQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If a person has RAMQ coverage, then they will use it to apply to GRS.
Asylum seekers	IFHP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The person requires an approval from MEDAVIE blue cross insurance.
Temporary residents with specific work visa	RAMQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-
Temporary residents with open work visa	Private insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depends on coverage. You are eligible only if you come from certain countries or it is a post-graduate open work permit.
Temporary residents with student visa	Private insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depends on coverage.
Visitor visa	Travel insurance or no insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depends on coverage.
Non-status	No insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some clinics provide limited gender affirming care regardless of status. Professionals should guide participants on options to regularize status if they are interested, as many may not know their options.

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## Access to mental health services

30-40% of our members who are trans+ and non-binary newcomers start looking to access mental health services shortly after arriving in Canada. For trans+ and non-binary newcomers, finding psychologists or therapists that suit their needs is usually difficult.

As mental health professionals supporting trans+ and non-binary newcomers, it is important to expand your knowledge of different aspects of their realities in order to better respond to their needs. While many trans+ and non-binary newcomers could have common needs, they come from different communities with their own unique circumstances and concerns. For example: A trans+ or non-binary newcomer who fled not only due to gender identity but also due to a war in their country might have certain emotional needs that intersect with both of those realities. Mental health professionals need to develop diverse approaches to address needs through different lenses.



One of the most popular questions that you might get from trans+ and non-binary newcomers, could be regarding support letters to access gender affirming care, such as surgeries or hormonal replacement therapy. To access certain surgeries, many clinics ask for a reference letter from a mental health professional. If you are a mental health professional who regularly works with trans+ or non-binary people, consider seeking out training and expanding your knowledge on this matter.

Some trans+ and non-binary newcomers may have seen a mental health professional for a very long time prior to their arrival to Canada. Some people may have even received their support letters from them, but clinics in Canada could require them to go through the same process again, getting support letters from a Canadian mental health professional. This comes as a shock to trans+ and non-binary newcomers, feeling that they have to go through similar processes all over again, and lengthening their waiting periods. As a mental health professional,

you can advocate for the people you are supporting by letting the clinics know of the consequences this has on your clients. If you are a professional working within clinics offering gender affirming care, you can advocate directly within your institution to make the process accessible, including providing translation services or services in multiple languages.

While some may have started exploring their gender identity before arriving in Canada, some may also be doing it for the first time. Exploring one's gender identity and expression is a journey. It takes time and patience. As a professional, it is important to take the time to understand how the person understands their gender and if they feel this clashes or is aligned with their new cultural environment.

**Summary of recommendations on access to mental health services:**

- Grow your knowledge of different aspects in relation to trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees.
- Get training on how to write support letters to access gender affirming care.
- Advocate for an easier access for trans+ and non-binary people to mental health and gender affirming care.

**❖ Immigration waiting periods in relation to mental health**

One of the most common struggles that newcomers go through is long waiting periods during immigration and refugee processes. Many asylum seekers describe it as waiting for the unknown — building a life in a country without knowing if they will be able to actually stay in it. The constant fear of getting sent back to their country of origin affects people during their daily life, especially when making decisions. This uncertainty affects people's ability to build stability, consequently affecting their mental health.

At the same time, the immigration process includes significant stress as people have to deal with various bureaucratic requirements in order to advance their status to the next possible one. Certain requirements aren't possible for everybody or could take years to fulfill. Throughout our work, we have found that as some of our members navigate life pressures, they lose track of important immigration deadlines and requirements, such as renewing their status. This could lead to losing their immigration status and, as a consequence, their ability to stay in the country.

For trans+ and non-binary people, lengthy immigration processes could mean longer waiting periods in accessing gender affirming care — which is essential for their wellbeing. This doesn't only affect their chances of survival but also affects their mental health. For example: asylum seekers have to pay high tuition fees as international students. This makes many asylum seekers wait until their refugee claim gets accepted to begin their studies in Canada. The refugee claimant process is long and getting a decision on a claim could take years.

**Summary of recommendations on immigration waiting periods in relation to mental health:**

- Educate yourself on mental health impacts of long immigration processes.
- Give people some techniques and tools to track application deadlines or the expiry of important documents.
- Ask questions about how immigration is impacting their transition journey and support them in overcoming or coping with these barriers.

## **Access to housing and shelters**

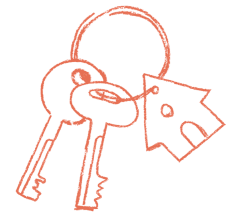
### ***Discrimination in Finding Housing***

Newcomers start looking for housing upon arriving in Canada. Throughout our work, we have noticed that some newcomers stay in temporary housing while

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actively looking for a permanent one. Credit history checks are one of the many requirements landlords impose on potential tenants. For many newcomers, this is not possible as they don't have a credit history. As a result, many landlords do not accept their applications unless a guarantor is found. Not many newcomers know people who are willing to do this for them, particularly as it takes time to build relationships and community in a new country, especially if you face trans/homo/biphobia.

As housing is the first thing many of our members start to look for, some are shocked by the realization that landlords have biases in relation to physical appearance, especially in regards to race. The AGIR support team gives extra support in navigating racism and housing. For example, we have seen that members who are racialised trans+ and non-binary newcomers receive more of our housing support services than other trans+ and non-binary newcomers who access our services.



For trans+ and non-binary newcomers, the biases in relation to physical appearance while accessing housing are even worse. They encounter biases based on how visible they are as trans+ and non-binary people, as well as based on racism, in addition to navigating the barriers they face as newcomers. While not everyone is visibly trans+ or non-binary, some get outed to landlords upon showing identification documents that don't correspond with their appearance. As a result, many of our trans+ and non-binary members are in need of access to shelters.

### *Accessing Shelters*

Most shelters aren't equipped to welcome trans+ and non-binary people. Accessing shelters is often a painful process for them which often involves a lot of inappropriate and disrespectful questioning, and they are unable to access the services with dignity. With many shelters following a gender binary, being either only for cis women or cis men, there are not many shelters that accept trans+ and non-binary people. After many challenges, some trans women have managed to get access to some women's shelters but unfortunately those women's shelters usually admit people based on whether or not they are perceived to be cis. This dehumanizing process that is based on physical appearance to access services has a negative effect especially on trans feminine people's mental health and wellbeing.

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For trans+ and non-binary people who are assigned female at birth, who are masculine presenting, having access to hygiene products like pads, tampons or others isn't an easy mission while being on the move. When those products are provided, they often target cis women. At the same time, it isn't always safe for trans+ or non-binary people to access hygiene products. For their safety, some go through the challenges of hiding traces of the hygienic products after use or hiding the pain of period cramps from people around them especially if they are in men's only shelters or spaces. In general, safety is an issue in men's shelters for both masculine and feminine presenting trans+ and non-binary people.

Not having a fixed address is an issue for trans+ and non-binary newcomers who could miss important correspondence from immigration in relation to their status. Not responding to certain correspondence on time could affect their status, lengthen the process, or even threaten their ability to continue living in Canada. They may need extra support in ensuring they have access to a mailbox to receive important mail (e.g. at a lawyer's office, resources that offer PO boxes for unhoused individuals).

As professionals working in housing organizations or shelters, you have an essential role to advocate and work on advancing the housing and shelter services for trans+ and non-binary newcomers. Educating yourself on trans+ and non-binary issues and working on educating people whom you work with can help you better support your members. Connecting and collaborating with organizations that are familiar with the challenges that trans+ and non-binary newcomers face can also help develop solutions and programs that better assist your supported members.

**As a shelter, one of the things that you could have is optional gender neutral beds section.** This is essential to have as an option as it links to the wellbeing and safety of trans+ and non-binary people. While some people might want to be in the gender neutral section at the shelter, some might not wish to be outed by using them. In general, it is important to advocate for your shelter to be trans+ and non-binary inclusive.



### **Summary of recommendations on access to housing and shelters :**

- Educate yourself on Trans+ and non-binary newcomer issues.
- Educate people who work with you in the same domain.
- Advocate for your Trans+ and non-binary supported members.
- Accompany vulnerable Trans+ and non-binary newcomers to apartment viewing appointments with landlords.
- Have an optional gender neutral section at the shelter.
- Understand that not everyone would be able to provide an identification document that matches how they are currently presenting.
- Have a conversation with Trans+ and non-binary people about where they would be most comfortable and safer in the shelter.
- Have private showers and gender neutral bathrooms.
- Have a smaller garbage bin in men's bathrooms to ease the discarding of hygienic products.
- Develop safety measures that support Trans+ and non-binary people at the shelter.



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## Access to legal services

Immigration legal services are another essential service for trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees. As a lawyer working to support asylum claims from trans+ and non-binary refugees, it is important to be aware of issues related to what it means to flee based on fear of persecution related to gender identity, expression and/or sex characteristics. This is an essential part of providing effective representation in their case and it can increase the chances of their claim getting accepted.

This requires you to educate yourself on gender identity and expression, and/or sex characteristics. This will help you to better understand the needs of your client and allow them to focus on explaining their story to you, allowing your client to feel cared for and increase their trust in you.

It is also important to research information regarding the situation of trans+ and non-binary people in the countries they fled from. Being connected to organizations that regularly publish reports on the situation of trans+ and non-binary people in different countries could help you save time. While not all countries have LGBTQ+ organizations, there are still international organizations that work in documenting the state of LGBTQ+ rights in different countries. The risks of not properly representing trans+ and non-binary people's cases can be very serious. The consequences of getting deported to places where they fled from could mean they might face threats that result in their death. Unfortunately, this is not an exaggeration.

As professionals involved in refugee hearings, understanding the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation will help you respect people's identities in procedures and better understand their story. It is important for all professionals involved, including commissioners of oaths, to be educated about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and/or sex characteristics. It is also very important to ensure that interpreters for refugee hearings are educated about trans+ and non-binary realities. For example, we know supported members who have faced interpreters that used slur words in hearings to refer to trans+ and non-binary people. Interpreters must be trained on which words are appropriate.

Trans+ and non-binary newcomers need other types of legal services. For example, trans+ and non-binary people are at a higher risk of facing violence and

harassment. As such, there is a big need for legal services oriented towards addressing violence. Trans+ and non-binary people face violence and harassment in a variety of contexts, including: transportation, schools, the street, their workplace, residential spaces or even while accessing public services. In many cases, one person could experience multiple incidents of violence or harassment in different places, all at once, all in one day. For that, addressing those issues would need diverse access to different types of legal clinic services. As a professional working with legal clinics' services, educating yourself on basic knowledge regarding gender identity and expression would save you from basic mistakes that could frustrate your supported members, such as misgendering them.

Throughout our work, it was noticeable that many of the injustices that our trans+ and non-binary newcomers go through is a combination of both transphobia and racism, as well discrimination based on language barriers. Due to all these intersections, trans+ and non-binary newcomers are at more risk of facing discrimination, violence and harassment everywhere they go. Some of our members have expressed fear of reporting or taking legal action against such violence. This could be related to many reasons, for example: mistrust due to past unjust treatment, or a belief that no action will be taken to protect them.

#### **Summary of recommendations on access to legal services :**

- Get a training on gender identity, expression and/or sex characteristics.
- Connect with organizations that regularly publish reports of the situation of trans+ and non-binary people in different countries.
- Check that the interpreters you are working with are trans+ and non-binary friendly.
- Advocate for the safety, wellbeing, access to services of trans+ people in all the different domains like : immigration, housing, public transportation, name and gender change, workplace, etc.
- Speak up, advocate, and be in solidarity with trans+ and non-binary people against the injustices that they face.

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## Access to name and gender change

Many administrative and legal processes in Canada are oriented towards the needs of citizens born in Canada. As such, there are many gaps or limitations to accessing these processes for immigrants and refugees. These limitations are particularly apparent in our support work with trans+ and non-binary newcomers who must navigate multiple institutions to change their legal name and gender. As some of our members fled without many of their documents (e.g, birth records) and they may never be able to access them, certain requirements are impossible to fulfill. This challenge comes alongside additional obligations, such as a minimum requirement of status (e.g., permanent residence) or minimum time of residency in a given province or territory (e.g., one year).

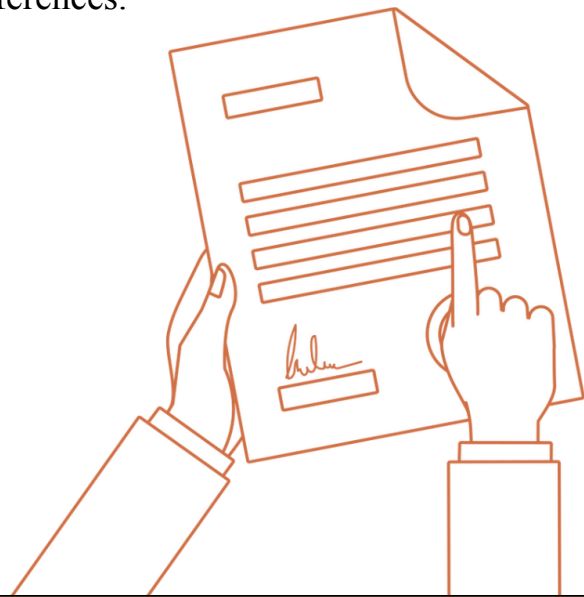
In the absence of communication and coordination between federal and provincial institutions to find a way to create a simple, unified process of legal name and gender change, our members who are trans+ and non-binary newcomers spend lots of effort, time, and money to navigate multiple federal and provincial institutions . For example, members have been able to change some of their documents (e.g., federal immigration document), while being unable to change others (e.g., provincial driver's license or school records). This is the outcome of the name and gender change process being possible in one institution but not in another, or of certain institutions having requirements that are difficult or impossible to meet.

After a lot of advocacy on the part of trans+ and non-binary migrant communities, currently, in Québec, trans+ and non-binary migrants technically have a right to change their name and gender if they have been living in the province for one year, regardless of immigration status. However, if they do not have an original birth certificate, the process is significantly more difficult. In such a case, it's important to communicate that there is hope and to refer them to organizations that can support them in taking steps towards their legal transition.

In general, the legal name and gender change process might not be an immediate, straightforward procedure for all of our trans+ and non-binary newcomers. Some of the factors that play a role in that are: immigration status, length of residence in a province, having an original birth certificate, having a proof of address, etc.

As service providers supporting trans+ and non-binary newcomers, it is important to know that some of the people you are supporting might not have easy access to

changing their legal name and gender. Therefore, it is important to put systems at your workplace to ensure that trans+ and non-binary people, regardless of their legal name and/or gender marker, are not misgendered or called with the non-preferred name during accessing services. As laws and jurisdictions regarding legal name and gender change continue to change, it is important to stay connected with appropriate professionals or organizations who have been working on trans+ and non-binary immigrants issues in order to remain informed. It is also important to keep on analyzing gaps and limitations. In the resources for service providers section, you will find some forms in relation to name and gender change as well as links to news about recent events in the references.



**Summary of recommendations on access to name and gender change:**

- Have suitable processes that ensure people do not get misgendered.
- Connect with organizations working closely on this issue.
- Work in solidarity with the advocacy efforts that are being done.
- Familiarize yourself with current processes and their limitations.

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## Access to language courses for newcomers

There is a higher number of our trans+ and non-binary newcomer members who withdraw from the language courses for newcomers, compared to our members from other populations. The reasons for this include things like: not feeling that their gender identity is respected, not feeling safe in the school environment, and not feeling stable before starting school or other mentally demanding activities.

For many trans+ or non-binary newcomers, hiding who they are in the school environment after they fled for that same reason is not something they would like to go through again. Being misgendered or called with their non-preferred name in a classroom isn't only disrespectful of their gender identity but it also puts people in dangerous situations as a result of outing them. As a consequence of feeling unsafe and unable to seek protection from the school administration, they may feel isolated or drop out.

It is important for schools to have a system in place that allows trans+ and non-binary newcomers to choose their preferred name and gender. Some schools have developed preferred name and gender change forms for their students. As a service provider working in language schools for newcomers, you can take examples of those forms and



processes and integrate them within your school. To support you, we have put an [example](#) from Concordia University in the section of [resources for professionals](#). As we have explained in the previous section, the name and gender change process may be inaccessible for many newcomers. As such, it is important to also give the option for people to use their preferred names on school identification cards and in school records.

It is necessary to work on the safety of your school environment for trans+ and non-binary students. Doing so will increase their chances of completing their diploma — an essential step when accessing the job market. Education and spreading awareness is key for increasing safety. Educate yourself and other

professionals working with you in the school and consider seeking appropriate training from AGIR on this topic.

As a counselor or social worker in a language school for newcomers, it is important to be attentive to the issues that trans+ and non-binary students bring to you. Listening to their issues will help you understand what areas you need to advocate for in regards to safety measures and procedures for the trans+ and non-binary newcomers that come to you. It is equally important for students to know that it's possible to come to you with those issues in the first place. In the section for organizations working with immigrants and refugees, we mentioned some ideas for letting trans+ and non-binary students know that they can come to you.

As a teacher in a language school for newcomers, it is important to educate yourself on this topic. You can also let the school know about the trainings needed to ensure a safe environment for trans+ and non-binary students in your classroom. As a teacher, you should not tolerate homophobic or transphobic words or behaviors in your classroom or other school facilities like hallways or bathrooms. Under Canadian<sup>4</sup> and Québec<sup>5</sup> Charters of Human Rights and Freedoms<sup>6</sup>, trans+ and non-binary people's rights are protected.

As a school, spreading awareness among your students will also help increase the safety of the school's environment. As language schools for newcomers offer awareness sessions about different topics, such as women's rights and housing rights, it is important to include LGBTQ+ topics in the program. This will help increase the safety of trans+ and non-binary people not just in the school environment but also in the bigger community outside of school. You can always connect with organizations that offer those types of awareness programs. AGIR is one of the organizations you or your school can get in touch with.

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<sup>4</sup> *Statutes of Canada 2017 Lois Du Canada (2017) Chapter 13 Chapitre 13.*  
[https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/2017\\_13.pdf](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/2017_13.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> "Charte Des Droits Et Libertés De La Personne." *Légis Québec*,  
<https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/c-12?langCont=fr#se:10>.

<sup>6</sup> Educaloi. "New Rights for Trans Persons: Legal News." *Éducaloi*, 10 Aug. 2020,  
<https://educaloi.qc.ca/en/legal-news/new-rights-for-trans-persons/>.



**Summary of recommendations on access to language courses for newcomers :**

- Train school staff (admin, counselors, teachers) about gender identity and expression and sex characteristics.
- Share the guide within your networks to spread awareness.
- Have gender neutral bathrooms.
- Do not misgender people or call their non preferred names in front of other people or students. For example: in a classroom, the hallway, etc.
- Develop school guidelines that include safety of trans+ and non-binary newcomers and have it in a visible place to students in different languages.



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## Access to the job market

As job counselors working at organizations supporting newcomers to access the job market, it is important to learn about the challenges that trans+ and non-binary newcomers face during the process. Some of our trans+ and non-binary members expressed how unsuccessful their interviews were. It is very easy for an employer to refuse a trans+ or non-binary person and not state the actual reason for rejection. While some expressed that they had a positive tone throughout emails after sending their resume, this seemed to change once an employer heard their voice throughout a phone conversation or met them for an interview. Being excluded from the majority of jobs in the market has its consequences on trans+ and non-binary people. For example:


- Some cannot find work for a very long time.
- Some work in very poor conditions.
- Some workers are forced to do physically demanding jobs.
- Some are forced to be closeted at work.
- Some sacrifice getting gender affirming care for their safety or to keep their job.

Some newcomers struggle with finding work that is in the same field they worked in when in their home country because their professional certifications are not recognized in Canada or they do not have Canadian work experience.

In addition to this, White Trans+ and non-binary newcomers face discrimination based on their gender identity, while Black or Brown Trans+ and non-binary newcomers also experience racism on top of the aforementioned discriminations. This puts racialized trans+ and non-binary newcomers at the bottom of the ladder in terms of access to the job market.

As the majority of gender affirming surgeries are not covered for trans+ and non-binary feminine people, they have to pay for surgeries out of pocket.. At the same time, they are unable to access the job market, putting them in a never ending cycle of chasing for survival.

As job counselors supporting newcomers to access the job market, one of the common things that you might hear about from trans+ and non-binary people is that they are on a wait-list for gender affirming surgeries. Once they receive their appointment, they might need to stop working temporarily. It is important not to



ask inappropriate questions if a person brings it up, as the type of surgery they are getting is a private, personal matter. Trans+ and non-binary people should not be subjected to inappropriate questions. Instead, you can lend support by letting trans+ and non-binary newcomers know of their possible options if they can't work temporarily.

Unfortunately, some of our members mentioned that they get inappropriate types of questions during job interviews. As such, interviews could include additional stress and frustration for people who are trans+ or non-binary. Even after being hired, they still face a lot of gender-based discrimination in the workplace. Access to legal services relating to discrimination, violence or harassment in the workplace have been one of the most common needs expressed by our trans+ and non-binary members. As we have mentioned previously in the access to legal services, many trans+ and non-binary people are scared of reporting the violence and harassment that happens to them.

Keeping in mind all the varied challenges mentioned in the different sections of this guide, it is clear how these issues are all interconnected. They all contribute to a never-ending cycle of finding ways to survive as opposed to thrive.. As an example: in the previous section regarding language courses for newcomers, we mentioned the high dropout numbers of trans+ and non-binary newcomers from language courses. Given barriers to accessing language courses, it is important to understand that it may take longer for trans and non-binary participants to learn French, and that they will need extra support in finding safe learning environments. Combining the challenges of accessing language courses with the challenges of accessing the job market can give us an idea of how important it is for all organizations and institutions to work together for the wellbeing of trans+ and non-binary newcomers.



### **Summary of recommendations on access to job market :**

- Spread awareness among recruiters and connect with different companies to build a trans+ and non-binary hiring program.
- Do not ask inappropriate questions regarding people's looks or genitalia.
- Do not blame the unfairness of the job market towards trans+ and non-binary people on their gender identities or expressions.
- Work with the different institutions like language course schools or legal clinics to spread awareness and build programs that address the issues.

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## Access throughout cultural differences and language barriers

As much as terminology may be helpful, it could also have the opposite effect. Terminology as a barrier is one of the things that many of our members who are trans+ and non-binary people struggle with. Even if they speak English or French, they won't necessarily explain their needs in a way that the western system of services understands them. As we have mentioned in the section on terminology, communities across the world could be using different words and ways of expressing their gender identity.

During AGIR's accompaniment services, it has been observed that different clinics or doctors have their own requirements for providing gender affirming services. For example: during our work with members, while one clinic didn't ask for a support letter from a psychologist in order to prescribe hormone replacement therapy, it was mandatory for another clinic. These examples showed us how much discretionary power doctors and clinics have to ease access to gender affirming services or not. Terminology plays an important role here. Many health services providers require trans+ and non-binary people to convince them that they are indeed who they say they are in terms of gender identity and expression. This includes the expectation for trans+ and non-binary people to use certain terms and ways of explaining who they are. As an example: in order to get a support letter from a psychologist many people could use the specific known words in the western world like transwoman, transman, non-binary or others. But, what if they don't know these terms? What if they identify with another word from their own culture? Or what if they have always lived free of labels?

In fact, some of our members expressed that they have never had to use a label before coming to Canada. They have simply always lived as who they are. You might also find out that people could be using specific terms that have a different use or meaning to other people or communities. You might hear new terms that people use for themselves to describe their gender identity or expression. Some of these terms aren't necessarily something you can easily research on the internet or read about. If you find out



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about a new term, do not treat it as something exotic. There are many undocumented terms and expressions that might be in use. Also, not every community would like to be documented or researched, especially because many of people who are interested in doing research or documentation come from the west or other academic atmospheres that have practices or frameworks that could cause harm to their community. At AGIR, we have favored working with researchers who use a community-based research approach.

Some people may use terms or ways of expressing their identities that some consider offensive. It is important to know that this might be what they know. It is also important to understand that they, themselves, might not be offended by it. Times change, terms change and some older generations might still be comfortable with terms to describe themselves even if it sounds outdated to younger generations and vice versa. You must be gentle and understanding about this, especially if they are using these terms to refer to themselves and not to others.

Class and access to education also plays a role in what terms people know. Remember, that this is not about you. They are describing and expressing themselves. No need to lose the focus of the most important thing in the support session - listening to the person you are supporting. No need to divert the conversation into lecturing the person and policing their language about the terms you think they should be using for themselves. When appropriate and if there's space, you could gently mention that other people are using other terms and it's important not to use it for other people. You then can give examples of some of these terms.

From all the above information, it is clear how terminology can create a power dynamic between service providers and people who are trying to access services.

### **Summary of recommendations on access throughout cultural differences and language barriers :**

- Do not assume a person's preferences or who they are based on terminology. Refer to people in the ways they asked for.
- Develop your understanding of different ways of expressing and interacting in different cultures.
- Do not push people into labels, especially if they aren't using any.
- Ease access to gender affirming care. Be aware of the power dynamics that terminology could cause.
- Do not use your position and access to a certain community to research without proper community involvement in research process from start to finish. It is up to the communities themselves if they want to do it for their own benefits. Do not treat terms from other cultures as exotic.
- Be patient while explaining specific terminology such as ones related to gender affirming health care or legal services. A person might have never heard of it. Certain terminology, words or language especially if related to accessing medical services might be important to explain for people to give consent.



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## Accessing services and safety

When offering services, it is always important to think about the location of where those services are. Many organizations already think of this point in terms of physical accessibility but not necessarily in terms of safety unless they are already at places where they keep safety in consideration (e.g., shelters for survivors of domestic violence).

When offering services for trans+ and non-binary people, the location of services in relation to safety is something that always has to be kept in mind. Some of our members who are trans+ and non-binary people have come to us with their experiences of violence or harassment that they faced in public (e.g., transportation, streets, grocery stores, etc.). Trans+ or non-binary newcomers who you are supporting may have already encountered violence or harassment before arriving to their appointment. We have noticed that some of our trans+ or non-binary participants arrive at their appointments agitated or scared because, as some have said, they encountered violence or harassment on the way to their appointment. For example: some members mentioned that there were people taking photos of them on public transportation, pointing fingers, laughing, or chasing them.

As a result of feeling frustrated or scared from these occurrences, people may have low tolerance for negative or frustrating encounters at the location they are seeking services. For example: If someone was laughed at based on gender identity or expression on the metro 15 minutes before arriving to their appointment, it will be even more frustrating to arrive at the location of the appointment only to be misgendered, all the way from the reception area in front of everyone in the waiting area, until the appointment room.





As a service provider, you can devote time within the appointment to check-in on the safety of trans+ and non-binary people while traveling to your location, as well as within your workplace. This will help you evaluate the safety of the location and creatively think of appropriate harm reduction ideas.



**Summary of recommendations on safety in the city in relation to access to services :**

- Have a check in with your trans+ and non-binary people about safety of the location of your organization or institution.
- Analyze the type of safety issues that your supported members face in relation to the location of offered services.
- Educate trans+ and non-binary people about their rights in terms of safety and protection.
- Advocate for more safety and protection measures for trans+ and non-binary people.



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## SCENARIOS

The following scenarios are inspired from real life experiences that our supported members went through. Take a look at them and analyze the situations to evaluate what you could have done? What would you have done or said differently?

### ❖ Scenario 1:

Julia, a trans woman from Mexico, is new to Montreal. She does not speak French very well. She found your clinic and entered where the secretary greeted her with “Good morning Sir”. He asked for identity documents, misgendered her and used Julia’s legal name (the one on her identification documents).

Julia explains that she has not used this name since her transition but she cannot change her identity documents as a trans migrant. Julia started feeling more and more uncomfortable but was finally able to see the doctor.

The doctor was sympathetic to the situation, and asked Julia what he can do to help her. Julia explained that she just needs to renew her hormone prescription that she couldn't take since her arrival to Canada. The doctor started by asking her questions, like: why she wants to take hormones, why she thinks she is a woman, if she thinks she is ready for this step, etc. Julia started to get annoyed and said: “I have been taking hormones for the past five years, why do you treat me like an idiot ?” The doctor was offended and said that he is just doing his job.

### ❖ Scenario 2:

Leila is a newcomer from Libya who came to your office for an appointment. She presented herself at the reception area and immediately told Alex, the receptionist: “Hi, here’s my RAMQ card, but I want you to call me Leila and use the pronoun ‘her’ when calling me. Alex replied: “No problem, I took a note, you can take a seat”.

Leila sat down waiting for her turn. The intervention worker, Josée, entered, calling: “Sir (Mohamad Al Safawi)”. Leila knew she was being called and got up. Everyone in the waiting area stared at her and started to whisper among each other in Arabic, a language that she also understands. She did not feel safe.

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Leila entered the office and looked visibly emotionally affected. She wondered if the receptionist ignored her demand on purpose. Leila told Josée: “Please call me Leila and use ‘she’ pronoun.”

Josée continued to say: “Ok, no problem, I will assist you as much as possible. Could you tell me more about your situation? How long have you lived as a woman? Are you used to working in jobs as a woman?”

Leila looked visibly uncomfortable and expressed that she’s simply looking for a job and does not want to talk about her life story. Josée replied: “No, no, I am just trying to help you”. Leila felt more uncomfortable, started gathering her papers and said: “I shouldn’t have bothered myself”.

Later, Josée joined Alex and said: “I don’t understand why those people are difficult”.

### ❖ Scenario 3:

Santiago is a newcomer from Colombia who arrived in Canada in January. The YMCA informed him that he can’t stay in their residence any longer. He started to look for housing. Some landlords seemed to be friendly with him at first. However, when he presented his documents, landlords would reject him without giving him a reason. Santiago’s identification documents didn’t match how he presented as a man. Santiago started couch surfing on some nights and sleeping on the streets on other nights. Meanwhile, extreme cold warnings were announced during the weekend and Santiago had no place to stay. He started looking for a shelter. He presented an identification document to the shelter worker. The worker was confused and said: “So are you a man or a woman down there? You obviously look suspicious and people would question what you are”.

Santiago had spent many nights outside, was tired of wearing a binder and had no energy to invest on how he looked to keep himself safe. He expressed that he doesn’t feel safe to sleep in the men’s section and he would like a bed in the women’s section. The worker replied: “I can’t have you in the women’s section looking like this. Women will freak out.”

Santiago very tiredly said : “I will sleep anywhere, I just need to close my eyes.” The worker replied: “I’m sorry but you will have to find another place to sleep tonight”.

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# GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## ❖ **Keep in mind:**

- The intersection of being a newcomer and Trans+ or non-binary person while offering services.

## ❖ **Educate yourself and others:**

- Get training on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and/or Sex Characteristics.
- Get training on the different immigration statuses.
- Build programs to educate people at your workplace on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and/or Sex Characteristics.
- Build programs to raise awareness in the general population on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and/or Sex Characteristics.
- Share this guide within your networks to spread awareness.

## ❖ **Respect people's identity and privacy:**

- Refer to people in the ways they asked for.
- Do not police the way people refer to themselves.
- Don't ask inappropriate questions regarding people's looks or genitalia.
- Do not ask people for their immigration status if it's not needed to offer a service. If it is needed, explain why you are asking the question and guarantee that the information will be kept confidential, regardless of status, including people with no status.
- Do not ask people for their immigration status out loud in front of other people. Some people with precarious immigration status could feel scared.

## ❖ **Safety:**

- Develop the safety of your work environment for trans+ and non-binary people.
- Advocate for the safety of trans+ and non-binary people at your workplace.

- Make general space guidelines. Have it somewhere visible. Have it in different languages.
- Have a complaint form somewhere visible. Have discrimination against sexual orientation or gender identity as an example that people can complain about.

### ❖ **Familiarize yourself on important topics:**

- Know about the different access to services in relation to immigration status.
- Look at the current processes for legal name and gender change provincially and federally. Analyze their gaps and limitations.

### ❖ **Support and work in solidarity:**

- Respect leadership of trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees on their own matters and work in solidarity.

### ❖ **Keep growing and developing your knowledge:**

- Develop your understanding of different ways of expressing and interacting in different cultures.



# RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS

## Organizations working with immigrants and refugees

- ❖ ALAC - Alliance pour l'accueil & l'intégration des immigrants:(<https://www.alac.qc.ca/>)
- ❖ PRAIDA - Programme régional d'accueil et d'intégration des demandeurs d'asile:(<https://www.ciusscentreouest.ca/programmes-et-services/praida-programme-regional-daccueil-et-dintegration-des-demandeurs-dasile/>)
- ❖ ALPA - Accueil Liaison pour Arrivants:( <https://www.alpaong.com/> )
- ❖ CSAI - Centre Social D'Aide Aux Immigrants:(<https://centresai.org/>)
- ❖ PROMIS Aid for immigrants and refugees:(<https://promis.qc.ca/en/>)
- ❖ La maisonnée Aide Aux Immigrants:  
(<https://www.lamaisonnee.org/la-maisonnee/> )
- ❖ Collectif Bienvenue: (<https://www.welcomecollective.org/fr/page-daccueil>)
- ❖ The refugee center: (<https://www.therefugeecentre.org/>)
- ❖ Action Réfugiés Montréal: (<https://actionr.org/>)
- ❖ Solidarité Sana Frontières: (<https://www.solidarityacrossborders.org/en/>)
- ❖ SIARI - Service d' Interprète d' Aide et de Référence aux Immigrants:  
(<https://www.siari.org/>)

## LGBTQ+ organizations

- ❖ ASTTeQ - Action Santé Travesti(e)s et Transsexuel(le)s du Québec:  
(<https://cactusmontreal.org/en/programs/astteq-en/>)
- ❖ Fondation Émergence: (<https://www.fondationemergence.org/>)
- ❖ Gris Montréal: (<https://www.gris.ca/>)
- ❖ Projet 10: (<https://p10.qc.ca/>)
- ❖ L'Astérisk: (<https://www.lasterisk.com/>)
- ❖ RÉZO - Santé et mieux-être des hommes gais et bisexuels, cis et trans:  
(<https://www.rezosante.org/> )
- ❖ Réseau des Lesbiennes du Québec: (<https://rlq-qln.ca/>)
- ❖ AlterHéros: (<https://alterheros.com/>)
- ❖ Interligne: (<https://interligne.co/>)
- ❖ Centre Communautaire LGBTQ+ de Montréal: ( <https://ccglm.org/> )
- ❖ Coalition des familles LGBTQ+: ( <https://familleslgbt.org/> )
- ❖ Queer Concordia: ( <https://www.facebook.com/QueerConcordia> )

- ❖ Queer McGill: (<https://www.queermcgill.org/>)
- ❖ Alliance Arc-en-ciel du Québec: ( <https://arcencielquebec.ca/> )
- ❖ Jeunesse Lambda: ( <https://www.jeunesselambda.com/fr/accueil> )
- ❖ Chambre de Commerce LGBTQ du Québec:  
(<https://www.cclgbtq.org/a-propos/historique/> )
- ❖ Conseil Québécois LGBTQ+: ( <http://www.conseil-lgbt.ca/> )
- ❖ Center for Gender Advocacy: ( <https://genderadvocacy.org/> )
- ❖ ACCM - AIDS Community Care Montréal: (<https://accmontreal.org/>)
- ❖ ATQ - Aide aux Trans du Québec: (<https://atq1980.org/>)

## Other organizations that support trans+ and non-binary people:

- ❖ Head and Hands: (<https://headandhands.ca/>)
- ❖ Stella-Sex Worker Advocacy and Support: (<https://chezstella.org/en/home/>)

## Name and gender change

### ★ Federally (Canada)

- ❖ Gender change form throughout Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada :  
<https://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=1253&top=32>
- ❖ change of name for reasons other than clerical or administrative errors :  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/identity-management/naming-procedures/managing-existing-records-change-name-request.html>
- ❖ Exceptions to change of name requirements:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/identity-management/exceptions.html>
- ❖ Verification of status as an identity-linking document :  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/identity-management/exceptions/verification.html>

### ★ Provincially (Québec)

- ❖ Directeur de l'état civil :  
<https://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/forms-publications.html>

## Immigration and refugee processes:

- ❖ Program toolkit, a guide to prepare your Refugee claim based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and/or sex characteristics :  
<https://capitalrainbow.ca/qrhp>
- ❖ My refugee claim guide: <https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/>
- ❖ Guide à l'intention des intervenants communautaires : «L'accès des personnes immigrantes et réfugiées à des mesures sociales au Québec »:  
<https://www.servicesjuridiques.org/documentation/depliants/>

## Health

- ❖ WPATH - World Professional Association For Transgender Health :  
(<https://www.wpath.org/>)
- ❖ SIDE+ clinic :  
(<https://santemontreal.qc.ca/population/services/clinique-de-depistage-sidep/>)
- ❖ CM - Clinique Mauve :  
(<https://sherpa-recherche.com/sherpa/projets-partenaires/clinique-mauve/>)
- ❖ CACTUS Montréal: ( <https://cactusmontreal.org/> )
- ❖ MUSIC: ( <https://muhc.ca/mental-health/music> )
- ❖ Clinique l'Actuel: (<https://cliniquelactuel.com/>)
- ❖ Médecins du Monde: (<https://medecinsdumonde.ca/>)
- ❖ Service des maladies virales chroniques (SMVC):  
(<https://cusm.ca/med-infectious-diseases/page/contacts-0>)

## Mental health

- ❖ MUSIC: ( <https://muhc.ca/mental-health/music> )
- ❖ If you find a trans-friendly mental health professional, you can ask them if they would register as a provider with the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) and accept to see sponsored refugees (during their first year in Canada) and refugee claimants. This insurance covers 20 sessions. Providers must get approval before billing, otherwise the insurance will not



reimburse. (<https://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=1279&top=33> )

- ❖ The lavender collective: (<https://www.thelavendercollective.ca/?lang=fr>)
- ❖ Pride therapy network of Montreal: (<https://montrealpridetherapynetwork.com/>)
- ❖ Healing in color: (<https://www.healingincolour.com/>)
- ❖ Black healing fund: <https://www.blackhealingfund.com/>

## Clinics offering gender affirming services

- ❖ MERAKI Health Center: ( <https://centremeraki.com/> )
- ❖ QUORUM: ( <http://cliniquequorum.com/> )
- ❖ LA LICORNE Medical Clinic: ( <https://cliniquemedicalelalicorne.com/>)
- ❖ Medical Clinic 1851
- ❖ AGORA Clinic, Dr. Antoine Cloutier Blais: ( <http://cliniquelagora.com/>)
- ❖ QUARTIER LATIN Medical Clinic: (<https://www.cmuql.com/?lang=en>)
- ❖ Dr. Gabrielle Landry: ([info@drgabrielcelandry.com](mailto:info@drgabrielcelandry.com))

## Clinic offering gender affirming surgeries

- ❖ GRS Montreal - Gender affirmation surgeries: <https://www.grsmontreal.com/en/home.html>

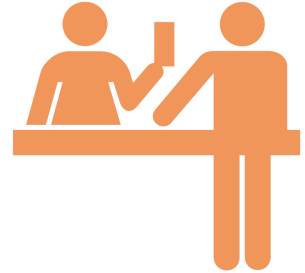
## Getting trainings on writing support letters for gender affirming care

- ❖ IST - Institut pour la Santé Trans: <https://santetranshealth.com/>

## Other

- ❖ Example of preferred name processes - Concordia : <https://www.concordia.ca/students/preferred-name-requests.html>
- ❖ Example of gender inclusive washrooms - McGill : <https://www.mcgill.ca/equity/resources/gender-sexuality/gender-inclusive-washrooms>

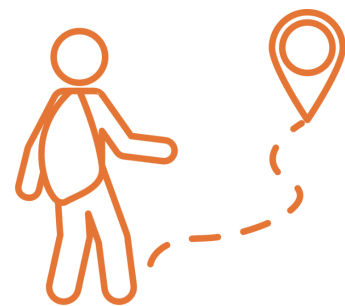
- 
- ❖ List of resources for trans+ and non-binary people by Action Santé Travesti(e)s et Transexuel(le)s du Québec (ASTT(e)Q) :  
<https://cactusmontreal.org/en/trans-support/resources>



# CHALLENGES WHILE CREATING THE GUIDE

The journey of this guide's conception and development through its different steps was a creative, inspirational yet complex experience for the various contributors, and we wanted to share some of these challenges:

- It took time to hire employees from the community itself to take leadership and work on this project themselves.
- It took time to integrate, train as well as expose new employees to an on-the-ground experience of the different topics that they need to understand in order to develop this guide.
- This guide has been developed by trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees. This means that throughout working on it, people have been exposed to triggering situations while interviewing participants or searching for information. This affects their wellbeing as well as the writing process.
- Those developing the guide were themselves sometimes living and trying to survive through the challenges of accessing services that are mentioned in the guide while developing it.
- Combining different points of views, knowledge and experiences was a complex process.
- The knowledge in this guide tries to capture as much as possible of the current situation of trans+ and non-binary immigrants and refugees in Québec through AGIR's experience from working on the ground as well community members themselves who developed the guide. A deeper or more complete study would require more resources for further research.
- People questioning the knowledge based on lived experiences that contributed to this guide as it's a non-academic source of information.
- A lack of documentation of certain precise situations in relation to trans+ and non-binary migrants and refugees, has led to challenges finding information about it.
- A challenge of limited capacity to visit some areas to get certain information.



## TERMINOLOGY & CULTURE

**Asylum seeker** | is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.<sup>7</sup>

Convention refugee | A person who meets the definition of “refugee” in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. You are a Convention refugee if:

- you have left your home country (your country of nationality or, if you do not have one, the country where you usually lived in the past);
- you have a well-founded fear of persecution based on your race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group; and

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<sup>7</sup> “Who Is a Refugee, a Migrant or an Asylum Seeker?” *Amnesty International*, 31 Oct. 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>

- you are unable or, because of your fear, unwilling to try to get the protection of your home country.<sup>8</sup>

**Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)** | covers certain health-care benefits for specific groups of people until they become eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance, such as:

- protected people, including resettled refugees,
- refugee claimants, and
- certain other groups.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. “Claimant's Guide (Print Version).” *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada*, 30 Nov. 2021, <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/refugee-claims/Pages/ClaimantGuide.aspx#about>.

<sup>9</sup> “What Is the Interim Federal Health Program?” *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*, / Gouvernement Du Canada, 26 July 2022, <https://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=1272&top=33>.

**Gender identity** | is each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from the gender typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. For some people, their gender identity is different from the gender typically associated with their sex assigned at birth; this identity is often described as transgender or simply trans. Gender identity is fundamentally different from a person's sexual orientation.<sup>10</sup>

**Gender Expression** | External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, voice, and/or behavior. Societies classify these external cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. (For example, in some cultures men wear long hair as a sign of masculinity.)

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<sup>10</sup> Canada, Department of Justice. "Government of Canada." Canada.ca, / Gouvernement Du Canada, 17 May 2016, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-justice/news/2016/05/gender-identity-and-gender-expression.html>.

Most transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity to resolve the incongruence between their knowledge of their own gender and how the world "sees" them.<sup>11</sup>

**Transgender** | an adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People who are transgender may also use other terms, in addition to transgender, to describe their gender more specifically. Use the term(s) the person uses to describe their gender. It is important to note that being transgender is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. A person can call themselves transgender the moment they realize that their gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Transgender Terms." *GLAAD*, 21 Apr. 2022, <https://www.glaad.org/reference/trans-terms>.

<sup>12</sup> "GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Transgender Terms." *GLAAD*, 21 Apr. 2022, <https://www.glaad.org/reference/trans-terms>.

**Trans** | used as shorthand for transgender.<sup>13</sup>

**Transition** | Transition is the process a person undertakes to bring their gender expression and/or their body into alignment with their gender identity. It is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time and the exact steps involved in transition will vary from person to person. Transition can include:

- **Social transition** - Telling family, friends, and co-workers, using a different name, using different pronouns, dressing differently, starting or stopping wearing make-up and jewelry, etc.
- **Legal transition** - Changing your name and/or sex marker on documents like a driver's license, passport, Social Security record, bank accounts, etc.
- **Medical transition** - Hormone replacement therapy and/or one or more surgical procedures.

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<sup>13</sup> "GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Transgender Terms." *GLAAD*, 21 Apr. 2022, <https://www.glaad.org/reference/trans-terms>.

These steps may also be referred to as gender affirming care.<sup>14</sup>

**Sex at Birth** | Infants are assigned a sex at birth, "male" or "female," based on the appearance of their external anatomy, and an M or an F is written on the birth certificate. However, the development of the human body is a complex process, and sex is not solely determined by anatomy, nor is it strictly binary. As many as 1.7% of people are born intersex. Furthermore, a person's body can be changed through medical transition in ways that fundamentally alter the sex they were assigned at birth.<sup>15</sup>

**Cisgender** | an adjective used to describe people who are not transgender. "Cis-" is a Latin prefix meaning "on the same side as," and is therefore an antonym of "trans-." A cisgender person is a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Transgender Terms." *GLAAD*, 21 Apr. 2022, <https://www.glaad.org/reference/trans-terms>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

**Non-binary** | Person whose gender identity does not align with a binary understanding of gender such as man or woman. A non-binary person may identify as neither a man nor a woman, both, or anywhere along the gender spectrum.<sup>17</sup>

**Two-spirit persons** | Umbrella term for some Indigenous people who identify as having both a female and male spirit within them or whose gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or spiritual identity is not limited by the binary classification of gender as woman or man.<sup>18</sup>

**Outing** | The act of disclosing a 2SLGBTQ+ person's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent.<sup>19</sup>

**Deadnaming** | Occurs when an individual, intentionally or not, refers

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<sup>17</sup> “Content Page - Web Experience Toolkit.” Definitions, 28 Apr. 2022, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/socjs-esjp/en/dash-tab/definitions>.

<sup>18</sup> “Content Page - Web Experience Toolkit.” Definitions, 28 Apr. 2022, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/socjs-esjp/en/dash-tab/definitions>.

<sup>19</sup> Canada, Public Health Agency of. “Government of Canada.” *Pride Guide 2022 - Canada.ca*, / Gouvernement Du Canada, 15 Sept. 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/pride-guide-2022.html>.

to the name that a transgender or gender-expansive individual used at a different time in their life. Avoid this practice, as it can cause trauma, stress, embarrassment, and even danger. Some may prefer the terms birth name, given name, or old name.<sup>20</sup>

**Misgendering** | Referring to someone, especially a transgender person, using a word, a pronoun or form of address that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.<sup>21</sup>

**Intersex** | Intersex is an umbrella term for bodies that are beyond the strict male/female binary current in our society. There are many variations of being Intersex that can include having one or more innate sex characteristics, such as genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that are beyond the limited interpretations of sex.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “LGBTQ+ Glossary.” *PFLAG*, 14 Nov. 2022, <https://pflag.org/glossary/>.

<sup>21</sup> Canada, Public Health Agency of. “Government of Canada.” *Pride Guide 2022 - Canada.ca*, / Gouvernement Du Canada, 15 Sept. 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/pride-guide-2022.html>.

<sup>22</sup> “What’s Intersex” *Planned Parenthood* <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/sex-gender-identity/whats-intersex>

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