



## Response to an Application under Section 34 of the *Human Rights Code* (Form 2)

(Disponible en français)

[www.hrto.ca](http://www.hrto.ca)

### How to Respond to an Application Where You Are Named as a Respondent

Use this form if you have been named as a respondent in a human rights application under section 34 of the *Human Rights Code*.

If you fail to respond to the Application, you may be deemed to have accepted all of the allegations in the Application, and the Tribunal may proceed without further notice to you.

#### Before you start:

1. Read the questions and answers below.
2. Download and read the [Respondent's Guide](#) from the Tribunal's website [www.hrto.ca](http://www.hrto.ca).  
If you need a paper copy or accessible format contact us at:

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario  
655 Bay Street, 14th floor  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2A3

Phone: 416-326-1312  
Fax: 416-326-2199  
TTY: 416-326-2027  
Email: [hrto.registrar@ontario.ca](mailto:hrto.registrar@ontario.ca)  
Website: [www.hrto.ca](http://www.hrto.ca)

Toll-free: 1-866-598-0322  
Toll-free: 1-866-355-6099  
Toll-free: 1-866-607-1240

The Tribunal has other guides and practice directions to help all parties to an Application understand the process. Download copies from the Tribunal's website or contact us.

3. Complete each section of the Response form that applies to you. As you fill out each section, refer to the instructions in the [Respondent's Guide](#).

### Questions about Responding to an Application

The following questions and answers are provided for general information. They should not be taken as legal advice or a determination of how the Tribunal will decide any particular application.

#### What happens if I fail to complete a Response Form?

You may be deemed to have accepted all the allegations. The Tribunal may deal with the Application without any further notice to you.

#### What is the time limit for responding?

Respondents must file a completed Response form no later than **thirty-five (35) days** after the Tribunal sends them a copy of the Application. The cover letter from the Tribunal gives you the exact date.

#### Are there defences to discrimination under the *Human Rights Code*?

Yes, there are some defences and exemptions in the *Code*. Please see the [Respondent's Guide](#). If you believe one of these applies, please explain how when you fill out the Response form.



## Response to an Application under Section 34 of the *Human Rights Code* (Form 2)

### Can the Tribunal deal with an application where the facts and issues have been dealt with or are being dealt with in another proceeding?

The *Code* has special rules depending on what the other proceeding is and at what stage the other proceeding is at. Read the [Respondent's Guide](#) and get legal advice if:

1. You are currently involved in, or were previously involved in a civil action based on the same facts and the applicant asked for a human rights remedy; **or**
2. A complaint was ever filed with the Ontario Human Rights Commission based on the same subject matter; **or**
3. You are currently involved in, or were previously involved in another proceeding (for example, a union grievance based on the same facts.

You must file a Response even if you believe that the Tribunal should defer the the Application or that the Application is outside the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, except where you allege the issues in dispute fall within exclusive federal jurisdiction.

### Learn more

To find out more about human rights in Ontario, visit [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca) or phone 1-800-387-9080.



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

Note: Complete all parts of this form, using the Respondent's Guide for help. If your form is not complete, the Tribunal may return it to you. At the end of this form, you will be required to read and agree to a declaration that the information in your Response is complete and accurate (if you are a lawyer or legal representative assisting a respondent with this Form 2, please see the Practice Direction On Electronic Filing of Applications and Responses By Licensed Representatives).

Respondents must file a completed Response form no later than thirty-five (35) days after the Tribunal sends them a copy of the Application. The cover letter from the Tribunal gives you the exact date.

Tribunal File Number 2019-36437-1

Contact Information for the Respondent

Respondent Contact Information

Please choose the type of Respondent: [X] Organization Respondent [ ] Individual Respondent

1. Respondent Contact Information - Organization

Contact information for a responding organization, such as a corporation, association, or group. Please complete both this section and Question 3.

Full Name of Organization
Ottawa Carleton District School Board

Organization Type:

- [X] Corporation
[ ] Partnership
[ ] Sole proprietorship
[ ] Unincorporated business/organization
[ ] Other (specify):

[Empty box for specifying other organization type]



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

Name of the person within this organization who is authorized to negotiate and bind the organization with respect to this Application.

Form with fields for Name (Richard Sinclair), Title (Manager of Legal Services and Labour Relations), Street (133 Greebank Road), City (Ottawa), Province (Ontario), Postal Code (K2H 6L3), Email (richard.sinclair@ocdsb.ca), Daytime Phone ((613) 596-8714), Cell Phone, Fax, and TTY.

What is the best way to send information to you? (If you check email, you are consenting to delivery of documents by email) [ ] Mail [x] Email [ ] Fax

Is this Response being filed on behalf of any other respondent? [x] Yes [ ] No

- [x] It is filed on behalf of all respondents named in the Application
[ ] It is filed on behalf of the following respondents

Based on the selection, please list the name of the respondents represented in this response.

Text box containing names: Julie Derbyshire, Janine Blouin

NOTE: While some respondent contact records were not identified by the applicant in Form 1 you may wish to add any additional respondent contact records in Section 4 in order retain accurate contact records on the case.

3. Representative Contact Information

Complete this Section only if you are authorizing a lawyer or other Representative to act for you.



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

I authorize the organization and/or person named below to represent me.

My representative is:

Lawyer LSUC # 48984I; 69743M
Paralegal LSUC #

Other- please specify the Nature of Exemption from licensing requirements in the text box below:
(e.g. Unpaid family member or friend)

For further information, see the Tribunal's Policy on Representation before the HRTO at www.hrto.ca.

First (or Given) Name: Raquel Larissa
Last (or Family) Name: Chisholm Volinets Schieven

Organization (if applicable): EMOND HARNDEN LLP

Street #: 707
Street Name: Bank Street
Apt/Suite:

City/Town: Ottawa
Province: Ontario
Postal Code: K1S 3V1
Email: rchisholm@ehlaw.ca, lvolinetschieven@ehlaw.ca

Daytime Phone: 613-563-7660
Cell Phone:
Fax: 613-563-8001
TTY:

What is the best way to send information to your representative?
(If you check email, you are consenting to delivery of documents by email)
Mail, Email, Fax



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

Contact Information - Additional Respondent(s) and Affected Person(s)

Please complete this selection if you believe another person or organization should be named as a respondent or given notice as an affected person(s).

4. Contact Information - Additional Respondent

If there is another organization or person who is not already named as a respondent on the Application form and who you believe should be named as a respondent, provide their contact information here. See the Tribunal's Practice Direction on Naming Respondents for more information on how to correctly name a potential respondent.

Please choose the type of respondent: Organization Respondent Individual Respondent

Additional Respondent Contact Information - Organization

Full Name of Organization

Name of Contact Person from the Organization

Table with contact details: First (or Given) Name, Last (or Family) Name, Title, Street #, Street Name, Apt/Suite, City/Town, Province, Postal Code, Email, Daytime Phone, Cell Phone, Fax, TTY

Add Another Respondent



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

5. Contact Information - Affected Person

If there is any other organization (such as a union or occupational association responsible for collective bargaining) or person who is not already named as an affected person on the Application form and who might be affected by this Application to the Tribunal, provide their contact information here.

Please choose the type of affected person: Organization Contact

Affected Person Contact Information - Organization

Full Name of Organization

Name of Contact Person from the Organization

Form with fields for Name of Contact Person (First, Last, Title), Street #, Street Name, Apt/Suite, City/Town, Province, Postal Code, Email, Daytime Phone, Cell Phone, Fax, TTY.

Add Another Affected Party

Request for Early Dismissal of the Application

6. Request for Dismissal - without Full Response

Complete this section only if you are requesting that the Tribunal dismiss the Application because one of the four situations below applies. Put an "X" in the box that applies. Please see the Respondent's Guide.



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

I request that the Tribunal dismiss this Application because:

- Four checkbox options for reasons to dismiss the application: 1. Claim filed in civil court, 2. Complaint filed with Ontario Human Rights Commission, 3. Applicant signed full and final release, 4. Issues within exclusive federal jurisdiction.

Note: If you put an "X" in any of the boxes above, go to Question 20. Except in these four situations, or as otherwise directed by the Tribunal, requests to dismiss an Application will not be considered without a complete response.

7. Request for Dismissal under s. 45.1 of the Code - with Full Response

Complete this section only if you are requesting that the Tribunal dismiss the Application because another proceeding has in whole or in part appropriately dealt with the substance of the Application. Put an "X" below if you are making this request. Please see the Respondent's Guide.

a) [ ] I request that the Tribunal dismiss the Application because another proceeding has in whole or in part appropriately dealt with the substance of the Application. (Attach a copy of the decision)

b) Please name the other proceeding:

Empty rectangular box for naming the other proceeding.

c) Explain why you believe the other proceeding has in whole or in part appropriately dealt with the substance of the Application.

Empty rectangular box for explaining why the other proceeding dealt with the substance of the application.



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

Note: You must complete the entire Response form and attach a copy of the document that started the proceeding and a copy of the decision.

Request to Defer the Application

8. Request to Defer

Complete this section only if the facts of the Application are part of another proceeding that is still in progress.

a) Describe the other proceeding:

Table with 3 rows and 2 columns for describing other proceedings: Union grievance, claim before another board, or other.

b) Are you asking the Tribunal to defer (postpone) the Application until the other proceeding is completed? (Attach a copy of the document that started the other proceeding) Yes No



Ontario

## Response to an Application under Section 34 of the *Human Rights Code* (Form 2)

### Responding to the Allegations in the Application

#### 9. Responding to the Allegations

Please summarize the facts and defences that support your Response to this Application. See the Respondent's Guide.

**Please include as part of your response:**

- any submissions you make that the Application is outside the Tribunal's jurisdiction;
- what allegations in the Application you agree with;
- what allegations in the Application you disagree with;
- any additional facts that you intend to rely on; and
- any defences that you intend to rely on.

Please see attached Schedule "A"

#### 10. Exemptions

Complete this section only if you are relying on one of the exemptions found in the *Code*. See the Respondent's Guide.

a) What exemption in the *Code* do you believe applies to this Application?

b) Please explain why you believe the exemption applies:

#### 11. Knowledge of the Events

a) When and how did you first become aware of the events described in the Application?

Please see attached Schedule "A"



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

[Empty response box]

b) How did you respond and what was the outcome?

Please see attached Schedule "A"

12. Disability and Employment

Complete this section only if the applicant alleges that they experienced discrimination in employment on the ground of disability. See Respondent's Guide.

a) Did you know about the applicant's particular needs before seeing the Application? [Yes/No radio buttons]

b) What are the requirements (essential job duties) of the position in question?

[Empty response box for question b)

c) Do you have a written policy, job description or other documentation that describes the requirements of the job? [Yes/No radio buttons]

d) Was the applicant unable to perform the requirements of the job because of their disability? [Yes/No (Go to 13) radio buttons]

Note: If you said "Yes" to Question 12c, you must attach a copy of the policy, job description or other document that describes the requirements of the job.

Questions About Internal Human Rights Policies

13. Internal Human Rights Policies

Complete this section only if the respondent is an organization. Please see the Respondent's Guide.



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

Table with 3 rows and 3 columns. Row 1: a) Do you have a policy related to the type of discrimination alleged in the Application? [Yes/No]. Row 2: b) Do you have a complaint process to deal with discrimination and harassment? [Yes/No (Go to 14)]. Row 3: c) Did the applicant make a complaint under the internal complaint process about the facts in this Application? [Yes/No (Go to 14)].

Note: You must attach a copy of the policy, complaint process, or the document that started the complaint, and the decision, if any.

Mediation

14. Choosing Mediation to Resolve the Application

Mediation is one of the ways the Tribunal tries to resolve disputes. It is a less formal process than a hearing. Mediation can only happen if both parties agree to it. A Tribunal Member will be assigned to mediate the Application. The Member will meet with you to talk about your Response. The Member will also meet with the applicant and will try to work out a solution that both sides can accept. If Mediation does not settle all the issues, a hearing will still take place and a different Member will be assigned to hear the case. Mediation is confidential.

Do you agree to try mediation? [X] Yes

Documents that Support Your Response

15. Important Documents You Have

If you have documents that are important to your Response, list them here. List only the most important. Indicate whether the document is privileged. Please see the Respondent's Guide.

Note: You are not required to send copies of your documents at this time. However, if you decide to attach copies of the documents you list below to your Response, they will be sent to the other parties to the Application along with your Response.

Table with 2 columns: Document Name, Why It Is Important To My Response. Row 1: Relevant policies, Correspondence with Applicant's parents, Internal correspondence regarding complaints; Please see Schedule "A" attached, Please see Schedule "A" attached, Please see Schedule "A" attached.

Add more Documents



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

16. Important Documents the Applicant Has

If you believe the applicant has documents that are important to your Response, that you do not have, list them here. List only the most important.

Table with 2 columns: Document Name, Why It Is Important To My Response

Add more Documents

17. Important Documents Another Person or Organization Has

If you believe another person or organization has documents that are important to your Response, that you do not have, list them here. List only the most important.

Table with 3 columns: Document Name, Why It Is Important To My Response, Name of Person or Organization Who Has It

Add more Documents

Confidential List of Witnesses

18. Witnesses

Please list the witnesses that you intend to rely on in the hearing. Note: The Tribunal will not send this list to the applicant. See the Respondent's Guide.

Table with 2 columns: Name of Witness, Why This Witness Is Important To My Response



Ontario

# Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario

## Response to an Application under Section 34 of the *Human Rights Code* (Form 2)

Add more Witnesses

### Other Important Information

#### 19. Other Important Information the Tribunal Should Know

Is there any other important information you would like to share with the Tribunal?

Please see Schedule "A" attached



**Response to an Application under Section 34 of the *Human Rights Code* (Form 2)**

**Checklist of Required Documents**

**20. Documents from Questions 6 to 13**

Put an "X" in the box beside the documents that you are required to send with your Response. Put the Tribunal File Number on each document.

- Copy of a statement of claim and the Court decision, if any (from Question 6)
- Copy of a complaint filed with the Ontario Human Rights Commission and decision, if any (from Question 6)
- Copy of a full and final release that the applicant signed dealing with same matter (from Question 6)
- Submissions in support of a Request for Dismissal without Full Response (under Question 6)
- Copy of a decision from another type of proceeding that appropriately dealt with the substance of the Application (from Question 7)
- Copy of a document that started another type of proceeding based on the same facts (from Question 7 & 8)
- Copy of the policy, job description or other document that describes the requirements of the job (from Question 12)
- Copy of your organization's policy on discrimination or harassment relevant to this Application (from Question 13)
- Copy of your organization's complaints process relevant to this Application (from Question 13)
- Copy of the applicant's internal complaint (from Question 13)
- Copy of the decision from the internal complaint process (from Question 13)



Response to an Application under Section 34 of the Human Rights Code (Form 2)

Declaration and Signature

21. Declaration and Signature

Declaration:

To the best of my knowledge, the information in my Response is complete and accurate.

Signature Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

Schieren 18/11/2019

Please check this box if you are filing your response electronically. This represents your signature. You must fill out the date, above.

Accommodation Required

If you require accommodation of Code related needs please contact the Registrar at HRTO.Registrar@ontario.ca or

Phone: 416-326-1312 Toll-free: 1-866-598-0322
Fax: 416-326-2199 Toll-free: 1-866-355-6099
TTY: 416-326-2027 Toll-free: 1-866-607-1240

Collection of Information:

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) has the right to collect the personal information requested on this form. We use the information to resolve your application. After you file the form, your information may also be available to the public. If you have questions about how the HRTO uses your personal information, contact the HRTO at 416-326-1312 or 1-866-598-0322 (toll-free.)

Submit to HRTO Print Form

Note: Only submit your Response once. If the Tribunal receives this Response more than once, it will only accept the first Response Form received.

**BETWEEN**

**NB AS REPRESENTED BY HER LITIGATION GUARDIAN PB**

**(Applicant)**

**– and –**

**OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD, JULIE DERBYSHIRE, AND  
JANINE BLOUIN**

**(Respondents)**

---

**SCHEDULE “A” TO THE RESPONSE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

---

**A. OVERVIEW**

1. The following are the submissions of the Respondents: the Organization Respondent, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (the “Board” or the “OCDSB”); and the Individual Respondents, Julie Derbyshire and Janine Blouin, to the Application (Tribunal File No. 2019-36347-I), filed against them by NB by her litigation guardian PB (the “Applicant”).
2. The Applicant alleges discrimination by the Respondents on the basis of sex, gender, and gender identity with respect to goods, services, and facilities. She alleges that a classroom discussion regarding gender expression and gender identity, directed at building inclusion, understanding, and acceptance of all students, regardless of their gender identity and gender expression, amounted to discrimination against her as a female child who identifies as a girl.
3. As particularized below, the Respondents did not violate the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, RSO 1990 (the “Code”) and did not discriminate against the Applicant.

4. Rather, the Respondents fulfilled their duties to ensure a safe, welcoming, open, and inclusive environment for all students, including those whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not conform to their birth-assigned sex.
5. The Applicant is not entitled to any relief whatsoever under the *Code*.
6. The Respondents respectfully request that the Application be dismissed.
7. The Respondents consent to the amendment of the Application (the amended Application and Schedule “A” are referred to herein simply as the “Application”), and to the amendment of the Applicant’s Response to the Respondents’ Request for a Summary Hearing (the “Summary Hearing Response”).

## **B. FACTS**

### *The Parties*

#### **The OCDSB**

8. The OCDSB is a School Board established by the Legislature of Ontario pursuant to the *Education Act*, RSO c E.2 (the “*Education Act*”). The OCDSB offers a wide range of educational programs as mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education.
9. The OCDSB is the largest school board in Eastern Ontario. The OCDSB has 148 schools that provide education to more than 70,000 students across the City of Ottawa, including 25 secondary schools, 118 elementary schools, and five secondary alternative sites.
10. The OCDSB employs more than 9,000 full-time and part-time staff.
11. The OCDSB is committed to fostering a discrimination-free environment in which the human rights of every student and employee are respected, and to meeting its obligations under the *Code*. The OCDSB’s Equity and Inclusive Education Policy is attached as **Tab 1**.

12. The OCDSB is committed to providing age-appropriate, inclusive, safe, and caring programs to students, including to students who do not identify or express their gender in accordance with their birth-assigned sex. The OCDSB’s *“Gender Identity and Gender Expression Guide to Support our Students”* is attached as **Tab 2** (the “Guide”).
13. The Guide is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s (the “Commission”) *“Policy on preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression,”* attached as **Tab 3** (the “Policy”).
14. The OCDSB provides schools with literacy resource packages, which contain age-appropriate books for children, on a variety of topics, including gender identity and gender expression. These books can be used by teachers in the classroom, or borrowed by parents to read with their children at home.

**Julie Derbyshire**

15. Julie Derbyshire is the principal of Devonshire Community Public School (the “School”), which is a part of the OCDSB. Principal Derbyshire is a member of the Ontario Principals Council.
16. The School is an elementary school located in Ottawa, Ontario, with approximately 370 students enrolled from junior kindergarten to grade six.
17. Principal Derbyshire and the School are committed to providing age-appropriate, inclusive, safe, and caring programs to students, including to students who do not identify or express their gender in accordance with their birth-assigned sex.
18. This includes having literary resources available to teachers, students, and parents.
19. Principal Derbyshire arranged to have the OCDSB’s Instructional Coach, Inclusive, Safe, and Caring Programs (the “Coach”) come into the School on February 6, 2017, to discuss gender identity and gender expression with the entire staff, including all teachers.

**Janine Blouin**

20. Janine Blouin has been a teacher at the School since January 2018. She was the Applicant's grade one teacher during the 2018 Winter Semester (January to June 2018). Ms. Blouin is a member of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

**The Applicant (NB)**

21. The Applicant is represented in these proceedings by her mother, PB, appointed as her litigation guardian.
22. The Applicant was enrolled as a student in the School in Ms. Blouin's class at all times relevant to the Application. The Applicant and her sister were both enrolled in the School beginning in junior kindergarten.
23. The Board understands that the Applicant and her sister are now enrolled with the Ottawa Catholic School Board, since September 2018.

*The Classroom Discussions*

24. Ms. Blouin commenced teaching at the School in January 2018, in the Applicant's grade one class (the "Class").
25. Ms. Blouin observed that many of the student interactions in the Class were based on distinctions between boys and girls. This included students commenting that other students could not play with certain toys, play certain games, wear certain clothes, choose certain colours, or behave in certain ways because of their sex and/or gender.
26. In response to these observations, Ms. Blouin read the book "My Princess Boy" (the "Book") to the Class in early-January 2018. The Book is an age-appropriate OCDSB literary resource that addresses gender identity, and reinforces that boys and girls are not confined to dress, play, or behave within typical gender norms, but rather, can dress, play, and act as they feel comfortable, regardless of sex. The Book emphasizes that there are no set rules or expectations on what it means to be a boy or a girl.

27. One of the students in the Class was particularly knowledgeable about these issues, and shared their knowledge with the Class. They expanded on the idea of boys and girls being able to dress, play, and act how they want to, regardless of sex and/or gender.
28. Later in January, a student in the Class was being teased for identifying with another gender than their birth-assigned sex. The next day, Ms. Blouin spoke to the Class about how a person can be one way physically, and feel another way in their heart, and told the Class that everyone should have the right to decide for themselves, without judgment.
29. In the course of these discussions, a student asked questions about whether a person could change their body. Ms. Blouin confirmed some people go to the hospital to change their bodies, but did not go into any details.
30. A few weeks later, students were arranging themselves into groups and some of them commented that they should be divided into groups of boys and groups of girls. Ms. Blouin responded, in haste, that there is no such thing as girls and boys, in an effort to explain to students the idea that gender exists on a spectrum and should not divide people. This comment was within a larger discussion about gender fluidity, and was intended to relay that gender exists on a fluid spectrum, rather than at two opposite sides of a binary.
31. In response to other interactions between students, including teasing/bullying based on sex/gender and gender expression, Ms. Blouin determined that it was necessary to engage the Class in a further discussion regarding gender identity and gender expression.
32. This is consistent with the OCDSB's policies regarding inclusion, as well as the recognition that teachers are permitted to address topics outside of the set curriculum to meet the needs of their class, including teaching concepts of gender identity and gender expression.
33. A few days later, near the end of January 2018, Ms. Blouin brought up the subject of gender fluidity, and showed the class a video entitled "[He, She, and They?!? – Gender](#)," in which gender identity is discussed (the "Video").
34. The Video teaches that there are girls, boys, and people who identify neither as boys nor girls, and encourages students to ask others about their preferred pronouns.

35. The Video promotes the dignity of all people, and emphasizes that everyone is free to make choices about their hair, clothing, colours, toys, and activities, without being confined by their sex.
36. After showing this Video, Ms. Blouin initiated a discussion with the class about being able to play with whatever toys they want, play whichever games they like, and dress however they choose. The students were open and interested in the discussions.
37. Ms. Blouin also drew a stick figure of a boy and a stick figure of a girl on the whiteboard, and drew a line between them, to signify the spectrum of gender identity.
38. After these discussions, Ms. Blouin observed that there were significantly fewer comments, teasing, and bullying in the classroom about what boys and girls could or could not do.
39. On February 1, 2018, Ms. Blouin contacted the parents of the student who had participated most vocally in the discussions regarding gender identity and gender expression, to seek their input in regards to their child's gender identity. Ms. Blouin met with them on February 5, 2018. At that meeting, Ms. Blouin relayed their child's comments to the parents.
40. The parents, in turn, advised Ms. Blouin that their child had been questioning their gender identity, and that they had discussions at home about gender fluidity. They emphasized that they wanted their child to be able to express themselves however they wished.
41. These parents had earlier advised Principal Derbyshire that their child was questioning their gender identity.

*The Applicant's Parents' Complaints*

42. The Applicant's mother came to speak to Ms. Blouin at the School on the morning of March 21, 2018. She did not tell Ms. Blouin in advance what she wished to speak about.
43. The Applicant's mother became agitated and upset during the discussion. She told Ms. Blouin that the Applicant had said that she did not want children and that she could change her body so that she did not have to have children. The Applicant's mother asked whether Ms. Blouin had talked to the Class about "sex changes."

44. Ms. Blouin acknowledged that the Class had discussed that some people change their bodies, after another student brought this up, as described above. Ms. Blouin provided no details, other than to confirm the statement, and made no reference to “sex changes.”
45. The Applicant’s mother also told Ms. Blouin that the Applicant said Ms. Blouin told the Class there were no boys and no girls. Ms. Blouin apologized and explained that she had misspoken, and this was not the message that she had intended to convey.
46. Ms. Blouin confirmed that the OCDSB recognizes gender fluidity, as per the Guide, and that the discussions were meant to help students understand what they or other students might be experiencing, to ensure that no students felt isolated.
47. The Applicant’s mother appeared agitated throughout the meeting, even after Ms. Blouin explained what had occurred in the classroom.
48. Unfortunately, Ms. Blouin was caught off guard by the Applicant’s mother’s approach and agitation, and so she was unable to communicate and clarify the discussions that had taken place in the Class at that time as clearly as she wished to.
49. Ms. Blouin offered to contact the Coach to obtain more information about how such discussions should be communicated, and to provide the Applicant’s mother with a copy of the Guide. Ms. Blouin also suggested that the Applicant’s mother could contact Principal Derbyshire for further discussion, if she remained concerned or wanted further information.
50. Shortly after the Applicant’s mother left, Ms. Blouin emailed Principal Derbyshire to advise her of the Class discussions, the Applicant’s mother’s concerns, and that the Applicant’s mother may contact her. Ms. Blouin also advised Principal Derbyshire that she had offered to contact the Coach, and asked Principal Derbyshire for the Coach’s name. This was the first time that Principal Derbyshire became aware of the discussions.
51. Contrary to the allegation at paragraph 19 of the Application, Ms. Blouin clarified her earlier comments with the Class that same day. Ms. Blouin apologized to the Class for having caused any confusion, and stated she should not have said there are no boys and no girls.

52. Ms. Blouin clarified that she had not intended to say that there were no boys and no girls, but rather meant that, in addition to boys and girls, there was a spectrum of gender.
53. Ms. Blouin also specifically reassured the Class that they did not have to change their bodies (in response to the Applicant having told her mother that she could change her body because she did not want to have children).
54. Principal Derbyshire and the Applicant's mother exchanged emails on March 21, 2018. The Applicant's mother advised Principal Derbyshire that she had raised her concerns with Ms. Blouin, and that Ms. Blouin appeared to appreciate that she had chosen the wrong words when she said, "there's no such thing as girls or boys." The Applicant's mother also wrote that she did not feel that discussions about sex changes were age-appropriate.
55. Principal Derbyshire went to see Ms. Blouin to discuss the issue in person. They talked about the discussions in the Class, and the Applicant's mother's concerns in more detail. Principal Derbyshire provided Ms. Blouin with the Coach's name, Caroline Ann Burrows, and they agreed that Ms. Blouin would contact the Coach.
56. Principal Derbyshire spoke to the Applicant's father by phone on March 26, 2018. He was irate. He alleged that Ms. Blouin had used the word "binary" (which she had in her discussion with the Applicant's mother, but not with the Class), and demanded that Principal Derbyshire communicate with all parents about the discussions in the Class.
57. Principal Derbyshire confirmed that Ms. Blouin had initiated the discussions in part to assist a student in the Class who had expressed that they may identify differently than their birth-assigned sex. Principal Derbyshire declined to communicate with all parents about the discussions, or to provide further details, as the Applicant's father demanded she do, to protect the safety of the Class and that student in particular.
58. Throughout their call, the Applicant's father was adamant that he did not want the Applicant to take part in such discussions.
59. Principal Derbyshire assured the Applicant's father that such discussions did not happen often, nor were they scheduled lessons, but rather arose in context, to meet students' needs.

60. Principal Derbyshire offered several options to help the Applicant feel more comfortable in the future.
61. Principal Derbyshire suggested that if the Applicant felt uneasy about such discussions, Principal Derbyshire could come sit with her, either inside or outside of the Class, or she could have a private discussion with the Applicant to help her to feel at ease.
62. Principal Derbyshire did not, as alleged, suggest that the Applicant be removed from the Class during such discussions. At all times, her approach was supportive and directed solely at responding to the Applicant's and her parents' concerns about her learning about gender identity and gender expression.
63. The Applicant's father continued to become more irate during the telephone call. Principal Derbyshire reiterated that her role was to ensure that all students felt included and welcome, including those who might be questioning their gender identity, or whose gender might not conform to their birth-assigned sex.
64. The Applicant's father followed up by email, and again demanded that Principal Derbyshire send a letter to all parents regarding the discussions. Principal Derbyshire declined to do so, which is consistent with the Board's obligations, per the Guide, to preserve the privacy of students. The Guide specifically directs that schools must keep a student's transgender/gender diverse status confidential, and should not disclose same to others unless there is a specific "need to know." It is also consistent with the Policy.
65. In that same email, the Applicant's father wrote that he did not feel that teachers should "broadcast complex gender related discussions to all students," and that there was a reason that "this level of discussion is not part of the curriculum."
66. He also wrote that, until "class content is both age appropriate and includes some level of parental consensus," he saw no other option but to have the Applicant removed from the class during such discussions. He advised Principal Derbyshire that he intended to raise the issue with the School's Parents' Committee (the School Council), the School Trustee, and the Board directly.

67. Principal Derbyshire forwarded this email to the Coach on March 27, 2018, to seek the Coach's assistance in addressing the concerns.
68. On March 27, 2018, Principal Derbyshire received an email from the School's Superintendent, Peter Symmonds, forwarding an email he received from the Applicant's parents requesting to meet to review their concerns. In that email, the Applicant's parents stated that their daughter was being taught "gender identity concepts that are not age appropriate or aligned with the Ontario curriculum."
69. On March 27, 2018, Principal Derbyshire followed up with the Applicant's parents by email. She advised that she was consulting with Board staff, and requested a time to meet in person to clarify their earlier telephone discussions. They were unsuccessful in finding a time to meet in person.
70. On March 27, 2018, the Applicant's mother attended the School Council Meeting (the "Meeting"). Prior to the Meeting, she had asked the School Council Chairs to put her on the agenda. At the Meeting, she gave a speech regarding her concerns.
71. The Applicant's mother also posed specific questions to Principal Derbyshire, including why she was refusing to advise all parents of the discussions and the context around these. In the interests of preserving the privacy and dignity of students, Principal Derbyshire declined to share the particulars that gave rise to the discussions.
72. Principal Derbyshire had brought the Guide with her, and answered a few other questions from parents.
73. Neither Ms. Blouin nor Principal Derbyshire received any complaints or concerns from any other parents of students in the Class about the discussions in question. On the contrary, a few parents contacted Principal Derbyshire to express their appreciation for the support provided to students.
74. Ms. Blouin shared the Video with Principal Derbyshire on March 28, 2018. Principal Derbyshire, who had not previously been aware of the Video nor that it had been shown in the Class, then relayed the details of the Video to Superintendent Symmonds.

75. Ms. Blouin contacted the Coach on March 28, 2018, to request her guidance.
76. The Coach responded on April 4, 2018. Ms. Blouin and the Coach spoke by phone that day about teaching concepts of gender. They discussed the relevant OCDSB resources, and talked about representing gender fluidity in class, in an inclusive manner, consistent with the relevant policies and guidelines. After the call, Ms. Blouin sent the Coach a copy of the Video, and the Coach responded indicating that she approved of the Video.
77. The Applicant's parents met with Superintendent Symmonds on April 11, 2018. They again demanded that the OCDSB communicate with all parents regarding the discussions that had occurred. Mr. Symmonds declined to do so, for the reasons already described.
78. In a further call with the Applicant's parents, Superintendent Symmonds told them about the Video.
79. Superintendent Symmonds and Principal Derbyshire agreed that, going forward, teachers at the School would continue to advise Principal Derbyshire before engaging in discussions about gender identity or gender expression. Principal Derbyshire reiterated to Ms. Blouin that she should speak to Principal Derbyshire before engaging in further such discussions. This was to ensure compliance with the Guide.
80. On April 13, 2018, the Applicant's mother emailed Ms. Blouin, Principal Derbyshire, and Superintendent Symmonds in follow-up to their discussions. She indicated that she and the Applicant's father were supportive of the outcome of their discussions, and requested a link to the Video, which Principal Derbyshire provided on April 13, 2018.
81. After early 2018, there were no further discussions about gender with the Class.
82. None of the Respondents heard from the Applicant's parents again regarding these issues until the Application was filed on March 18, 2019. The Applicant and her sister completed the school year in June 2018. They did not return to the School in September 2018.

**C. ISSUES**

*The Individual Respondents Should Be Removed as Respondents*

83. The Respondents request that the Individual Respondents named in the Application be removed as Respondents to the Application. The Respondents reserve the right to file a Request for an Order During Proceedings to have the Individual Respondents removed.

84. At paragraph 5 of *Persaud v Toronto District School Board*, 2008 HRTO 31 the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (the “Tribunal”) directed consideration of the following factors when determining whether to remove a personal respondent from an Application:

a) *Is there is a corporate respondent in the proceeding that also is alleged to be liable for the same conduct?*

There is a Corporate Respondent, the OCDSB, which is alleged to have discriminated against the Applicant.

b) *Is there any issue raised as to the corporate respondent’s deemed or vicarious liability for the conduct of the personal respondent who sought to be removed?*

The OCDSB accepts that it would be vicariously liable for the Individual Respondents’ alleged violations of the *Code*, if any. At all material times, the Individual Respondents were employees of the OCDSB. All of the decisions and actions of the Individual Respondents with respect to the Applicant, if any, were done in their capacity as employees of the OCDSB, and therefore were the decisions and actions of the OCDSB.

c) *Is there any issue as to the ability of the corporate respondent to respond to or remedy the alleged Code infringement?*

There is no question with respect to the OCDSB’s ability to respond to or remedy the alleged *Code* infringements.

- d) *Does any compelling reason exist to continue the proceeding as against the personal respondent, such as where it is the individual conduct of the personal respondent that is a central issue or where the nature of the alleged conduct of the personal respondent may make it appropriate to award a remedy specifically against that individual if an infringement is found?*

There is no compelling reason to continue the proceeding against the Individual Respondents. Their conduct was, at all times, professional and in keeping with their *Code* obligations. The Applicant has provided no facts to suggest that either Individual Respondent acted outside of their capacity as an employee of the OCDSB, nor that either engaged in any conduct so egregious as to require relief against them personally.

- e) *Would any prejudice be caused to any party as a result of removing the personal respondent?*

The Applicant would suffer no prejudice by removing Principal Derbyshire and Ms. Blouin from the Application.

*The Respondents Did Not Discriminate Against The Applicant*

85. The Respondents categorically deny all allegations of discrimination, whether direct or indirect, or differential treatment, whether direct or indirect, against the Applicant based on or related to sex, gender, and/or gender identity in the area of services. The Respondents note that “gender” is not, in and of itself, a *Code* ground.
86. To establish discrimination, the Applicant must demonstrate that:
- a) She has a characteristic protected from discrimination;
  - b) She experienced an adverse impact within a social area protected by the *Code*; and
  - c) The protected characteristic was a factor in the adverse impact.

*Shaw v Phipps*, 2010 ONSC 3884 at para 47, upheld 2012 ONCA 155; *Peel Law Association v Pieters*, 2013 ONCA 396 at para 56.

87. The Applicant has failed to allege facts that meet these criteria.
88. While the Applicant and her parents may not like that there were discussions in the Class about gender identity and fluidity, this does not amount to discrimination.
89. If the Respondents did anything wrong, it was at most by presenting students with content that was not age-appropriate, which is not admitted, and does not, in any event, amount to discrimination. Once the Respondents became aware that the Applicant was upset and confused by the discussions, her concerns were addressed immediately, and efforts were made to ensure that no further confusion or upset resulted.

### **No Discrimination on the Basis of Sex**

90. To establish discrimination on the basis of sex, the Applicant must establish a link between her sex and the alleged discriminatory actions of the Respondents. There is no such link.
91. The Applicant alleges that Ms. Blouin engaged in a discussion about the gender spectrum, and stated that boys and girls are not real, and that boys and girls do not exist. She does not allege that she was singled out or treated differently because of her sex, or that girls were targeted by the discussions. The comments were directed equally at all students, regardless of sex, and were aimed at building awareness and openness towards children who do not, as the Applicant does, identify with their birth-assigned sex.
92. There is nothing discriminatory based on sex about these comments, which applied equally to boys and to girls. Even if the Applicant and her parents found the Respondents' comments offensive, this cannot be construed as discrimination because of sex simply because the Applicant is a girl (see, for example, *Chambers v Littell*, 2010 HRTO 987 at para 8; *Prior v SKM Pharmacy Inc*, 2019 HRTO 1056 at para 13).
93. While the Respondents do not dispute that females are a historically-disadvantaged group, as compared to males, this fact, in and of itself, does not mean that the Applicant was subjected to discrimination. As compared to transgender individuals, cisgender females have not been in a historically-disadvantaged position.

94. In the present case, the comparison is not between girls and boys, but rather cisgender girls and boys, and transgender or gender non-conforming individuals. In this analysis, it cannot be said that the Applicant, as a cisgender girl, suffered a disadvantage because of her sex, nor can it be said that the Respondents' actions established a disadvantage that perpetuates prejudice or stereotyping against gender-conforming individuals.
95. The Applicant's argument is, in effect, that the Respondents discriminated against gender-conforming male and female students. This amounts to an allegation of discrimination based on being cisgender or gender-conforming, which does not withstand scrutiny.

### **No Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity**

96. To establish discrimination on the basis of gender identity, the Applicant must first establish that she falls within this protected group. The Respondents submit that as a cisgender girl, she does not.
97. The Commission and the Tribunal have recognized that transgender and gender non-conforming people are one of the "*most disadvantaged groups in society*" and have faced "*extreme social stigma and prejudice in our society*" (see, for example, the Policy; *Lewis v Sugar Daddys Nightclub*, 2016 HRTO 347 at paras 36-39, citing *XY v Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, 2012 HRTO 726 at para 165; *Browne v Sudbury Nickel Operations*, 2016 HRTO 62 at paras 34-35).
98. The Tribunal has repeatedly recognized that the purpose of the addition of gender identity and gender expression as *Code* grounds, by *Toby's Law*, was to protect individuals who were not historically protected, and who therefore faced disadvantages that cisgender individuals did not; that is "*people whose gender identity does not conform to traditional social norms e.g. transgender people*" (*Leach v Ontario (Advanced Education and Skills Department)*, 2017 HRTO 1263 at para 23, citing *Vanderputten v. Seydaco Packaging Corp.*, 2012 HRTO 1977; see also: *Chester v City of Toronto Economic Development Corporation*, 2015 HRTO 785 at para 41, citing the Policy; *Lewis v Sugar Daddys Nightclub*, 2016 HRTO 347 at paras 36-39; *Browne v Sudbury Integrated Nickel*

*Operations*, 2016 HRTO 62 at paras 36-42; *Barksey v Four Corners Medical Walk In Clinic/Northwood Medical Clinics Inc*, 2016 HRTO 1116 at paras 36-37).

99. The Respondents submit that the ground of gender identity ought not to be interpreted and expanded so as to offer protection to cisgender males or females against adverse treatment for expressing themselves in a stereotypically gender-conforming way. Such an interpretation, which would offer further protection to a historically-advantaged group, would be inconsistent with the very purpose of the *Code's* protections, and would do violence to the important purposes of *Toby's Act*, (*Barksey v Four Corners Medical Walk In Clinic/Northwood Medical Clinics Inc*, 2016 HRTO 1116 at paras 36-37).
100. There is no doubt that women, as a group, have faced historical disadvantage in society vis-à-vis men. It is also beyond doubt that gender-confirming women have not faced disadvantage vis-à-vis transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. This distinction is the very reason why gender identity and gender expression protections exist.
101. The Respondents submit that this Application, if successful, would have the effect of further perpetuating prejudice and ignorance against gender non-conforming and transgender people, and diluting the *Code* protections for such individuals.
102. The Respondents urge the Tribunal to reject the Applicant's argument that she, as a cisgender female, was discriminated against on the basis of gender identity when she was told that gender exists on a spectrum, and that gender identities other than her own exist.
103. The Respondents further urge the Tribunal to continue to develop the growing body of case law that recognizes that the ground of gender identity is intended to be a shield against discrimination for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, and not a sword for those in the majority of individuals who are gender-conforming.

#### **No Prima Facie Case of Discrimination**

104. As set out in the Respondents' Form 26, Request for Summary Hearing, dated May 24, 2019, the Respondents submit that the Application, in its entirety, fails to establish a *prima facie* case, has no reasonable prospect of success, and ought to be dismissed summarily.

105. The Respondents rely on Rule 19A of the Tribunal's Rule of Procedure and *Dabic v Windsor Police Service*, 2010 HRTO 1994, at paras 8-9.
106. The Applicant filed a Response to the Request on June 7, 2019, and an amended Response to the Request on October 28, 2019 (the "Summary Hearing Response").
107. The Respondents reserve the right to address the new allegations in the Summary Hearing Response in greater detail, prior to any hearing in this matter. At this stage, the Respondents wish to make the following comments.
108. Neither the Application nor the Summary Hearing Response provide any basis upon which the Tribunal could conclude that the Applicant has a reasonable prospect of establishing discrimination. The Applicant also makes several false allegations in the Summary Hearing Response, some of which are contradicted by the allegations in their own Application.
109. The Applicant alleges at paragraph 7 of the Summary Hearing Response that there was a "repeated denial of the existence of "girls." This is false. As described in the Application, Ms. Blouin stated that "boys and girls are not real" and that "there are no boys or girls." She made each of these comments only once. This was neither "repeated," nor directed at "girls." The Applicant does not allege, nor is it the case, that students were told that boys are real, but girls are not. In other words, no distinction was made between boys and girls.
110. The Applicant alleges, at paragraphs 11-12 of the Summary Hearing Response, that Ms. Blouin "denied the existence of two genders on the gender identity spectrum (boys and girls)," and made comments that were discriminatory against "two genders on the gender identity spectrum." This belies the allegations of discrimination on the basis of sex, and amounts to an argument that cisgender students were discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity, because they were taught about the gender spectrum and gender fluidity. The Respondents' position on this argument is detailed above.
111. At no time did Ms. Blouin portray "only fluid genders as genuine," as alleged. Rather, she indicated that all gender is on a fluid spectrum, which is consistent with the Commission's

Policy and the OCDSB's Guide. She did so to emphasize that all genders are genuine, contrary to certain individuals' perceptions that gender exists only on a male-female binary.

112. Contrary to the allegation at paragraph 15 of the Summary Hearing Response, Ms. Blouin explained gender identity as a spectrum, and the Book and Video both highlighted the idea of the gender spectrum, and the fluidity of gender identity.
113. While the Board does not dispute that all pupils, "including those in the majority of a given category" are entitled to acceptance and inclusion, it rejects that this ought to be at the expense of exposing such students to the realities of those in the minority of a given category. The Respondents categorically deny that teaching lessons on gender fluidity stigmatizes, degrades, or alienates gender-conforming or biologically-female students.
114. Contrary to the allegation at paragraph 18 of the Summary Hearing Response, the Board neither believes nor intends to convey that "there is something wrong or abnormal about gender conforming or biologically-female students." Rather, the Board believes and intends to convey that just as there is nothing wrong or abnormal about being gender conforming, so too is there absolutely nothing wrong with being gender-nonconforming. That the Applicant's parents take issue with this belief does not amount to discrimination.
115. The Respondents reject the suggestion at paragraph 19 of the Summary Hearing Response that teaching and recognizing gender identities that do not conform with traditional understandings in any way impinges upon the rights of gender-conforming boys or girls.
116. The Respondents deny that they discriminated against the Applicant in their response to her complaints about the discussions in the classroom. First, since no *Code* grounds were initially engaged, the Respondents had no *Code* obligation to take any action based on these complaints. In any event, as described above, when the Applicant's parents complained, the Respondents took efforts to understand their concerns, and to reach resolution. At the time, the Applicant's parents indicated that they were satisfied with the outcome. That they are now displeased with these efforts does not amount to discrimination.

117. Should the Tribunal decline to grant summary hearing at a preliminary stage, the Respondents reserve the right to argue at hearing that the Applicant's evidence fails to disclose a prima facie case of discrimination, and request summary dismissal at that time (*Pellerin v Conseil scolaire du district catholique Centre-Sud*, 2011 HRTO 1777).

**The Charter Allegations are Outside of the Tribunal's Jurisdiction and Should be Dismissed**

118. The Respondents deny that they have breached the Applicant's section 7 or section 15 *Charter* rights, as alleged at paragraphs 44-46 of the Application.
119. In any event, these allegations are outside of the Tribunal's jurisdiction, and ought to be dismissed. The Respondents reserve the right to make a Request for an Order During Proceedings to have these allegations struck.
120. The Tribunal has repeatedly confirmed that it does not have the jurisdiction to hear "stand alone" *Charter* challenges. That is, while the Tribunal can consider an allegation that the *Code* itself is unconstitutional (i.e. that a provision of the *Code* violates the *Charter*), it cannot consider allegations that an applicant's *Charter* rights were breached by the actions of a respondent. The Tribunal's jurisdiction is specifically limited to claims arising under the *Code* (*Eaton v Ontario (Community Safety and Correctional Services)*, 2018 HRTO 1815 at paras 5-6; *DS v Children's Aid Society of the Districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin*, 2016 HRTO 187 at para 12; *Vezina v Elections Ontario*, 2016 HRTO 1176 at para 2; *Terra v Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board*, 2015 HRTO 1657 at para 34; *Rosario v Thunder Bay (Police Services Board)*, 2013 HRTO 2093 at para 5).
121. In the absence of such an allegation of unconstitutionality, the Respondents submit that the Applicant's allegations of *Charter* breaches ought to be dismissed.

**CONCLUSION**

*The Respondents Acted in Accordance with their Obligations*

122. The Respondents categorically deny all allegations of discrimination, whether direct or indirect, or differential treatment, whether direct or indirect, as against the Applicant based

on or related to sex, gender, and/or gender identity in the provision of services. The Respondents deny having breached sections 1, 9, and/or 11 of the *Code*.

123. The Respondents are deeply committed to meeting their obligations to students under the *Code*, the Commission's Policy, the OCDSB's Guide, and the *Education Act*, as amended by the *Accepting Schools Act*.
124. The Respondents complied with the Board's obligations pursuant to the *Education Act*, to promote a positive school climate that is "*inclusive and accepting of all pupils of any [...] sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression [...]*."
125. Their actions were at all times consistent with these obligations, including the obligation to preserve students' privacy and confidentiality.
126. The Applicant's parents' allegations that the impugned discussions are outside of the curriculum is clearly outside of the Tribunal's jurisdiction. In any event, the allegation is unfounded.
127. In *ETFO et al v Her Majesty the Queen*, 2019 ONSC 1308 at para 122, the Divisional Court confirmed that teachers were "*free to address topics that go beyond those expressly set out in the 2010 Curriculum to meet the needs of a given class or student.*" Further, at paragraph 123(e), the Divisional Court continued that the Minister of Education had confirmed that "*teachers may teach the gender identity concept in class.*"
128. To allege that the Respondents' attempts to create a welcoming school environment and protect the privacy of a student questioning their gender identity infringes upon the Applicant's rights as a gender-conforming female is contrary to the *Code* in letter and spirit.

*The Remedies Requested are Inappropriate*

129. With respect to the Remedies the Applicant seeks, the Respondents submits as follows.
130. The damages claimed are not owed as there has been no breach of the *Code*.

131. In the alternative, if the Respondents are found to have violated the *Code*, the Applicant's request for \$5,000.00 in damages is excessive and unfounded, particularly given the steps the Respondents took when it came to their attention that the Applicant was upset and confused by the discussion.
132. The Respondents already ensure that classroom instruction does not devalue, deny, or undermine any sex or gender identity, including female, and an order to this effect would be superfluous. This is achieved through the literary resources, the Guide, instruction from the Coach, and ongoing discussion and learning.
133. The Tribunal does not have the jurisdiction to order teachers to inform parents when lessons on gender identity will take place, including notice of the teaching objectives and the materials that will be used.
134. The Applicant's request that the Board cease and desist from teaching that gender is fluid or exists on a spectrum is fundamentally at odds with the purpose of the *Code*, and, indeed would serve only to perpetuate discrimination against a historically-disadvantaged group. This remedy request belies the true purpose of this Application: to prevent the Board from teaching students about gender theory and fluidity.
135. For all of these reasons, the Application should be dismissed.

All of which is respectfully submitted this 18<sup>th</sup> day of November 2019.

**EMOND HARNDEN LLP**

Barristers and Solicitors  
707 Bank Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1S 3V1

**Raquel Chisholm**

LSO #: 489841I

**Larissa Volinets Schieven**

LSO #: 69743M

Tel: (613) 563-7600

Fax: (613) 563-8001

**Solicitors for the Respondents**

**TAB 1**



**TITLE: EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

**Date Issued: 30 April 2001**

**Last Revised: 12 April 2011**

**Authorization: Board: 26 March 2001**

---

**1.0 OBJECTIVE**

To ensure equity of opportunity and equity of access to the full range of programs, services, and resources offered by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (“the District”) to foster successful educational achievement and social outcomes.

**2.0 DEFINITIONS**

In this policy,

- 2.1 **Diversity** refers to the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.
- 2.2 **Discrimination** refers to unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, or disability, as set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, or on the basis of other, similar factors. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.
- 2.3 **Equity** refers to a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.
- 2.4 **Inclusive Education** refers to education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

- 2.5 **School Community** refers to students, parents/guardians, trustees, staff, contractors and service providers, volunteers and community members.

### **3.0 POLICY**

- 3.1 The District is committed to promoting student achievement and well-being for all students.
- 3.2 The District is committed to the identification and elimination of discriminatory bias and systemic barriers that may limit access to, and opportunity for, effective student engagement and achievement.
- 3.3 The District confirms and upholds the principles enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
- 3.4 The District believes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to all programs, services, and resources are critical to the well-being of those who serve our schools and to the achievement of successful outcomes by all those whom we serve.
- 3.5 The District is committed to fairness, equity, and inclusive education as essential principles of our school system; our policies, programs, operations, and practices will reflect these values.

### **4.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

The District's commitment to equity and inclusive education will be guided by the Ministry of Education's *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools"*. Further details and specific action statements are contained in the "Equity and Inclusive Education" procedure – PR.618.CUR.

- 4.1 The District shall serve its staff, students and families in diverse communities by:
- a) incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education into its policies, programs, procedures, and practices so that an equity and inclusive education focus is an integral part of the District's operations and structures;
  - b) ensuring existing policies, programs, procedures, and practices are reviewed to be in accordance with the District's equity and inclusive education policy;
  - c) ensuring policies, programs, procedures, and practices are drafted, implemented and reviewed in accordance with the District's equity and inclusive education policy; and
  - d) implementing positive employment practices that support equitable hiring, mentoring, retention, promotion, and succession planning.
- 4.2 The District shall provide informed leadership to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps for students by identifying and addressing discrimination by:

- a) communicating the District's equity and inclusive education policy to staff, students, parents, and community;
  - b) identifying education and/or training required to assist staff, students, parents in implementing the equity and inclusive education policy; and
  - c) ensuring the Director of Education, or designee liaises with the Ministry and other district boards to share challenges, promising practices and resources.
- 4.3 The District shall establish and maintain collaborative relationships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families and employees are recognized and addressed by:
- a) reviewing the structure of existing committees and partnerships to help ensure they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education;
  - b) expanding community outreach efforts to foster new partnerships that engage a cross-section of diverse students, parents, staff, community members and various community organizations, including business groups;
  - c) drawing upon the expertise of related partners to explore innovative ways of sharing resources that can help to meet the diverse needs of its students and provide new and relevant learning opportunities; and
  - d) developing and sustaining on-going relationships with community agencies to ensure support in both student achievement and well-being.
- 4.4 The District shall deliver an inclusive curriculum and review resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify and address discriminatory biases so that each student may maximize their learning potential. This includes:
- a) supporting staff in the use of inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and effective instructional strategies that reflect the diverse needs of students and the learning pathways they are taking;
  - b) providing students with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures and perspectives;
  - c) reviewing resources, instruction, assessment and evaluation practices to identify and eliminate stereotypes, discriminatory biases and systemic barriers;
  - d) identifying and addressing inconsistent standards and discriminatory biases in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated; and
  - e) being sensitive to new curriculum materials when purchasing decisions are being made.
- 4.5 The District acknowledges each individual's right to follow or not follow religious beliefs and practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodation to students and staff. Please refer to P 086 and PR 086 CUR.

- 4.6 The District shall endeavour to ensure a respectful, positive school climate and learning environment, by:
- a) monitoring school environments through climate surveys every two years and incorporating questions on equity and inclusive education; and
  - b) addressing any expression of bias or discrimination in any form by its staff, students, parents/guardians, contractors and service providers, volunteers or visitors who are on District premises or participating in District-sponsored activities.
- 4.7 The District shall provide the school community with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to identify and address discriminatory biases and systemic barriers by:
- a) allocating resources to provide opportunities for staff to participate in training on topics of equity and inclusive education;
  - b) providing information for students and parents to increase their knowledge and understanding of equity and inclusive education; and
  - c) identifying and drawing upon existing expertise, as appropriate, with respect to equity and inclusive education within the District, other school districts, community partners and agencies.
- 4.8 The District shall assess and monitor its progress in implementing an equity and inclusive education policy by:
- a) embedding equity and inclusive principles into board and school improvement plans and other District policies, programs, procedures, and practices;
  - b) communicating the equity and inclusive education policy, initiatives and results to all stakeholders and making it readily available on the Board's website; and
  - c) integrating updates of the District's progress in the Director of Education's annual report.

## **5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

*Education Act, 1998, section 8.1 (29.1)*

*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Constitution Act, 1982*

*Ontario Human Rights Code*

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools" (June 24, 2009)

Board Policy P.121.GOV: Accessibility

Board Policy P.053.HR: Alleged Harassment

Board Policy P.119.HR: Respectful Workplace

Board Policy P.032.SCO: Safe Schools

Board Policy P.086.CUR: Religious Accommodation Policy (replaces Religious Holy Days)

Board Policy PR. 586.CUR: Religious Accommodation Procedure (replaces Religious Holy Days)

Board Procedure PR.666.GOV: Accessibility (Customer Service Standards)

Board Procedure PR.652.HR: Respectful Workplace  
Board Procedure PR.521.SCO: Safe Schools  
Board Procedure PR.618.CUR: Equity and Inclusive Education Procedure

**TAB 2**



OTTAWA-CARLETON  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

# **GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER EXPRESSION**

*GUIDE TO SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS*

**INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND CARING PROGRAMS**





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The OCDSB would like to thank district and school staff for their ongoing commitment and advocacy for transgender and gender diverse students and families. We would like to acknowledge our students and families who have been courageous in working as change agents in our schools. We also acknowledge the significant contributions of the Rainbow Service Provider's Network, who provide community support to our students, staff and parents in the OCDSB community.*

*Special thanks to the OCDSB working group members: Patsy Agard, Barry Armstrong, Lee Blue, Al Brule, Alison Buchanan, Denise Croteau, Matt Gagnier, Brian Garbutt, Beck Hood, Kathi Kay, Kristin Kopra, Jacqueline Lawrence, Janice McCoy, Anne McKillop-Ostrom, Rick Mellor, Sue Peter-Weeks, Brett Reynolds, Natalie Rodriguez, Henrike Sanne, Tracy Shapiro, Shannon Smith, Peter Wright.*

*Parts of this document have been adapted from documents in the Toronto District School Board, Thames-Valley District School Board, Durham District School Board, Halton District School Board, and the Nova Scotia Department of Education. We acknowledge and thank them for their efforts in creating guidelines to support the accommodation of transgender and gender diverse students.*

# INTRODUCTION

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is committed to ensuring the physical and emotional safety of all students. As part of this commitment, we want to make sure students of all gender expressions and identities feel safe, welcomed and accepted in our schools.

All school districts exist within a broader context of law and public policy that protects and defends human rights. The Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) provides for equal rights and opportunities, and freedom from discrimination. The Code recognizes the dignity and worth of every person in Ontario, in employment, housing, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trade or professional associations.

People who are discriminated against or harassed because of their gender identity and/or gender expression are legally protected from discrimination under the Code. This includes transsexual, transgender, two-spirit and intersex persons, crossdressers, and other people whose gender identity or expression is, or is seen to be, different from their birth-identified sex.

## PURPOSE

This document sets out the OCDSB's guidelines related to accommodation based on gender identity and gender expression. It has been designed to raise awareness and help protect against discrimination and harassment. It is intended that this document will support staff, students and families in the OCDSB community in ensuring that the rights of those whose gender identity and gender expression do not conform to traditional social norms are protected, understood and accepted. It is important that we recognize that all members of our school communities are entitled to particular supports and protections. This includes students who are transitioning, identify as androgynous, gender creative, gender independent, gender fluid, gender variant, gender diverse, gender non-conforming, intersex, two-spirit, transgender, transsexual or trans\*.

It is expected that the guidelines will be adhered to in general; however, it is also recognized that specific accommodations sought are to be fulfilled on a case-by-case basis and individualized to best meet the needs of the student and/or family who is making an accommodation request.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Each student, school, and district staff has a responsibility to ensure that transgender and gender diverse students have a safe learning environment. This includes making sure that any incident of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or violence is to be handled in accordance with OCDSB policies and procedures.

### Student Roles and Responsibilities:

- ◆ Respect the rights of all members of the school community with regard to their gender identity and gender expression
- ◆ Support the safety and well-being of all students
- ◆ Celebrate the diversity of the student population

### Parent Roles and Responsibilities:

- ◆ Demonstrate respect for the rights for all students, staff, parents, and members of the school community with regard to their gender identity and gender expression
- ◆ Engage in initiatives that foster a positive, safe school environment
- ◆ Work with the school Principal and other staff to request and fulfill an accommodation request



### Sex:

the classification of people as male, female or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person's reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes and other physical characteristics.



### Gender Identity:

each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's 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 their birth assigned sex.



### Gender Expression:

how a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways people express their gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes.

***Additional terms are found on page 10.***

**Staff Roles and Responsibilities:**

*The Principal will work with staff to ensure that the following roles and responsibilities are adhered to.*

- ◆ Respect the rights of all members of the school community with regard to their gender identity and gender expression and are in compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code
- ◆ Support the safety and well-being of all students
- ◆ Celebrate the diversity of the student population
- ◆ Take personal responsibility to educate themselves (i.e., be aware of available resources to help connect students to the supports they need)
- ◆ Model respect, understanding, appropriate behaviour, and affirmation of diversity in the working and learning environment
- ◆ Ensure curriculum and classroom materials and activities contain positive images and accurate information about history and culture which reflects the accomplishments and contributions of transgender and gender diverse people, in accordance with Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and OCDSB practice
- ◆ Develop a plan to prevent and respond to transphobic incidents (e.g. bullying prevention plan, develop safer spaces, education for students, responses according to OCDSB safe schools policies and procedures)
- ◆ Work with student and/or family to support and fulfill an accommodation request(s)
- ◆ Respect confidentiality in the event of disclosure of a student's gender identity

**District Roles and Responsibilities:**

- ◆ Ensure that OCDSB guidelines, policies and procedures are reflective in nature of transgender and gender diverse students and are in compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code
- ◆ Identify and address discriminatory biases so that each student may maximize their learning potential, including the use of inclusive curriculum, instructional strategies that reflect the diverse needs of students and pathways for all learners
- ◆ Support schools in issues of equity (including gender identity) within the existing structures, practices and environments
- ◆ Provide professional development opportunities and other supports for district personnel and school staff on creating inclusive learning environments for transgender and gender diverse students
- ◆ Work in partnership with transgender and gender diverse communities

# ACCOMMODATION GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS



## Accommodation Based on Request

The OCDSB will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation to students making a request based on their right to free gender expression and/or gender identity. The district will balance its decision on how to best accommodate the student with several factors including: the dignity of the person making the request; the goal of inclusiveness; health and safety concerns; the cost of the accommodation to the district and the effect of the accommodation on the district's ability to fulfill its duties under district policies, the Education Act, and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Under the Human Rights Code, an accommodation is a multi-party process and shared responsibility. Everyone must work together cooperatively and respectfully to explore and implement appropriate accommodation solutions.

Accommodations are made upon request, regardless of the age of the student, on a case by case basis. Whenever possible, school staff will work collaboratively with the student and the parent/guardian. In the event of a safety risk to the student, the OCDSB will follow the appropriate policies and procedures.

An accommodation request should be made in writing to the school principal. The request may come directly from the student or the student's legal guardian(s). Staff may also work in an advocacy capacity and work with the student to support them in their request. The school will work together with the student and/or family on an accommodation that best respects dignity, meets individual needs, and promotes inclusion.

An accommodation request is generally a specific request as it pertains to an individual student, based upon some of the categories described in this document. Each request will be different because they are developed on a case by case basis. **There may be a request made that is not described in this document.**

## Confidentiality

All students have a right to confidentiality; schools must keep a student's transgender/gender diverse status confidential. Therefore, school staff should not disclose a student's transgender/gender diverse status to others unless there is a specific "need to know" (e.g., to fulfill a specific accommodation request). School staff will ensure that consent is sought from the student and the student's family prior to the sharing of information in order to fulfill an accommodation request.

## Names/Pronouns

Transgender, intersex, two-spirit and gender diverse students have the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun corresponding to their gender identity. This is true regardless of whether the student has obtained a legal name or sex designation change. (e.g., in the school database and registration system, a student's "preferred or chosen name" and a change of gender can be used on class lists, timetables, etc.) School staff may need to make manual changes to report cards and diplomas to ensure that the preferred name and pronouns appear on these documents.

Students who wish to use gender diverse pronouns such as "they", "them", "zhe", "ze", "hir" to identify themselves will be accommodated.

Every person has the right to define their own gender identity. A person's self-identification is the sole measure for their gender.

## Unresolved Requests



The OCDSB will take reasonable and timely steps to address the request for an accommodation. Students and their families, who feel that their accommodation needs remain unmet, may speak to the Superintendent of Instruction assigned to the school.

## Individual Procedures



District and school staff must consider each student's needs and concerns separately. Each gender diverse and trans student is unique with different needs. An accommodation that works for one student cannot simply be assumed to work for another.

## Official Records

*For changes to official school records, school staff will work collaboratively with the student and the parent/guardian as part of the process.*

The school will change a student's official records (Ontario Student Record (OSR) and Ontario Education Number (OEN)) to reflect a change in legal name upon receipt of documentation that such legal name has been changed (i.e. birth certificate).

The school will change a student's official records to reflect a change in gender upon request of the student. No supporting documentation is required for this change.

The school will also change the preferred first name upon request of the student.

## Washroom Access

All students have a right to safe restroom facilities and the right to use a washroom that best corresponds to the student's gender identity and gender expression, regardless of the student's sex assigned at birth. Requiring students to 'prove' their gender (by requiring a doctor's letter, identity documents, etc.) is not acceptable. A student's self-identification is the sole measure of the student's gender.

Where possible, schools will also provide an easily accessible all-gender single stall washroom for use by any student who desires increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason. Use of an all-gender single stall washroom is an option students may request, but should not be imposed upon a student by the school because of the student's gender identity.

## Sports Activities, Gym Classes, and Change Rooms

School staff must ensure students can exercise their right to participate in gender-segregated sports, inter-scholastic athletics, and Health and Physical Education class activities in accordance with each student's gender identity. Coaches will work with and be supported by school staff to address each student's accommodation needs and ensure safety.

Students have the right to a safe change-room that corresponds to their gender identity. Transgender or gender-diverse students have the right to an accommodation that best meets the individual student's particular needs. Such accommodations, according to the student and/or family request, may include:

- A. access to the change-room as would be afforded to any other student of that gender identity;
- B. use of a private area within the public area (e.g., a bathroom stall with a door; an area separated by a curtain, etc.);
- C. a separate changing schedule in the private area (either utilizing the change room before or after the other students);
- D. use of a nearby private area (a nearby washroom; a nurse's office)

A coach will plan ahead in the case of away games.

It is not an acceptable accommodation to deny a student the opportunity for Health and Physical Education. For example: *not* allowing the student to have Health and Physical Education; *forcing* the student to choose independent study; *requiring* a transgender or gender-diverse student to use the change room corresponding to the student's sex assigned at birth.

## Participation in Other Areas

As a general rule, in any other circumstance where students are separated by gender in school activities (e.g., class discussions, field trips), students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity.

Activities that may involve the need for housing accommodations in order to address student privacy concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. All students on school field trips need to be housed in a manner that is safe and respectful. No student should be excluded from participating in a field trip, or asked to pay more to participate because of their gender identity. In some cases this may mean offering private accommodation to transgender students.



## Discussions about Gender Identity in Different Subject Areas

**Arts:** Deconstruct gender stereotyping in arts classes (e.g. music – flute players are female, media arts – only guys are computer savvy, drama – no females on stage in Shakespeare’s time, dance – only girls dance) and discuss exceptions to these stereotypes in order to broaden student experience and promote gender diversity.

**English:** Provide students with materials depicting characters in non-gender stereotyped ways. When studying classical literature that may contain gender stereotypes, discuss this with students, including the connection to social norms and evolution of societal issues.

**Languages:** How does gender connect to language? How can we use singular gender-neutral pronouns (e.g. they)? Do other languages have such a pronoun? For example, in French, objects have gender. Does this make sense? How was each gender decided? Do they follow stereotypical lines or are there unusual examples?

**Math:** Have a class discussion on famous mathematicians of the past and present. Discuss the dominance of men in the field and possible reasons for that. Have students challenge the long-held notion that girls aren’t good at math and challenge this belief. Introduce non-binary examples of gender into the language of word problems.

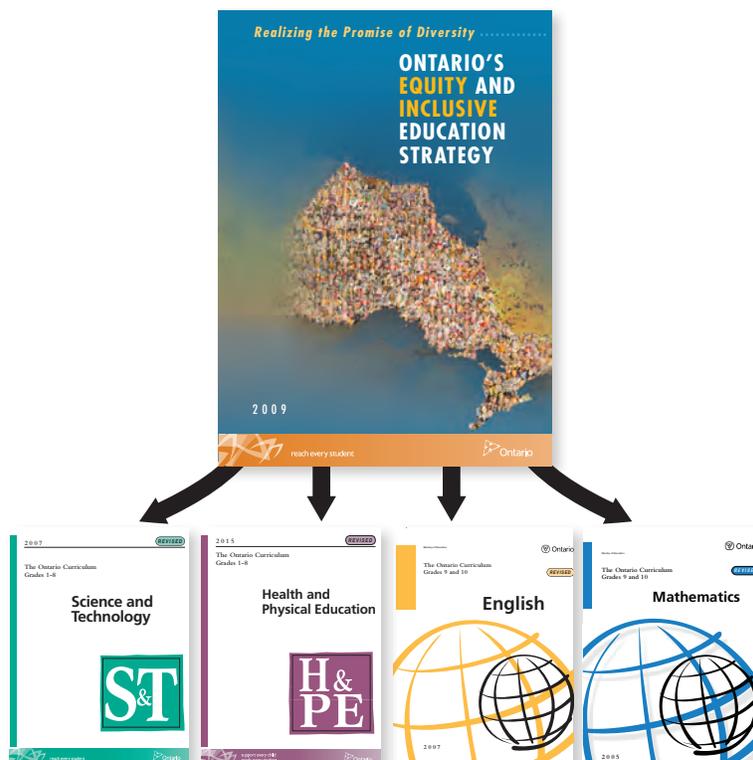
**Native Studies:** What does the term two-spirited mean? How are two-spirited people viewed in Aboriginal communities? Discuss how gender roles have been defined and how they have changed over time and in different communities.

**Health and Physical Education:** All people should see themselves represented in what is taught in health class. Teachers will present the range of human diversity, including, but not limited to: a range of bodies, a range of sexes, a range of gender identities and gender expressions, and a range of sexual orientations.

**Social Sciences:** Discuss how gender roles differ through time and by region. Provide students with a context for how changes come about through shifts in attitude, understanding, laws, scientific discovery, etc.

**Science:** Have students consider the biological and genetic differences between sexes and the scientific definition of a male and female. Introduce the notion of intersexuality. Discuss varieties in gender roles through the animal kingdom in terms of reproduction, mating rituals, caregiving, and nurturing roles.

**Technological Studies:** Challenge gender stereotyping in tech classes (e.g. only males are auto mechanics; only females do fashion design), and discuss expectations about these stereotypes to broaden student experience and promote gender diversity.



## Student Engagement and Leadership

Schools will support the development of a trans-inclusive student alliances or clubs. They should also support actions, activities and campaigns that are trans-positive and create awareness about and seek to end, transphobia, gender stereotypes, and gender-based violence.

### **Ontario Education Act Section 301**

#### **Board support for certain pupil activities and organizations**

*303.1 (1) Every board shall support pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote a safe and inclusive learning environment, the acceptance of and respect for others and the creation of a positive school climate, including,*

*(a) activities or organizations that promote gender equity;*

*(b) activities or organizations that promote anti-racism;*

*(c) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people with disabilities; or*

*(d) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including organizations with the name gay-straight alliance or another name. 2012, c. 5, s. 12.*

*Same, gay-straight alliance*

*(2) For greater certainty, neither the board nor the principal shall refuse to allow a pupil to use the name gay-straight alliance or a similar name for an organization described in clause (1) (d). 2012, c. 5, s. 12.*

## Dress Codes

All students can choose to wear appropriate clothing, informed by the OCDSB dress code policy, which matches their gender identity. School dress codes should not be gender specific, and should apply equally to all students, regardless of gender. The dress codes will be respectful of students who are gender creative, or who are in the process of transitioning.

## Facilities and School Design

The design of new schools and additions to existing sites will ensure that an all-gender washroom and appropriate change room facilities will be incorporated into the design. Private washroom signs should use the word washroom, with a toilet symbol. As appropriate, the Principal will work with the Area Supervisor, Chief Custodian, and Design & Construction to fulfill accommodation requests.

## Standardized Forms and Documentation

School staff are encouraged to use gender-diverse language and offer gender-inclusive choices on school forms and documentation. (e.g., “Gender \_\_\_\_\_” “Guardian 1 \_\_\_\_\_”) Gender documentation should only be asked when there is a legal requirement.

# DEFINITIONS

(Taken from the OHRC Policy on Gender Identity and Gender Expression)

The definitions provided below are not meant to label an individual but are intended as sometimes helpful functional descriptors. These words, like all words, are social constructs developed over time. New language is constantly formed both to unite community members as well as define groups by experience, politics, and other group memberships.

These terms and definitions are not standardized, and may be used differently by different people, and in different regions. Labels and identities should only be self-selected by individuals, not assumed by others. Biology does not imply identity. Nor does behavior and expression alone constitute identity.

**Cisgender and cisnormativity:** most people are “cisgender” (not trans); that is, their gender identity is in line with or “matches” the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisnormativity (“cis” meaning “the same as”) refers to the commonplace assumption that all people are cisgender and that everyone accepts this as “the norm.” The term is used to describe prejudice against trans people that is less overt or direct and more widespread or systemic in society, organizations and institutions. This form of systemic prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible.

**Cross-dresser:** a person who, for various reasons, wears gender atypical clothing. They may or may not self-identify as a cross dresser. “Cross-dresser” is a word that tends to refer to men with sometimes strong preferences for clothing often worn by women.

**Gender binary:** a social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: man or woman. These genders are expected to correspond to birth sex: male or female. In the gender binary system, there is no room for interpretations, for living between genders, or for crossing the binary. The gender binary system is rigid and restrictive for many people who feel that their natal sex (sex they were labelled with at birth) does not match up with their gender or that their gender is fluid and not fixed.

**Gender expression:** how a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person’s chosen name and pronoun are also common ways people express their gender. Others perceive a person’s gender through these attributes.

All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways. For trans people, their chosen name, preferred pronoun and apparel are common ways they express their gender. People who are trans may also take medically supportive steps to align their body with their gender identity.

**Gender identity:** each person’s internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person’s 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 their birth assigned sex.

For most people, their sex and gender identity align. For some, it does not. A person may be born male but identify as a woman, or born female but identify as a man. Other people may identify outside the categories of woman/man, or may see their gender identity as fluid and moving between different genders at different times in their life.

**Gender non-conforming/gender diverse/gender variant/gender queer/gender creative:** individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as “feminine men” or “masculine women” or as androgynous, outside of the categories “boy/man” and “girl/woman.” People who are gender non-conforming may or may not identify as trans.

**Gender norms:** the gender binary influences what society considers “normal” or acceptable behaviour, dress, appearances and roles for women and men. Gender norms are a prevailing force in everyday lives. Strength, action and dominance are stereotypically seen as “masculine” traits, while vulnerability, passivity and receptiveness are stereotypically seen as “feminine” traits. A woman expressing masculine traits may be stereotyped as overly “aggressive,” while a man expressing “feminine” traits may be labeled as “weak.” Gender norms can contribute to power imbalances and gender inequality in the home, at work and in communities.

**Intersex:** a term used to describe a person born with reproductive systems, chromosomes and/or hormones that are not easily characterized as male or female. This might include a woman with XY chromosomes or a man with ovaries instead of testes. Intersex characteristics occur in one out of every 1,500 births. Typically intersex people are assigned one sex, male or female, at birth. Some intersex people identify with their assigned sex, while others do not. Some choose to identify as intersex. Intersex people do not typically identify as transgender or transsexual.

**“Lived” gender identity:** the gender a person internally feels (“gender identity” along the gender spectrum) and publicly expresses (“gender expression”) in their daily life including at work, while shopping or accessing other services, in their housing environment or in the broader community.

**Sex:** the classification of people as male, female or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person’s reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes and other physical characteristics.

**Sex and gender:** whereas “sex” is a person’s physical characteristics, “gender” is about what it means to be a man or woman in society. It is the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions and roles linked to being a “man” or “woman.” Social norms related to gender can vary depending on the culture and can change over time.

**Sexual orientation and gender identity are different:** Sexual orientation describes human sexuality, from gay and lesbian to bisexual and heterosexual orientations. A person’s gender identity is fundamentally different from and not related to their sexual orientation. Because a person identifies as trans does not predict or reveal anything about their sexual orientation. A trans person may identify as gay, lesbian, queer, straight or bisexual, just as people who do not identify as trans.

**Trans or transgender:** an umbrella term that describes people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man in society.

“Trans” can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross dressers or gender non-conforming (gender variant or gender queer). “Trans” includes people whose gender identity is different from the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex. Trans people may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments, such as hormone therapy and a range of surgical procedures, to align their bodies with their internally felt gender identity.

People who have transitioned from one gender to another may simply identify as female or male. Others may also identify as trans, as a trans woman or a trans man. Some people may identify as trans and not use the labels “female” or “male.” Others may identify as existing between male and female or in different ways beyond the binary of male/female.

Trans people may identify their gender in many ways. There is no single or universal experience of what it means to be trans. As a result, different trans people face distinct forms of discrimination in society, and this may relate to whether they identify as male, female, a person with a trans history, a person in the process of transitioning, a trans man, trans woman, transsexual, or gender non-conforming.

**Trans man and trans woman:** A person whose sex assigned at birth is “female” and identifies as a man may also identify as a trans man (female-to-male FTM). A person whose sex assigned at birth is “male” and identifies as a woman may also identify as a trans woman (male-to-female MTF).

**Transitioning:** refers to a host of activities that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include changes to their name, sex designation, dress, the use of specific pronouns, and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, sex-reassignment surgery or other procedures. There is no checklist or average time for a transition process, and no universal goal or endpoint. Each person decides what meets their needs.

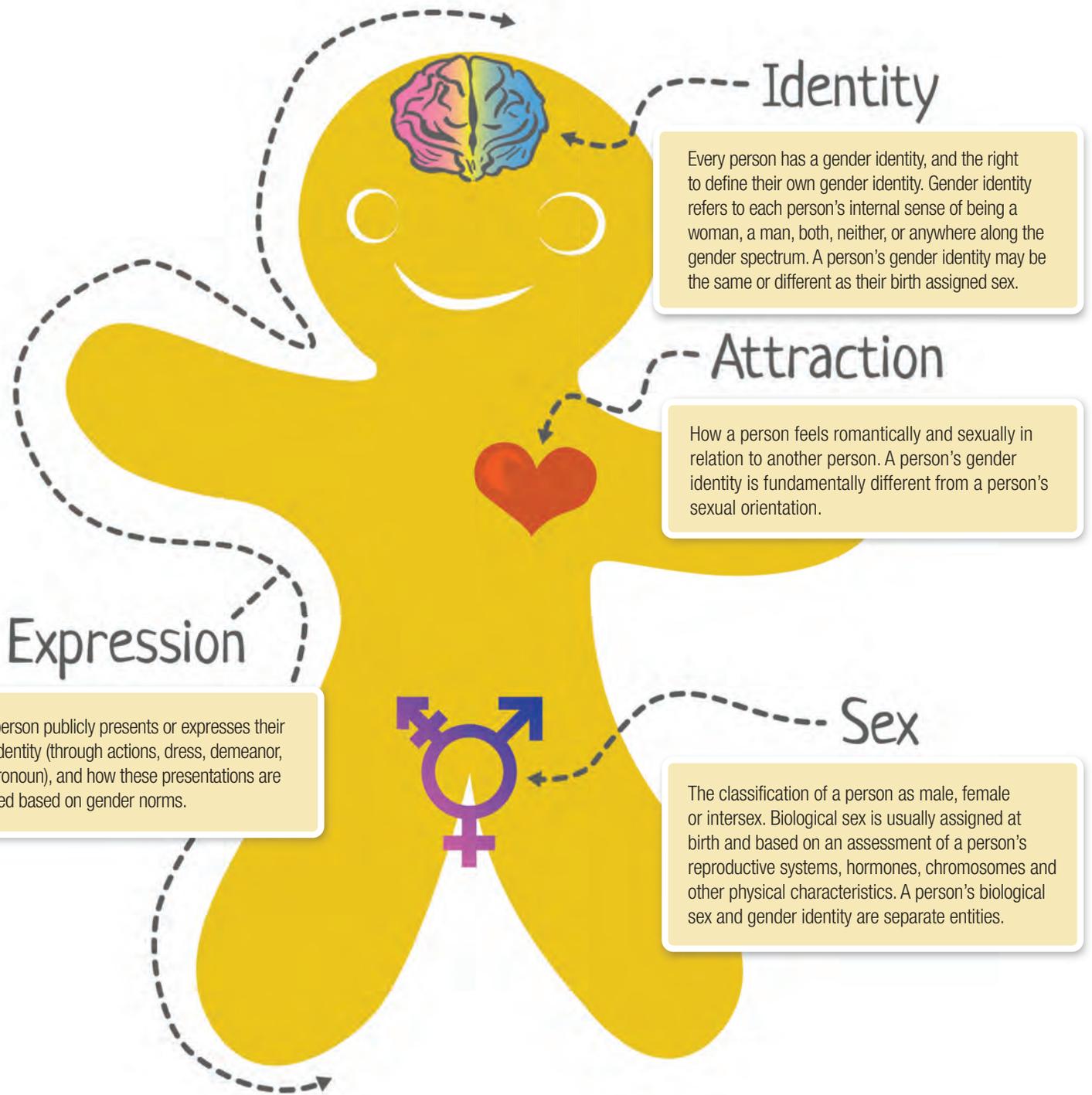
**Transphobia:** the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people.

**Transsexual:** a person whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. They may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments to align their bodies with their gender identity, such as hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery or other procedures. They may also undertake other changes to align their external attributes and appearance with their gender identity.

**Two-Spirit:** a term used by Aboriginal people to describe from a cultural perspective people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex. It is used to capture a concept that exists in many different Indigenous cultures and languages. For some, the term Two-Spirit describes a societal and spiritual role that people played within traditional societies, such as: mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies, transcending accepted roles of men and women, and filling a role as an established middle gender.

# THE GENDERBREAD PERSON

The Genderbread Person is a visual representation of some terminology related to gender identity and gender expression, and has been used by various organizations for training purposes.



# RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS

## OCDSB Equity and Inclusive Education

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/ab-ocdsb/p-n-p/Policies%20and%20Procedures/P%20098%20CUR%20Equity%20and%20Inclusive%20Ed.pdf>

## OCDSB Board Code of Conduct

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/ab-ocdsb/p-n-p/Policies%20and%20Procedures/P%20125%20SCO%20School%20Board%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>

## OCDSB Confidential Communication between students and staff

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/ab-ocdsb/p-n-p/Policies%20and%20Procedures/P%20093%20SCO%20Confid%20Commun.pdf>

## Accepting Schools Act (part of the Ontario Education Act)

[http://ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills\\_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2549](http://ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2549)

## PPM 145 – Promoting a positive school climate

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf>

## PPM 119 – Equity and Inclusive Education

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/119.pdf>

## OHRC – Policy on preventing discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and gender expression

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression>

# RESOURCES

## OCDSB

- ♦ School multi-disciplinary Team – each school has a team in place comprised of a social worker, psychologist, learning support teacher(s) and principal.
- ♦ Inclusive, Safe and Caring Programs department staff
- ♦ LGBTQ Book Kit for K-8 Schools

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/ab-ocdsb/InclusiveSafeandCaring/ISC%20Docs/LGBTQ%20Book%20Collection%20K-8.pdf>

## Community

- ♦ LGBT Youth line – a free peer support phone line for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, queer and questioning youth. Sunday to Friday, 4:00 to 9:30pm.  
1-800-268-9688 | <http://www.youthline.ca/index.php>
- ♦ Kids Help Phone – a free 24/7 counseling and information service for young people.  
1-800-668-6868 | <http://www.kidshelpphone.ca>
- ♦ Gender Diversity Clinic at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario  
<http://www.cheo.on.ca/en/genderidentity>
- ♦ Support Group for parents & caregivers of gender creative, trans, transgender children, youth or young adults run by Family Services Ottawa and the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario  
<http://familyservicesottawa.org/children-youth-and-families/around-the-rainbow/>
- ♦ Gender Creative Kids Canada  
<http://gendercreativekids.ca/>

## Publications

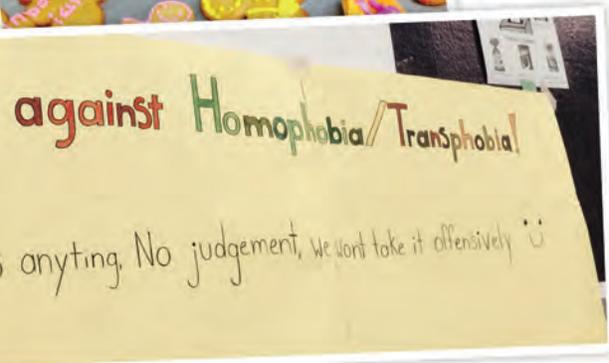
- ♦ Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools (Canadian Teachers Federation)  
<http://gendercreativekids.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Supporting-Transgender-and-Transsexual-Students-web.pdf>
- ♦ Public Health Agency of Canada – Q/A Gender Identity in Schools  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/rp/gi-is/index-eng.php>
- ♦ EGale Canada - EVERY CLASS IN EVERY SCHOOL: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools  
<http://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/EgaleFinalReport-web.pdf>

" I FEEL INCLUDED AT MY SCHOOL. ALL THE STUDENTS ARE AWESOME AND THE RAINBOW CLUB HAS HELPED ME FEEL EVEN BETTER."

"AS A NEW STUDENT, I'VE BEEN PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT HOW TEACHERS RESPECT MY PREFERRED NAME AND PRONOUNS. BEING ABLE TO USE MY CHOSEN NAME REGULARLY REALLY HELPS ME"



"IN OUR CLASS WE WANT TO TREAT KIDS THE WAY THAT THEY WANT TO BE TREATED. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE A BOY OR A GIRL. YOU CAN BE FRIENDLY AND CALL THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO BE CALLED LIKE HE, SHE OR THEY"



## OCDSB Student Hopes and Dreams

- ◆ Equality for all gender identities
- ◆ To be my best self
- ◆ To have an all-gender washroom in all schools
- ◆ Go to the Olympics
- ◆ The freedom to be who I am without fear
- ◆ To finish high school
- ◆ To be happy for who I am and who I want to be
- ◆ To become a social worker for children and teens who need someone to talk to, like I did
- ◆ To raise kids with them
- ◆ Living in a society where we can be accepted for who we are rather than what we wear/look like
- ◆ No more phobia/stigma
- ◆ Become a history teacher and teach about the advancements in LGBTQ+ rights throughout history
- ◆ To love without fear



**Published by Communications and Information Services in collaboration  
with Inclusive, Safe and Caring Programs — February 2016**



133 Greenbank Road • Ottawa, ON K2H 6L3 • Phone: 613-721-1820  
Fax: 613-820-6968 • Website: [www.ocdsb.ca](http://www.ocdsb.ca)



**TAB 3**

Policy on preventing discrimination because of

# **GENDER IDENTITY**

and

# **GENDER EXPRESSION**

ISBN: 978-1-4606-3900-9 (Print)  
978-1-4606-3901-6 (HTML)  
978-1-4606-3902-3 (PDF)

Approved by the OHRC: January 31, 2014  
Available in accessible formats on request  
Also available at [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca)  
Disponible en français



Ontario  
**Human Rights Commission**  
Commission ontarienne des  
droits de la personne

## Contents

<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2. About this policy</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Gender identity and gender expression</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Bias and prejudice</b> .....	<b>8</b>
4.1 Stereotyping.....	8
4.2 Transphobia.....	9
4.3 Cisnormativity .....	9
<b>5. Emerging human rights protections</b> .....	<b>10</b>
5.1 Ontario.....	10
5.2 Other Canadian jurisdictions.....	11
5.3 International standards .....	11
<b>6. Ontario’s Human Rights Code</b> .....	<b>12</b>
6.1 Protections.....	12
6.2 Establishing discrimination .....	13
6.3 Right to self-identify gender .....	14
<b>7. Forms of discrimination</b> .....	<b>14</b>
7.1 Direct, indirect and subtle discrimination .....	14
7.2 Intersecting grounds .....	15
7.3 Association .....	16
7.4 Gender-based harassment and sexual harassment .....	17
7.5 Poisoned environment.....	21
7.6 Systemic discrimination .....	22
<b>8. The duty to accommodate</b> .....	<b>23</b>
8.1 Procedural and substantive duties.....	24
8.2 Principles .....	24
8.2.1 Respect for dignity .....	24
8.2.2 Individualization.....	25
8.2.3 Integration and full participation .....	25
8.2.4 Inclusive design.....	25
8.2.5 Appropriate accommodation .....	26
8.3 Roles and responsibilities .....	27
<b>9. Reasonable <i>bona fide</i> requirements</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>10. Other limits on the duty to accommodate</b> .....	<b>29</b>
10.1 Failing to participate in the accommodation process .....	29
10.2 Balancing competing rights.....	29
10.3 Undue hardship .....	30

<b>11. Complaints and reprisal .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>12. Corporate liability .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>13. Preventing and responding to discrimination.....</b>	<b>33</b>
13.1 Organizational reviews, policies and education .....	33
13.2 Transitioning .....	34
13.3 Identity documents.....	35
13.3.1 Barriers.....	35
13.3.2 Changing a name or sex designation .....	36
13.3.3 Recognizing lived gender identity.....	37
13.4 Washrooms and change rooms .....	38
13.4.1 Access based on lived gender identity .....	38
13.4.2 Accommodation and inclusive design .....	39
13.5 Dress codes.....	41
13.6 Shelter services .....	41
13.7 Health care services .....	43
13.8 Education system .....	45
13.9 Law enforcement and justice services .....	47
13.9.1 Strip searches .....	47
13.9.2 Correctional institutions .....	48
13.10 Other services.....	49
13.11 Housing .....	49
13.12 Employment.....	50
13.12.1 Hiring.....	51
13.12.2 Transitioning employees .....	51
13.13 Vocational associations .....	52
<b>Appendix A: Purpose of OHRC policies .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Appendix B: Glossary for understanding gender identity and expression.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Appendix C: Best practices checklist.....</b>	<b>58</b>

## Summary

People who are transgender, or gender non-conforming, come from all walks of life. Yet they are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. Trans people routinely experience discrimination, harassment and even violence because their gender identity or gender expression is different from their birth-assigned sex.

Under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the *Code*) people are protected from discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and gender expression in employment, housing, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trade or professional associations.

**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 their birth-assigned sex. Gender identity is fundamentally different from a person's sexual orientation.

**Gender expression** is how a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender.

**Trans** or **transgender** is an umbrella term referring to people with diverse gender identities and expressions that differ from stereotypical gender norms. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, trans woman (male-to-female), trans man (female-to-male), transsexual, cross-dresser, gender non-conforming, gender variant or gender queer.

**Discrimination** happens when a person experiences negative treatment or impact, intentional or not, because of their gender identity or gender expression. It can be direct and obvious or subtle and hidden, but harmful just the same. It can also happen on a bigger systemic level such as organizational rules or policies that look neutral but end up excluding trans people. Friends, family or others who face discrimination because of their association with a trans person are also protected.

**Harassment** is a form of discrimination. It can include sexually explicit or other inappropriate comments, questions, jokes, name-calling, images, email and social media, transphobic, homophobic or other bullying, sexual advances, touching and other unwelcome and ongoing behaviour that insults, demeans, harms or threatens a person in some way. Assault or other violent behaviour is also a criminal matter. Trans people and other persons can experience harassing behaviour because of their gender identity or expression (gender-based harassment) and/or their sex (sexual harassment).

Social stereotypes about gender, and prejudice and fear towards trans people are often at the root of discrimination and harassment. Negative attitudes about a trans person's racial identity, family status or other grounds can combine or intersect to make things worse.

Everyone has the right to define their own gender identity. Trans people should be recognized and treated as the gender they live in, whether or not they have undergone surgery, or their identity documents are up to date.

An organization should have a valid reason for collecting and using personal information that identifies a person's gender. They should keep this information confidential. Trans people can have their name or sex designation changed on identity documents and other records. The criteria and process should not be intrusive or medically based.

Trans people should have access to washrooms, change rooms and other gender specific services and facilities based on their lived gender identity.

Dress code policies should be inclusive and flexible. They should not prevent trans people and others from dressing according to their expressed gender.

Organizations should design or change their rules, practices and facilities to avoid negative effects on trans people and be more inclusive for everyone. Any exceptions must be legitimate in the circumstances, and trans people must be provided any needed accommodation unless it would cause undue hardship.

The duty to accommodate the needs of trans people is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved should cooperate in the process, exchange only necessary information and explore options while respecting privacy.

Trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals should not be treated negatively while at work, at school, trying to rent an apartment, shopping, eating a meal in a restaurant, using health care services or shelters, dealing with law enforcement and justice services, or at any other time.

Organizations are liable for any discrimination and harassment that happens. They are also liable for not accommodating a trans person's needs unless it would cause undue hardship. They must deal with complaints, take steps to prevent problems and provide a safe, welcoming environment for trans people.

Organizations should learn about the needs of trans people, look for barriers, develop or change policies and procedures and undertake training. This will help make sure trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals are treated with dignity and respect and enjoy equal rights and freedom from discrimination.

## 1. Introduction

People who are transgender, or who otherwise don't conform to gender stereotypes, come from all walks of life. They are represented in every social class, occupation, race, culture, religion and sexual orientation, and live in and contribute to communities across Ontario and around the world.

Yet, "trans" people are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. They routinely experience prejudice, discrimination, harassment, hatred and even violence. People who are in the process of "transitioning" or "coming out" are particularly vulnerable.<sup>1</sup> Many issues go to the core of human dignity. Courts and tribunals have recognized this as "substantial and disturbing."<sup>2</sup>

Trans people face these forms of social marginalization because of deeply rooted myths and fears in society about people who do not conform to social "norms" about what it means to be female or male. The impact is significant on their daily lives, health and well-being.

In 2010, the Trans PULSE Project<sup>3</sup> conducted a detailed survey with 433 trans people across Ontario. Trans people reported barriers and discrimination in accessing employment and medical care.<sup>4</sup> While a higher percentage of trans people had post secondary education, their income levels did not reflect this. The majority were living below the poverty line.<sup>5</sup> They also reported lower levels of employment.<sup>6</sup> Two-thirds said they had avoided public spaces that everyone else takes for granted such as malls or clothing stores, restaurants, gyms and schools because of a fear of harassment, being

---

<sup>1</sup> Also see section 13.2-Transitioning and Appendix B-Glossary of this Policy.

<sup>2</sup> *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, 2012 HRTO 726 at para. 15 (CanLII). In this case, the Tribunal recognized that transgender persons are a "historically disadvantaged group." *Brodeur v. Ontario (Health and Long-Term Care)*, 2013 HRTO 1229 at para. 41 (CanLII). In this case, the Tribunal stated that "disadvantage and prejudice against transgendered persons in Ontario remains substantial and disturbing."

<sup>3</sup> Trans PULSE is a community-based research project that was created to respond to problems identified within Ontario trans communities regarding access to health and social services. Funding for the project was provided by the Wellesley Institute, the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). To learn more see: <http://transpulseproject.ca/about-us/>

<sup>4</sup> Jake Pyne *et al.*, "Improving the Health of Trans Communities: Findings from the Trans PULSE Project" (Presentation to the Trans Health Advocacy Summit, August 24, 2012), online: Trans PULSE <http://transpulseproject.ca/research/improving-the-health-of-trans-communities-findings-from-the-trans-pulse-project/>.

<sup>5</sup> G. Bauer *et al.*, *Who are Trans People in Ontario?* Trans PULSE e-Bulletin, 20 July, 2010, 1(1), online: Trans PULSE [www.transpulseproject.ca](http://www.transpulseproject.ca).

<sup>6</sup> G. Bauer *et al.*, *We've Got Work to Do: Workplace Discrimination and Employment Challenges for Trans People in Ontario*, Trans PULSE e-Bulletin, 30 May, 2011,2(1), online: Trans PULSE [www.transpulseproject.ca](http://www.transpulseproject.ca).

“read” (perceived as trans), or “outed.” Washrooms were the most commonly avoided space.<sup>7</sup> Over their lifetime, 77% reported they have had suicidal thoughts and 43% had attempted suicide.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, broader social and legal change is underway. Society is beginning to recognize the value and importance of respecting every person’s gender identity and expression. International human rights standards, domestic legislation and legal decisions have confirmed the legal obligation to uphold the right to be free from discrimination and harassment based on gender identity and gender expression.

Ontario’s *Human Rights Code* (the *Code*) is a provincial law that sets out legal rights and obligations to protect people from discrimination. In 2012, three parties of the Ontario Legislature co-sponsored *Toby’s Act*, the Bill that added “gender identity” and “gender expression” as prohibited grounds of discrimination under the *Code*.<sup>9</sup> The grounds make it clear that trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals are entitled to legal protections in the same way that people are protected from discrimination and harassment based on race, age, disability and all other prohibited grounds.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. About this policy

This policy is a complete revision and update of the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s (OHRC’s) original *Policy on discrimination and harassment because of gender identity* first published in 2000.

In keeping with the Preamble of the *Code*, this policy aims to:

- Promote recognition of the inherent dignity and worth of trans people
- Provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and gender expression
- Create a climate of understanding and mutual respect, so that trans people feel they belong in the community and can contribute to it.

---

<sup>7</sup> A. Scheim, G. Bauer & J. Pyne, *Avoidance of Public Spaces by Trans Ontarians: The Impact of Transphobia on Daily Life*, Trans PULSE e-Bulletin, 16 January, 2014. 4(1). online: Trans PULSE [www.transpulseproject.ca](http://www.transpulseproject.ca).

<sup>8</sup> Pyne *et al.*, *supra* note 4.

<sup>9</sup> See Bill 33, *An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression* 1st Sess, 40th Leg, Ontario (assented to 19 June, 2012), S.O. 2012 C.7, online: Legislative Assembly of Ontario [www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills\\_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2574&isCurrent=false&ParlSessionID=40%3A1](http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2574&isCurrent=false&ParlSessionID=40%3A1).

<sup>10</sup> There are 17 protected grounds in the *Code*: race, colour, ancestry, creed, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance (in housing) and record of offences (in employment).

The policy promotes understanding and awareness about trans people and their rights. It can help employers, unions and other vocational associations, and housing and service providers understand and meet their legal responsibilities under the *Code* to prevent and address discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.

Organizations can also use the policy to support the development of their own training materials and anti-discrimination and harassment policies.

The analysis and many of the examples in this policy are based on research, tribunal and court cases involving gender identity and gender expression, as well as consultations the OHRC undertook with trans people, other individuals and organizations.<sup>11</sup>

See Appendix A for more about the purpose of OHRC policies.

### 3. Gender identity and gender expression

The *Code* does not define the grounds of gender identity, gender expression or sex. Instead, the understanding of these and other related terms, and the implications for the *Code* and OHRC policies, is evolving from tribunal and court decisions, social science research as well as self identity and common everyday use.

**Sex** is the anatomical classification of people as male, female or intersex, usually assigned at birth.

**Gender identity** is each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's 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 their birth-assigned sex.

**Gender expression** is how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes.

A person's gender identity is fundamentally different from and not related to their sexual orientation.

**Trans** or **transgender** is an umbrella term referring to people with diverse gender identities and expressions that differ from stereotypical gender norms. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, trans woman (male-to-female MTF), trans man (female-to-male FTM), transsexual, cross-dressers, or gender non-conforming, gender variant or gender queer.

---

<sup>11</sup> See the OHRC's consultation backgrounder: *Talking about gender identity and expression*, available online at [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca).

**Gender non-conforming** individuals do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth and may or may not identify as trans.

**“Lived” gender identity** is the gender a person feels internally (“gender identity” along the gender spectrum) and expresses publicly (“gender expression”) in their daily life including at work, while shopping or accessing other services, in their housing environment or in the broader community. See section 13.3.3 of this policy: Recognizing lived gender identity.

For more information on these and other related terms see Appendix B: Glossary for understanding gender identity and expression.

## 4. Bias and prejudice

Trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals are often judged by their physical appearance for not fitting and conforming to stereotypical norms about what it means to be a “man” or “woman.” They experience stigmatization, prejudice, bias and fear on a daily basis. While some may see trans people as inferior, others may lack awareness and understanding about what it means to be trans.

“The notion that there are two and only two genders is one of the most basic ideas in our binary Western way of thinking. Transgender people challenge our very understanding of the world. And we make them pay the cost of our confusion by their suffering.”<sup>12</sup>

Bias and prejudice, or simply ignorance, can lead to isolation, vulnerability, disadvantage and discrimination at school, at work, in stores and other services, or even where people live. Trans people living in smaller towns or rural communities may even be more isolated.

### 4.1 Stereotyping

Many situations of discrimination happen because of negative attitudes, biases and stereotypes about people who are trans or gender non-conforming. Stereotyping is when assumptions are made about individuals based on assumptions about qualities and characteristics of the group they belong to.<sup>13</sup> When people stereotype others, they do not see the real person. Stereotypes are often unfounded generalizations that come from misconceptions and incomplete or false information about people. Anyone can stereotype and not even realize it, even those who are well meaning.

---

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Findlay, as cited in John Fisher & Kristie McComb, *Outlaws & In-laws: Your Guide to LGBT Rights, Same-sex Relationships and Canadian Law* (Ottawa: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, 2003), at 46.

<sup>13</sup> The Supreme Court of Canada has recently said that “Stereotyping, like prejudice, is a disadvantaging attitude, but one that attributes characteristics to members of a group regardless of their actual capacities.” *Quebec (Attorney General) v. A*, [2013] 1 S.C.R. 61 at para. 326.

There are widespread stereotypes about trans people in society that often go unquestioned. These include wrong ideas that trans people are “abnormal” or “unnatural,” that they are “frauds,” deceptive and or misrepresent themselves. They may be seen as more likely to take part in criminal activity, be pedophiles, or have mental health problems. Some believe trans women to be a threat to other women.<sup>14</sup>

Anyone who engages in illegal activity including threatening or harassing behavior or assault should be dealt with accordingly under the law. This should not detract in any way from the rights of trans people.

False and harmful stereotypes are rooted in fear and uninformed attitudes and can lead to discrimination against trans people because of their gender identity or expression.

## 4.2 Transphobia

“Transphobia” is the aversion to, fear or hatred of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people.

Many trans Ontarians experience transphobia according to the Ontario-based Trans PULSE survey:

- 98% of trans Ontarians reported at least one experience of transphobia
- Nearly 75% of trans people have been made fun of for being trans
- Over 25% have experienced physical violence because they were trans
- Nearly 25% reported being harassed by police
- Trans women experience transphobia more often than trans men.<sup>15</sup>

## 4.3 Cisnormativity

“Cisnormativity” (“cis” meaning “the same as”) refers to the commonplace assumption that all people are “cisgender” (not trans). In other words, their gender identity is in line with or “matches” the sex they were assigned at birth, and everyone accepts this as “the norm.”

The term is used to describe stereotypes, negative attitudes and prejudice towards trans people that are more widespread or systemic in society and its institutions. This form of prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the person or organization responsible, making it all the more entrenched and difficult to address.

---

<sup>14</sup> For more information see the OHRC’s 1999 Discussion paper: *Towards a Policy on Gender Identity*, online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/discussion-paper-toward-commission-policy-gender-identity](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/discussion-paper-toward-commission-policy-gender-identity).

<sup>15</sup> R. Longman *et al.*, *Experiences of Transphobia among Trans Ontarians*. Trans PULSE e-Bulletin, 7 March, 2013. 3 (2), online: Trans PULSE [www.transpulseproject.ca](http://www.transpulseproject.ca).

“Cisnormative assumptions are so prevalent that they are difficult at first to even recognize... Cisnormativity disallows the possibility of trans existence or trans visibility. As such, the existence of an actual trans person within systems such as healthcare is too often unanticipated and produces a social emergency of sorts because both staff and systems are unprepared for this reality.”<sup>16</sup>

Society’s bias that there is only one right, normal or moral expression of gender underpins this form of prejudice and the discrimination that can result from it. Also see section 7.6 of this policy: Systemic discrimination.

## 5. Emerging human rights protections

### 5.1 Ontario

In 1999, the OHRC took the position that the ground of sex under human rights law could be interpreted to include the right of transgender people to be free from discrimination and harassment.

In 2000, the OHRC released its ground breaking *Policy on discrimination and harassment because of gender identity* (the original version of this policy). The OHRC and others successfully litigated that policy over the years, with tribunals and courts recognizing more and more the human rights of trans people.

During this time, the OHRC continued to call for explicit recognition of gender identity as a protected ground of discrimination in Ontario’s *Human Rights Code*.<sup>17</sup> In 2012, Ontario added the grounds “gender identity” and “gender expression” to the *Code*.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Greta Bauer et al., “I Don’t Think This Is Theoretical; This Is Our Lives”: How Erasure Impacts HealthCare for Transgender People” (2009) 20(5) *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, 348 at 356, online: *Trans PULSE* [http://webctupdates.wlu.ca/documents/39345/Trans\\_PULSE\\_How\\_erasure\\_impacts\\_HC\\_for\\_TG\\_people\\_JANAC\\_2009.pdf](http://webctupdates.wlu.ca/documents/39345/Trans_PULSE_How_erasure_impacts_HC_for_TG_people_JANAC_2009.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> See OHRC Discussion paper, *supra* note 14. Also see the OHRC’s statement to the Standing Committee on Social Policy on Bill 33, *Toby’s Act (Right to be Free from Discrimination and Harassment Because of Gender Identity or Gender Expression)*, online: *Legislative Assembly of Ontario* [www.ontla.on.ca/web/committee-proceedings/committee\\_transcripts\\_details.do?locale=en&Date=2012-06-11&ParlCommID=8963&BillID=2574&Business=&DocumentID=26452#P158\\_35125](http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/committee-proceedings/committee_transcripts_details.do?locale=en&Date=2012-06-11&ParlCommID=8963&BillID=2574&Business=&DocumentID=26452#P158_35125).

<sup>18</sup> See Bill 33, *supra*, note 9. Before the addition of the grounds gender identity and gender expression, discrimination against trans and transgender people had been addressed under the grounds of “sex” and “disability.” The use of the ground disability to address claims of discrimination against trans people has been recognized as problematic because it can imply a demeaning and medicalized approach to understanding gender identity.

## 5.2 Other Canadian jurisdictions

Some other jurisdictions in Canada also provide protection for trans people. Human rights legislation in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories includes the protected ground of “gender identity.” Nova Scotia’s human rights legislation includes both “gender identity” and “gender expression.” In jurisdictions without specified grounds, discrimination because of gender identity is being addressed under the ground of “sex.”<sup>19</sup>

## 5.3 International standards

Internationally, understanding of legal rights for trans people has advanced in recent years. The 2007 *Yogyakarta Principles*, developed by a group of international human rights experts, detail how international human rights law applies to gender identity and sexual orientation in a range of areas including discrimination in work, health, education and access to justice.<sup>20</sup>

Several statements from international human rights organizations have recognized the fundamental human right to self-identify one’s gender, and the need for protection against discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.<sup>21</sup>

In 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution, supported by 85 countries including Canada, to study the issue of human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity. Among other things, the resolution expressed concern about acts of violence and discrimination against individuals because of their gender identity. In a report later that year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized that governments have an obligation to protect people from discrimination because of gender identity.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> In addition, in 2013, the Parliament of Canada passed a bill [Bill C-279, *An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity)*] that would amend Canada’s *Human Rights Code* to include the ground “gender identity”. The bill also includes proposed changes to the *Criminal Code* to recognize violent crimes motivated by transphobia as hate crimes. At the time of this policy, Bill C-279 was before the Senate and had not yet received a final vote to become law. Under the bill, “gender identity” means... the individual’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex that the individual was assigned at birth. See Parliament of Canada: [www.parl.gc.ca/legisinfo/BillDetails.aspx?billId=5122660&Mode=1&Language=E](http://www.parl.gc.ca/legisinfo/BillDetails.aspx?billId=5122660&Mode=1&Language=E)

<sup>20</sup> *Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* (2007), online: Yogyakarta Principles [www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles\\_en.htm](http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.htm)

<sup>21</sup> See International Commission of Jurists, *Sexual orientation and gender identity in human rights law, references to jurisprudence and doctrine of the United Nations human rights system – 4th edition* (2010), online: International Commission of Jurists [www.icj.org/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-in-human-rights-law-references-to-jurisprudence-and-doctrine-of-the-united-nations-human-rights-system-4th-edition/#lightbox/0/](http://www.icj.org/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-in-human-rights-law-references-to-jurisprudence-and-doctrine-of-the-united-nations-human-rights-system-4th-edition/#lightbox/0/). Also see: *Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* Res.AG/RES.2504 (XXXIX-O/09), 4<sup>th</sup> Sess., Organization of American States (OAS),(2009), online: OAS <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/lgbt/links/>.

<sup>22</sup> See *Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity* HRC Res. 17/19, UN HRCOR, 17<sup>th</sup> Sess., UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/17/19 (2011); *Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, UN HRCOR, 19<sup>th</sup> Sess., UN Doc. A/HRC/19/41, (2011) online: United Nations [www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBT.aspx#at5](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBT.aspx#at5).

## 6. Ontario's *Human Rights Code*

### 6.1 Protections

Under the Ontario's *Human Rights Code*, trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals are protected from discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and gender expression in five social areas.<sup>23</sup>

- When receiving goods, services and using facilities (section 1). "Services" is a broad category and can include privately or publicly owned or operated services including insurance, schools, restaurants, policing, health care, shopping malls, *etc.*
- When occupying housing accommodation (section 2). This includes private rental housing, co-operative housing, social housing and supportive or assisted housing
- When entering into a contract with others (section 3). This includes the offer, acceptance, price or even rejecting a contract
- In employment (section 5). This includes full time work, part-time work, volunteer work, student internships, special employment programs, probationary employment,<sup>24</sup> and temporary or contract work
- When joining or belonging to a union, professional association or other vocational association (section 6). This applies to membership in trade unions and self-governing professions, including the terms and conditions of membership, *etc.*

A fundamental aspect of the *Code* is that it has primacy over all other provincial laws in Ontario, unless the law specifically says that it operates notwithstanding the *Code*. This means where a law conflicts with the *Code*, the *Code* will prevail, unless the other law says otherwise.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> The grounds "gender identity" and "gender expression" address many types of human rights violations that were previously addressed under the grounds of "sex" and "disability." For example, see *Forrester v. Peel (Regional Municipality) Police Services Board et al*, 2006 HRTO 13 (CanLII) and *Hogan v. Ontario (Health and Long-Term Care)*, 2006 HRTO 32 (CanLII). In other jurisdictions, this type of discrimination is covered under the ground of "sex" or in some cases "disability."

<sup>24</sup> See *Adga Group Consultants Inc. v. Lane*, 2008 CanLII 39605 (ON SCDC).

<sup>25</sup> Section 47 of the *Code* reads: (1) This Act binds the Crown and every agency of the Crown. (2) Where a provision in an Act or regulation purports to require or authorize conduct that is a contravention of Part I, this Act applies and prevails unless the Act or regulation specifically provides that it is to apply despite this Act. R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19, s. 47 (2).

## 6.2 Establishing discrimination

The *Code* does not define discrimination. Instead, the understanding of discrimination has evolved from tribunal and court decisions. To establish *prima facie* (on its face) discrimination the person making a claim must show:

1. They have a characteristic protected by one or more of the *Code* grounds (e.g. gender identity or gender expression)<sup>26</sup>
2. They experienced adverse or negative treatment or impact in one of the social areas under the *Code* (e.g. in accessing a service, housing or employment)
3. The protected characteristic was a factor in the adverse treatment or impact.<sup>27</sup>

Discrimination is not always direct and is often hard to detect. The claimant must show on a “balance of probabilities” (more likely than not) that adverse or negative treatment happened. The analysis should be flexible and look at all relevant factors in the situation including circumstantial evidence as well as the full impact on the affected person or group. While there may be evidence of “intent,” this is not needed to prove discrimination. Gender identity, gender expression or other protected characteristics need only be one of the factors in the negative treatment for discrimination to exist.<sup>28</sup>

Once *prima facie* discrimination is established, the burden then shifts to the organization or person responsible to either provide a credible non-discriminatory explanation, or justify the conduct or practice using one of the defences available under the *Code* (also see sections 9 and 10 of this policy).

---

<sup>26</sup> The *Code* would also protect people who experience discrimination because of a relationship, association or dealings with a person because of that person’s gender identity or expression or other protected characteristic (See section XX on Forms of Discrimination below).

<sup>27</sup> *R.B. v. Keewatin-Patricia District School Board*, 2013 HRTO 1436 at para. 204. These requirements for establishing discrimination were drawn from *Moore v. British Columbia (Education)*, 2012 SCC 61. Note that in a few cases, most of which have challenged government services or have raised concerns that different treatment may not amount to discrimination in a substantive sense, disadvantage is not inferred or assumed from the circumstances but may need to be shown by the claimant to establish adverse treatment or impact: see, for example, *Ontario (Disability Support Program) v. Tranchemontagne*, 2010 ONCA 593 (CanLII), *Ivancicevic v. Ontario (Consumer Services)*, 2011 HRTO 1714 (CanLII), *Klonowski v. Ontario (Community Safety and Correctional Services)*, 2012 HRTO 1568 (CanLII). However, the Court of Appeal for Ontario and HRTO have noted that in most cases under the *Code*, disadvantage can be assumed where there is adverse treatment based on a prohibited ground and that in most human rights cases it will not be necessary to go through a process of specifically proving what the disadvantage is; see *Hendershott v. Ontario (Community and Social Services)*, 2011 HRTO 482 at para. 45 (CanLII).

<sup>28</sup> *Gray v. A&W Food Service of Canada Ltd.* (1994), CHRR Doc 94-146 (Ont. Bd. Inq.); *Dominion Management v. Velenosi*, [1977] O.J. No. 1277 at para. 1 (Ont. C.A.); *Smith v. Mardana Ltd. (No. 1)* (2005), 52 C.H.R.R. D/89 at para. 22 (Ont. Div. Ct.); *King v. CDI Career Development Institutes Ltd.* (2001), 39 C.H.R.R. D/322 (Sask. Bd. Inq.).

### 6.3 Right to self-identify gender

International human rights principles are clear that every person has the right to define their own gender identity. A person's self-defined gender identity is one of the most basic aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom.<sup>29</sup>

For legal and social purposes, a person whose gender identity is different from their birth-assigned sex should be treated according to their lived gender identity.<sup>30</sup>

The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) has said that, "for transgendered people, insisting on their treatment in accordance with their birth gender for all purposes is discriminatory because it fails to take into account their lived gender identity."<sup>31</sup>

## 7. Forms of discrimination

### 7.1 Direct, indirect and subtle discrimination

Discrimination may take many different forms. It may happen in a direct way. It can happen when individuals or organizations exclude trans people from housing, employment or services, withhold benefits that are available to others, or impose extra burdens that are not imposed on others, without a legitimate reason.

Discrimination may also happen indirectly. It may be carried out through another person or organization.

**Example:** A company contracting services from a temp agency takes on a worker who it later discovers is trans. The company tells the agency not to send any more workers who are trans or who don't look like "normal" men or women.

Both the organization or person that sets out discriminatory conditions, and the organization or person that carries out this discrimination, can be named together in a human rights claim and held jointly responsible.

There is much overt discrimination against trans people. More hidden, subtle or subversive forms happen as well but they are just as harmful. For more information about "subtle" discrimination, see section 3.3 of the OHRC's Policy on racism and racial discrimination.

---

<sup>29</sup> *Yogyakarta Principles*, *supra* note 20, Principle 3: The right to recognition before the law.

<sup>30</sup> See *Vanderputten v. Seydaco Packaging Corp.*, 2012 HRTO 1977 at paras. 66-67 (CanLII) (also citing *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, *supra*, note 2) and *Sheridan v. Sanctuary Investments Ltd. (c.o.b. B.J.'s Lounge)*, [1999] B.C.H.R.T.D. No. 43, 3 C.H.R.R. D/467 at para 107: "transsexuals who are living as members of the desired sex should be considered to be members of that sex for the purposes of human rights legislation."

<sup>31</sup> *Vanderputten ibid.* at para. 66 (CanLII).

Discriminatory remarks are not always made openly. People don't necessarily voice their stereotypical views to explain their behaviour. Subtle discrimination might only be detected when looking at all of the circumstances to see if a pattern of behaviour exists.

Individual acts themselves may be ambiguous or explained away. But when viewed as part of a larger picture, they may lead to a conclusion that discrimination because of gender identity or expression was a factor in the treatment of a person. An inexplicable departure from the usual practices may support a claim of discrimination.<sup>32</sup> Criteria applied to some people but not others may also be evidence of discrimination, if it can be shown that people and groups protected by the *Code* were singled out for negative treatment.

The cumulative effect of both overt and subtle discrimination is profoundly damaging to people who experience it.

## 7.2 Intersecting grounds

Discrimination may be unique or distinct when it involves two or more *Code* grounds. It is said to be "intersectional." The concept of intersectional discrimination recognizes that people's lives involve multiple interrelated identities, and that marginalization and exclusion based on *Code* grounds may exist because of how these identities intersect.

Trans people are also vulnerable because of their identification with other *Code* grounds, such as race,<sup>33</sup> family status,<sup>34</sup> sex (pregnancy and breastfeeding) or disability. They may experience unique forms of discrimination when they try to access housing, employment or services. Particular stereotypes develop around intersecting identities that put trans people at significant disadvantage.

**Example:** A female tenant identifies as a "Black person," as "trans" and as a "young" person. She experiences racial comments and threats of eviction from her superintendent whenever she asks to have maintenance work done. The property management company investigates. Other long-time Black tenants report no problems with the superintendent. The investigator concludes the young Black trans woman experienced discrimination because of her combined gender identity, race and relatively young age.

---

<sup>32</sup> See *Johnson v. Halifax Regional Police Service* (2003), 48 C.H.R.R. D/307 (N.S. Bd.Inq.) at para. 57 for an example of a case where deviations from normal practice supported a finding of race discrimination.

<sup>33</sup> Jaime M. Grant *et al.*, *Injustice at Every Turn: A report of the national transgender discrimination survey* (Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011). Online: [www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> "[T]he notion that a child will be harmed by a trans parent lingers in child custody decision-making, in family planning policy and practice, and in public opinion, and is experienced by trans parents as discrimination...." Jake Pyne, *Transforming Family: Trans Parents and their Struggles, Strategies and Strengths* (2012), online: LGBT Parenting Connection [www.lgbtparentingconnection.ca/resources.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=444bca3c-ba19-213b-d94e-e941220871c1&subjectID=59](http://www.lgbtparentingconnection.ca/resources.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=444bca3c-ba19-213b-d94e-e941220871c1&subjectID=59), at 8.

A person's experience of discrimination because of their gender identity can also intersect with their socio-economic status. Studies indicate higher levels of poverty among trans communities, in part resulting from workplace discrimination.<sup>35</sup> A trans person living with low income may face additional or unique forms of stigma and discrimination. Financial vulnerability is very relevant to understanding the impact of intersectional discrimination on people's lives.

Organizations have a duty to maintain environments that are free from discrimination and harassment. This includes taking into account the needs of people from diverse backgrounds, with a range of unique identities.

Organizations should look at whether their staff have cultural competency skills.<sup>36</sup> The ability to interact comfortably with people of diverse cultural backgrounds and identities is key to recognizing and meeting the human rights-related needs of different groups and communities, including trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals.

When interacting with people, organizations should use an individualized approach that recognizes the unique identity of each person, without relying on preconceived notions, assumptions or stereotypes.

### 7.3 Association

Some people face discrimination because of their association with someone who is trans or gender non-conforming.<sup>37</sup>

**Example:** A tenant experiences harassing comments from a landlord because their new roommate is a trans person.

---

<sup>35</sup> See Bauer *et al.*, *supra*, note 6.

<sup>36</sup> "Cultural competence" may be defined as "an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, particularly in the context of human resources, non-profit organizations, and government agencies whose employees work with persons from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Cultural competence comprises four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) Attitude towards cultural differences, (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures." See *Cultural competence*, online: Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_competence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_competence) (Retrieved: January 17, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Section 12 of the *Code* states: A right under Part I is infringed where the discrimination is because of relationship, association or dealings with a person or persons identified by a prohibited ground of discrimination.

Discrimination because of association is prohibited under the *Code*.<sup>38</sup> This could apply to friends, family<sup>39</sup> or others such as someone advocating on behalf of trans people.

## 7.4 Gender-based harassment and sexual harassment

The *Code* prohibits harassment on various grounds including because of gender identity and gender expression (gender-based harassment) as well as because of sex (sexual harassment). Trans people, other gender non-conforming individuals as well as non-trans people (cisgender) can all experience harassment on any one or a combination of these and other grounds.

The *Code* defines harassment as “engaging in a course of vexatious<sup>40</sup> comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.” Harassment will have happened if the person carrying out the behaviour knew or should have known it was unwelcome. If the victim says the behaviour is unwelcome then the harasser “knows.” If the harasser didn’t know (or didn’t intend to harass), it is still harassment if a “reasonable” person would know such behaviour is unwelcome.<sup>41</sup> What is considered “reasonable” includes the perspective of trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals.

A victim does not have to explicitly or directly object to harassment.<sup>42</sup> They may be vulnerable and not speak out because of a threat or fear or because the person has some power or authority over them like a manager or landlord. Some may simply withdraw or walk away.

---

<sup>38</sup> See section 12 of the *Code*, *ibid*.

<sup>39</sup> See for example *Knibbs v. Brant Artillery Gunners Club*, 2011 HRTO 1032 (CanLII) (discrimination because of association with a person who had filed a disability discrimination claim); *Giguere v. Popeye Restaurant*, 2008 HRTO 2 (CanLII) (dismissal of an employee because her husband was HIV-positive); *Barclay v. Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 12*, 31 C.H.R.R. D/486 (Ont. Bd. Inq.) (punishment of a member because she objected to racist comments about Black and Aboriginal People); and *Jahn v. Johnstone* (September 16, 1977), No. 82, Eberts (Ont. Bd. of Inquiry) (eviction of a tenant because of the race of the tenant’s dinner guest).

<sup>40</sup> In *Murchie v. JB’s Mongolian Grill*, 2006 HRTO 33 (CanLII), the HRTO found that a serious single incident could constitute harassment. However, more often a single incident is treated as a form of discrimination (see the section on poisoned environment), see e.g. *Romano v. 1577118 Ontario Inc.*, 2008 HRTO 9 (CanLII) and *Haykin v. Roth*, 2009 HRTO 2017 (CanLII).

<sup>41</sup> See *Reed v. Cattolica Investments Ltd. and Salvatore Ragusa*, [1996] O.H.R.B.I.D. No. 7. See also, *Gregory v. Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc.* 2011 HRTO 1535 at para. 87 citing *Ghosh v. Domglas Inc. (No. 2)* (1992), 17 C.H.R.R. D/216 (Ont. Bd. Inq.) at paras. 43 to 48 and *Dhanjal v. Air Canada*, 1996 CanLII 2385 at p. 50 (CHRT).

<sup>42</sup> In *Harriott v. National Money Mart Co.*, 2010 HRTO 353 at para.104, the HRTO found that the respondent’s continued sexualized and inappropriate comments and conduct were unwelcome in the workplace. The HRTO, citing earlier case law, also confirmed that a person is not required to protest or object to the harassing conduct for discrimination to be found; *ibid.* at para. 108.

Many trans people are vulnerable to harassment because of their gender identity and gender expression.<sup>43</sup> Trans people also experience harassment that is sexual in nature (sexual harassment) that may be because of their gender identity, gender expression and/or sex.

Gender-based harassment can involve:

- Derogatory language toward trans people or trans communities
- Insults, comments that ridicule, humiliate or demean people because of their gender identity or expression<sup>44</sup>
- Behaviour that “polices and or reinforces traditional heterosexual gender norms”<sup>45</sup>
- Refusing to refer to a person by their self-identified name and proper personal pronoun
- Comments or conduct relating to a perception that a person is not conforming with gender-role stereotypes
- Jokes related to a person’s gender identity or expression including those circulated in writing or by email or social media<sup>46</sup>
- Spreading rumours about a person’s gender identity or expression including through the Internet<sup>47</sup>
- “Outing” or threatening to “out” someone as trans
- Intrusive comments, questions or insults about a person’s body, physical characteristics, gender-related medical procedures, clothing, mannerisms, or other forms of gender expression
- Other threats, unwelcome touching, violence and physical assault.

Sexual harassment can involve:

- Intrusive or offensive questions or comments about a trans person’s sex characteristics, sexual identity, romantic relationships or sexual activity, or sexual orientation
- Jokes that objectify a trans or gender non-conforming person in a sexual way including those circulated by email or social media<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> See paras. 165-166 of XY, *supra*, note 2, in which the HRT0 accepted that trans persons as a group tend to face very high rates of verbal harassment and physical assault and are sometimes even murdered because of their transgender status. The HRT0 also accepted various statements in the OHRC’s 2000 *Policy on discrimination and harassment because of gender identity* describing the prejudice, harassment and violence experienced by trans persons. Also see OHRC 1999 discussion paper, papers included in OHRC training session the Transpulse Survey.

<sup>44</sup> *Vanderputten, supra*, note 30.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth J. Meyer, “Gendered Harassment in Secondary Schools: Understanding Teachers’ (Non) Interventions,” (2008) 20(6) *Gender and Education*, 555, online: [www.psychologytoday.com/files/attachments/31038/meyer2008gendered-harassment.pdf](http://www.psychologytoday.com/files/attachments/31038/meyer2008gendered-harassment.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, *Perez-Moreno v. Kulczycki*, 2013 HRT0 1074 (CanLII) re: posting discriminatory comments on Facebook. See also *Vanderputten, supra*, note 30, where a trans person was subjected to harassing bulletin board postings.

<sup>47</sup> *Perez-Moreno, ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

- Displaying or circulating pornography,<sup>49</sup> sexual pictures or cartoons,<sup>50</sup> sexually explicit graffiti,<sup>51</sup> or other sexual images about trans people including through the Internet
- Leering or inappropriate staring<sup>52</sup>
- Threats, unwelcome touching, violence and sexual assault.

Harassment against trans and other gender non-conforming individuals can be a mix of unwelcome gender-based and sexual behaviour at the same time. Harassment is often used to get people to follow traditional sex stereotypes. It is also used as a bullying tactic to ridicule, ostracize and exercise power over people based on how they dress, act, or express their gender.<sup>53</sup>

Trans people are particularly vulnerable to gender-based harassment and sexual harassment during the time when they publicly transition to their felt gender identity, or if their trans history is disclosed to others.

**Example:** A factory worker transitioned from identifying and presenting as a man to identifying and presenting as a woman. Over a period of years during and after her transition, she alleges she was exposed to sexual conversations and pornography. Co-workers grabbed and touched her breasts, buttocks and genitals and called her names like “he-she.”<sup>54</sup>

Harassment because of gender expression can affect people who are not trans.

**Example:** An outspoken, high-performing woman in a male-dominated professional accounting office was denied partnership and told to learn how to “walk more femininely, talk more femininely, dress more femininely, wear make-up, have her hair styled, and wear jewellery....”<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> *Baylis-Flannery v. DeWilde*, 2003 HRTO 28 (CanLII); *Waroway v. Joan & Brian’s Upholstering & Interior Decorating Ltd.* (1992), 16 C.H.R.R. D/311 (Ont. Bd. Inq.); see also *Abdolalipour v. Allied Chemical Canada Ltd.* (1996), [1996] O.H.R.B.I.D. No. 31 (Ont. Bd. Inq.); *deSousa v. Gauthier* (2002), 43 C.H.R.R. D/128 (Ont. Bd. Inq.)

<sup>50</sup> *deSousa v. Gauthier* (2002), 43 C.H.R.R.D/128 (Ont. Bd. Inq.).

<sup>51</sup> *Fleet Industries v. International Assn. of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Local 171 (H. Grievance)*, [1997] O.L.A.A. No. 791.

<sup>52</sup> *Harriott v. National Money Mart Co.*, 2010 HRTO 353 (CanLII) and *Garofalo v. Cavalier Hair Stylists Shop Inc.*, 2013 HRTO 170 (CanLII). Depending on the circumstances, consideration should be given to whether there are other plausible explanations for “inappropriate” staring. For example, a person with a visual or other disability may not be aware that they are staring.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of gender-based harassment and homophobic harassment in the school setting, see Meyer, *supra*, note 45.

<sup>54</sup> Leslie Fulbright, “Transsexual says ex-employer ignored harassment” *San Francisco Chronicle* (25 February 2009), online: SFGate [www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Transsexual-says-ex-employer-ignored-harassment-3250009.php](http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Transsexual-says-ex-employer-ignored-harassment-3250009.php).

<sup>55</sup> *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, 109 S. Ct. 1775 (1989), as discussed in Jennifer L. Berdahl, “The Sexual Harassment of Uppity Women,” (2007) 92(2) *Journal of Applied Psychology* 425 at 426. See also *Farris v. Staubach Ontario Inc.*, 2011 HRTO 979 (CanLII).

Harassment can be a hostile attempt to make someone feel unwelcome in their environment because of the way they express their gender. In some cases, it may take the form of homophobic bullying because others see the person's gender expression as an expression of their sexual orientation.

**Example:** A female high school student who is not trans wears her hair short with masculine clothes and is very athletic. She is repeatedly called a "dude," "she-man" and "dyke" by groups of kids in her school and players on teams from other schools.

Harassment can happen between members of the same sex or gender identity. Male-to-male gender-based harassment, for example,<sup>56</sup> is aimed at men who appear more feminine, gay or otherwise "insufficiently" masculine based on stereotypes about gender.<sup>57</sup> The harassment will often involve homophobic slurs and taunting, no matter what the perpetrator or victim's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the *Code's* explicit protection against harassment in housing and employment, harassment is also prohibited in services and other social areas.<sup>59</sup>

Organizations have an obligation to maintain an environment free of harassment targeting people because of their gender identity or gender expression, whether or not anyone objects.<sup>60</sup>

For more information see the OHRC's *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment*.<sup>61</sup> Also see section 12 of this policy: Corporate liability.

<sup>56</sup> There are also cases of female-to-female harassment. See Janine Benedet, "Same-Sex Sexual Harassment in Employment", (2000), 26 Queen's L. J. 101.

<sup>57</sup> As discussed in Margaret S. Stockdale, "The Sexual Harassment of Men: Articulating the Approach-Rejection Theory of Sexual Harassment," in James E. Gruber & Phoebe Morgan, eds., *In the Company of Men: Male Dominance and Sexual Harassment*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005) 215 at 237.

<sup>58</sup> *Selinger v. McFarland*, 2008 HRTO 49 at para. 23 (CanLII): "Although the case was advanced on the ground of 'perceived' sexual orientation, in my view, there is no necessity to rely on the concept of perception in this case. In *Jubran*, the majority found that neither the sexual orientation of the complainant nor the perception of the alleged harassers was relevant in determining a complaint of sexual orientation discrimination. Comments and conduct that are derived from derogatory stereotypes of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people are captured by the prohibited ground of sexual orientation, regardless of the complainant's sexual identity or the perception of the respondent." See also *Smith v. Menzies Chrysler Inc.* 2009 HRTO 1936 (CanLII); (reconsideration request denied in 2009 HRTO 2270 (CanLII)).

<sup>59</sup> See *Haykin v. Roth*, *supra*, note 40, confirming that harassment in services is prohibited under the *Code*.

<sup>60</sup> In the case of employment, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.O.1, s. 32.0.1 requires all employers with over five employees to establish policies on harassment and violence in the workplace and to review these annually. In *Berger v. Toronto (City)*, 2011 HRTO 625, the HRTO also confirmed that an organization has an obligation to accommodate mental health disabilities that arise due to workplace harassment or conflict, provided they are diagnosed by physician and accommodation is required based on medical evidence. This obligation exists regardless of whether the harassment is proven.

<sup>61</sup> See OHRC's *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment*, online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-0](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-0)

## 7.5 Poisoned environment

While harassment generally involves a series of incidents, in some cases, one incident could be severe or serious enough to create a poisoned environment.<sup>62</sup>

A poisoned environment is a form of discrimination. In employment, tribunals have held that the atmosphere of a workplace is a condition of employment as much as hours of work or rate of pay. A “term or condition of employment” includes the emotional and psychological circumstances of the workplace.<sup>63</sup> A poisoned environment can also happen in housing and services.

A poisoned environment may happen when unwelcome comment and conduct is ongoing or widespread throughout an organization. This can lead to a hostile or oppressive atmosphere for one or more people from a *Code*-protected group.

While ongoing exposure to harassment can be a factor, a poisoned environment is also based on the nature of the comments or conduct and the impact on an individual or group rather than just on the number of times the behaviour happens.<sup>64</sup>

Behaviour need not be directed at any one person to create a poisoned environment. A person can experience it even if not a member of the targeted group. Failing to address discrimination and harassment may in itself cause a poisoned environment.<sup>65</sup>

The consequence of a poisoned environment is that certain people or groups like trans people face negative terms and conditions of employment, tenancy, education or other services that other people do not experience. A poisoned environment might also cause a person to delay transitioning and can negatively affect other gender non-conforming individuals as well as friends and family.

A poisoned environment can happen because of the comments or actions of any person, regardless of their position of authority or status. It could involve a co-worker, supervisor, co-tenant, housing provider, member of the Board of Directors, fellow student, teacher, contractor, client, etc. Whoever is involved, the person in charge has a duty to address it.

---

<sup>62</sup> In *Dhanjal v. Air Canada* (1996), 28 C.H.R.R. D/367 (C.H.R.T.), the tribunal noted that the more serious the conduct, the less need there is for it to be repeated. Conversely, the tribunal held the less serious the conduct, the greater the need to show its persistence. See also *General Motors of Canada Limited v. Johnson*, 2013 ONCA 502 (CanLII).

<sup>63</sup> *Smith v. Menzies Chrysler Inc.*, *supra*, note 58; *Dhillon v. F.W. Woolworth Co.* (1982), 3 C.H.R.R. D/743 at para 6691 (Ont. Bd. Inq.); *Naraine v. Ford Motor Co. of Canada (No. 4)* (1996), 27 C.H.R.R. D/230 at para. 50 (Ont. Bd. Inq.).

<sup>64</sup> See *Moffatt v. Kinark Child and Family Services* (1998) 35 C.H.R.R. D/205 (Ont. Bd. Inq.); *Kharoud v. Valle-Reyes* (2000) BCHRT 40; *Dhanjal*, *supra*, note 62.

<sup>65</sup> *Vanderputten*, *supra*, note 30; *McKinnon v. Ontario (Ministry of Correctional Services)*, [1998] O.H.R.B.I.D. No. 10.

**Example:** A trans woman was subjected to a poisoned work environment through harassing comments and being required to use the men's change room. The company contributed to the poisoned environment by insisting that she be treated as a man in all respects until she completed surgery, and by failing to investigate and respond to her allegations of harassment.<sup>66</sup>

Organizations have a duty to maintain an environment free from discrimination, to be aware of a poisoned environment that exists, and to take steps to respond and eliminate it.<sup>67</sup> This is the case even if no one objects, and even if there is widespread participation in the behaviour.<sup>68</sup> Managers who know or should know a poisoned atmosphere exists but allow it to continue are essentially promoting discrimination even if they are not directly involved (also see section 12 of this policy: Corporate liability).<sup>69</sup>

## 7.6 Systemic discrimination

Discrimination is not always just between individuals. It can be more complex and systemic, embedded in patterns of behaviour, policies and practices that are part of the administrative structure or informal culture of an organization, institution or sector. It can be hidden to the people who don't experience it. Sometimes a group's historical disadvantage is a factor that gives rise or contributes to the systemic discrimination they experience.

These factors sometimes appear neutral on the surface but can have an adverse or negative effect, creating or continuing disadvantage and limiting rights and opportunities for trans and other gender non-conforming persons.<sup>70</sup>

**Example:** A new recreational hockey league is divided into men's and women's teams. A trans man who plays in another women's league wants to join the men's team. The new league interprets the rules to mean you must play on the team that matches your birth-assigned sex.

---

<sup>66</sup> *Vanderputten, supra*, note 30.

<sup>67</sup> See for example *Vanderputten, supra*, note 30.

<sup>68</sup> See *Smith v. Mardana Ltd. (No. 1)*, *supra*, note 28, and *Naraine v. Ford Motor Company, supra*, note 63.

<sup>69</sup> *Ghosh v. Domglass Inc.* (1992), 17 C.H.R.R. D/216 at para. 76 (Ont. Bd. Inq.).

<sup>70</sup> In *Moore v. British Columbia (Education)*, 2012 SCC 61, the Supreme Court of Canada reaffirmed its earlier definition of systemic discrimination set out in its seminal 1987 decision *Canadian National Railway Co. v. Canada (Human Rights Commission)*, [1987] 1 S.C.R. 1114 at p. 1138-1139 as, "practices or attitudes that have, whether by design or impact, the effect of limiting an individual's or a group's right to the opportunities generally available because of attributed rather than actual characteristics." The OHRC uses "systemic discrimination" when referring to individual institutions, or a system of institutions, that fall under the jurisdiction of the *Code* (e.g. the education system).

Systemic discrimination may include aspects of overt as well as adverse effect discrimination that overlap and compound the problem.<sup>71</sup>

**Example (continued):** The new hockey league's governing board denies the trans man's application based on their interpretation of the rules. They also claim that dressing rooms would be a problem. The chair of the board has not kept the matter confidential and is advising other leagues in the area to keep trans people from playing on the "wrong" team.

Organizations and institutions have a positive obligation to make sure they are not engaging in systemic discrimination. They should prevent barriers by designing policies and practices inclusively up front. They should also review their systems and organizational culture regularly and remove barriers where they exist.

Organizations must also address new problems when they come up. To the greatest extent possible, this means changing policies and practices to include and accommodate<sup>72</sup> more people instead of merely making exceptions for people who don't "fit" in the existing system.<sup>73</sup>

**Example (continued):** The recreational hockey league still has separate women's and men's teams, but changes its policy to permit players to play on the team that matches their lived gender identity.

## 8. The duty to accommodate

Under the *Code*, employers and unions, housing and service providers have a legal duty to accommodate the needs of people because of their gender identity or gender expression, unless it would cause undue hardship. The goal of accommodation is to help everyone have equal opportunities, access and benefits. Failure to accommodate may lead to a finding of discrimination under the *Code*.

Employment, housing, services and facilities and related requirements should be designed inclusively up front to minimize the need for individual accommodation. They must be adapted when people have accommodation needs related to their gender

---

<sup>71</sup> *Pivot Legal Society v. Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Assn. (No. 6)* (2012), CHRR Doc. 12-0023, 2012 BCHRT 23, para 581: "To summarize, I find that systemic discrimination, like individual discrimination, may include components of direct, as well as adverse effect discrimination."

<sup>72</sup> For more information about the duty to accommodate see sections 8, 9 and 10 of this policy.

<sup>73</sup> The *Supreme Court of Canada* has been clear that systems must be designed to be inclusive of all persons and to reflect differences among individuals. Standards should provide for individual accommodation, if reasonably possible. *British Columbia (Public Service Employee Relations Commission) v. BCGSEU*, [1999] 3 S.C.R. 3 ["Meiorin"].

identity or expression. This should always be done in a way that best promotes the person's integration and full participation. Most accommodations are not difficult, and should not cause a major burden for those responsible.

Many trans people will not require any accommodations at all. It will depend on the needs of the particular person and the situation.

## 8.1 Procedural and substantive duties

The duty to accommodate has both a procedural component (the process) and a substantive component (the accommodation provided). Both are equally important.<sup>74</sup>

The procedural duty involves the considerations, assessments and steps taken to respond to an accommodation need.<sup>75</sup> The courts have said that, "a failure to give any thought or consideration to the issue of accommodation, including what, if any, steps could be taken constitutes a failure to satisfy the 'procedural' duty to accommodate."<sup>76</sup>

The substantive duty is about the appropriateness or reasonableness of the chosen accommodation as well as the reasons for not providing an accommodation, including proof of undue hardship.<sup>77</sup>

## 8.2 Principles

The duty to accommodate is made up of several principles including respect for dignity, individualization, integration and full participation.

### 8.2.1 Respect for dignity

Human dignity involves many factors, including respect for trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals and their self-worth as well as their physical and psychological integrity and empowerment. It is also about privacy, confidentiality, comfort, autonomy, individuality and self-esteem.

---

<sup>74</sup> See *Meiorin*, *ibid* at paras. 65-6 and *British Columbia (Superintendent of Motor Vehicles) v. British Columbia (Council of Human Rights)*, 1999 CanLII 646 (SCC), [1999] 3 S.C.R. 868, at paras. 22 and 42-45 ("Grismer"). See also *Adga Group Consultants Inc. v. Lane*, *supra*, note 24.

<sup>75</sup> In *Gourley v. Hamilton Health Sciences*, 2010 HRTO 2168 (CanLII), the adjudicator stated: "The substantive component of the analysis considers the reasonableness of the accommodation offered or the respondent's reasons for not providing accommodation. It is the respondent who bears the onus of demonstrating what considerations, assessments, and steps were undertaken to accommodate the employee to the point of undue hardship..." (at para. 8).

<sup>76</sup> *Adga Group Consultants Inc. v. Lane*, *supra*, note 24, at para. 107 (ON SCDC).

<sup>77</sup> See *Gourley*, *supra*, note 75, at para. 8.

Dignity includes considering how accommodation is provided and the person's own participation in the process. Organizations responsible for providing accommodation should consider the different ways people may need accommodation in their workplace, housing environment or when accessing a service.

### 8.2.2 Individualization

There is no set formula for people who might require accommodation because of their gender identity and expression. Each person's needs are unique and must be considered when an accommodation request is made. While some accommodations may only meet one person's needs, organizations will find that many of the changes they implement will benefit others as well.

### 8.2.3 Integration and full participation

Employment, housing, services and facilities should be designed, and may need to be adapted, to accommodate the needs of trans people in a way that best promotes their integration and full participation.<sup>78</sup> Segregated treatment is less dignified and is unacceptable unless it can be shown it's the best way to achieve equality in the circumstances.<sup>79</sup>

### 8.2.4 Inclusive design

Achieving integration and full participation requires barrier-free inclusive design up front as well as removing existing barriers. Good inclusive design will minimize the need for people to ask for individual accommodation. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that standards should be designed to reflect all members of society, to the extent that this is reasonably possible.<sup>80</sup>

Organizations should design inclusively for the needs of trans people when they develop or change policies, programs, procedures, standards, requirements and facilities. They should not create new barriers.

**Example:** Organizations should make sure their forms do not ask for a person's sex or gender unless they can show it is necessary for providing the service.

---

<sup>78</sup> *Eaton v. Brant County Board of Education*, [1997] 1 S.C.R. 241 ["Eaton"].

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* The Supreme Court stated that "integration should be recognized as the norm of general application because of the benefits it generally provides" (at para. 69). However, the Court found that in Emily Eaton's circumstances, segregated accommodation was in her best interests. The Court was of the view that this was one of those unusual cases where segregation was a more appropriate accommodation.

<sup>80</sup> *Meiorin, supra*, note 73, at para. 68.

### 8.2.5 Appropriate accommodation

Where barriers continue to exist because it is not possible to remove them at a given point in time, then accommodations must be provided, unless this causes undue hardship.

Accommodation is a process and a matter of degree. Different options can be seen along a continuum. The most appropriate accommodation will be the one that best respects dignity, meets individual needs, and promotes inclusion and full participation.

An organization should first identify what is the most appropriate or ideal accommodation in the circumstances before considering whether it would cause undue hardship. It must put in place the most appropriate accommodation unless it is not possible in the circumstances, or would cause undue hardship. In that case, the organization must consider and put in place next-best, phased-in or interim solutions.

**Example:** A fitness club member is in the process of transitioning to identifying publicly as a woman. She no longer feels it's appropriate or safe to use the men's change room but is not yet comfortable using the women's change room. The club manager explores interim solutions with her, such as a privacy curtain or partition in the women's or men's shower and change areas, or access to private staff space.

The club is also looking at more universally inclusive options for the future such as building an accessible privacy stall in each change room, and/or a universal single-user gender-neutral washroom with a shower and space for changing. These could be used by anyone who needs them such as a person who is transitioning, a person with a disability, a family, or others.

This approach allows a trans member to use the facilities based on their lived gender identity and have options while transitioning. It also provides greater privacy options for all members. The club also develops a policy addressing the rights of trans members and educates staff about the policy.

In some cases, the most appropriate accommodation may involve changing policies, practices and other requirements so they are more inclusive. It may require flexibility when enforcing rules and requirements or otherwise proof of why the requirement is legitimate and necessary in the circumstances (also see section 9 of this policy: Reasonable bona fide requirements). This type of accommodation may come up, for example, when a trans person requests a change to administrative documents and electronic records and databases to reflect their lived gender and chosen name (also see section 13.3 of this policy: Identity documents).

Organizations will find that inclusive design, barrier removal and individual accommodations often benefit larger numbers of people.

### 8.3 Roles and responsibilities

Accommodation is a multi-party process and shared responsibility.<sup>81</sup> Everyone must work together cooperatively and respectfully to explore and implement appropriate accommodation solutions.

The person seeking accommodation is responsible for:

- Telling the accommodation provider (employer, landlord, service provider, etc.) when they have *Code*-related needs that require accommodation
- Providing information relevant to their needs and meeting any agreed-upon standards once accommodation has been provided
- Cooperating in the accommodation process to the best of their ability.

Accommodation providers are responsible for:

- Accepting requests for accommodation in good faith (unless there is evidence the request is not genuine)
- Making reasonable requests for only information that is necessary to clarify the nature and extent of the accommodation needed for the situation
- Making sure that information related to accommodation is kept confidential and shared only with people who need the information for their role in implementing the accommodation
- Acting in a timely way and taking an active role in looking for solutions
- Covering any appropriate costs related to the accommodation.

Keeping information about someone's trans identity private and confidential is critical because of the stigma and stereotypes that trans people often face.

## 9. Reasonable *bona fide* requirements

The *Code* prohibits discrimination that results from requirements, qualifications, or factors that may appear neutral but have an adverse or negative effect on people identified by *Code* grounds.<sup>82</sup>

At the same time, the *Code* allows an organization to show that the requirement, qualification or factor is nevertheless "reasonable and *bona fide*" in the circumstances. However, to do this, the organization must show that the needs of the person cannot be accommodated without undue hardship.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> *Central Okanagan School District No. 23 v. Renaud*, [1992] 2 S.C.R. 970.

<sup>82</sup> See section 11 of the *Code*: Constructive discrimination.

<sup>83</sup> The test for undue hardship is set out fully in the OHRC's *Policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate*, and is discussed in greater detail in section 10.3 of this policy.

## The legal test

The Supreme Court of Canada has set out a framework for deciding whether a *prima facie* (on its face) discriminatory requirement<sup>84</sup> is reasonable and *bona fide* (legitimate) in the circumstances. The organization must show on a balance of probabilities (more likely than not) that the requirement:

1. Was adopted for a purpose or goal that is rationally connected to the function being performed
2. Was adopted in good faith, in the belief that it is necessary to fulfill the purpose or goal
3. Is reasonably necessary to accomplish its purpose or goal, in the sense that it is impossible to accommodate the claimant without undue hardship.

Ultimately, the person who wants to justify a discriminatory requirement, rule or standard must show that accommodation was incorporated into the standard to the point of undue hardship. This means the requirement was designed or changed to include as many people as possible, and that any remaining individual needs were accommodated, short of undue hardship.

**Example:** In the case *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) found that requiring trans people to have transsexual surgery to change their sex designation on a birth certificate (under the *Vital Statistics Act*) was not reasonable and *bona fide* and discriminated against trans people.

The HRTO said: “the respondent has not established that allowing transgendered persons to change the sex designation on their birth registrations and birth certificates without surgery would make vital event data less accurate and reliable than it is under the current system, let alone to the point of imposing undue hardship on the respondent.”<sup>85</sup>

In this case, the Province of Ontario failed the third part of the test and could not show the requirement was “reasonably necessary....”

---

<sup>84</sup> See section 6.2 of this policy, Determining discrimination, for an explanation of *prima facie* discrimination.

<sup>85</sup> *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)* 2012 HRTO 726 at paras. 238 and 240 (CanLII). See also *Finan v. Cosmetic Surgicentre (Toronto)*, 2008 HRTO 47 at paras. 42-50 (CanLII) for a case where the HRTO found the respondent met the three-step test, therefore justifying *prima facie* discriminatory treatment in services. See also *Québec (Comm. des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse) c. Maison des jeunes À-Ma-Baie Inc. (No 2)* (1998), 33 C.H.R.R. D/263 (T.D.P.Q.) for a case where an employer did not meet the three-step test and could not establish a genuine and *bona fide* occupational requirement related to gender identity.

## 10. Other limits on the duty to accommodate

### 10.1 Failing to participate in the accommodation process

Everyone involved in the accommodation process has a duty to cooperate to the best of their ability. In some cases, an organization may have met its procedural and substantive duty to accommodate where the person requesting accommodation did not sufficiently take part in the process, refused or otherwise could not take part at all. While a person may ask for a certain type of accommodation, both sides should be willing to explore options that appropriately meet the person's needs.

Before concluding that a person has failed to cooperate in the accommodation process, organizations should consider if there are any disability or other *Code*-related factors that may prevent the person from taking part. The organization may need to accommodate these factors as well. They should also consider whether there is a need to adjust the accommodation because it is not working.

### 10.2 Balancing competing rights

Generally, when a person makes an accommodation request, the organization or institution responsible for accommodation will be able to provide the accommodation without it affecting the legal rights of other people.

Sometimes, however, a request for accommodation may result in a “competing human rights” situation if the rights of another person or group are also affected.

Organizations have a legal duty to take steps to prevent and respond to situations involving competing rights. The OHRC's *Policy on competing human rights* sets out a framework for dealing with competing human rights situations as well as preventing conflicts from happening.<sup>86</sup> Part of the analysis involves considering whether there is a legislative exemption for the situation, or whether the interference with the rights of another person or group is significant or substantial.

**Example:** In a case that went to the British Columbia Court of Appeal, the Vancouver Rape Relief Society decided not to train a trans woman as a volunteer because she had lived part of her life as a man. They argued the restriction was a legitimate requirement for the position because they provide services specifically to women who have experienced violence from men.

---

<sup>86</sup> For more information, see the OHRC's *Policy on competing human rights* online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-competing-human-rights](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-competing-human-rights).

The Court discussed the impact on both sides (the volunteer and the clients) and found that while the organization had appeared to discriminate against the trans woman, an exemption in the BC *Human Rights Code*, which is designed to address competing rights, protected the organization from liability in this situation.<sup>87</sup>

Each competing rights situation must be examined and decided on its own merits giving serious consideration to the specific context. A different set of facts could mean a different outcome in another situation.

### 10.3 Undue hardship

Organizations have a duty to accommodate the needs of trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals, unless it would cause undue hardship.

Undue hardship is difficult to prove. The *Code* prescribes three factors to decide whether an accommodation would cause undue hardship:

- Cost
- Outside sources of funding, if any
- Health and safety requirements, if any.

Only these three factors can be used to assess undue hardship. The onus of proving it lies with the organization.<sup>88</sup> They cannot rely on impressionistic views or stereotypes,<sup>89</sup> anecdotal evidence or after-the-fact justifications.<sup>90</sup> Nor can an organization speculate as to what might or might not happen if the accommodation is provided.<sup>91</sup> The evidence to prove undue hardship must be real, direct, objective, and in the case of costs, quantifiable.

The cost standard is a high one.<sup>92</sup> An organization would need to show in an objective way that the cost of the accommodation, for example, would alter the essential nature of what it does or would substantially affect its viability. In making this assessment, organizations should consider:

- What is the size of the operation? What might prove to be a cost amounting to undue hardship for a small organization will not likely be the same for a larger organization.
- Can the costs be recovered in the normal course of operation?

---

<sup>87</sup> *Vancouver Rape Relief Society v. Nixon*, 2005 BCCA 601, application for leave to appeal to SCC dismissed 2007 CanLII 2772 (SCC).

<sup>88</sup> *Grismer*, *supra*, note 74, at para. 42.

<sup>89</sup> *Meiorin*, *supra*, note 73, at para. 78-79 and *Grismer*, *supra*, note 74, at para. 41. Cases since *Meiorin* and *Grismer* have also applied this stringent requirement for objective evidence; see, for example, *Miele v. Famous Players Inc.* (2000), 37 C.H.R.R. D/1 (B.C.H.R.T.).

<sup>90</sup> See *Buttar v. Halton Regional Police Services Board*, 2013 HRTO 1578 (CanLII).

<sup>91</sup> *Adga Group Consultants Inc. v. Lane*, *supra*, note 24.

<sup>92</sup> *Grismer*, *supra*, note 74, at para. 41.

- Can other divisions or departments of the organization help absorb the cost?
- Can the costs be phased in over a longer time period?
- Can the organization set aside a certain percentage of money every year in a reserve fund to be used for accommodation?

To offset costs, an organization has an obligation to consider any outside sources of funding or in-kind resources available to make the accommodation. A person seeking accommodation is also expected to take advantage of any available outside resources that could help cover expenses related to the accommodation.

Health and safety concerns will amount to undue hardship if they are shown to be real and significant. Organizations have a legal obligation to protect the health and safety of all their employees, clients, tenants and others.<sup>93</sup> They should consider whether changing or waiving a health and safety requirement or providing any other type of accommodation might result in a serious health or safety risk. An organization should look at:

- The nature and severity of the risk
- The likelihood of it happening, and who might be affected
- If the risk only involves the person asking for accommodation, would they be willing to assume it?
- How does the risk compare to other risks allowed within the organization or already tolerated in society as a whole?

Organizations must try to mitigate or reduce risks where they exist. The amount of risk that exists after accommodations have been made and precautions have been taken to reduce the risk (short of undue hardship based on cost) will determine whether there is undue hardship.<sup>94</sup>

**Example:** A trans female employee makes an accommodation request for some physical changes to the washrooms as well as the corporate policy on their use. The employer denies the request, claiming undue hardship for “safety” reasons. However, it appears they are speculating and have no evidence of a real risk. Also, the employer hasn’t shown why it couldn’t deal with a safety issue even if one did come up.

---

<sup>93</sup> For example, see *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, *supra*, note 60.

<sup>94</sup> For more information about undue hardship, see the OHRC’s *Policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate* online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-and-guidelines-disability-and-duty-accommodate](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-and-guidelines-disability-and-duty-accommodate)

## 11. Complaints and reprisal

Trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals who believe they experienced discrimination or harassment should try to raise the matter or make a complaint with their employer, union or other vocational association, landlord or service provider. If this is not possible or the problem is not addressed, they can ask the Human Rights Legal Support Centre<sup>95</sup> for advice or make a complaint – called an application – to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario<sup>96</sup> within one year from the last alleged incident.

The *Code* protects people if they experience reprisal or threats of reprisal for claiming their rights.<sup>97</sup> A reprisal is an action or threat that is intended as retaliation or punishment for claiming or enforcing a right under the *Code*. However, there is no strict requirement that someone who alleges reprisal must have already made an official complaint or claim under the *Code*.<sup>98</sup> Also, to prove reprisal, a person does not have to show their rights were actually infringed.<sup>99</sup>

People associated with people who have experienced or complained about discrimination are also protected from discrimination and reprisal (also see section 7.3 of this policy: Association).<sup>100</sup>

## 12. Corporate liability

Organizations have a legal duty and ultimate responsibility to maintain an environment free from discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and expression. They must take steps to prevent and respond to violations of the *Code* or they may be held “liable” and face monetary penalties or other orders from a tribunal or court.

It is unacceptable to choose to remain unaware, ignore or fail to address potential or actual human rights violations, whether or not a complaint is made.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> [www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/Default.aspx](http://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/Default.aspx)

<sup>96</sup> [www.hrto.ca/hrto/](http://www.hrto.ca/hrto/)

<sup>97</sup> See section 8 of the *Code*: Reprisal. Also see section 7(3)(b) which also prohibits reprisal for rejecting a sexual solicitation or advance, where the reprisal is made or threatened by a person in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the person.

<sup>98</sup> *Noble v. York University*, 2010 HRTO 878 at paras. 30-31, 33-34 (CanLII). Reprisal is established if:

- An action was taken against, or a threat was made to, the claimant
- The alleged action or threat was related to the claimant having claimed, or trying to enforce a *Code* right, and
- There was an intention on the part of the respondent to retaliate for the claim or the attempt to enforce the right.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* See also *Bertrand v. Primary Response*, 2010 HRTO 186 (CanLII).

<sup>100</sup> *Knibbs v. Brant Artillery Gunners Club*, *supra*, note 39.

<sup>101</sup> *Re Dupont Canada Inc. and Kingston Independent Nylon Workers Union*, [1993] O.L.A.A. No. 426 at para. 67; *Alberta v. Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (Banack Grievance)*, [1999] A.G.A.A. No. 74 at para. 86.

Under section 46.3 of the *Code*, a corporation, trade union or occupational association, unincorporated association or employers' organization will be held responsible for discrimination, including acts or omissions, committed by employees or agents in the course of their employment. This is known as "vicarious liability."

Responsible parties violate the *Code* where they directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally infringe the *Code*, or where they otherwise authorize, condone or adopt behaviour that is contrary to the *Code*.

Multiple organizations may be held jointly liable where they all contribute to discrimination. Tribunals and courts may also find organizations liable because they failed to respond appropriately to discrimination and harassment. Organizations may face higher damages as a result.<sup>102</sup>

Vicarious liability does not apply to the parts of the *Code* dealing with harassment. However, since a poisoned environment is a form of discrimination, when harassment amounts to or results in a poisoned environment, vicarious liability is restored. The "organic theory of corporate liability" may also apply. That is, an organization may be liable for acts of harassment carried out by its employees if it can be proven that management was aware of the harassment, or the harasser is part of the management or "directing mind" of the organization.<sup>103</sup>

Generally speaking, anybody with authority or significant responsibility for the guidance of others will be considered part of the "directing mind."

## 13. Preventing and responding to discrimination

### 13.1 Organizational reviews, policies and education

Corporate liability involves more than individual instances of discrimination and harassment. Organizations also risk violating the *Code* if they do not address underlying problems such as systemic barriers, a poisoned environment or an organizational culture that condones discrimination.

There are several steps organizations can take to make sure they are following the *Code* and human rights principles related to gender identity and expression. Strategies can include developing and implementing:

- A barrier prevention, review and removal plan
- Anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies
- An accommodation policy and procedure

---

<sup>102</sup> *Smith v. Menzies Chrysler Incorporated*, *supra*, note 58.

<sup>103</sup> *Olarte v. DeFilippis and Commodore Business Machines Ltd. (No. 2)* (1983), 4 C.H.R.R. D/1705 (Ont. Bd. Of Inq.), *aff'd* (1984), 14 D.L.R. [4th] 118 (Div. Ct.).

- An internal complaints procedure
- An education and training program<sup>104</sup>
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, all workplaces in Ontario are expected to develop harassment policies and review these at least once a year. Harassment policies should specifically recognize protection for gender identity and expression among other *Code* grounds.<sup>105</sup>

For more information about these types of strategies, see the OHRC's *Policy primer: guide to developing human rights policies and procedures*.<sup>106</sup>

Organizations should also consider developing policies and procedures to deal with the specific needs of trans people related to transitioning, identity documents, washrooms and change facilities, privacy and confidentiality, etc. These issues were raised during the OHRC's public consultation<sup>107</sup> and are covered in more detail in the next sections of this policy. Addressing them will help remove significant barriers for trans people in their daily lives.

Also see Appendix C: Best practices checklist on these issues and on dress codes, collecting data on sex and gender as well as workplace gender transition guidelines and individual plans.

## 13.2 Transitioning

Transitioning refers to the activities and process that people may follow to help them live their felt gender identity. This can be very different for each person and some may always be in a state of transition (also see Appendix C: Glossary).

People who are transitioning may need distinct forms and degrees of accommodation along the way. They may ask for recognition of their preferred gender and name while waiting for formal changes to official identity documents. Some may need temporary access to private single-user washrooms and change rooms or housing facilities. They may also need time away for medical procedures or other activities to support their transition. Generally, these will be temporary until the person is ready to access regular services and facilities according to their lived gender identity.

---

<sup>104</sup> This should include training and education that specifically focuses on the stereotypes and discrimination that trans people face [see *Forrester v. Regional Municipality of Peel (Police Services Board)*, *supra*, note 23, at paras. 473 and 476]. Also see the *Yogyakarta Principles*, *supra* note 20, at Principle 17, which calls for implementing education and training programs to enable all health care practitioners to deliver the highest attainable standard of health care, with full respect for each person's gender identity.

<sup>105</sup> Also see *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, *supra*, note 60.

<sup>106</sup> See the OHRC's *Policy primer: guide to developing human rights policies and procedures* online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/guidelines-developing-human-rights-policies-and-procedures](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/guidelines-developing-human-rights-policies-and-procedures)

<sup>107</sup> See OHRC Consultation backgrounder, *supra*, note 11.

Transitioning can be a very difficult and stressful time for trans people. They are “coming out” to live their felt gender identity making them particularly vulnerable to discrimination and harassment. Issues like name and gender recognition and access to washrooms go to the core of people’s human dignity.

Respect, understanding and confidentiality is everyone’s responsibility during transition and the accommodation process. Organizations should be alert to preventing and addressing any harassment that may happen. Developing policies and training staff will also help prevent problems during transition.

## 13.3 Identity documents

### 13.3.1 Barriers

Many identity documents such as birth certificates, health cards, passports, drivers’ licences, school and medical records, etc., show a person’s sex or gender. For trans people, these documents may not match their lived gender identity.

Discrepancies on official documents can create significant barriers, disadvantage and even health and safety risks for trans people.

**Example:** In *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, the HRTO said: “A non-transgendered woman can confidently produce a birth certificate when she is required to do so (or when it would be convenient to do so) without having to contend with a sex designation that is incongruent with her lived experience. Her gender identity accords with the sex assigned at birth and is not open to question or challenge. For a transgendered woman, however, this simple act is fraught with risk. Will she be perceived differently as a result of producing a birth certificate that shows that ‘officially’ she is a different gender from the one that she presents? Will her gender identity be questioned or challenged by the person viewing her birth certificate? Will she even perhaps be subject to ridicule or humiliation as a result of producing a government issued document that states that she is a different gender than the one in which she presents herself?”<sup>108</sup>

Trans people may face invasive questions from schools, shelters, hospitals, potential employers or even police about why their gender expression doesn’t “match” the gender designation on a document. An organization might be unwilling to recognize the person’s chosen name and gender. The person may be placed in the “wrong” sex segregated setting such as dorms or hospital rooms that don’t match their lived gender.

An organization should have a valid reason for collecting and using personal information that identifies a person’s gender. They should keep this information confidential.

---

<sup>108</sup> *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, *supra*, note 2, at paras. 147-48.

### 13.3.2 Changing a name or sex designation

International human rights standards<sup>109</sup> and Ontario case law confirm that a trans person cannot be expected to go through sex reassignment surgery, or any other medical procedure, as a condition to change the gender designation on their identity documents.

**Example:** In *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, the HRTO found the requirement under the *Vital Statistics Act* that a person must certify they had sex-reassignment surgery before being able to change the sex designation on their birth certificate was discriminatory because it resulted in disadvantageous treatment or impact and perpetuated stereotypes about trans people.<sup>110</sup> The Tribunal said:

The message conveyed is that a transgendered person's gender identity only becomes valid and deserving of recognition if she surgically alters her body through "transsexual surgery." This reinforces the prejudicial view in society that, unless and until a transgendered person has "transsexual surgery," we as a society are entitled to disregard their felt and expressed gender identity and treat them as if they are "really" the sex assigned at birth.<sup>111</sup>

While the Ontario Government has not amended the *Vital Statistics Act*, it has made changes to the criteria for changing sex designation on an Ontario birth registration. Sex reassignment surgery is no longer required. A practicing physician or psychologist need only certify that a change in sex designation is appropriate given the person's lived gender identity.<sup>112</sup>

Criteria for changing the name and or sex designation on identity documents should be respectful, non-intrusive, and need not necessarily be medically based.

**Example:** Many types of professionals – social workers, nurses, school or college or university officials, therapists, employers, members of one's family, faith community or others – could confirm a person is trans and living publicly in the gender matching the change they are requesting.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> See *Yogyakarta Principles*, supra note 20, at Principle 3. See also, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, supra note 22, at p.22, 25.

<sup>110</sup> *XY v. Ontario (Government and Consumer Services)*, supra, note 2, at paras. 14-15.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* at para. 172.

<sup>112</sup> As of the publication date of this policy, the Government of Ontario has not yet amended the discriminatory section 36 provision of the *Vital Statistics Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. V.4. To learn more about the Government of Ontario's revised requirements for changing the sex designation on a birth certificate see: Service Ontario, *Changing your sex designation on your birth registration and birth certificate* online: Service Ontario [www.ontario.ca/government/changing-your-sex-designation-your-birth-registration-and-birth-certificate](http://www.ontario.ca/government/changing-your-sex-designation-your-birth-registration-and-birth-certificate) (retrieved February 19, 2014).

<sup>113</sup> See the OHRC's response to the Ministry of Government Services' consultation document on revised criteria for change of sex designation on an Ontario birth registration, online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/re-consultation-document-%E2%80%93-revised-criteria-change-sex-designation-ontario-birth-registration](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/re-consultation-document-%E2%80%93-revised-criteria-change-sex-designation-ontario-birth-registration).

Other requirements related to changing a name or sex designation, such as public disclosure, should not negatively affect trans people.

**Example:** In 2006, the OHRC raised concerns that public disclosure requirements under the *Change of Name Act* were having a discriminatory impact on trans people, effectively “outing” them in public records. To address this, the Government of Ontario amended the legislation and changed the related regulations, accommodating trans people by allowing for a non-publication option.<sup>114</sup>

### 13.3.3 Recognizing lived gender identity

Sometimes, a person may choose not to change their name and gender on their identity documents. In other instances, different documents may indicate different names and/or gender designations. Regardless of what is recorded on a person’s identity documents, a trans person should be addressed in person by their chosen name and gender.

Organizations should accommodate if a trans person asks them to have documents recognize a name that differs from their legal name.

**Example:** A trans student requests that class lists reflect their lived gender identity and chosen name. This would help make sure teachers and other staff and students address them appropriately.

Depending on the circumstances, the *Code* may allow for limits on the duty to accommodate, especially if a person chooses not to change their legal name. An organization would have to show their criteria for recognizing a person’s gender identity is legitimate and they were unable to accommodate short of undue hardship (see sections 9 and 10 of this policy on reasonable *bona fide* requirements and the duty to accommodate). A person’s chosen name and gender might still be used alongside their legal name, again, if appropriate in the circumstances.

**Example:** A trans client requests that electronic health records at their local walk-in clinic reflect their lived gender identity and chosen name alongside current health card information that shows a different name and gender. This would help make sure healthcare professionals and other staff address them appropriately in person.

For prescriptions and other documents, ordering medical procedures and referrals to other health care practitioners, the clinic believes the name and gender shown on the person’s health card is also necessary to avoid any health and safety risk from mistakes that might happen.

---

<sup>114</sup> Bill 152, *Ministry of Government Services Consumer Protection and Service Modernization Act, 2006* amended ss. 8(1)(a) and 13 of the *Change of Name Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.7 as well as the regulations (R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 68, s. 6).

In many cases, organizations will not need corroboration or proof of a person's lived gender identity to recognize a person's chosen name and gender in their administrative system. A person's request should usually be enough.

**Example:** The University of Toronto has a policy that allows students to change their name and gender on academic records, class lists and online student databases by writing a letter to their college registrar, requesting this change. The university will require the student to establish and authenticate their identity.<sup>115</sup>

A person's self-identified gender should be accepted genuinely in good faith even if identity documents do not match their lived gender. An organization would need a serious reason to doubt someone's self-identified gender.<sup>116</sup>

## 13.4 Washrooms and change rooms

### 13.4.1 Access based on lived gender identity

Access to washrooms is a basic physical need at the core of human dignity for everyone. Yet washrooms cause significant barriers for trans people and are one of the public spaces they avoid most.<sup>117</sup>

The *Code* allows for restriction of services or facilities to persons of the same sex for reason of "public decency."<sup>118</sup> Facilities such as washrooms, change rooms and locker rooms are typically segregated based on sex. Trans people have the right to access these facilities based on their lived gender identity.

An organization's washroom facilities and any related policy should not negatively affect trans people. A trans person who identifies and lives as a man should have access to the men's washrooms and change rooms. A trans person who identifies and lives as a woman should have access to the women's washrooms and change rooms.

**Example:** In a case that went to the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal, a trans person living as a woman entered a lounge and used the women's washroom. When she came out, a bouncer told her not to do so again or she would be asked to leave. Later, the manager made a policy that patrons must use the washroom matching their anatomy.

The Tribunal found that the policy discriminated against the trans woman and the lounge had a duty to accommodate her needs to the point of undue hardship. The

---

<sup>115</sup> *University of Toronto's Statement Concerning Changes of Student Personal Information in Official Academic Records (Approved April 16, 2009)*, online: University of Toronto <http://sqdo.utoronto.ca/resources/resources-for-trans-people-u-of-t/>

<sup>116</sup> See for example *Forrester*, *supra*, note 23.

<sup>117</sup> See *Scheim et al.*, *supra*, note 7.

<sup>118</sup> See section 20(1) of the *Code*: Restriction of facilities by sex

Tribunal said that “transsexuals in transition who are living as members of the desired sex should be considered to be members of that sex for the purposes of human rights legislation” and that “Taking this view, the Complainant was a woman and, therefore, her choice of the women’s washroom was appropriate.”<sup>119</sup>

A trans person should not be required to use a separate washroom or change room because others express discomfort or transphobic attitudes, such as, “trans women are a threat to other women.” Trans people themselves are at risk of harassment and violence when using these facilities.<sup>120</sup> Education and awareness will help dispel these kinds of stereotypes.

**Example:** In the case of *Ferris v. O.T.E.U., Local 15 (1999)*, the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal said: “I accept that transgendered people are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. They often bear the brunt of our society’s misunderstanding and ignorance about gender identity. In the context of the workplace, washroom use issues are often contentious and, in the absence of knowledge, sensitivity and respect for all concerned, can inflict a great deal of emotional harm on the transgendered person.”<sup>121</sup>

#### 13.4.2 Accommodation and inclusive design

A trans person does not need to “ask” to use the washroom. They have the right to use the one that matches their lived gender identity. Some people, however, may need accommodation, temporary or otherwise, to access washrooms, change-rooms or other type of sex-segregated facility.

**Example:** While going through a transition process, and because of concerns about harassment from others, a trans employee requests access to the single-user gender-neutral accessibility washroom normally reserved for use by persons with disabilities.

An employer or service provider has a duty to accommodate such requests unless there is proof it would cause undue hardship.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup> See *Sheridan, supra*, note 30, at paras. 102 and 107 (B.C.Trib.). But see *obiter* comments in *Vanderputten, supra*, note 30, at para. 68.

<sup>120</sup> See Jody L. Herman “Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender People’s Lives” (2013) 19(1) *Journal of Public Management and Social Policy* 65 online: *Journal of Public Management and Social Policy* [www.jpmsp.com/volume-19/vol19-iss1](http://www.jpmsp.com/volume-19/vol19-iss1)

<sup>121</sup> *Ferris v. O.T.E.U., Local 15 (1999)*, 36 C.H.R.R. D/329 at para.16 (B.C.H.R.T.).

<sup>122</sup> See *Sheridan, supra*, note 30, at para. 102.

The Ontario Building Code Regulation<sup>123</sup> already recognizes standards for single-user gender-neutral washrooms (a washroom with one toilet that can be used by either sex) as well as “universal” washrooms (a washroom accessible for people with disabilities with a wash basin and one toilet). The standards only apply to new buildings and major renovations.

Changes to the Building Code Regulation, effective January 1, 2015, will require at least one universal washroom in all new buildings or major renovations, and, for multi-storey buildings, at least one for every three floors. The Building Code Regulation also permits single-user gender-neutral washrooms for everyone instead of separate male and female washrooms.<sup>124</sup> These changes will help meet the needs of trans people and others.<sup>125</sup>

More and more organizations are taking the initiative up front to design, add or convert facilities to be more inclusive with a range of options for everyone. Putting the Building Code standards and other best practices in place sooner will reduce the need for individual accommodation requests and benefit a wide range of people.<sup>126</sup> Examples include:

- More privacy options in traditional men-only and women-only washrooms and change rooms such as individual shower and changing stalls with curtains or doors, that are also accessible and available to everyone
- Gender-neutral single-user washroom or gender-neutral multi-stall washrooms that anyone can use: these options also improve access for people whose gender identity or expression does not fit into “man” or “woman.” They also allow parents with children of opposite genders to enter the washroom together
- “Universal” washrooms: this single-user option also provides accessibility for people with disabilities as well as families and privacy for anyone who needs it regardless of gender identity

Washrooms and change rooms need to be inclusive, accessible and safe spaces for everyone, including trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals.

<sup>123</sup> *Building Code Act, 1992*, S.O. 1992, c. 23, O.Reg. 332/12.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, ss. 3.7.4.2.(8), (9) & (10) online: e-laws [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regq/english/elaws/regq\\_120332\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regq/english/elaws/regq_120332_e.htm)

<sup>125</sup> See the section on “Washrooms” in the OHRC’s 2012 Submission to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on proposed changes to the Ontario Building Code, online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ohrc-submission-mmah-proposed-changes-ontario-building-code](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ohrc-submission-mmah-proposed-changes-ontario-building-code)

<sup>126</sup> See the 519 Church Street Community Centre *Washroom Signage Policy* online: The 519 Church Street Community Centre [www.the519.org/resources](http://www.the519.org/resources). See University of Western Ontario Equity & Human Rights Services *Gender-Neutral Washrooms at Western* online: University of Western Ontario [www.uwo.ca/equity/](http://www.uwo.ca/equity/).

### 13.5 Dress codes

Some employers, educational institutions, service providers like swimming pools, or residential facilities like hospitals or even jails may have rules about what people wear. These requirements can be legitimate depending on the circumstances but they should not negatively affect trans people and others protected under the *Code*. Any specific dress codes, such as uniforms or protective gear, must be genuine and reasonably necessary and should not be based solely on gender stereotypes.<sup>127</sup>

Dress code policies need to be inclusive of everyone, including trans people. Organizations must allow trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals to dress according to their expressed gender. Dress codes must also accommodate women who have a masculine gender expression and men who have a feminine gender expression. Others may identify as gender non-conforming, and should not be required to dress in clothing either stereotypical of men, such as a tie, or women, such as a skirt. Dress codes that are gender-inclusive and flexible are the best approach.

### 13.6 Shelter services

Trans people sometimes face barriers and discriminatory treatment when accessing shelter services. Trans males, for example, have reported that they are unsafe in men's shelters and unwelcome in women's.<sup>128</sup> Some shelters ask invasive questions about a trans person's transition status. Shelter staff may have little training about transgender-related issues, needs and terminology.<sup>129</sup> Some youth report being required or feeling compelled to conform to their birth-assigned sex to access shelter services.<sup>130</sup>

The *Code* has exceptions that might permit organizations like homeless, transitional and youth shelters or shelters for abused women to restrict their residential accommodation or other services to persons of the same sex. A trans person should have access to the shelter that matches their lived gender identity.<sup>131</sup> A shelter might even limit its service to just helping trans people.<sup>132</sup> A shelter cannot otherwise discriminate based on a person's gender identity or expression.

<sup>127</sup> Cases have recognized that requiring an employee to dress in a sexualized, gender-specific way can be a form of sexual harassment or discrimination. See for example: *Mottu v. MacLeod and others*, 2004 B.C.H.R.T. 67; *Doherty and Meehan v. Lodger's International Ltd.* (1981), 3 C.H.R.R. D/628 (N. B.); *Giouvanoudis v. Golden Fleece Restaurant & Tavern Ltd.* (1984, 5 C.H.R.R. D/1967; and *Ballentyne v. Molly 'N' Me Tavern* (1982) 4 C.H.R.R. D/1191.

<sup>128</sup> The FTM Safer Shelter Project Research Team, *Invisible Men: FTMs and Homelessness in Toronto* (2008), online: The Wellesley Institute [www.wellesleyinstitute.com/publication/ftms\\_and\\_homelessness\\_in\\_the\\_city\\_of\\_toronto\\_-\\_research\\_report/](http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/publication/ftms_and_homelessness_in_the_city_of_toronto_-_research_report/).

<sup>129</sup> Ilona Alex Abramovich, "No Safe Place to Go LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in Canada: Reviewing the Literature" (2012) 4(1) *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth* 29.

<sup>130</sup> See I. Alex Abramovich, "Teal's Story", online: ilona6 [www.ilona6.com/artsinformed.php](http://www.ilona6.com/artsinformed.php) (retrieved February 18, 2014).

<sup>131</sup> If a competing rights situation comes up, the shelter would have to show any restriction on a group is legitimate (reasonable and *bona fide*) in the circumstances and how else they might accommodate (also see sections 9 and 10 of this policy).

<sup>132</sup> See sections 14, 18 and 21 of the *Code*

**Example:** A young person seeks services at a youth shelter that has a “male” and “female” floor. Her birth assigned sex is male but she identifies as female. She requests to stay on the female floor, and the shelter agrees. The shelter also takes steps to educate clients and staff in the shelter about gender identity and human rights.

Safety from harassment and violence inside shelters is also a pressing concern for people who use them. Trans people are particularly vulnerable.<sup>133</sup>

**Example:** A trans man may not feel safe in a men’s shelter and may ask for access to a women’s shelter, or to a separate space within a men’s or a women’s shelter.

Shelter rules and requirements should be inclusive as possible to avoid negatively affecting trans clients. Organizations also have a duty to accommodate any needs trans clients may have unless it would cause undue hardship. Accommodation needs might involve changes to policy requirements, practices or systems and facilities such as washrooms, change rooms, sleeping quarters, or security procedures, as well as identity records or other matters.

Shelters should look for barriers, develop or change policies and procedures and undertake training to deal effectively with access and safety needs of all clients, including trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals.<sup>134</sup>

**Example:** Section 4.7 of the City of Toronto’s Shelter Standards addresses the needs of trans clients and reads in part: “It is expected that all shelters be accessible to the transgendered / transsexual/two-spirited (TS/TG/2-S) residents in their self-defined gender, and that shelters will work toward improving access to this group. Shelters will support the choices of TG/TS/2-S residents to gain access to services in the gender they identify will best preserve their safety.”

Shelters will be required to identify how they will respond to people who are TS/TG/2-S seeking service including developing a process, that may include a policy, staff training, designated beds, referrals, etc. done in consultation with TS/TG/2-S communities.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> See Abramovich, *supra*, note 129.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services, *Toronto Shelter Standards* online: City of Toronto [www1.toronto.ca/city\\_of\\_toronto/shelter\\_support\\_housing\\_administration/files/pdf/shelter\\_standards.pdf](http://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/shelter_support_housing_administration/files/pdf/shelter_standards.pdf) at 14.

### 13.7 Health care services

Trans people have a wide range of health care needs like anyone else. But they face barriers in accessing health care services on many levels.

Trans people report that family doctors and hospital emergency services often do not understand or respect their lived gender identity. It can be common for trans people to avoid seeking medical assistance, even in dire circumstances, for fear of a degrading experience in the health care setting.<sup>136</sup>

Research points to systemic social exclusion of trans people within the healthcare system. Services are often designed as if trans people do not exist. Little to no information is collected on their health care needs. This often results in policies and practices that may be discriminatory and create barriers for trans people to access care.<sup>137</sup>

**Example:** Hospital staff refuse to recognize a trans person's chosen name and lived gender during a visit to emergency with a broken arm. Staff assign the trans patient to the "wrong" sex-segregated room and ask invasive and unnecessary questions about her body.

Trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals have a right to access health care services free of discrimination and harassment. Hospitals and other healthcare providers have an obligation not to discriminate or condone discrimination, including harassment, because of someone's gender identity or gender expression. They also have a duty to accommodate any needs trans patients may have unless it would cause undue hardship.

Health care providers should take steps to identify and remove barriers as well as develop policies and procedures to prevent discrimination faced by trans people.

**Example:** Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital has an anti-discrimination policy that provides guidelines on the treatment of all trans, intersex and two-spirit patients (see Appendix B: Glossary for an explanation of these terms) to make sure they are treated with equality, dignity, and respect, in accordance with the *Code*. The policy provides guidance in several areas, including:

- All patients have the right to be identified and addressed by their lived gender
- Patients who are trans, intersex or two-spirit are to be given a range of bed accommodation options (e.g. private or semi-private room) according to their lived gender identity
- All patients have the right to use washrooms or change rooms based on their lived gender. Information is provided on the location of universal (single-user gender-neutral) washrooms

---

<sup>136</sup> See Bauer *et al.*, *supra*, note 16, at 357.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

- Health care practitioners only request and disclose a patient's birth-sex and/or other related information when directly related to their health care
- Admitting services provide options for identification that include trans, intersex and two-spirit.<sup>138</sup>

Trans people also face barriers in accessing specialized health care services unique to their health care needs as a trans person.

The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) covers sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Trans people can only access SRS if they complete a designated program, available at only one institution in Ontario, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.<sup>139</sup> There is currently a wait list of several months to access this program.<sup>140</sup>

Trans people may seek other body-changing procedures that are not covered by OHIP.<sup>141</sup> A few cases have come to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario alleging the lack of OHIP coverage for medical procedures related to transitioning gender identity is discriminatory.<sup>142</sup>

**Example:** The HRTO dismissed two claims alleging the government's failure to fund breast augmentation, voice therapy and facial laser hair removal for male-to-female transsexuals was discriminatory. The HRTO found no evidence these procedures were medical needs that fell within the purpose of OHIP.<sup>143</sup>

All health care providers, including those offering elective procedures not covered by OHIP, should be aware of the health care needs of trans people and adapt their services where appropriate. Health care providers must not exclude trans people unless they can show they do not have the competency (skills or experience) needed to safely provide the services.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>138</sup> For more information see Mt. Sinai Hospital, *Gender Identity Policy*, online: Mt. Sinai Hospital [www.mountsinai.on.ca/about\\_us/corporate-information/policies/Gender%20Identity%20Policy%20-%20l-e-30-36.pdf/view](http://www.mountsinai.on.ca/about_us/corporate-information/policies/Gender%20Identity%20Policy%20-%20l-e-30-36.pdf/view)

<sup>139</sup> See Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, *Bulletin 4480 Relisting of Sex Reassignment Surgery under OHIP* (20 June 2008) online: Ministry of Health and Long Term Care [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/ohip/bulletins/4000/bulletin\\_4000\\_mn.aspx](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/ohip/bulletins/4000/bulletin_4000_mn.aspx).

<sup>140</sup> Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, *Gender Identity Clinic* online: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [www.camh.ca/en/hospital/care\\_program\\_and\\_services/hospital\\_services/Pages/gid\\_guide\\_to\\_camh.aspx](http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/care_program_and_services/hospital_services/Pages/gid_guide_to_camh.aspx) (retrieved February 10, 2014).

<sup>141</sup> See SRS and Trans Health Policy Group, *Information on Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) and Trans Health Care in Ontario* (2009) online: Rainbow Health Ontario [www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=85313d1e-3048-8bc6-e8bd-be8677d01c3a](http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=85313d1e-3048-8bc6-e8bd-be8677d01c3a)

<sup>142</sup> For example, see *Brodeur v. Ontario (Health and Long-Term Care)*, 2013 HRTO 1229 (CanLII) and *Hogan v. Ontario (Health and Long-Term Care)*, 2006 HRTO 32 (CanLII).

<sup>143</sup> *Brodeur*, *ibid.* at paras 24, 27 and 41.

<sup>144</sup> For example, the Clinic Head of the Gender Identity Clinic at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health wrote an open letter to family doctors requesting they start prescribing hormone therapy so patients can begin the process without seeking specialty care. Dr. Christopher McIntosh & Dr. Nicola Brown, *Open Letter to Family Doctors regarding Hormone Therapy* online: Centre for Addiction in Mental Health

**Example:** In a case that went to the HRTO, two women alleged a doctor, who performs elective cosmetic plastic surgery including on the genitals of both women and men, refused them services because they were trans. One woman was inquiring about plastic surgery on her labia and the other was interested in breast augmentation.

The HRTO found the trans women did experience *prima facie* discrimination as the doctor denied the surgeries because they were trans. However, the HRTO accepted the doctor's justification that he was not qualified to safely perform the surgeries the trans women were seeking and found there is no expectation that he go get the necessary skills.<sup>145</sup>

The international Yogyakarta Principles recognize that access to specialized health care services for trans people is part of the right to the highest standard of health. This includes governments helping to facilitate access to body modifications related to gender reassignment.<sup>146</sup>

### 13.8 Education system

Trans youth can face a wide range of prejudice and discriminatory treatment at a very challenging time in their life. This can include educators and fellow students not addressing them by their chosen name and pronoun, and a lack of access to appropriate and safe washrooms and change room facilities. Trans youth are especially vulnerable to harassment and bullying from peers.

A 2011 Canadian survey found:

- 78% of trans students feel unsafe in their schools
- 74% of trans youth had been verbally harassed because of their gender identity
- 49% had experienced sexual harassment in school because of their gender identity
- 37% had been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender identity or expression.<sup>147</sup>

Trans youth want but don't always have the support of their teachers and school administration to help them during transition to their felt gender. Sometimes they may not have the support of their family either, making a welcoming school environment all the more important.

---

Health, [www.camh.ca/en/hospital/care\\_program\\_and\\_services/hospital\\_services/Pages/Open-Letter-to-Family-Doctors-regarding-Hormone-Therapy.aspx](http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/care_program_and_services/hospital_services/Pages/Open-Letter-to-Family-Doctors-regarding-Hormone-Therapy.aspx) (retrieved February 18, 2014).

<sup>145</sup> See *Finan v. Cosmetic Surgicentre (Toronto)*, 2008 HRTO 47 paras 42-50 (CanLII).

<sup>146</sup> Yogyakarta Principles *supra*, note 20, Principle 17(g).

<sup>147</sup> C. Taylor, et al., *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools. Final Report* (2011) online: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust <http://egale.ca/category/youth-and-safer-schools/national-survey/>

Ontario's *Accepting Schools Act*<sup>148</sup> amended the *Education Act* to provide explicit protection for students from bullying because of gender identity and gender expression among other grounds. The legislation requires school boards to develop and implement equity and inclusive education policies that address all forms of discrimination and harassment based on *Code* protected grounds, including gender identity and gender expression.<sup>149</sup>

All youth have a right to self-identify and express their lived gender identity while accessing education services. Under the *Code*, school boards, colleges and universities as well as other educational institutions have a responsibility to take steps to prevent and respond to discrimination and harassment of students because of their gender identity or gender expression. They also have a duty to accommodate any trans students' needs related to gender identity and expression.

Educational institutions should develop policies and procedures to recognize, among other things, that:<sup>150</sup>

- Trans students have the right to be addressed by their chosen name and pronoun
- Official records should reflect a student's lived gender, chosen name and pronoun as much as possible
- Trans students have the right to access washrooms and other facilities and take part in physical education and other classes in accordance with their lived gender identity
- If they wish, trans students can also request accommodations such as access to gender inclusive washrooms, or private spaces within change rooms
- More privacy options such as individual changing stalls and showers with curtains or doors would benefit all students
- Students have a right to privacy, and schools must keep a student's transgender status confidential. It should not be communicated to others unless they have a "need to know" to fulfill a specific accommodation need, or if the student requests it

---

<sup>148</sup> *Accepting Schools Act*, 2012, S.O. 2012 C.5, online: Legislative Assembly of Ontario [http://ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills\\_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2549](http://ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2549)

<sup>149</sup> For more information see the Ministry of Education, *Policy and Program Memorandum No. 119, Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools* online: Ministry of Education [www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm.html). Also see the OHRC's remarks to the Ontario Legislative Standing Committee on Social Policy regarding Bill 13 and Bill 14 on bullying online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ohrc-remarks-ontario-legislative-standing-committee-social-policy-regarding-bill-13-and-bill-14](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ohrc-remarks-ontario-legislative-standing-committee-social-policy-regarding-bill-13-and-bill-14)

<sup>150</sup> See Toronto District School Board (TDSB), *Guidelines for the Accommodation of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students and Staff: An Administrative Guideline of the Toronto District School Board* online: TDSB [www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/Innovation/GenderBasedViolencePrevention/AccommodationofTransgenderStudentsandStaff.aspx](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/Innovation/GenderBasedViolencePrevention/AccommodationofTransgenderStudentsandStaff.aspx). See also Genny Beemyn, *Transgender Checklist for Colleges and Universities* online: Campus Pride. <http://www.campuspride.org/tools/transgender-checklist-for-colleges-universities/> (retrieved on February 19, 2014).

- School dress codes and uniforms should be flexible and inclusive of all students regardless of their sex, gender identity or gender expression
- Where educational institutions have student residents, trans students should be able to choose housing based on their lived gender identity. It is also beneficial to have gender inclusive housing options where students share a facility regardless of their sex or gender identity.

### 13.9 Law enforcement and justice services

Trans people are especially disadvantaged and vulnerable when dealing with police, correctional institutions and other service providers in positions of power.<sup>151</sup>

It is vital that law enforcement services develop policies as well as education and training for police and correctional service staff, to address the discrimination, harassment and violence that trans people report facing in law enforcement situations.<sup>152</sup>

To effectively promote and protect the rights of trans people, justice institutions and other legal services also need to learn about their needs.

#### 13.9.1 Strip searches

In law enforcement situations requiring strip searches, police and correctional institution officers need to offer trans persons a choice of the sex of the officer(s) who searches them. This should include the option of only male officer(s), only female officer(s), or a “split search” with both male and female officers. A split search might involve, for example, male officers examining a detainee’s “male” lower body and female officers examining the person’s “female” upper and/or lower body. The HRTO confirmed this approach to conducting searches with trans individuals.

**Example:** The HRTO found that a detainee, who self-identified as a trans woman, experienced discrimination when police refused her requests for strip-searches to be conducted by female officers.<sup>153</sup> The HRTO said that in these types of situations detainees must be offered a choice of the sex of the officer who searches them.<sup>154</sup>

The HRTO set out appropriate criteria for verifying identity and conducting strip searches. It also identified some exceptions for dealing with high security risk situations and for rare circumstances where an officer might opt out because they have a valid competing right.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>151</sup> A. Scheim *et al.*, *Joint Effort: Prison Experiences of Trans PULSE Participants and Recommendations for Change*. Trans PULSE e-Bulletin, 22 April, 2013. 3 (3) Online: Trans PULSE [www.transpulseproject.ca](http://www.transpulseproject.ca).

<sup>152</sup> In *Forrester*, *supra*, note 23, the HRTO noted the importance of training all police officers on trans issues at paras. 468 and 473.

<sup>153</sup> See *Forrester*, *ibid.* at para. 416.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* at para. 476.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* at paras. 467 and 476.

### 13.9.2 Correctional institutions

In correctional settings, trans people are at higher risk of experiencing harassment and violence both from other inmates as well as from institutional staff.<sup>156</sup> Sometimes, trans people may be held in segregation units for their own protection. However, this can often isolate them and prevent them from having the same privileges or access to services available to others within the general prison population.<sup>157</sup>

Inmates whose gender identity is different from their birth-assigned sex should be assessed and accommodated on an individual basis. To the greatest extent possible, institutions should provide trans inmates with housing that is appropriate for their lived gender identity. Accommodation options should consider both their safety as well as the safety of all inmates. Assessment of safety risk should be based on evidence and not speculation or stereotypes.

Prison authorities should also make sure that forms of protective segregation are not unjustly used to deny trans inmates the rights and privileges that other prisoners have.

The importance of accommodating trans inmates is supported by the case law.

**Example:** A case that went to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) dealt with a trans inmate who identified and lived as a woman, but was placed in a men's prison. The CHRT found that Correctional Service Canada had a duty to accommodate trans inmates, especially because of their vulnerability to violence. The CHRT said:

Any policy dealing with this uniquely vulnerable group must recognize the differential effect that housing inmates in accordance with their anatomy has on transsexual inmates. The policy also needs to acknowledge their susceptibility to victimization within the prison system. Finally, it must require the individualized assessment of each transsexual inmate by corrections officials, in consultation with qualified medical professionals, as to the appropriate placement of the individual within the various types of facilities available in the male prison system, and the steps that are necessary to ensure their safety.<sup>158</sup>

Trans inmates should also have access to health care services related to transitioning while incarcerated.

---

<sup>156</sup> As Human Rights Watch has found, "empirical data on prison sexual violence suggest that it is not a random activity, but arises from the choosing of particular victims who... are believed to be more vulnerable." Human Rights Watch, *No Escape: Male Rape in United States Prisons* (2001) as cited in Human Rights Watch, *Transgender Prisoners, Identity, and Detention: Policy Recommendations* (2006) online: [www.outcast-films.com/films/cu/transgender\\_prisoners.pdf](http://www.outcast-films.com/films/cu/transgender_prisoners.pdf); A. Scheim et al., supra note 151.

<sup>157</sup> Kara Sandor von Dresner et al., "Providing Counseling for Transgendered Inmates: A Survey of Correctional Services" (2013) 7(4) *International Journal of Behavioural Consultation and Therapy* 38.

<sup>158</sup> See *Kavanagh v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2001 CanLII 8496 (CHRT) at para 166.

**Example (continued):** The CHRT also found that Correctional Service Canada's blanket prohibition on sex reassignment surgery had a discriminatory effect on trans-identified inmates, and that it was unable to justify such a policy. As a result, the CHRT ordered Correctional Service Canada to develop a health care services policy that ensures that the needs of transsexual inmates are identified and accommodated.

### 13.10 Other services

The *Code* also protects trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals from discrimination in other areas involving services, goods and facilities<sup>159</sup> including retail stores.

**Example:** In a complaint that went to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, a trans woman alleged a bridal shop refused to let her try on dresses as she planned her wedding. The complaint was successfully resolved once the business owner better understood the human rights issues.<sup>160</sup>

Retailers and other service providers must not discriminate because of gender identity or expression when providing their services. They too have a duty to accommodate needs that customers or clients may have related to their gender identity and expression, unless it would cause undue hardship.

### 13.11 Housing

Trans people are vulnerable to discrimination from landlords because of their gender identity or gender expression when applying for housing, exercising their rights as a tenant,<sup>161</sup> or when trying to access other housing-related services (see also section 13.6 of this policy: Shelter services).

While discrimination may not always be direct or overt, prejudicial attitudes and related treatment can make it hard for trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals to access and maintain housing. This in turn can have a harmful cascading effect on other aspects of their lives, including health, education and employment.

The *Code* says that every person has a right to equal treatment in housing without discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression.<sup>162</sup> Landlords, their agents and other housing providers must not deny housing to people because of their gender identity or gender expression.

<sup>159</sup> See section 1 of the *Code*.

<sup>160</sup> Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, *Mediation Achieves Resolution For Transgender Woman's Complaint* (11 September 2013) online: Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission [http://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/+pub/documents/news/2013/20130911\\_MediationAnnouncement\\_MediaRelease.pdf](http://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/+pub/documents/news/2013/20130911_MediationAnnouncement_MediaRelease.pdf).

<sup>161</sup> See Grant *et al.*, *supra*, note 33.

<sup>162</sup> See section 2 of the *Code*: [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90h19\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm)

**Example:** A trans woman calls a landlord and makes an appointment to see an apartment for rent. During the appointment, the landlord asks what her real name is and says he only rents to women. When the trans woman follows up the next day, he abruptly tells her the apartment was now rented to someone who supposedly came to see it sooner.

As well, landlords must not discriminate in how they treat tenants, including decisions about renewing leases or evictions. They must also address any discrimination or harassment related to gender identity and gender expression that may happen within the housing environment. This could include dealing with the behaviour of other tenants, agents of the landlord such as building supervisors, or others such as maintenance workers.

**Example:** A worker doing repairs in the apartment of a trans woman makes ongoing comments about her body and sexual practices. Shortly after, the tenant discovers transphobic graffiti on the wall of the parking garage. She complains to the landlord that she is being harassed, but the landlord says there isn't much he can do about it.

If landlords become aware of discrimination or harassment through complaints or other means, they must respond appropriately. Landlords who fail to take steps to address problems may be found liable by a tribunal or court.<sup>163</sup>

### 13.12 Employment

Trans people report facing discriminatory treatment in employment. The Ontario-based Trans PULSE survey found:

- 18% of survey respondents said they were turned down for a job because of their trans identity
- 13% said they were fired from their job or constructively dismissed because they were trans<sup>164</sup>

Discrimination is often based on unfounded stereotypes or negative assumptions such as: trans people will make other co-workers and clients uncomfortable; they will not be a good "fit" for the workplace; or, they have accommodation needs that will be difficult and expensive.

The *Code* says that every person has a right to equal treatment in employment without discrimination and harassment because of gender identity and gender expression.<sup>165</sup> This includes any accommodation that may be necessary and applies at all stages of employment from hiring, to retention, pay and benefits and dress codes, to training and promotion, performance management and termination.

<sup>163</sup> For more information see OHRC's *Policy on human rights and rental housing* online: OHRC [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-human-rights-and-rental-housing](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-human-rights-and-rental-housing)

<sup>164</sup> G. Bauer *et al.*, *supra* note 6

<sup>165</sup> See section 5 of the *Code*.

### 13.12.1 Hiring

Employers must make sure that overt and subtle or hidden discrimination against trans people or other gender non-conforming individuals does not happen during hiring or they can be held liable.

**Example:** In a case that went to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, a trans woman had applied for a job as a customer service representative in a bank. She underwent a three-step interview process and was led to believe she would be hired. Later when she found out she did not get the job, the bank did not explain why. Meanwhile, they had not filled the position and continued to look at applicants who had the same qualifications as the trans woman.

During the hearing, the bank said it did not hire the trans woman because she was supposedly over qualified, had an attitude during the final interview that “was not that of a person who wishes to serve the public” and wanted to “use the position to promote the rights of transgendered persons.”<sup>166</sup>

The CHRT said these reasons were disingenuous and an excuse for bias and prejudice because she was trans.<sup>167</sup> The CHRT found that discrimination had happened. It said that where a trans person is qualified and someone else, no better qualified, is selected (or where the organization rejects the trans person but continues to seek applicants with the same qualifications), the organization will need to provide a non-discriminatory explanation for not hiring the trans person.

### 13.12.2 Transitioning employees

Trans employees are particularly vulnerable to discrimination when their identity becomes known to employers or when they begin to transition to their felt gender identity.

Employees who are transitioning publicly can experience a great deal of stress during this time, including at work. This is due in part to their experience and fear of discrimination and harassment. Employers may find an excuse to fire or demote transitioning employees instead of providing accommodation. They sometimes discriminate in other ways, such as assigning less lucrative or prestigious files and clients, or denying training and promotion opportunities. It may be difficult for a trans employee to prove that this type of subtle discrimination happened,<sup>168</sup> but the negative impact is real.

---

<sup>166</sup> *Montreuil v. National Bank of Canada*, 2004 CHRT 7 at para. 56 (CanLII).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* at paras. 57-73.

<sup>168</sup> See *Québec (Comm. des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse) c. Maison des jeunes À-Ma-Baie Inc. (No 2)*, *supra*, note 85. In this case, the employee was fired after she told her employer about her transition.

**Example:** In an HRTO case, an employee was taking steps to transition to identifying and presenting as a woman. During this time, she experienced ridicule and harassing comments and conduct from co-workers in the change room and the workplace at large. She complained to her employer about the harassment and the need for separate change facilities. Her employer refused to address the harassment and later fired her.<sup>169</sup>

The HRTO found the employer had discriminated and contributed to the harassment and a poisoned work environment by insisting the employee use the men's change room, even though she was living as a woman and faced ongoing harassment from co-workers. The HRTO also found the employer failed to investigate and respond reasonably to the employee's complaints of harassment.<sup>170</sup>

**Example:** An employee intends to transition and speaks to their manager to inform them and discuss what types of accommodation they may need during the transition period. The employee asks for time off so that they may return to work presenting in their new gender. The employer accommodates the employee by working cooperatively to develop a transition plan to address different issues that may arise in the workplace, such as changing the employee's name in electronic directories, washroom use, and to provide education and training for other employees.

### 13.13 Vocational associations

The *Code* says that every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to membership in any trade union, trade or occupational association or self-governing profession without discrimination because of gender identity or gender expression.<sup>171</sup>

**Example:** In a case that went to the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal, a trans employee was involved in a dispute with her employer (that initially related to a complaint that was made about her use of the women's washroom). The person did not feel that her union's actions on her behalf regarding this dispute were adequate. She alleged that the union discriminated against her in its response to the incident, both initially and with respect to the events that followed the initial dispute, and in the way it responded to the employer's handling of the complaint made against her.

The Tribunal found that the union had treated her worse than it would have treated other union members in similar circumstances, and that her status as a trans person was a factor in her treatment. The Tribunal ordered the union to stop contravening the human rights law and to pay her damages for lost wages and the injury it had done to her dignity, feelings and self-respect.<sup>172</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> *Vanderputten, supra*, note 30.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> See section 6 of the *Code*.

<sup>172</sup> *Ferris v. O.T.E.U., Local 15, supra*, note 121.

## Appendix A: Purpose of OHRC policies

Section 30 of the *Code* authorizes the OHRC to prepare, approve and publish human rights policies to provide guidance on interpreting provisions of the *Code*. The OHRC's policies and guidelines set standards for how individuals, employers, service providers and policy-makers should act to comply with the *Code*. They are important because they represent the OHRC's interpretation of the *Code* at the time of publication.<sup>173</sup> Also, they advance a progressive understanding of the rights set out in the *Code*.

Section 45.5 of the *Code* states that the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) may consider policies approved by the OHRC in a human rights proceeding before the HRTO. Where a party or an intervenor in a proceeding requests it, the HRTO *shall* consider an OHRC policy. Where an OHRC policy is relevant to the subject matter of a human rights application, parties and intervenors are encouraged to bring the policy to the HRTO's attention for consideration.

Section 45.6 of the *Code* states that if a final decision or order of the HRTO is not consistent with an OHRC policy, in a case where the OHRC was either a party or an intervenor, the OHRC may apply to the HRTO to have the HRTO "state a case" to the Divisional Court to address the inconsistency.

OHRC policies are subject to decisions of the Superior Courts interpreting the *Code*. OHRC policies have been given great deference by the courts and the HRTO,<sup>174</sup> applied to the facts of the case before the court or the HRTO, and quoted in the decisions of these bodies.<sup>175</sup>

---

<sup>173</sup> Note that case law developments, legislative amendments, and/or changes in the OHRC's own policy positions that take place after a document's publication date will not be reflected in that document. For more information, please contact the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

<sup>174</sup> In *Quesnel v. London Educational Health Centre* (1995), 28 C.H.R.R. D/474 at para. 53 (Ont. Bd. Inq.), the Tribunal applied the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1971) to conclude that OHRC policy statements should be given "great deference" if they are consistent with *Code* values and are formed in a way that is consistent with the legislative history of the *Code* itself. This latter requirement was interpreted to mean that they were formed through a process of public consultation.

<sup>175</sup> For example, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice quoted at length excerpts from the OHRC's published policy work in the area of mandatory retirement and stated that the OHRC's efforts led to a "sea change" in the attitude to mandatory retirement in Ontario. The OHRC's policy work on mandatory retirement heightened public awareness of this issue and was at least partially responsible for the Ontario government's decision to pass legislation amending the *Code* to prohibit age discrimination in employment after age 65, subject to limited exceptions. This amendment, which became effective December 2006, made mandatory retirement policies illegal for most employers in Ontario: *Assn. of Justices of the Peace of Ontario v. Ontario (Attorney General)* (2008), 92 O.R. (3d) 16 at para. 45 (Sup.Ct.). See also *Krieger v. Toronto Police Services Board*, 2010 HRTO 1361 (CanLII) and *Eagleson Co-Operative Homes, Inc. v. Théberge*, [2006] O.J. No. 4584 (Sup.Ct. (Div.Ct.)) in which both the HRTO and the Court applied the OHRC's *Policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate*, available at: [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyDisAccom2](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyDisAccom2). The HRTO has cited the OHRC's earlier gender identity policy on a number of occasions, see among others *Vanderputten*, *supra*, note 30, *Brodeur*, *supra*, note 142, and *XY*, *supra*, note 2.

## Appendix B: Glossary for understanding gender identity and expression

The words people use to describe themselves and others are very important. The right terms can affirm identities and challenge discriminatory attitudes. The wrong ones can disempower, demean and reinforce exclusion. While these terms and explanations are considered current and appropriate at the publication of this policy, their meaning and use can evolve and change over time. Generally, when in doubt, asking a person how they self-identify is the most respectful approach.

**Sex:** the classification of people as male, female or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person's reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes and other physical characteristics.

**Sex and gender:** whereas "sex" is a person's physical characteristics, "gender" is about what it means to be a man or woman in society.<sup>176</sup> It is the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions and roles linked to being a "man" or "woman." Social norms related to gender can vary depending on the culture and can change over time.<sup>177</sup>

**Gender binary:** a social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: man or woman. These genders are expected to correspond to birth sex: male or female. In the gender binary system, there is no room for interpretations, for living between genders, or for crossing the binary. The gender binary system is rigid and restrictive for many people who feel that their natal sex (sex they were labelled with at birth) does not match up with their gender or that their gender is fluid and not fixed.<sup>178</sup>

**Gender norms:** the gender binary influences what society considers "normal" or acceptable behaviour, dress, appearances and roles for women and men. Gender norms are a prevailing force in everyday lives. Strength, action and dominance are stereotypically seen as "masculine" traits, while vulnerability, passivity and receptiveness are stereotypically seen as "feminine" traits. A woman expressing masculine traits may be stereotyped as overly "aggressive," while a man expressing "feminine" traits may be labeled as "weak." Gender norms can contribute to power imbalances and gender inequality in the home, at work and in communities.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup> There are various social and medical theories about what constitutes sex and what constitutes gender, and there is no consensus or single definition for these terms. See Australian Human Rights Commission, *Sex Files* (2009) online: Australian Human Rights Commission [www.humanrights.gov.au/sex-files-sex-gender-diversity-project-2008](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sex-files-sex-gender-diversity-project-2008).

<sup>177</sup> See World Health Organization, *Health Topics: Gender* online: World Health Organization [www.who.int/topics/gender/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/gender/en/) (retrieved February 19, 2014). See also Anne Enke, *Transfeminist Perspectives in and beyond Transgender and Gender Studies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012).

<sup>178</sup> N. Teich, *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) at 5.

<sup>179</sup> MenEngage, *Engaging Men, Changing Gender Norms: Directions for Gender-Transformative Action* (2012) online: MenEngage Alliance

**Gender identity:** each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's 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 their birth-assigned sex.

For most people, their sex and gender identity align. For some, it does not. A person may be born male but identify as a woman, or born female but identify as a man. Other people may identify outside the categories of woman/man, or may see their gender identity as fluid and moving between different genders at different times in their life.

**Gender expression:** how a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways people express their gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes.

All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways. For trans people, their chosen name, preferred pronoun and apparel are common ways they express their gender. People who are trans may also take medically supportive steps to align their body with their gender identity.

**Trans or transgender:** an umbrella term that describes people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man in society. "Trans" can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross dressers or gender non-conforming (gender variant or gender queer).

"Trans" includes people whose gender identity is different from the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex. Trans people may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments, such as hormone therapy and a range of surgical procedures, to align their bodies with their internally felt gender identity.

People who have transitioned from one gender to another may simply identify as female or male. Others may also identify as trans, as a trans woman or a trans man. Some people may identify as trans and not use the labels "female" or "male." Others may identify as existing between male and female or in different ways beyond the binary of male/female.

Trans people may identify their gender in many ways. There is no single or universal experience of what it means to be trans. As a result, different trans people face distinct forms of discrimination in society, and this may relate to whether they identify as male, female, a person with a trans history, a person in the process of transitioning, a trans man, trans woman, transsexual, or gender non-conforming.

**Gender non-conforming/gender variant/gender queer:**<sup>180</sup> individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as “feminine men” or “masculine women” or as androgynous, outside of the categories “boy/man” and “girl/woman.” People who are gender non-conforming may or may not identify as trans.

**Trans man and trans woman:** A person whose sex assigned at birth is “female” and identifies as a man may also identify as a trans man (female-to-male FTM). A person whose sex assigned at birth is “male” and identifies as a woman may also identify as a trans woman (male-to-female MTF).

**Transsexual:** a person whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. They may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments to align their bodies with their gender identity, such as hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery or other procedures. They may also undertake other changes to align their external attributes and appearance with their gender identity.

**Transitioning:** refers to a host of activities that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include changes to their name, sex designation, dress, the use of specific pronouns, and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, sex-reassignment surgery or other procedures. There is no checklist or average time for a transition process, and no universal goal or endpoint. Each person decides what meets their needs.

**Intersex:** a term used to describe a person born with reproductive systems, chromosomes and/or hormones that are not easily characterized as male or female. This might include a woman with XY chromosomes or a man with ovaries instead of testes. Intersex characteristics occur in one out of every 1,500 births. Typically intersex people are assigned one sex, male or female, at birth. Some intersex people identify with their assigned sex, while others do not. Some choose to identify as intersex. Intersex people do not typically identify as transgender or transsexual.<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Gender queer: “those who identify their gender outside of traditional gender categories and may not identify as either trans men or trans women. Some gender queer individuals pursue medical transition options and some do not.” Pyne, *supra* note 34, at 9.

<sup>181</sup> Rainbow Health Ontario, *RHO Fact Sheet: Intersex Health*, online: Rainbow Health Ontario [www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/admin/contentEngine/contentDocuments/Intersex\\_final.pdf](http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/admin/contentEngine/contentDocuments/Intersex_final.pdf)

**“Lived” gender identity:** the gender a person internally feels (“gender identity” along the gender spectrum) and publicly expresses (“gender expression”) in their daily life including at work, while shopping or accessing other services, in their housing environment or in the broader community.

**Cross-dresser:** a person who, for various reasons, wears gender atypical clothing. They may or may not self-identify as a cross dresser. “Cross-dresser” is a word that tends to refer to men with sometimes strong preferences for clothing often worn by women.

**Sexual orientation and gender identity are different:** sexual orientation describes human sexuality, from gay and lesbian to bisexual and heterosexual orientations.<sup>182</sup> A person’s gender identity is fundamentally different from and not related to their sexual orientation. Because a person identifies as trans does not predict or reveal anything about their sexual orientation. A trans person may identify as gay, lesbian, queer, straight or bisexual, just as people who do not identify as trans.

**Two-Spirit:** a term used by Aboriginal people to describe from a cultural perspective people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex. It is used to capture a concept that exists in many different Indigenous cultures and languages. For some, the term Two-Spirit describes a societal and spiritual role that people played within traditional societies, such as: mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies, transcending accepted roles of men and women, and filling a role as an established middle gender.<sup>183</sup>

**Cisgender and cisnormativity:** most people are “cisgender” (not trans); that is, their gender identity is in line with or “matches” the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisnormativity (“cis” meaning “the same as”) refers to the commonplace assumption that all people are cisgender and that everyone accepts this as “the norm.” The term is used to describe prejudice against trans people that is less overt or direct and more widespread or systemic in society, organizations and institutions. This form of systemic prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible.

**Transphobia:** the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people.

---

<sup>182</sup> Sexual orientation is also a protected ground under the *Code*

<sup>183</sup> 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, *Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practices Guide* (2008) online: 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, [www.2spirits.com](http://www.2spirits.com).

## Appendix C: Best practices checklist

### Privacy and confidentiality

- Maximize privacy and confidentiality of any information related to a trans person's gender identity, or to the extent the trans persons wishes. This includes information that directly or indirectly identifies that a person's sex is different from their gender identity.
- Keep a person's transgender history and medical information private and confidential, and limited to only relevant information and people directly involved in helping to meet the person's needs.
- All information should remain exclusively with designated personnel (such as the human resources person) in a secure filing system to protect the person's confidentiality.

### Identification documentation and records

- Recognize a trans person's preferred name and gender in all administrative systems and documents (including hard copies and electronic).
- Show how any requirement for a person's "legal" name and gender is legitimate (reasonable and *bona fide*) in the circumstances.
- Undertake system reviews to identify how electronic databases, IT systems and other relevant information processes can be modified to recognize a person's chosen name and gender when it does not match legal documents.

### Collecting data on sex and gender

- Consider whether there is a legitimate need to ask for and collect information about sex/gender. If yes, provide options beyond the binary of male/female or man/woman.<sup>184</sup>
- To the greatest extent possible, allow people to self-identify their sex or gender identity.<sup>185</sup> The option of a blank box, for example, is the most inclusive.
- Protect any information indicating transgender status as confidential.

---

<sup>184</sup> See ACT Law Reform Advisory Council, *Beyond the Binary: legal recognition of sex and gender diversity in the ACT, Report 2* (2012) online: ACT Law Reform Advisory Council [www.justice.act.gov.au/resources/attachments/LRAC\\_Report\\_7\\_June.pdf](http://www.justice.act.gov.au/resources/attachments/LRAC_Report_7_June.pdf), at 48. See also Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.(2008), online: Human Rights Campaign Foundation [www.fs.fed.us/cr/HRC\\_Foundation\\_-\\_Transgender\\_Inclusion\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace\\_2nd\\_Edition\\_-\\_2008.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cr/HRC_Foundation_-_Transgender_Inclusion_in_the_Workplace_2nd_Edition_-_2008.pdf).

<sup>185</sup> Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *ibid*. For more detailed information on data collection methods that are inclusive and respectful of diverse gender identities, see also Rainbow Health Ontario, *RHO Fact Sheet: Designing Surveys and Questionnaires*, online: Rainbow Health Ontario [www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=9901094e-d737-dde8-0d8c-8166b3780517](http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=9901094e-d737-dde8-0d8c-8166b3780517).

### Dress code policy

- Do not base it on gender stereotypes, and apply it consistently to all people, regardless of their gender identity or expression.
- Make it inclusive of trans people, and identify that everyone may dress in accordance with their lived gender identity or gender expression.

### Washrooms and change facilities policy

- Recognize the right of trans people to access facilities based on their lived gender identity.
- Communicate that a trans person will not be required to use a separate facility because of the preferences or negative attitudes of others.
- Make clear that accommodation options will be provided on an individualized basis, if a trans person requests.
- Provide privacy options that anyone in a change room may choose to use.
- Provide information on where people can find accessible, all-gender washrooms.

### Organization gender transition guideline<sup>186</sup>

- Guidelines should be in place before a transitioning employee comes forward. They provide clear direction for managers on how to generally help transitioning employees, while still recognizing the obligation to take the individual's needs into account. This sends a signal to everyone that transitioning employees will be supported.
- Guidelines should address:
  - A lead contact person to assist the transitioning employee
  - What a transitioning employee can expect from management
  - Expectations of management and other staff, transitioning employees in facilitating a successful workplace transition
  - Related policies and practices for assisting with the transition process, such as: washroom policies, dress code policies, confidentiality and privacy, recognizing the person's new name in documentation and records, anti-harassment policies, dealing with any individual accommodation needs as well as training for management, staff and clients.

---

<sup>186</sup> For more information on best practices for employers see Canadian Labour Congress, *Workers in Transition: A Practical Guide About Gender Transition for Union Representatives*, online: Canadian Labour Congress [www.canadianlabour.ca/news-room/publications/workers-transition-practical-guide-union-representatives](http://www.canadianlabour.ca/news-room/publications/workers-transition-practical-guide-union-representatives); Canadian Autoworkers Union, *Workers in Transition: A Practical Guide for Union Representatives* online: Canadian Autoworkers Union <http://www.caw.ca/en/9201.htm>. See also the international sources: Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *supra* note 197; Government of New Zealand, Department of Labour, *Transgender People at Work*, online: Human Rights Commission [www.hrc.co.nz/human-rights-environment/action-on-the-transgender-inquiry/discrimination-and-marginalisation](http://www.hrc.co.nz/human-rights-environment/action-on-the-transgender-inquiry/discrimination-and-marginalisation).

### Individualized gender transition accommodation plan

- Working together, the employee, employer and union representatives (where the employee has asked for their involvement) may wish to create a transition plan to address what, if any, accommodations may be needed in the workplace related to the steps the employee is taking in the transition process.
- Each trans person's situation will vary, and an individualized transition plan will make clear what steps will be taken given the needs of the particular employee.
- It can be useful to discuss timelines and dates when the employee would like to:
  - Be addressed by their new name and new pronoun
  - Begin expressing their gender identity through clothing, in keeping with the workplace dress code
  - Use washroom and other facilities in their lived gender identity
  - Able to take time off work for any medical treatments related to their transition, if needed.
- The plan should also address:
  - When and how any related employment records, documents and databases will be updated to reflect the person's new name and gender (e.g. human resources and administrative records, email and phone directories, business cards, etc.)
  - If, when and how other employees and clients will be informed of the person's new name and gender identity
  - Anti-harassment planning – a simplified process to deal quickly and effectively with any harassment the transitioning employee may experience
  - When and how training for other employees, clients or managers will be provided to help them understand the transition process, if appropriate
  - How management and the union will show support for the transitioning employee.