

# A RESOURCE

## GUIDE FOR

## TRANS AND

## NON BINARY

## FOLKS

CREATED BY TRANS AND NON BINARY FOLKS



# NAVIGATING GENDER WITH YOUR COUNSELLOR

Unfortunately, SAC Brant has multiple counselling streams which are defined by gender. They include individual counselling through the Adult Women's Program, Male Survivors' Program, and the Young Women's Program. We know that the gendered nature of the programs is not ideal for many trans and non-binary survivors, however during our intake process we'll ask you to choose an area that feels most comfortable for you. Trans folks are welcome in all of our programs and we encourage you to choose a program that's most conducive to your healing.

### SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

Which program would affirm your experiences of gendered / sexual violence?

Which program would you feel safer accessing? (i.e. would you prefer a space where there is mostly feminine or masculine folks?)

If none of these programs feel good for you, we can work with you to figure out what other supports might make more sense.

**When accessing services**, you get to decide if you feel comfortable sharing your gender identity with your counsellor. You are **not** obligated to come out as trans or non-binary in order to access services, however conversations about gender might be relevant to your experiences of gendered / sexual violence.

Unfortunately, your counsellor may not have extensive experience with conversations around gender, transphobia, or the ways violence can look for trans folks. As with accessing many other services, you might find yourself needing to explain your gender identity or your experience to your counsellor in order for them to better understand your situation. Understandably, this can be very difficult.

When you are first meeting with your counsellor, feel free to ask as many questions as you would like to help yourself feel more comfortable. You are allowed to decide if your counsellor is a good fit for you. If it's not a good fit, it's always okay to change counsellors.

Asking your counsellor if they are familiar with the experiences of trans folks, if they've provided counselling to trans folks before, and if they have knowledge of how how sexual and gendered violence impacts trans folks could all be helpful questions.

We also want to acknowledge that there is no uniform "trans experience" Usually when issues facing trans folks are talked about, there isn't much acknowledgment on how other areas of our life can impact that experience. Racism, colonialism, ableism, or experiences of poverty, homelessness, or addiction can all impact our safety as trans and non-binary folks. Feel free to ask your counsellor questions about their experiences in these areas as well.

### IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

You are welcome to disclose information about your gender identity if it is important to you or helps provide context, but please don't feel obligated!

There may be times where it is relevant to give information that is not affirming of your gender (i.e. if you are looking for an accompaniment to the hospital). These experiences of transphobia in no way invalidates your identity!

You are allowed to tell your counsellor if you feel like your experiences are being misunderstood or invalidated. You are allowed to state your needs!

## BEING TRANS IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES

A lot of discussion around sexual and gendered violence focuses on cis-gender women being assaulted by cis-gender men. That's true for many folks, but if that isn't your experience it might seem like your story is hidden or not believed. Sexual Assault Centres (along with other supports and resources) don't always do a very good job at making sure that their services are designed with trans and non-binary people in mind and this can make it feel as if you are not deserving of support. This pamphlet was created to help move through that process and to highlight what it might be like to access services at the Sexual Assault Centre of Brant as a trans / non-binary person.

While SAC still has much work left to do around trans inclusion and addressing transphobia, we are committed to making your experience with us as safe and healing as possible.

Your experience of violence is valid. Whether they reflect the more mainstream narratives or not. It is no fault of yourself or your gender identity if service providers are not familiar with your particular experience and at no point should they be put up for debate. Your experiences are valid, real and yours to define.

When moving through sexual violence support spaces, it is okay to do what you need to do in order to access services. If that means feeling like you have to misgender yourself in order to receive support, this does not make you any less trans and it does not make your identity any less valid. Existing in these spaces can be difficult for trans people. Be gentle with yourself, you are doing what you need to do to survive.

**CIS-GENDER:** when we are born, we are assigned a gender (male or female). Cis means that you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth.

**TRANS:** trans is an umbrella word often used by folks who don't identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

**NON-BINARY:** a term that is often placed under the trans umbrella. However, not all non-binary people identify as trans. It's one of many terms used to describe gender if neither male or female makes sense.

**GENDER FLUID:** a term used by folks whose gender may shift over time or alternates between different expressions and identities.

## SUPPORTS FOR TRANS FOLKS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED GENDERED VIOLENCE

In addition to getting support around experiences of sexual harassment, abuse or assault, SAC can also offer support around any experiences of gendered violence (including transphobia\*).

For example, if you have experienced discrimination based on your gender at your workplace (or any other area of your life) you can access supports whether you have experienced sexual violence or not.

Please ask your counsellor for support around what you need. If they are unable to assist you, they may be able to direct you to other services in the area.

Our services are meant to support your healing journey in a way that makes sense for you. Letting your counsellor know what does and does not work for you is a very important step in this process. If you do not want to talk about a certain experience or time in your life (i.e. when you came out, your experience with hormones or surgeries, your childhood, your relationship with your family etc) it is okay to let your counsellor know that and they should respect that.

**\*TRANSPHOBIA:** violence experienced by trans people due to their gender. This can look like individual level experiences (i.e. violence from a family member or stranger) or society level (i.e. government policies limiting trans rights)

### Supports and Resources

Planned Parenthood Toronto

Rainbow Health Ontario

The 519 Toronto

Rainbow Railroad

LGBT Youthline

### More information

Everyday Feminism

The Body is not an Apology

Let's Queer Things Up

Kanawayhitowin: Two Spirit  
People- Building Inclusive  
Communities

Rest For Resistance

**Trans Lifeline Canada:** 877-330-6366  
Trans lifeline is a grassroots hotline offering direct support to trans folks in crisis

### Sexual Assault Centre of Brant

**24 Hour Crisis Line:** 519-751-3471

**Business Line:** 519-751-1164  
sexualassaultcentre@sacbrant.ca  
sacbrant.ca

**FB:** Sexual Assault Centre of Brant