



<b>FROM</b>	<b>NAME &amp; TITLE</b>	William Wells, Deputy Director 	<b>CITY OF BALTIMORE MEMO</b>	
	<b>AGENCY NAME &amp; ADDRESS</b>	Mayor's Office of Homeless Services		
	<b>SUBJECT</b>	City Council Resolution 21-0069R – Investigative Hearing - Well-being of the Transgender Community in Baltimore		

DATE:

**TO**

The Honorable President and  
Members of the City Council  
City Hall, Room 400

November 16, 2021

**Position: Favorable**

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) has been asked to respond to City Council Resolution 21-0069R introduced by Councilmembers Burnett, McCray, Dorsey, Porter, Cohen, Ramos, Stokes, Torrence, Conway, and Council President Mosby.

**Background**

This Resolution calls for an investigative hearing where representatives from the Mayor's Office, various City agencies and departments, and other relevant stakeholders to update the City Council on services provided to and the general well-being of the transgender community in Baltimore City. Following on the hearing in the fall of 2020 on this topic, the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) has continued to address the needs of all Baltimoreans who find themselves experiencing homelessness, and especially members of the transgender community.

MOHS recognizes the need to specifically address the transgender individuals who seek services from MOHS and our funded providers in ways that counter the currents of anti-transgender stigma, transphobia, and the dehumanization of transgender individuals in the media, politics, and public policy. It is the expectation at MOHS that staff identify their preferred pronouns and consistently and correctly refer to people by their preferred gender identifiers/pronouns.

**Services**

Since client self-disclosure would be required in order to track utilization of the various programs funded through MOHS with City, State, and Federal dollars, it is not easy to quantify the amounts that MOHS grants for services that transgender clients receive. Our funded programs serve clients without regard to gender identity, so we expect that members of the transgender community are accessing homeless services in Baltimore, including those funded through MOHS. It should be noted that there are shelters and services that occur outside of those services funded by MOHS

**Baltimore Safe Haven**

MOHS was pleased that a portion of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) funding in the amount of \$488,083 has been allocated to Baltimore Safe Haven to fund crisis transitional housing services for youth in Baltimore City; including tailored, culturally competent services for transgender youth experiencing homelessness.

**Staff Training**

MOHS is currently finalizing the calendar year 2022 in-service calendar for all of our funded providers and we expect to have programs that directly address providing services to and

correctly interacting with transgender and LGBTQ individuals so that everyone feels safe and welcomed and can access services through all our funded providers.

MOHS has provided annual Cultural Competency and Sensitivity training for all staff in the Outreach, Emergency Services, and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) offices – this training specifically addresses serving clients within the transgender community. Other, similar training was provided during COVID and pre-COVID, a variety of training was envisioned around cultural competency and sensitivity.

In prior years, training was provided by Jabari Lyles, previously the Director of LGBTQ Affairs for the Office of the Mayor. MOHS will require this training for all client-facing staff once it is available again when a new director for the office is announced and the trainings resume. MOHS is pursuing alternative training resources, such as True Colors United, for in-service training for all staff.

MOHS requires that our funded shelter provider staffs must receive cultural competency training that includes training for serving LGBTQ clients.

### **MOHS Outreach**

In addition to training all Outreach staff on sexual orientation and gender identity (from the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights), MOHS Outreach has a dedicated member designated as LGBTQ Specialist for Outreach. This role was specifically created to better connect with and support LGBTQ residents who are experiencing homelessness by:

- Engaging homeless individuals who identify as LGBTQ in activities that promote assets, competencies and resiliency
- Working collaboratively and flexibly with LGBTQ individuals experiencing homelessness in developing individualized and effective, strengths-based service plans.
- Attending community meetings and effectively networking with various community organizations (i.e., community or neighborhood associations, schools, churches) in order to develop a system of supports and promote opportunities for homeless LGBTQ individuals
- Acting as an advocate to encourage equity in service provisions to homeless LGBTQ population
- Providing LGBTQ individuals with information, contacts, referral services and supports as needed to facilitate access to programs, services and opportunities
- Supporting the establishment of LGBTQ positive environments in local community organizations addressing homelessness in Baltimore City

The LGBTQ Specialist also receives additional training on LGBTQ+ community in the workplace and customer service (by The Equality Institute) and a course on Foundational Safe Zones (provided by the Safe Zone Project).

### **Data**

MOHS is the data lead for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in Baltimore, which is the mandated data system for providers and agencies that do intakes and provide services for people experiencing homelessness in Baltimore. HUD has required a question on Gender/Sexual Orientation, and the question was updated in the summer of 2021 to be more inclusive. Previously the HMIS system asked two questions, one about "Gender" and one "Sexual Orientation"

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During the 2020 Point In Time count (PIT), out of 2,193 persons interviewed, 11 respondents identified as transgender and one as gender non-conforming.

The new HUD-mandated "Gender" is still required for intake but allows for multiple selections and a more inclusive set of possible responses and directions, "Gender should be assigned based on the client's self-perceived gender identity. transgender is defined as identification with, or presentation as, a gender that is different from the gender at birth." The selection options are:

- Female
- A gender other than singularly female or male (e.g., non-binary, genderfluid, agender, culturally specific gender)
- Data not collected
- Male
- Transgender
- Questioning
- Client Doesn't know
- Client refused

### **Conclusion**

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services strongly supports the City's efforts to be more inclusive and proactively enhance the general well-being of the transgender community in Baltimore. Neighbors experiencing homelessness should face as few barriers as possible to actually accessing services and feeling safe and comfortable in doing so.

cc: Natasha Mehu  
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