

NOTE: The following is an excerpt from a larger feedback summary document created by JOHS Staff. We elected to share the introduction in full and then share an edited down version of feedback relevant to service delivery for public inclusion in the RFP.

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of August and September 2022, the Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) conducted a number of community engagement sessions in order to collect feedback on an Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). This RFP was designed by Team PSH within the JOHS in order to disburse \$5.8 Million with the goal of serving up to 285 adults with PSH services with priority for projects that effectively and intentionally serve people of color, LGBTQIA2S+ people and people with significant physical and behavioral health disabilities. This RFP also calls for applicants to propose projects that will specifically serve transgender, nonbinary, and two-spirit community members. Local data on transgender, nonbinary, and two-spirit people experiencing homelessness are limited and past JOHS engagement with this community has been limited. JOHS staff reached out to organizations, programs and individuals that specialize in serving the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and scheduled listening sessions to inform the RFP. In total, we engaged five organizations. This report summarizes these sessions and themes the feedback received with regard to service delivery for LGTBQIA2S+ communities. Some feedback is conveyed using direct quotes pulled from our notes, and other feedback is conveyed using summaries by the authors. No feedback is directly attributed to any specific respondent.

Relating to Service Delivery for Queer and Transgender Community Members

1. "Exercise extreme caution in creating tenant-based programs for transgender people."
 - a. There is an immense stigma attached to this community. Taking someone off the street and placing them in an apartment complex alone, as often takes place in tenant-based programs, can be incredibly isolating, retraumatizing, and, even deadly.
2. There is a dearth of recovery-oriented projects especially within this community. Multiple groups that we interviewed flagged the higher rates of substance use and abuse within the LGTBQIA2S+ community.

- a. There are a significant number of people in this community who may not succeed or survive in housing without recovery-oriented services.
 - b. "For someone who has achieved stable housing for the first time, especially after substance use or SUD (substance use disorder), this could be the first time that they are left alone with their thoughts, and without support, this could be a detrimental lonely time for them."
 - c. We received multiple warnings regarding the placement of someone with a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in a unit alone and without the proper support. There is a worry that in this situation, it could lead to the client burning bridges due to behaviors related to the SUD, not being able to maintain housing and ending up back on the street or worse.
3. It is critical that the homeless services continuum works to increase access to health workers that provide gender-affirming care.
 - a. A robust plan to offer gender-affirming health connection services should be a part of culturally specific PSH services for this community.
 - b. Interviewees pondered how we can start building the foundations of a strong network of community health workers who specialize in providing care to the LGBTQIA2S+ population in the region.
4. Gender Affirming, Mental Health, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion trainings should be standard and ongoing at any organization seeking to serve queer and transgender people.
5. PSH projects should consider creating partnerships with legal services organizations that can help participants complete any legal name or ID processes that may be financially and/or institutionally daunting.
6. PSH projects should take steps to reduce barriers for sex workers and survivors of domestic violence.
 - a. Often sex workers are unable to access services they need because their income cannot be properly verified or their work is not seen as valid.
 - b. Often survivors of DV have reports of property damage on their rental records and a huge proportion of DV survivors experience financial abuse leading to poor credit, debt and other financial-related barriers.
 - i. Project-based PSH projects should be aware of this and should tailor their application materials + tenant screening criteria to lower barriers.
 - ii. Tenant-based PSH projects should also be aware of this and prepared to

support households to address these barriers. This could include having DV advocates on staff or on-call in order to draft the proper paperwork necessary for victims of financial abuse or with negative rental history due to DV.

7. "Partnerships need to be more than just in name."
 - a. Projects that include partnerships between larger, dominant culture organizations and culturally specific and/or smaller community-based organizations should demonstrate how these partnerships will use this money to build power in those culturally specific and/or smaller organizations.
 - b. These culturally specific and/or smaller organizations are experts in their communities but often partnerships are not taking advantage of this.
 - c. At their worst, partnerships are exploitative and simply leverage the community trust these culturally specific and/or smaller organizations have earned in order to secure funding for whatever the larger organization wants.
 - i. White supremacy culture plays a role here.