



## PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

---

Policy Title: Providing Non-Discriminatory Services to LGBTQ Youth

Department: Residential Programs

---

### I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish operational practices that reinforce our commitment to respect the dignity of LGBTQ youth, create a safe environment for all members of the Covenant House community, and ensure that all youth have equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits provided by CHNO.

### II. Policy

It is the policy of CHNO to maintain and promote a facility that provides the highest quality of services to youth regardless of their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, sex, disability, immigration status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. In accordance with state and federal laws, all youth receiving services from Covenant House New Orleans (CHNO) have the right to live in an environment free of harassment and discrimination. CHNO is committed to a healthy and accepting setting for all youth receiving services, by training and evaluating staff, instituting policies, and educating youth to respect each other. CHNO does not tolerate discrimination or harassment by employees, volunteers, or other youth.

### III. Procedure

- LGBTQ youth receiving services at CHNO will receive fair and equal treatment, without bias and in a manner based on the principles of sound professional practice.
- All employees and volunteers at CHNO will not discriminate against or harass any youth in their care based on a youth's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other protected categories.
- CHNO employees will safeguard youth from discrimination, physical and sexual harassment or assault, and verbal harassment by other youth, based on a youth's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other protected categories.
- CHNO will take all reasonable steps within its control to meet the diverse needs of all youth receiving services and provide an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other protected categories.
- All youth need to feel safe in their surroundings in order to fully benefit from our services and care. CHNO will establish and maintain a culture where the dignity of every youth is respected and all youth feel safe.
- Employees will create opportunities for dialogue with youth and staff about all forms of diversity to increase tolerance and respect. Employees will model positive behavior when

interacting with LGBTQ youth and remind all youth that anti-LGBTQ threats or acts of violence and disrespectful or suggestive comments or gestures will not be tolerated.

- CHNO will provide a safe and non-discriminatory environment where youth can learn and grow. Employees of CHNO will not prohibit or discourage communication or interaction between youth of the same sex that is not also prohibited or discouraged between youth of different sexes. CHNO does not encourage romantic and/or sexual relations between any youth receiving services.
- Staff should be aware that LGBTQ youth are in various stages of awareness and comfort with their sexual orientation and gender identity. If a youth discloses their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, the staff member should talk with the youth about it in an open and non-judgmental fashion and determine if the youth has particular concerns, needs, or fears related to being LGBTQ.
- Youth should not be prohibited from having a roommate based on a youth's actual or perceived sexual orientation. If a youth is fearful of rooming with a particular youth, he or she will be provided a different roommate or a single room, if available. This assignment will be made in accordance with facility safety, security, and availability. If necessary to ensure privacy and safety, transgender youth will be provided a single room, when available.
- Employees and volunteers of CHNO will not refer to youth by using derogatory language in a manner that conveys bias towards or hatred of LGBTQ youth. In particular, all staff and volunteers will not imply or tell LGBTQ youth that they are abnormal, deviant, or sinful, or that they should change their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Transgender youth shall be referred to by their preferred name and the pronoun that reflects the youth's gender identity, even if their name has not been legally changed.
- Transgender youth shall be housed on the floor where they feel most comfortable in accordance with their gender identity.
- Consistent with the facility's reasonable and necessary policies, CHNO will provide transgender youth with safety and privacy when using the shower and bathroom and when dressing and undressing. Transgender youth will not be required to shower or undress in front of other youth and should be permitted to use the bathroom that is consistent with their gender identity. Where available, transgender youth will have access to single-occupancy bathrooms and showers.
- If LGBTQ youth request assessment or treatment, CHNO will help them access medical and mental health care providers who are knowledgeable about the health care needs of LGBTQ youth.
- Youth should be allowed to dress and present themselves in a manner consistent with their gender identity. CHNO will provide or allow youth to purchase clothing, including undergarments, appropriate for the youth's gender identity and gender presentation.
- In order for employees and volunteers to have awareness and capacity to effectively work with LGBTQ youth, all staff and volunteers are required to attend training on working with LGBTQ youth. This training will teach participants:
  1. The goals and requirements of the Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedure regarding LGBTQ youth;
  2. How to work with LGBTQ youth in a respectful and non-discriminatory manner;
  3. How to recognize, prevent, and respond to harassment against LGBTQ youth.
- CHNO supervisors and management staff shall treat all reports of violations of these policies and procedures seriously. CHNO management will promptly and effectively respond to grievances filed by youth and shall take swift action according to established procedures to respond to reported violations.