

## **LGBTQIA+ Client Accessibility Policy**

### **POLICY**

Caring Unlimited is committed to providing accessible, inclusive services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, non-binary, asexual and all LGBTQIA+ persons who have experienced domestic violence. This policy covers asserted, perceived or inferred sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Caring Unlimited does not discriminate on the basis of sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status or any other status protected by law. LGBTQIA+ survivors receiving services shall receive fair and equal treatment, without bias, and shall be treated with respect, dignity and cultural competency.

In accordance with the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Equal Access Rule and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Caring Unlimited provides housing, shelter and services based on the gender identity of the person requesting services. Caring Unlimited is permitted to offer gender-segregated and gender-specific services. For those individuals not currently eligible for these services, Caring Unlimited will explicitly state the reason why and will provide a comparable service or make a referral to another service provider.

It is the policy of Caring Unlimited, in accordance with federal, state, and local laws, to prohibit all forms of harassment and discrimination of or by clients, employees, visitors, and volunteers, including harassment and discrimination based on actual or perceived gender identity and expression. Discriminatory and prejudice-motivated comments or other behavior that creates a hostile environment will not be tolerated.

If an LGBTQIA+ person feels they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment by a staff member, volunteer, contractor or other client, they should report it to any staff person and/or file a grievance. Caring Unlimited will take immediate action to resolve inappropriate behavior, harassment or equal access issues by any person—and will seek to mediate and resolve conflicts in a way that is fair, equitable and respectful. If a client needs be moved for harassment and safety concerns, the Agency will have a preference to move the client with the bias.

Retaliation against an individual who files a complaint of harassment or discrimination

against Caring Unlimited employees, visitors, volunteers, or other clients, or who participates in an investigation of such a complaint, is strictly prohibited.

## **PROCEDURE**

### *EXPECTATIONS FOR STAFF*

Caring Unlimited staff will treat everyone with dignity and respect regardless of their gender, gender expression, gender identity or sexuality.

Staff, volunteers and others providing services to LGBTQIA+ survivors shall not discriminate against or harass any survivor in their care and shall immediately report any evidence of discrimination, physical or sexual harassment, and verbal harassment of any such identified persons to their supervisor.

Caring Unlimited staff and volunteers will receive training to increase cultural competency around LGBTQIA+ identities and how to effectively serve the needs of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Caring Unlimited will seek training and technical assistance from—and partner with—organizations that can provide resources, support and expertise regarding serving the LGBTQIA+ community.

Caring Unlimited will affirm each person's identity and will correct any misinformation or inaccurate conclusion that the presence of LGBTQIA+ clients threatens the health or safety of other clients solely on their LGBTQIA+ status.

Staff, volunteers and contractors shall refer to clients using the client's stated name and gender pronoun. This includes all verbal or written communications with the client, as well as those communications about or in reference to the client with other staff or clients. Caring Unlimited recognizes that an individual may request to use a different name, presentation or pronoun in different settings.

Information regarding a client's sex assigned at birth, gender identity, sexual orientation and any medical treatment is confidential and must never be disclosed unless the client gives permission to share this information. Only essential staff are given this information in order to ensure equal access and safety.

As part of safety planning, advocates will consider access to medical treatment and gender affirming care in accordance with a client's gender expression and biological needs. (e.g. clothing, wigs, prosthetics, binders, personal care products etc.)

Staff and volunteers will demonstrate an understanding of some of the unique dynamics that impact survivors from historically marginalized groups such as those who identify as

LGBTQIA+. Staff will be familiar with LGBTQIA+ resources for referrals.

Staff and volunteers must abide by Caring Unlimited's anti-harassment and non-discrimination policies.

#### *EXPECTATIONS FOR OTHER CLIENTS / RESIDENTS*

All clients and residents are required to treat each other with respect and are prohibited from using discriminatory, harassing, or abusive language or actions toward any other client, resident, volunteer or staff member.

#### *SAFE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT*

Caring Unlimited strives to use signs, symbols and images at our facilities and on printed materials that represent the diversity of people we serve—and indicate our commitment to supporting the LGBTQIA+ community.

Bathrooms at Caring Unlimited facilities are gender inclusive, with private, individual use bathrooms available.

Meetings with clients are held in private, confidential spaces for intake and other data gathering purposes.

#### *ADDITIONAL SHELTER CONSIDERATIONS*

Clients will be supported to continue with any medication and gender-affirming health care.

We respect the client's evaluation of their own safety with regard to housing options and accommodate reasonable client requests regarding safety.

We will provide clothing, hygiene products and other basic needs items as requested by the client and in line with their gender expression or biological needs.

A client with children will not be considered ineligible for shelter based on the gender of their minor children.

#### **Related Policies:**

- Anti-Discrimination Policy and Complaint Procedure