

# POSITIVE SPACE ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

## KEY COMPONENTS

### Signage & Infrastructure

- Positive Space signage, e.g. posters, rainbow flags, etc.
  - Images with diverse representations (many cultures, genders, sexualities, languages, ages, ethnicities, religions, etc.)
  - Aim for culturally relevant and culturally sensitive materials (research, consult, and gather input)
- Clear positive affirming statements – “You are welcome here;” “This space strives to be safe, welcoming, and inclusive for people of all genders and all sexualities”
- Accessible and clearly marked gender-neutral bathroom with all amenities (including baby change table)

### Policies & Procedures

- Human rights policy
  - Explicitly includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected grounds
  - Aligns with OHRC requirements (see OHRC *Guidelines on Developing Human Rights Policies and Procedures*)
- Procedure for addressing homo/bi/transphobia, harassment, and bullying
- Client Bill of Rights
- Behavioural expectations in this space
- Feedback / complaints procedure

### Resources

- LGBTQ+ resources should be included in the same list/package/shelf with all the other resources
  - Know Your Rights info
  - LGBTQ+ immigration
    - Immigrating as a same-sex couple/family
    - Sponsoring a same-sex partner
    - Filing a refugee claim on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity
    - Immigration/refugee claims and HIV status
    - Referrals to lawyers who are skilled and reputable in these areas

- Info on changing name and sex designation on legal documents
- LGBTQ+ newcomer friendly health care providers and clinics
  - Include info on languages of service and whether they serve IFH and non-status
  - Include health care providers equipped and knowledgeable to serve trans clients (hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery, etc.)
  - Include LGBTQ+ newcomer friendly counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, addictions counselors, etc.
- LGBTQ+ community organizations; LGBTQ+ newcomer support groups; LGBTQ+ parenting and family programming; etc.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### Universal

- Same information communicated to everybody who uses the space
  - Nobody is singled out
  - A person does not have to come out, or be outed, or be perceived as LGBTQ+, in order to receive LGBTQ+ relevant information
  - Message is sent to everybody that this is a Positive Space, this is something we talk about and offer services about, and these are the expectations here

### Accessible Communication – *Across Languages, Literacy Levels, and (Dis)Abilities*

- Language
  - Information needs to be communicated in whatever language(s) a person can understand
  - Consider challenges of translation
    - Some languages do not have words for LGBTQ+ identities, or do not have words with positive connotations
    - Many cultures have their own understandings and contexts of LGBTQ+ identities, and these may not match up with Western LGBTQ+ definitions
- Format
  - Visual/pictorial, written, Braille, verbal, etc.
  - With any and all necessary aids and accommodations

- Timing
  - Communicate information upon initial intake/hiring, regularly and as needed thereafter
    - Should be ongoing conversation
    - Discuss at staff meetings and hold ongoing training sessions
    - Remind clients of policies as relevant – try to do this to prevent incidents rather than only after the incidents have occurred
  
- Inclusive
  - Use gender-neutral words like “partner” instead of boyfriend/husband or girlfriend/wife
  - Intake forms: Sex/gender questions
    - Which are you asking for, sex or gender identity?
    - Is it actually necessary to know?
    - Best option is to put a blank line and let people fill it in themselves. No number of checkboxes can cover every option. Avoid using the word ‘Other.’
    - Include a ‘Prefer Not to Disclose’ option.
  - Ask for preferred name, title, and pronouns.

### **Anonymity & Confidentiality**

- What are the policies?
- How are these communicated?
- How are people held accountable to them?
- How are these maintained when translators/interpreters are involved?
  - This includes both language and (dis)ability support
  - Be aware that many LGBTQ+ newcomers may not be comfortable with a translator from the same background, for fear of judgment or being ‘found out’
  - Consider what procedure to use if a person needs assistance in communicating or recording what is intended to be anonymous feedback

### **Accountability**

- How are incidents addressed?
- How are injured parties supported in healing, safety, and access to justice?
- How are offending parties supported in learning and growing?
- How are similar incidents prevented from happening again?
- Who is responsible?