

IF YOU ARE A PROVIDER WORKING WITH A TRANSGENDER PERSON

Always refer to a transgender person by pronouns appropriate to that individual's presented gender. When in doubt, just ask. A question is an indication of respect and a desire to serve the consumer well.

It is never appropriate to refer to another human being as "it". Transgender individuals may appear to be androgynous. If you feel uncomfortable with a lack of clarity, we suggest discussing your feelings with your supervisor to move past the discomfort so you can support the individual who has sought out your services in good faith.

As with all personal disclosure, keep confidential any information a transgender client shares related to his or her gender identity, living situation, or any personal information. The decision to tell someone about gender issues should always be left to the individual. What's more, such information is protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

It is inappropriate to ask a transgender person about their genitals, how they have sex, or other very personal questions.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different issues. A transgender person might be straight, gay, bisexual, or any other self-determined orientation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you are a behavioral health professional who would like to learn more about unique challenges facing transgender individuals within the behavioral health system, please consider inviting members of The Goodrum Project to your facility. We offer individual consultation as well as training for larger groups.

If you have the willingness to open the door to learning, we welcome your questions, and we value your professional skills.

Our goal is to work side by side with you to create a positive, effective team in order to offer the best in support and services to transgender individuals who seek mental health treatment within the Tucson area.

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A project of:

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Join our Yahoo! Group, SAGA-AZ



SAGA is a program of
Wingspan
LGBT Community Center
www.wingspan.org

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SOUTHERN ARIZONA GENDER ALLIANCE

ALEXANDER JOHN

GOODRUM

TRANSGENDER MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT



THE
GOODRUM
PROJECT

ALEXANDER JOHN GOODRUM



In the fall of 2002, the Tucson community was devastated by the tragic loss by suicide of Alexander John Goodrum, a local friend and transgender activist. Alexander suffered from co-occurring mental health issues, and, in his last weeks, he sought support from the local mental health system.

Alexander's death brought the issue of mental health to the forefront of the transgender community. The Goodrum Project was born out of that response.

The primary goals of The Goodrum Project are to offer resources, mediation, and encouragement to transgender individuals to develop self-advocacy skills; and to offer education for mental health professionals to facilitate positive relationships resulting in sensitive, solution-focused service plans.

The Southern Arizona Gender Alliance (SAGA) envisions a society where transgender and transsexual people are ensured of their basic rights and can be open, honest, and safe at home, at work, and in the community. SAGA offers support, social, and discussion groups that reflect the various aspects of gender and society.

We also provide educational forums and trainings for businesses, service providers, and community members to learn more about the issues facing transgender people and how our allies can be supportive and inclusive.

ISSUES FACING TRANS PEOPLE

Presently, mental health providers have little or no education about the specific needs of transgender clients.

Challenges facing transgender people include:

- Lack of insurance coverage for sex reassignment surgery (SRS), hormone replacement therapy, counseling, and other medical needs limits the ability to make medical changes necessary for positive mental health. This often results in depression, hopelessness, and other mental health concerns that could be avoided with appropriate medical intervention.
- Rejection from families and friends leaves transgender youth especially at risk for homelessness and more likely to engage in prostitution, unsafe sexual practices, and substance abuse.

The transgender population has a similar rate of mental health concerns as the general population. Identification as transgender does not imply mental illness. Many transgender people have no incidence of mental health issues. Our concern is for those who do identify as transgender and have mental health concerns.

GOODRUM PROJECT SERVICES

The Goodrum project seeks to support and empower transgender people in seeking out appropriate mental health services while offering support and education to service providers.

Volunteer advocates of The Goodrum Project will:

- Respond to every call or request for resources and clarify the scope of our program
- Use respectful language when referring to each person
- Encourage and support consumer rights to self-determination
- Seek to support the consumer in connecting with the most appropriate services within the Tucson area
- Seek to aid mental health providers in developing better understand and skills to support transgender consumers

GOODRUM
PROJECT