

# THE EQUAL ACCESS RULE:

## Safer Housing for LGBTQIA+ Unhoused Youth

**CARE WARNING:**  
Transphobia, homophobia, and sexual harassment

Released:  
Sept. 2024

Updated:  
N/A

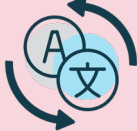
### Summary

In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Special Needs Assistance Program (SNAPs), HUD technical assistance (TA) providers conducted listening sessions with LGBTQIA+ youth aged 18–24 who are currently in shelter. Participants answered questions related to their experiences accessing housing. The information gathered will inform future training and TA for shelters and housing service providers on HUD's Equal Access Rule (EAR). A person-centered, trauma-informed approach was used when designing and implementing the listening sessions, which included:



#### LIVED EXPERIENCE

Engaging lived experience experts to co-lead planning and logistics and facilitate the listening sessions.



#### LANGUAGE

Providing Spanish and ASL interpretation.



#### COMPENSATION

Providing compensation for participation.



#### OPPORTUNITIES

Offering opportunities for breaks and processing.



#### RESOURCES

Including LGBTQIA+-specific and trauma-informed resources for participants.

### Listening Session Key Themes & Quotes



#### HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

Participants have been turned away from housing because of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.



#### PROVIDING RESOURCES

Participants found that shelters and housing programs that provide LGBTQIA+-specific resources are more accessible to youth.



#### DISCRIMINATION

Participants are in constant fear of losing housing because of discrimination as result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



#### LANGUAGE BARRIER

Participants reported a lack of language access and support for LGBTQIA+ youth who speak Spanish or languages other than English.

“

“I won't hide who I am at all.”

”

Even when facing potential discrimination, participants do not hide aspects of their identity in order to gain access to housing.

“

“They trip up on my pronouns every single time and deadname me. I constantly have to ask them to stop.”

”

Participants reported that housing program staff and the resources and services provided are not inclusive or supportive of LGBTQIA+ people.

“

“I've had to overly express my sexuality for staff to see me. The Manager would hit on me and I'd have to say I'm a lesbian non-binary person and not interested.”

”

Participants recounted that sexual harassment and predatory behavior by staff is a significant safety issue with the expressed concern that shelters are not safe places.

“

So what are you?  
Are you a boy today and a girl tomorrow?”

”

Participants shared examples of the discriminatory behavior of shelter staff toward non-binary and trans people who do not align with traditional gender roles.

### Beyond Access: Recommendations for EAR Compliance and Trauma-Informed Practices for Shelters and Housing Programs



#### UP-TO-DATE POLICIES

Review current policies to ensure compliance with HUD's Equal Access Rule by using the [“EAR Tool.”](#)



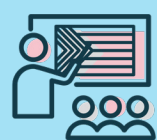
#### TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Engage in trauma-informed care by using chosen pronouns and chosen names and share EAR policies and complaint procedures with “residents.”



#### EXPERIENCED STAFF

Hire staff with experience in trauma-informed care and lived experience.



#### LIVED EXPERIENCE TRAINING

Provide staff training about the needs and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ people and families.



#### HARRASMENT TRAINING

Incorporate ongoing harassment, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, and stalking training into annual “training about EAR for staff and contracted workers.”



#### COMMUNITY REVIEW

Ethically engage community partners and persons with lived experience to lead policy and procedure review and assessment activities by providing training and compensation for lived expertise.



#### PROVIDE RESOURCES

Have resources, clothing, and personal care products that meet the specific needs of LGBTQIA+ people.