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# Managing Anti-Trans Harassment for Health Care Providers

This guide was developed by Rainbow Health Ontario to aid Ontario health care providers who may be facing harassment due to their commitment to gender-affirming care.

## If you are facing harassment...

**This harassment is not occurring because of what an individual provider did in their role, but because of a coordinated anti-trans movement.**

- Harassment of providers intentionally presents itself as an isolated and organic reaction to the provision of gender-affirming care.
- Providers across Canada who have experienced anti-trans harassment have consistently reported almost identical experiences.
- The goal of this harassment is to intimidate providers and make them question the legitimacy of trans and gender diverse experiences.

**Anti-trans organizers intentionally present themselves as more supported and numerous than they are.**

- A small number of anti-trans organizers drive harassment to providers across the country.
- Anti-trans organizers claim to speak for large groups of people in order to maintain the illusion that their goals have widespread approval. This can increase the fear and intimidation of those targeted.

**Trust yourself.**

- If something feels weird or off, listen to your instincts.
- Some anti-trans harassment intentionally disguises itself as general inquiry or well-intentioned concern. It is okay to take a step back, do some research, or reach out for support if you are not sure about a request or an interaction.

## Resisting harassment

When confronted with harassment, it is normal to feel fear, anger, and defensiveness. However, responding to harassment with these emotions can escalate the situation. It can be difficult, but it's important to remain calm.

Preparing for possible harassment in advance is a key strategy for mitigating its potential harm. Preparation can help everyone to feel confident about how harassment will be managed if it occurs.

## Just in case - build strength and resilience

- *Connect with Local Community* – Connect with other local gender-affirming care providers and 2SLGBTQ organizations if available. This keeps everyone updated on emerging tactics of anti-trans activists, strategies for responding, and any government policy change that may catalyze harassment.
- *Communicate & Educate* – Communicate with the entire clinic team. This includes any reception staff and relevant management or departments, like communications, legal, and IT if available. Anyone in an organization, especially those who interact with the public or have a public affiliation with the organization, may be targeted with harassment. Some harassment presents itself as friendly information distribution, genuine concern, or innocuous questions. Discussing the potential for harassment in advance ensures that everyone knows what to watch for.
- *Consider Organizational Policy* – Identify relevant organizational policy (or policy gaps) that outlines roles and responsibilities. Is there a safety plan, a harassment and discrimination policy, or a code of conduct? Some organizations may already have resources available to monitor harassment (like a communications department that tracks online mentions of the organization). Intimidation thrives on fear and unpredictability; a provider might not know when or if they will experience harassment. However, providers and clinics can determine what their role will be and what they should expect from their organization if they experience harassment.
- *Consider Clinic Visibility* – What information is publicly available about the provider or the clinic? Some clinics promote themselves on social media, some clinics have a page on their organization's website, and some may want to remove certain information from their website. If intentionally limiting access to information, assess how decisions in the interest of safety affect access to care for gender diverse communities.
- *Assess Personal Visibility* – What is your comfort level being publicly connected to gender-affirming care? Once something is online, it's hard to completely remove it. Providers may want to consider their comfort with public exposure for harassment tactics that they have not experienced; being careful about online presence proactively can mitigate risk if harassment escalates in the future.
- *Create Alerts for Harassment Campaigns* – Set up online alerts for the names of clinics and providers who may be targeted with harassment. This ensures that providers and clinics know if they are named in a media article, which may indicate a harassment campaign is starting or escalating.

## If harassment happens...

- *Do Not Engage* – **Do not respond to contact from anti-trans organizers or to malicious requests for information.** Anti-trans individuals and groups do not contact gender-affirming care providers or clinics in good faith. They want to waste the provider's time, so they have less time for patient care. They may intentionally lie or misrepresent information about gender-affirming care or clinic practices, in the hopes of provoking a response. Any information that is provided to anti-trans organizers will likely be publicized to keep their base engaged and escalate harassment. Responding signals to anti-trans organizers that someone is listening to them; they will continue trying to communicate in the hopes of spreading disinformation.

## More Resources



Listen to Rainbow Health Ontario's podcast [\*2SLGBTQ Health in Focus\*](#). Episodes 3 & 4 cover anti-trans harassment and more tips for providers to protect themselves.



[The Internet Isn't All Rainbows: Exposing and Mitigating Online Queerphobic Hate against 2SLGBTQ+ Organizations](#)

[We Will Win: Guide to Campaign Messaging In Support of Trans Youth](#)



[Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health](#)

[College of Physicians and Surgeons Ontario - Equity Diversity and Inclusion](#)



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