

## **The Coffee Oasis Policy to Ensure Safe and Unconditional Care of LGBTQ+ Youth**

### 1. Protecting the Rights of All Youth

**Identification.** All staff and volunteers will acknowledge, respect, and uphold the right of youth to openly identify as LGBTQ+ or any other identity.

**Anti-Discrimination.** All staff and volunteers will acknowledge, respect, and uphold the right of young people to live free from discrimination. TCO guarantees the right of LGBTQ+ youth to the same equitable services, care, placement, treatment, and benefits as non-LGBTQ+ youth.

### 2. Training Staff and Volunteers

**Mandatory Training.** All staff and volunteers will undergo mandatory initial and ongoing training on caring for LGBTQ+ youth.

### 3. Creating A Safe and Unconditionally Caring Space for All Youth

**Proactive Care.** At the initial meeting with a young person and periodically thereafter, staff and volunteers will indicate, in language that is appropriate for the youth, that TCO is a safe place for all youth, including LGBTQ+ youth, and that:

- a. Youth will be unconditionally cared for and served regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other identity; and
- b. Any acts of bullying, intimidation, or harassment against them by peers or adults will not be tolerated.

**Visual Reminder.** TCO will create "All Are Welcome" signs that will be displayed in youth centers as a reminder that all youth are welcome and unconditionally cared for at TCO.

### 4. Talking About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity with All Youth

**Talking about sexual orientation and gender identity.** Staff and volunteers will never single out youth who they perceive as LGBTQ+; they should approach all youth in a similar manner.

**Responding to disclosures.** If a youth discloses their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, staff and volunteers will talk about it with them in a safe and unconditionally caring manner.

**Confidentiality.**

- a. With regard to communication within TCO, we will only share information about the sexual orientation or gender identity of a youth if disclosure is necessary to serve the youth or ensure safety, and never to the youth's detriment.
- b. The TCO does not share information about the sexual orientation or gender identity of a youth without their consent. TCO is a safe place for a youth to confide in safe adults. We acknowledge the reality that some youth have been victims of abuse and violence when they "come out" to their families. The TCO is committed to being a safe place for all youth while advocating for safe and healthy families.

### 5. Ensuring Safe and Unconditionally Caring Services for LGBTQ+ Youth

**Screening of service providers.** Prior to referring a youth to another service provider, we will confirm that the provider will uphold the same rights of LGBTQ+ youth as detailed here.

**LGBTQ+ specific providers.** TCO does not specialize in LGBTQ+ services. TCO specializes in job training and housing services. Youth will be pointed to other local service providers who offer LGBTQ+ specific services.

## 6. Ensuring Safe and Unconditionally Caring Housing for LGBTQ+ Youth

**Safe searches.** The Coffee Oasis only conducts no touch searches (required at DCYF-licensed shelters).

**Isolation as a last resort.** We will not use isolation or segregation as a default means to protect LGBTQ+ youth from violence or harassment. In consultation with youth impacted, we will work to identify alternative means of protection. Isolation will be a last resort and minimized.

**Safe facilities.** All restrooms and showers facilities are single occupancy.

## 7. Ensuring Safe and Unconditionally Caring Healthcare for LGBTQ+ Youth

**No conversion therapy.** We will not and have never participated in or contracted with any provider that does conversion therapy.

**LGBTQ+ healthcare.** LGBTQ+ youth choose their own healthcare options.

## 8. Responding to Families of LGBTQ+ Youth

**Responding to Anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes and beliefs.**

We are committed the safety and unconditional care of LGBTQ+ youth. We also believe the best place for a youth is with a safe and loving family.

a. If a youth has openly identified as LGBTQ+ to their parent(s)/guardian(s), then we will:

\*Seek to understand as to whether an attitude or belief—even those deeply rooted in religious beliefs and cultural values—that would harmfully impact the youth's immediate health, safety, and well-being and/or put the youth at risk for future harm.

b. If a youth has not identified as LGBTQ+ to their parent(s)/guardian(s) because they fear for their safety, then we will refrain from divulging any known information about the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity to the parent(s)/caregiver(s). The Coffee Oasis works with local and state agencies (DCYF, law enforcement, etc.) to assess and ensure safety of youth in our programs.

\*TCO will work with the youth and family towards family reunification, because we believe the best place for any youth is with a safe and loving family.

**Information for families.** When it does not threaten the safety of youth, we will provide families of LGBTQ+ youth with information and support on how they can provide safe and unconditional care for their LGBTQ+ youth.

## 9. Establishing Expectations for Staff and Volunteers

**Standards of conduct.** Staff and volunteers will take accountability for their words and actions. If a staff or volunteer becomes aware that their words or actions have—even unintentionally—insulted, disparaged, or otherwise harmed any youth; that staff or volunteer will acknowledge and apologize.

**Annual review.** Staff will annually review/sign this policy as a part of the Employee Handbook.

**Confidential complaints.** There will be a mechanism by which youth can make confidential complaints of issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.