



At Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS), we have been offering gender-affirming services to 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and their families for over 30 years. We stand by the evidence that exploring sexuality and gender are both normal and natural aspects of human development, and we work to create celebratory spaces for youth to live authentically and vibrantly, to dream a world that is free from harassment, judgment, and rejection.

For us, the choice to support and celebrate queer and trans youth is easy. When we create safety within our services, within communities, and within the home, young people thrive. When we support autonomy and the right to self-exploration, [we support all young people's quality of life and freedom.](#)

We are now watching, with devastation, as many of the youth and families we work with experience increased fear and lack of safety due to the waves of transphobia and homophobia that have been battering our communities. As an organization, we see how racism, colonialism, white supremacy, transphobia, homophobia, and other systemic oppressions intersect to cause widespread harm and violence.

For example, as legislators across the US [ban books](#) in schools with 2SLGBTQIA+ content, they're also banning books on the experiences of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people. In places where gender-affirming care is being criminalized, so is [access to abortion](#). We cannot allow for this kind of hatred to spread in our communities. We stand in opposition to all forms of oppression, and recognize how homophobia and transphobia have the strongest negative impacts for youth who are Black, Indigenous, people of colour.

And let us be clear: this is not just about what we've been hearing in the media, or from [politicians and policy makers across the US](#), but what we're experiencing in our own communities across so-called [Canada, in Ontario, and in Toronto](#). Now, more than ever, we are called to stand in unwavering support of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. We are deeply concerned about the current harmful political and social shifts taking place, and their impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities everywhere.

We believe that it is not enough to oppose discrimination and violence. As an organization we deeply celebrate queer and trans lives, and queer and trans resistance.

Now is the time to show your support. We are asking you to join us in taking action, both internally within your workplace, and externally within the larger community, to protect and celebrate queer and trans lives.

# TAKE ACTION!

1. **Train your staff!** Make a commitment to your workplace by offering ongoing support, engagement, and professional development. Be consistent, and ensure that all staff reflect the **gender-affirming, celebratory** culture of your organization.
2. **Create welcoming spaces!** For queer and trans youth and their families to feel safe and welcomed in your services and your staff, **you need to be proactive**. Make sure your documents are inclusive. Visually indicate that your organization is a safe space. Share your own values around 2SLGBTQIA+ respect and leadership with all new services users, partners, and visitors. Have public statements from your organization that speak to your gender-affirming stance.
3. **Have policies in place!** Ensure that respect and celebration of queer and trans people is embedded in your organization's processes and practices, in all services and at all levels.
4. **Hire queer and trans people!** Secure funding for queer and trans programming. **Develop opportunities** for, and centre the leadership of queer and trans Black, Indigenous, people of colour. Build relationships with local queer and trans organizations and groups to determine your role in supporting their needs.
- 5 **Take a stand!** Use this template to create a public statement in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and their families, especially if you live in a place where harmful legislation is impacting the youth and families you are in service to.
6. **Celebrate Queer and Trans People in your Life!** Support robust, diverse, Pride programming within your agency, and within your communities. Celebrate events like Trans Day of Visibility, Pink Shirt Day, and other community events. Recognize and promote queer and trans leadership in your organization, your sector, and your communities.