

# Reporting on Transgender Issues

## A Reference Guide for North Carolina Media

**Transgender individuals and issues affecting the transgender community continue to generate news stories across North Carolina and the nation.**

*This guide is intended to provide North Carolina media outlets with proper terminology, local sources, and story ideas that can assist editors,*

*producers, and reporters with their coverage of transgender individuals and issues.*

*In general, media should not make assumptions about a transgender person and their personal journey. No two narratives are ever the same, and the process of transitioning can include a range of surgical and non-surgical options.*

## Discrimination Against Transgender People

**Many Americans have a profound lack of understanding of what it means to be transgender.**

*Consequently, transgender people commonly face a wide variety of discriminatory barriers to full equality. Transgender people disproportionately face interpersonal and institutional challenges in employment, housing, and health care. They also experience challenges in having their gender identity respected (like the simple act of being addressed by the proper pronoun or name).*

*Much of the discrimination transgender people face mirrors that experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people, but is often more pervasive or severe.*

*Additionally, transgender people face a range of legal issues that LGB people rarely do: identity documents not reflective of one's gender, sex-segregated public restrooms and other facilities, dress codes that perpetuate traditional gender norms, and barriers to access to appropriate health care.*

### Issues Affecting the Transgender Community:

**ID Challenges:** *Transgender people often face hurdles when trying to update or obtain new identification cards, including those issued by schools and government agencies such as the DMV.*

*Policies allowing individuals to change their gender marker on an ID card vary and may require extensive documentation from a doctor, sometimes including proof of surgeries that many individuals choose not to undertake or cannot access. Beginning in 2016, North Carolina voters will be required to show a valid photo ID at the polls that matches their physical appearance – bringing new urgency to transgender individuals seeking to obtain accurate ID cards. Transgender people may also face unjust scrutiny or*

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# Terminology

GLAAD's media reference guide provides a comprehensive glossary of terms to use and avoid in stories about transgender issues, including proper definitions for transgender, cisgender, sex, gender identity, transition, and other terms. The GLAAD style guide is available at <http://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

## Things to Remember When Interviewing and Reporting on Transgender Individuals

**DO:** Strive to use accurate terminology as outlined in GLAAD's style guide.

**DO:** Be respectful! Treat a trans person the same way you would treat anyone else.

**DO:** Ask individuals what their preferred name is and which pronouns they prefer to use and be referred to by. Use those names and pronouns in stories.

**DON'T:** Make any assumptions about a trans person, including their sexual orientation, the reasons behind their decision to transition, or the ways in which they have transitioned.

**DON'T:** Make the story about or focus on an individual's anatomy. It is no more acceptable to ask a transgender person about their genitalia than it would be to ask a cisgender person about their genitalia.

**DON'T:** Put quotation marks around either a transgender person's chosen name or the pronoun that reflects that person's gender identity.

**DON'T:** Use inaccurate or cliché phrases such as "trapped in a man/woman's body". See GLAAD style guide for more.

discrimination from individual workers at agencies that issue ID cards. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality's 2011 report, "Injustice At Every Turn," which surveyed 6,450 transgender or gender-nonconforming people in all 50 states, including 121 respondents from North Carolina, 15% of respondents said they have been asked to leave when trying to update ID documents.

**Workplace Discrimination:** North Carolina currently provides no workplace protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers against undue discrimination, but federal law protects transgender individuals from employment discrimination in at least some instances. According to national surveys, transgender people have as high as twice the rate of unemployment compared to the national average. According to NCTE's 2011 survey, 90% of transgender people have experienced discrimination, mistreatment or harassment on the job. In North Carolina, 16% reported having lost a job, 16% were

denied a promotion, and 47% were not hired because they were transgender, according to NCTE.

**Bullying & Social Stigma (In schools, home life, and public accommodations):** North Carolina's anti-bullying law (§ 115C-407.15) covers gender identity, but transgender people often face enormous social stigma, including violence and bullying, in the places where people should expect to feel the most comfortable and welcome.

According to the NCTE survey, 78% of transgender people were harassed or discriminated against in K-12 education, while 57% of transgender people have experienced "significant family rejection." Shockingly, 41% of respondents reported having attempted suicide (the average suicide attempt rate of the general population is 1.6%). In North Carolina, 50% of respondents said they were verbally harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation or service, including hotels,

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*restaurants, buses, airports, and government agencies. Twenty percent who interacted with police reported harassment by officers.*

**Prisoners' Rights:** *Transgender people who are incarcerated often face a range of hardships. For example, studies have consistently documented the heightened vulnerability of transgender persons to sexual victimization in correctional settings. The ACLU of North Carolina also receives many requests for legal assistance from incarcerated transgender individuals who have been denied hormone treatment or who have been incorrectly housed with members of a different sex. The federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) requires certain minimum standards for the treatment of transgender inmates. Read more about PREA at <https://www.aclu.org/blog/tag/prison-rape-elimination-act>*

**Housing Discrimination and Instability:** *NCTE survey respondents reported blatant housing discrimination, as well as housing instability, much of which the survey suggests stems from the challenges faced in employment. In North Carolina, 11% of transgender respondents had been evicted, 20% were denied a home or apartment, and 18% said they became homeless at one time or another because of their gender identity/expression.*

**Read the report:** *“Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey” (2011), which provides results for the U.S. and North Carolina, is available at [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org), [www.transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org), and [www.endtransdiscrimination.org](http://www.endtransdiscrimination.org).*

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## **Newsworthy Events**

### **November 20, Transgender Day of Remembrance:**

*The Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is an annual observance that honors the memory of people whose lives were lost in acts of transphobic or anti-transgender violence and seeks to bring attention to ongoing violence against the transgender community. The day is marked by vigils and other events across North Carolina and the nation. TDOR was founded by Gwendolyn Ann Smith to honor the memory of friend Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was killed in 1998. According to Smith, “The*

*Transgender Day of Remembrance seeks to highlight the losses we face due to anti-transgender bigotry and violence. I am no stranger to the need to fight for our rights, and the right to simply exist is first and foremost. With so many seeking to erase transgender people -- sometimes in the most brutal ways possible -- it is vitally important that those we lose are remembered, and that we continue to fight for justice.”*

# North Carolina Sources on Transgender Issues



## American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina (statewide)

[acluofnc.org](http://acluofnc.org)

*The ACLU-NC champions the rights of transgender people to live their lives freely and with respect. The ACLU-NC fights to gain protections for transgender people against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations (including schools), and health care. The organization also challenges obstacles to people obtaining government identity documents respectful of their gender identity, as well as barriers to transgender parents seeking continuing relationships with their children.*

Contact: Communications Director Mike Meno at 919-834-3466 or [mmeno@acluofnc.org](mailto:mmeno@acluofnc.org).

## Campaign for Southern Equality (statewide)

[southernequality.org](http://southernequality.org)

*CSE is based in Asheville, North Carolina, and works across the South to promote full LGBT equality. Contact: Executive Director Rev. Jasmine Beach-Ferrara at [jasmine@southernequality.org](mailto:jasmine@southernequality.org) or 828-242-1559.*



## Equality NC (statewide)

[equalitync.org](http://equalitync.org)

*Equality NC is the largest statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights advocacy organization in North Carolina. Contact: Jen Jones, Communications Director, at [jen@equalitync.org](mailto:jen@equalitync.org) or 919-260-5906.*

## The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Center at UNC-Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill)

[lgbtq.unc.edu](http://lgbtq.unc.edu)

*The center works to foster a safe inclusive environment for UNC-Chapel Hill students of all sexualities, gender identities and gender expressions. The programs and services we offer are designed to increase campus and community awareness, improve campus climate, and advocate for sexuality and gender identity issues. Contact: Director: Terri Phoenix 919-843-5376 or [rlgbtq@unc.edu](mailto:rlgbtq@unc.edu).*



## LGBT Center of Raleigh (Triangle)

[lgbtcenterofraleigh.com](http://lgbtcenterofraleigh.com)

*The Center's Transgender Initiative is built around the idea of creating a communal, safe place for people from all across the gender spectrum, along with their allies, to meet, gather, and provide a supportive and welcoming social environment. The mission is to help build community with self-identified or perceived transgender, gender variant, or gender non-conforming individuals and trans-positive organizations in the greater NC Triangle region. Contact Executive Director James Miller at 919-832-4484 or [jmiller@lgbtcenterofraleigh.com](mailto:jmiller@lgbtcenterofraleigh.com)*





## **LGBT Community Center of Charlotte (Charlotte-Mecklenburg)**

[www.lgbtcharlotte.org/](http://www.lgbtcharlotte.org/)

*The LGBT Community Center of Charlotte is the neighborhood venue that offers programming, provides resources and serves as a voice for its diverse community. Contact: 704-333-0144 or [director@gaycharlotte.com](mailto:director@gaycharlotte.com).*



## **El Centro Hispano (Triangle)**

[www.elcentronc.org](http://www.elcentronc.org)



*Grassroots community based organization dedicated to strengthening the Hispanic/Latino community and improving the quality of life of Hispanic/Latino residents in Durham, Carrboro, Chapel Hill and surrounding areas. Coordinates programs for transgender Latinas. Contact: Alex Cordova at [acordova@elcentronc.org](mailto:acordova@elcentronc.org) or Jose L. Alegria at [jalegria@elcentronc.org](mailto:jalegria@elcentronc.org).*

## **Southerners on New Ground (the South)**

[southernersonnewground.org](http://southernersonnewground.org)

*SONG's mission is to build, sustain, and connect a southern regional base of LGBTQ people in order to transform the region through strategic projects and campaigns developed in response to the current conditions in our communities. SONG builds this movement through leadership development, intersectional analysis, and organizing. Contact: Co-Director Caitlin Breedlove is based in North Carolina [caitlin@southernersonnewground.org](mailto:caitlin@southernersonnewground.org)*



## **Trans People of Color Coalition (national)**

[transpoc.org](http://transpoc.org)

*National social justice organization that promotes the interest of Trans People of Color. Deputy Director Parker Hurley is based in the Triad: [hurleypt@guilford.edu](mailto:hurleypt@guilford.edu) or 336-316-2374.*



## **TransHealth Coordinators (national)**

[www.transhealthcoordinators.org](http://www.transhealthcoordinators.org)

*TransHealth Coordinators is a non-profit, educational organization whose dual purpose is to help the transgender community access safe, compassionate and respectful health care, and to advise health care professionals on better ways to serve their transgender patients. The organization achieves its goals by offering resources, health screenings at conferences, and by finding satisfactory solutions to health care grievances by employing education and sensitivity training and taking stronger action when needed against a the medical provider, clinic, hospitals or organization. Contact: Director Jennifer M. Barge: [transhealth@rocketmail.com](mailto:transhealth@rocketmail.com)*





*For any questions about this guide,  
please contact ACLU of North Carolina  
Communications Director Mike Meno  
at 919-834-3466 or [mmeno@acluofnc.org](mailto:mmeno@acluofnc.org).*