

Working with LGBTQ2S Clients for Landlords and Housing Providers

What's the connection between LGBTQ2S issues and housing?

LGBTQ2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer and Two Spirit) people are at an increased risk of becoming homeless due to the added stress and pressure from hostile reactions to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity by society. One study estimates that 50% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2S. Thus, you are very likely to meet an LGBTQ2S person who wishes to live in your property.

Why should LGBTQ2S people matter to me?

- Many homeless people identify themselves as LGBTQ2S. If you make an effort to include LGBTQ2S people, you can obtain more tenants and housing workers will be more likely to refer clients to your property. As a result, **you can have less vacant units!**
- LGBTQ2S people may be very suitable tenants for your property and by including them; they will come to recognize that your property is the best match for them.
- It is illegal to discriminate against someone's sexual orientation or gender under the BC Human Rights Code. If you discriminate against someone based on their sexual orientation or gender, you can be taken to court.

What if LGBTQ2S tenants require special attention?

LGBTQ2S tenants will not require additional support or attention. They are tenants just like everyone else. However, you will need to be respectful towards concerns specific to LGBTQ2S people and ensure that all your tenants are respectful as well. It is the same as respecting another culture, an LGBTQ2S culture.

Important Terms

Lesbian: women who are attracted to other women

Gay: men who are attracted to other men

Bisexual: people who are attracted to both men and women

Two Spirit: some First Nations people's cultural recognition of a person with both masculine and feminine spirits

Queer: a term originally used as a homophobic insult, which has to an extent been reclaimed and used as a term of pride denoting someone who does not identify as heterosexual

Sexual Orientation: refers to a person's romantic/sexual attraction to other people

Gender Identity: a person's internal and psychological sense of their gender

Trans: people with gender identities that don't match with the gender they were assigned with at birth

Common Concerns for LGBTQ2S people

- **Identification (ID):** Many trans people are uncomfortable showing ID due to discrimination based on discrepancies between the ID and the person's visual appearance and chosen name. In addition, it is a lengthy process to change legal names, documents, and identification. It is also expensive to pay for transition-related procedures, many of which are not covered by health insurance. As a landlord and housing provider, what's important is that the person is an appropriate tenant, not the person's gender. It will often be obvious that the person on the ID is the same person who wishes to view your property. Be sure to address the person by their preferred name and pronouns.
- **Discrimination:** Other tenants in your property may not be as welcoming towards LGBTQ2S tenants. If allegations of discrimination against one of your tenants based on sexual orientation or gender identity come to your attention, investigate the matter to the best of your ability. It sends the wrong message to your LGBTQ2S tenants if you allow homo/bi/transphobic comments. Racial discrimination would never be acceptable, nor should discrimination against sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Confidentiality:** An LGBTQ2S person's sexual orientation and gender identity is a personal matter that should never be publicly outed without explicit permission from the person. It is important not to single out your LGBTQ2S tenants to the other tenants. Let LGBTQ2S tenants handle the situation as they see fit. If conflicts do emerge, deal with it then. Even better, take a proactive approach by informing all potential tenants about your diversity-friendly policies.

What can I do to promote diversity at my property?

- Place a rainbow sticker near a common entranceway (if it exists) to advertise to others that your property is LGBTQ2S friendly and ensure that anyone who works at the property is properly trained and educated regarding LGBTQ2S and other diversity issues.
- Inform all potential tenants that your property is LGBTQ2S-friendly and that they must be respectful to all tenants regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, ethnicity, ability, etc. Enforce your diversity-friendly policies at all times.
- Don't force potential tenants to out themselves as LGBTQ2S; what matters is whether they will be good tenants, not their sexual orientation or gender identity. Forcing people to be 'out' can put them at risk of discrimination and harm from others.
- If conflicts do emerge involving your LGBTQ2S tenants, don't automatically assume that the conflicts are the result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It may be a case of behaviour that is unrelated to sexual orientation or gender identity. If you find that the conflict is from discrimination against LGBTQ2S tenants, be sure to educate and remind your tenants about your diversity-friendly policies.

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