



# Resident Handbook Transgender Housing Program

*Last Updated 7/25/16*

**Ali Forney Center**  
**Transitional Housing Program**

Welcome to the Ali Forney Center Transgender Housing Program. The goal of Transgender Housing is to assist young transgender people who are homeless/at risk of becoming homeless/runaway in living independently, building on AFC's specialization in working with LGBTQ youth. We hope that this experience is full of challenges that foster individual growth, and we look forward to working together to help create a positive, enriching community.

This handbook will serve as a guide for residents of transgender housing to the expectations and requirements within the program. Below you will find a snapshot of the program, Basic Information section, and a comprehensive overview of the following sections: Resident Services, Program Requirements, Tier System, Discipline, and Policies.

## **BASIC INFORMATION**

### **Length of stay:**

16-20 year olds can stay up to 18 months, or until they reach the age of 21.

### **Age Requirements:**

16 – 20 years old (age out by 21 years)

Can apply up to 20 years and 6 months. TH will accept someone up to this age, with the understanding that they will age out by 21.

### **Goal:**

The goal of AFC Transgender Housing is to assist homeless, at-risk, and runaway transgender young people in creating and maintaining a healthy living style which ultimately prepares residents for independent living. This program focusses on assisting youth to achieve their self-defined transition related goals.

### **Services Provided:**

- Case Management
- Housing and Groceries
- Independent Living Skills
- Laundry Stipend (or on-site laundry facility)
- Mental Health Therapy
- Metrocard
- Outside Referrals
- Resident Advisory Board

### **Application Requests:**

- Identify as Transgender
- Homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- Psychosocial assessment every six months
- HIV consultation
- Completed application
- Interview

## **RESIDENT SERVICES**

### **Case Management:**

Residents will attend a once per week meeting with their Case Manager at the site or the Harlem Drop-in Center during a time that best suits both of their schedules. The purpose of these meetings is either to create a monthly plan of needed services or to track progress in the program. In addition, this is a time and space for residents to discuss other goals they may have with their Case Manager (family relationships, transition related issues, queer issues, career goals, substance abuse issues, etc.) that go above and beyond the program requirements. Case Managers may also add goals above and beyond those stated in the tiers on a case by case basis. Weekly participation of case management is mandatory and will yield a 2 hour curfew extension.

### **Housing and Groceries:**

Residents are assigned to a shared apartment, which includes common space as well as private bedrooms (3 per room max). Grocery lists are compiled by all residents with the Youth Counselor during **Community Meetings\*** and ordered twice monthly. Residents are encouraged to prepare their own healthy, balanced meals. If a resident requests assistance with how to cook nutritiously, this will be worked into residents' service plan.

\*see page 6 for more information

### **Independent Living Skills:**

These skills include budgeting, housekeeping, hygiene, cooking, banking, time management, etc. Residents may either request assistance with these skills or they may be presented by the Youth Counselor or **LIFE Coach\***.

\*see page 6 for more information

### **Laundry Stipend:**

Residents are responsible for washing their clothes and linens on a weekly basis. On scheduled days, the Youth Counselor will dispense laundry money to residents if laundry facilities are not present in the apartment to those who qualify. It is their responsibility to ask for this privilege; any missed weeks will not be retroactively awarded. See your Case Manager for details.

### **Mental Health Therapy:**

While all residents are required to engage in some form of self-care throughout their stay with AFC, they can request this service at any time through their Case Manager, who can set up an appointment with an AFC therapist.

### **Metrocard:**

Residents will be given weekly metrocards each week. Lost or stolen metrocards will not be replaced, however, the Supervisor may approve for the Youth Counselor to issue petty cash if the resident has an appointment, provided they bring back some form of

receipt. Residents receiving a metrocard will be responsible for filling out a **Travel Log**, which is used to track all work, school, and case management related travel. Travel Log questions should be directed to your Youth Counselor. It is their responsibility to ask for this privilege; any missed weeks will not be retroactively awarded. See your Case Manager for details.

**Outside Referrals:**

This includes referrals to agencies outside of AFC for educational and/or vocational opportunities, medical/dental care, legal services, mental health services, permanent housing placements, etc. Please see your Case Manager for more information.

**The Drop-in Center:**

The Drop-in Center provides services for all housing residents, from vocational and educational services, supportive groups, independent living skills development, recreational activities, and a **Client Advisory Board**. Meals and snacks are also provided. Please see your Case Manager for more information.

**Resident Advisory Board:**

The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) meeting is a space for all TH residents to discuss community living with TH staff. The meeting provides a forum for residents to take part in discussing a variety of programmatic issues, and to take an active role in learning about and improving the program.



## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **Chores:**

Each site has a list of chores that must be completed by residents daily. In addition, residents are also responsible for keeping their bedrooms clean, passing daily room inspections, and participating in weekly deep cleaning. Youth Counselors will check that chores are being completed properly and if a chore is not done on time or does not meet the standards of the Youth Counselor, a **write-up\*** will be issued. Please see a Youth Counselor for more information including the timeframe for completion.

\*see page 8 for more information

### **Community Meetings:**

The community meeting is a weekly house meeting where residents can bring up apartment issues, concerns, needs, and program suggestions. The Youth Counselor will be present but residents are responsible for facilitating the meeting. It is mandatory that all residents attend the community meeting. Weekly participation of the Community Meeting will result in a 2 hour curfew extension.

### **Community Oriented Tasks:**

All residents are required to complete one community oriented task per tier. This provides a way for residents to volunteer in their chosen community, increasing their social responsibility and adding a boost to their resume. Examples can range from volunteering at a clothing drive or AIDS Walk to serving meals at the Drop-in Center. Please see your Life Coach or Case Manager for more opportunities.

### **Intake Packet:**

All residents are required to complete an intake packet upon arrival. Intake packets contain additional rules and guidelines not outlined here. Please keep a copy of your intake packet for your records.

### **LIFE Retreat:**

The Learning Independence for Empowerment (LIFE) retreats are based on various topics to support residents as they transition towards independent living. These events take place every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month and are hosted by the **LIFE Coaches**, volunteers who are committed to supporting and guiding the residents on site for a period of at least one year. Residents are required to attend LIFE retreats and will receive a 2 hour curfew extension per retreat. Residents may also co-facilitate a LIFE retreat with a LIFE coach. Co-facilitation is encouraged and residents that do so are entitled to one extra overnight for the month.

### **Reassessments:**

All residents of AFC are required to complete a reassessment every six months. Reassessments offer the agency an opportunity to check in on data collected in the initial intake. Please see your Case Manager for more information and scheduling.

**Roommate Agreements:**

Residents are required to complete an attached **Roommate Agreement Form** upon first arrival to a site, and any time there is a bedroom/roommate change or request for one thereafter. The Youth Counselor may help facilitate the process if a resident requests assistance. All forms will be kept in the resident's chart for reference.

**Self-Care:**

In recognition of the everyday stresses our residents face, we have developed the self-care policy in order to help alleviate those stresses and maintain physical, emotional, mental, and/or spiritual well-being. Residents can personalize a self-care plan that suits their busy lifestyle that includes weekly participation with a professional facilitator in their chosen area of self-care. Everyone is expected to engage in weekly self-care activities throughout their entire stay in the THP and requirements are included in each tier. See your Case Manager for self-care ideas.

## PROGRAM TIERS

Introductory Tier (First two weeks)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet weekly for case management</li> <li>● Create a long term housing plan</li> <li>● Voc/Ed consultation</li> <li>● Schedule health &amp; mental health evaluations including PPD &amp; HIV screening</li> <li>● Attend Community Meetings</li> <li>● Complete a substance assessment</li> </ul>	<p>Residents in the Introductory tier will have a 10pm curfew on weeknights and a 12am curfew on weekends (Friday and Saturday nights). Residents in the introductory tier will not be required to exit the house during the day.</p>
Silver Tier (Two months)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue meeting with case manager and working on housing plan</li> <li>● Obtain updated physical assessment</li> <li>● Complete a psychological evaluation</li> <li>● Create a plan for weekly self care</li> <li>● Work with LEAP and begin submitting job logs and/or maintain employment and/or attend school</li> <li>● Work with case manager to acquire professional, gender affirming clothing</li> <li>● Create plan for mentorship / community oriented task</li> </ul>	<p>Residents will receive one overnight pass each month.</p> <p>Residents engaged in school or work for at least 21 hours per week may spend free time at the house during the day. Residents not working or attending school will not have access to the house during the day unless they have completed daytime activities with a YC.</p>
Gold Tier (Six Months)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue case management and housing plan</li> <li>● Continue weekly self care</li> <li>● Continue to submit weekly job logs or pay stubs</li> <li>● Attend quarterly case conference</li> <li>● Get an updated HIV screening</li> </ul>	<p>Residents will receive two overnights passes each month.</p> <p>Residents engaged in school or work for at least 21 hours per week may spend free time at the house during the day. Residents not working or attending school will not have access to the house during the day unless they have completed daytime activities with a YC.</p>

Diamond Tier (One year +)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue case management and work towards housing plan</li> <li>● Continue weekly self care</li> <li>● Evaluate self care with mental health professional every six months</li> <li>● Attend quarterly case conferences</li> <li>● Continue with vocational and educational goals with case manager</li> </ul>	<p>Residents will receive three non consecutive overnights passes each month.</p> <p>Residents engaged in school or work for at least 21 hours per week may spend free time at the house during the day. Residents not working or attending school will not have access to the house during the day unless they have completed daytime activities with a YC.</p>

## **DISCIPLINE**

### **Write Ups:**

If a resident behaves in a way that violates program policy (including but not limited to breaking curfew, not completing chore, having a “no show”, disrespecting another resident or Youth Counselor, or a verbal argument) they will be given a **write up**. The Youth Counselor on duty will inform the resident that they are written up and document it. The **Write Up Form** will be signed by resident and go in their files. If the resident refuses to sign the write up, the Youth Counselor will document this on the write up. Signing the form is not an acknowledgement of breaking policy by the resident, but simply acknowledgment that they have received a write up from the Youth Counselor.

### **Probation:**

If a resident receives three write-ups for any reason within a 30 day period they will be put on 14 day probation. The terms of the probation will be written on the **Notice of Probation Form**. Residents must sign the probation. If a resident refuses to sign the probation form, the Youth Counselor will document this on the probation form. Signing the form is not an acknowledgement of breaking policy by the resident, but simply acknowledgment that they have received a probation form from Youth Counselor.

### **Suspension:**

If a resident violates the terms of their 1<sup>st</sup> probation, they will have 7 days of no daytime access. If a resident violates the terms of their 2<sup>nd</sup> probation, they will be suspended for 1 day. If a resident violates the terms of their 3<sup>rd</sup> probation, they will be suspended for 2 days. If a resident violates the terms of their 4<sup>th</sup> probation and any probations following, they will be suspended for 3 days. The Youth Counselor will assist them in locating other shelter locations whenever possible.

### **Contracts:**

A resident can be placed on a contract if they choose not to engage in one or more program requirements, such as community meeting, case management, and LIFE retreats. A resident can also be placed on a contract if the case manager has determined that additional structure is needed around a specific area, such as employment, savings, or self-care. The details of the contract would be determined by either the case manager and resident, or the treatment team if necessary, and may include limited drop-in center access and/or restricted curfew. Please see your Case Manager for more information.

### **Discharge:**

Repeated rule violations and probations may result in an individual contract that may differ from the stated policy, including discharge from the program. The Program Supervisor or Director must approve an involuntary discharge if for a reason other than a physical fight. Any physical altercation will result in immediate discharge on the spot.



1 Write Up	Expires after 30 days
2 Write Ups	Expires after 30 days
3 Write Ups	Probation. Write ups no longer expire after 30 days, but reset to zero after two weeks.
Probation +1	Probation. Write ups no longer expire after 30 days, but reset to zero after two weeks from the start of probation.
Probation +2	Consequence
First Consequence	7 days without daytime access. Subsequent consequences will be in the form of suspensions.
1st Suspension	Client is suspended from residence for 1 day. Client returns with zero write ups after the suspension is over.
2nd Suspension	Client is suspended from residence for 2 days. Client returns with zero write ups after the suspension is over.
3rd Suspension	Client is suspended from residence for 3 days. Client returns with zero write ups after the suspension is over.
Additional Suspensions	Additional suspensions will be for 3 days. Residents who have served more than 4 suspensions may be subject to discharge.

## **POLICIES**

### **ARETHA (Always Respect Everyone's Talent, Humanity, and Achievement)**

AFC strives to maintain a safe space and an inclusive community for all of our residents. It is our philosophy that we **all** deserve a safe and respectful living environment. The community at AFC will remain shade-free and judgment-free in the hopes that our residents will accept each other's differences and support one another in achieving their goals during their stay with us. Inability to adhere to AFC's respect policy may result in a discharge from the program.

### **Confidentiality:**

AFC respects the confidentiality and safety of every resident. When a resident poses a threat to themselves or others and jeopardizes the safety of the program, confidentiality will be broken. Please see the **Declaration of Confidentiality Form** in the intake packet for more information.

Additionally, Youth Counselors will never disclose that a resident lives in our housing. If there is a phone call for a resident, the Youth Counselor will tell the caller "I cannot confirm or deny that that person lives here, if you would like to leave a message and they do live here they will get the message". Residents should not tell others the confidential address/phone numbers of any AFC housing site. This also includes other AFC residents.

### **Commingling of funds:**

AFC policy states that we will never keep or use a resident's money or entitlements in any form for any reason, including payment for food and services provided. Residents will be responsible for using their own funds for savings and for any purchases not covered by AFC funding.

### **Computer/Phone Policy:**

Residents are allowed to use program phones **ONLY** for employment/educational purposes. Residents are allowed to use program computers for employment or educational purposes, meeting program requirements, or checking email for a maximum of 15 minutes, unless approved by the Youth Counselor.

### **Curfew times:**

Residents need to be in the house by the time specified within their individual Tier and are responsible for taking all possible train delays and service changes into consideration when returning to the site. Possible curfew changes may result for younger residents. Please see your Case Manager for more details. Consequences for not adhering to policies are stated in the discipline section of this document.

### **Dating/Relationships:**

Dating among residents living in the same AFC facility is prohibited, in order to maintain a safe and space and inclusive community for everyone present. If a relationship starts to develop, residents are required to notify a Supervisor or Director so that they can make any appropriate changes. Withholding this information may result in disciplinary action, including discharge from our program.

**Destruction of Property:**

We ask that our residents respect the space in which they are living. Anyone caught in the act of destroying program property, including but not limited to slamming doors, throwing or ripping objects from the wall, or vandalizing the building, will jeopardize their stay at AFC and may be held responsible for the repair of such destroyed property.

**Good Neighbor Policy:**

Disturbing the peace in or around any AFC site is a serious matter that will result in disciplinary action.

**Grievances:**

In the event that a resident believes they are being treated unfairly by a fellow resident or by a Youth Counselor, they may request a **Grievance Form** on which to state the grievance. The grievance form should then be submitted to a Youth Counselor or Supervisor within 24 hours and will be addressed in a timely manner. Additionally, grievance forms will be reviewed by the THP Director, and will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

**Guests:**

TH residents are not permitted to have guests in or around the building at any time, including other AFC residents. Violation of this policy is a serious matter that will result in disciplinary action.

**Immigration Policy:**

The Ali Forney Center will not discriminate based on one's citizenship status. Residents who are undocumented must agree to pursue such matters with the appropriate legal assistance.

**Lights Out:**

Residents in the Intro and Gold tier are expected to be in bed by 12 am during the week (Sunday through Thursday) and at a reasonable hour during the weekend (Friday and Saturday). Residents in the Diamond and Platinum tier are expected to go to bed at a reasonable hour and keep noise to a minimum after 12 am every day. Cell phone, laptop, or other electronic device usage is not permitted in their bedrooms after 12 am. Common spaces such as the living room and kitchen are closed at 2 am every day. Consequences for not adhering to policies are stated in the discipline section of this document.

**Loitering Policy:**

Residents are not permitted to loiter in, in front of, or near any AFC site. Failure to follow this policy may jeopardize one's housing.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:**

The Ali Forney Center takes discrimination very seriously and therefore violations, even those made in jest, may result in serious consequences. Residents cannot discriminate based on one's citizenship status, sexual orientation, race, culture, sex, gender identity, religion, language, disability, or HIV status. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge from the program.

**No-Shows:**

A "no-show" is when the resident enter the residence 2 hours after their set curfew, OR when residents do not return to the residence at all. Residents are expected to be present at the residence every night with the exception of planned and approved absences and failure to comply will result in a write-up.

**Personal Belongings:**

The Ali Forney Center is not responsible for lost or stolen property. Any personal belongings must be able to fit in designated storage areas only- additional storage will not be provided. Residents will be expected to remove any belongings that do not fit in the designated storage areas.

**Physical fighting:**

Physical fighting, including horseplay, is not permitted in or around AFC facilities. Engaging in a physical fight in an AFC facility will result in immediate discharge from our program.

**Recording Policy:**

Due to the confidential nature of our program, video or tape recording in any AFC site is forbidden without the prior consent of each person who is being recorded. Violation of this will result in a write-up and repeated disregard may result in a discharge. Publicly releasing any video or audio recording of an AFC site without prior consent will lead to an immediate discharge. Threats of video or tape recording may result in disciplinary action.

**Reporting Abuse:**

The Ali Forney Center takes reports of abuse very seriously. Should a resident be a victim of abuse, or suspect that abuse in any form is taking place within the agency, they should report it a Program Director. Should staff suspect that abuse in any form is taking place, they are required to report it ASAP to a Program Director.

**Sex Work:**

The Ali Forney Center promotes stable employment. With this in mind, we will not consider illegal sex work as an acceptable form of employment to meet the employment

requirements of the program. We ask that those who are capable of obtaining legal employment do so, and require those who are in TH to maintain legal employment.

**Sexual Contact:**

Sexual contact is prohibited in and around all of AFC's facilities. Residents found engaging in sexual conduct may be discharged from the program.

**Smoking:**

Smoking is prohibited inside all of AFC's facilities. This includes smoking out of windows and from balconies and/or verandas that may be found in our residences.

**Substance Policy:**

AFC strives to maintain a safe space for all of our residents. Therefore, the possession of and/or use of drugs, alcohol and/or related paraphernalia is prohibited. We ask that our residents also strive to maintain a safe space for one another by not entering the facility under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. If, during their stay with us, a resident is struggling with following AFC's substance policy, the treatment team will work to support them in addressing this issue. Repeated disregard for AFC's substance policy may jeopardize their stay in the program.

**Theft:**

Theft will not be tolerated in AFC facilities. Please respect your fellow residents' belongings and the belongings of the program. Anyone who steals from a program member or from the program may be discharged from the program.

**Travel Policy:**

Residents requesting to travel during their stay may do so if they follow the guidelines stated by the Case Manager. These guidelines include but are not limited to: proof of travel (copy of bus/plane ticket); contact information at destination; set arrival and departure dates; and resident must exhaust all overnights before a pass will be granted.

**Verbal threats:**

Verbal threats, including those made in jest, are not permitted in or around AFC facilities. A verified threat to the safety of another resident or staff member will result in discharge from our program. Other consequences may apply on a case by case basis.

**Violence:**

Violence is not permitted in or around AFC facilities. The term violence refers to any form of physical violence, verbal harassment, sexual harassment, threats of violence, and/or any form of bullying. Taking part in any violent activity while in or around an AFC facility will result in a discharge from the program.

**Wake Up Policy:**

Residents are expected and encouraged to wake up on their own. Residents in the Intro and Gold tier need to allow enough time to be out of the house by 9am on weekdays or

they will receive a write-up. Alarm clocks are provided to assist with this policy. Wake up calls can be provided at the residents' request; however, repeated failure to wake may result in the loss of this privilege.

**Weapons:**

Weapons are not permitted in or around AFC facilities. Possession of a weapon or brandishing an object that can be used as a weapon in an AFC facility will result in a discharge from the program. Tools for work and other sharp objects can be kept if submitted to the staff on duty, however, variations to this policy may be made as needed.