



Summary Report: Transgender Women Listening Session – June 4, 2025

Total Participants = 18

This report highlights the lived experiences and insights of transgender women living with HIV in Los Angeles (LA) County. It focuses on sexual health care access, provider interactions, prevention knowledge, stigma, and systemic barriers. The findings underscore the urgent need for gender-affirming, culturally competent, and holistic services.

Knowledge & Comfort Discussing Sexual Health

Most participants reported feeling comfortable or very comfortable discussing sexual health with their healthcare providers. Healthcare providers who created safe, judgment-free environments enabled open conversations. Trust and feeling "seen" played a major role in participants engaging in care. A few participants expressed some discomfort when accessing sexual health services, citing internalized fear of judgment or prior bad experiences engaging in care. Common questions or concerns around sexual health included:

- How to practice safe sex with partners.
- Managing HIV disclosure and protection for partners.
- The possibility of maintaining a healthy, fulfilling sex life.
- Emotional support and peer dialogue around living with HIV.

These concerns underscore a desire not just for medical advice but for holistic guidance around intimacy.

HIV Prevention & Intervention Awareness

Most participants were aware of HIV prevention tools and expressed interest in finding new ways to protect and/or provide them to partners.

Participants had mixed experiences when accessing HIV care services. Some felt seen and cared for when providers proactively offered education and prevention tools for partners. Others reported initial frustration and neglect, especially when focus remained solely on medication without acknowledging concerns around possible interactions with gender-affirming care (hormone therapy), mental health, or partner needs. Participants noted that connecting with LGBTQ+ and trans-specific clinics are vital for feeling respected, informed and empowered.

Access, Referral & Collaboration

When seeking sexual health care, nearly all participants preferred to go to a trusted healthcare provider or doctor. Peer-led spaces and community clinics were especially valued for offering dignified, affirming, and nonjudgmental care. Several participants reported experiences of discrimination, misgendering, and outright denial of services. These include:

- Refusing care due to being transgender or HIV-positive.



- Humiliating interactions—e.g., being deadnamed in waiting rooms or being falsely judged for lifestyle assumptions.

These experiences led to delays in care, feelings of shame and mental anguish, and loss of trust in the system.

Suggestions to improve access to HIV-related care and support included more trans-led clinics and trans staff, more gender-affirming and culturally competent providers including increased training on understanding the unique health needs of transgender women. Additionally, participants noted that transgender women often face financial hardships, unstable housing or unemployment and suggested increased access to affordable care, expanded Medicaid for all, insurance coverage for gender-affirming treatment and housing/job support.

Cultural Responsiveness & Community Trust

Many participants noted facing implicit and explicit racism, transphobia, and/or stigma, including dehumanizing language and dismissive tone, healthcare providers expressing discomfort or ignorance about treating transgender women, and false assumptions linking HIV status and trans identity to "irresponsible" behavior. These experiences led to many participants feeling unwelcome, ashamed, angry, and invisible. Some participants "brushed off" these experiences, but many were deeply impacted, leading to trauma, isolation, and avoidance of care.

Capacity & Support Needs

Participants expressed the need for services that address the unique needs of transgender women. Specifically, a need for:

- Whole-person care with integrated services addressing mental health, physical health, housing, employment, and food security in one place.
- Peer-led support groups and community education.
- Mental health care and counseling for trauma, gender dysphoria, and stigma.
- Job training and financial support.
- Safe spaces where trans women feel respected and affirmed.

Participants called for comprehensive HIV care system that includes support from medical clinics, community-based organizations and County partners alike including:

- **Inclusive, nonjudgmental, and trauma-informed clinics** that provide respectful and supportive healthcare tailored to the needs of marginalized and underserved populations.
- **Community-based organizations** that offer comprehensive services, including legal assistance, peer support groups, food aid, HIV and STI testing and treatment, and guidance in accessing gender-affirming healthcare and stable housing.



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- **County-level services** that include expanded housing programs, job placement and employment support, and public education initiatives aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination in the community.

Transgender women living with HIV in LA County are clear: they want respectful, comprehensive, and affirming care. The system must evolve beyond clinical access to holistic care and unbiased inclusion. Implementing these recommendations will move LA County toward equity, justice, and compassion for the transgender community.