

Interim Place

Mississauga, Ontario

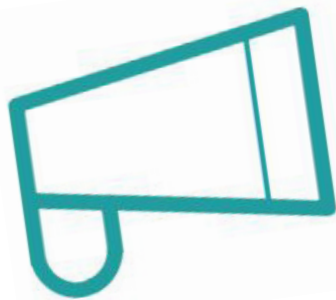


Key Insights:

- With residents, focus on working through their concerns and fears, and focusing what they need now, rather than forcing ideas on them.
- Change is constant. It is important to revisit policies regularly, even after you have updated them, and to hold sessions with staff on an ongoing basis.

Shelter Profile: [Interim Place](#) provides shelter, support, counselling, and advocacy for abused women and their children. They operate two emergency shelters, with 54 beds across the two locations, and an outreach team that works with women who are not staying at the shelter but who require VAW support. Interim Place is located in the Greater Toronto Area, and serves a very diverse population.

Making Changes: One of the first steps Interim Place took on their journey to becoming more supportive of the trans community was to update their policies to **use language that is more inclusive**. For example, they replaced “women and trans women” with “all women, cis and trans” to reflect the reality that cis women and trans women are all equally women. This update process involved recognizing that language is constantly changing and growing, and that people may use different terms. It is important not to put a label on someone, but rather to **use the language a person has chosen for themselves**.



Interim Place has also focused on having **conversations with staff and residents to raise awareness**. These are framed as conversations rather than training sessions to reflect that they are talking with people rather than at them. Initially, they held two five-hour conversations with staff. Based on these conversations, they developed a package to provide to all new hires. They plan to revisit these conversations periodically so that it can be an ongoing learning opportunity. They also have conversations with residents about language and who belongs in the space. These sessions are a chance for residents to work with their own fears and myths and to address a lack of understanding.

It has also been helpful for Interim Place to **have a trans woman on their outreach team**. This individual has been able to support staff and residents through the adjustment process and help them address challenges that have come up. Importantly, **this staff member is not tokenized**, and like the rest of the staff, she works with all women, cis and trans, who access Interim Place services.

Overcoming Barriers: There is not yet an answer to the **question of where trans men can access services and support**. They may not be safe in a men’s shelter, but being forced to stay at a women’s shelter demeans their identity. Interim Place will do their best to find a safe location for them to go, however, on occasion and if there is space, Interim Place will house them in an emergency single bedroom space for the night.



“I can see how people have changed throughout this process. I talk to women who participated in the conversations, and it impacted them a year or 8 months later. I hear staff actively working and using the language changes, tools, and conversations at other levels. Interim Place staff are even pushing people at other agencies for change. I can see that they have really taken it up.”