



INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

For transgender¹ or non-binary people or their loved ones residing in Wisconsin, the availability of resources and services for our community is rapidly expanding. Both mainstream and LGBTQ+ service providers and professionals are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about serving us. Identifying, evaluating and selecting service providers or other resources to support us can still feel like an overwhelming task, though, as we search for hard-to-find sources of accurate and comprehensive information.

This Guide is intended to fill that information gap. The Guide can serve both as a starting point and as an ongoing reference for transgender and non-binary Wisconsinites, their loved ones and their service providers. Each section of this Guide includes “how-to” information and provides relevant resources in-state and nationally, based on FORGE’s 25 years of supporting transgender and non-binary people.

A 2015 survey revealed that one-third of transgender and non-binary individuals have had at least one negative healthcare experience related to their gender identity.

One-quarter of trans and non-binary individuals reported that they did not seek needed health care due to fear of being mistreated because of their gender identity.

(James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.)

Resources, service providers and professionals referenced in this Guide may be specifically focused on transgender and non-binary populations or for the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, or they may be designed for the general population. Whether we work with specialty or mainstream providers, transgender and non-binary people and our families and other loved ones always deserve access to competent and culturally responsive services that affirm our identity/ies while meeting our individual needs.

Not knowing what to expect when we visit or interact with service providers or professionals often adds a layer of fear or concern to such interactions. Increased anxiety about provider interactions results in some transgender and non-binary individuals being deterred from seeking resources or forgoing needed services like regular health care. This Guide is intended to inform transgender and non-binary communities and facilitate increased access to needed services and resources.

¹ Transgender: Throughout this Guide, we will use fluid language of “trans,” “transgender,” “gender non-conforming, and “non-binary.” We honor and recognize the complexity and multiplicity of gender identities. We use these words in their broadest meanings, inclusive of those whose identities lie outside of these often limiting terms.

Who Should Use This Guide?

As more mainstream providers continue to enhance their awareness of trans people, trans issues and the need to move beyond binary gender classifications, and as new specialty providers continue to appear, trusted sources that help navigate options and gather hard-to-find resources are increasingly valuable tools to help us manage some of the complexities of our lives.

Providers in many fields will also find the Guide of use in developing resources for or supporting transgender and non-binary individuals in Wisconsin. FORGE encourages providers both to use the Guide as a reference tool to increase their own knowledge and cultural responsiveness, and to share the Guide with the trans and non-binary individuals and family members with whom they work.

How Should I Use This Guide?

This Guide may be used in many different ways. You can read it in its entirety to grow your knowledge about how to navigate a broad range of systems and resources in Wisconsin, or you can jump to specific topics of interest. Each section of the Guide is written as a stand-alone document.

However you use this Guide, and however you identify, you have access to information and resources in this Guide to support, empower and help you thrive in Wisconsin!^{2†}

Trans Language in This Guide

Transgender: Throughout this Guide, we will use fluid language of “trans,” “transgender,” “gender non-conforming, and “non-binary.” We honor and recognize the complexity and multiplicity of gender identities. We use these words in their broadest meanings, inclusive of those whose identities lie outside of these often limiting terms.

ABOUT FORGE, Inc.

FORGE was founded by and for transgender and non-binary people and loved ones in Milwaukee in 1994 and has provided peer support to transgender and non-binary people and loved ones in Southeastern Wisconsin ever since. Beginning in 2009, FORGE began receiving federal funding from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to lead training and technical assistance efforts nationwide to improve victim service professionals’ ability to appropriately and respectfully serve trans and non-binary survivors of crime, with a particular emphasis on survivors of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, dating violence, stalking and hate crimes.

^{2†} This Guide is intended to be a dynamic document that will be expanded and updated. Subsequent versions of the Guide will be made available on FORGE’s websites.

FORGE maintains a robust menu of services for the trans/non-binary/loved ones community, funded by federal and state grants and *pro bono* work. As a national resource, we have created a free, online library of self-help materials, online support and referrals for transgender and non-binary survivors and loved ones, available at forge-forward.org.

FORGE also provides professionals with a wide range of support, including 1-1 technical assistance, virtual trainings, presentations at conferences, customized in-person intensives, and site visits to increase cultural competency. In addition to recorded trainings, FORGE has created and hosts a large, free, online library of publications, fact sheets, and other printable resources for providers, available at forge-forward.org.

HOW TO CONTACT FORGE

Email:	askFORGE@forge-forward.org
Mail:	FORGE, Inc. P.O. Box 1272 Milwaukee, WI 53201
Phone:	(414) 559-2123
Online:	https://forge-wi.org/contact-us/

FORGE Services in Wisconsin

FORGE is headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and provides local supports for the trans/non-binary/loved ones community in the Greater Milwaukee Area as well as statewide.

Individual Support, Services, Information & Referrals

FORGE staff provide individuals with information and referrals, supports and services, either in-person or by phone, email or online. Our staff in Wisconsin are members of trans/non-binary communities, and each brings over 20 years of experience working with individuals in our communities. We strive to provide services and support that are grounded in principles of trauma-informed care. Staff are trans-knowledgeable and familiar with resources and service providers throughout the state and region, with a particular focus on the Greater Milwaukee Area and serving transgender or non-binary victim-survivors of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, dating violence, stalking and hate crimes.

FORGE provides a wide range of individual services. We encourage you to contact us for assistance with any issue, whether specifically related to your gender identity or not.

1. Information and referrals.

We know that it can be challenging and sometimes daunting to identify or locate needed resources or services. FORGE staff offer connections in Wisconsin and around the country to various service providers, medical providers and mental health care providers. We can and do answer many questions that trans/non-binary people have, and we offer support and conversation on topics like exploring your gender identity, learning about gender-affirming medical care or legal name/gender marker ID changes, planning for disclosure of your gender identity at work, school or home, navigating health care systems and working successfully with your medical and insurance providers. We can suggest where to find welcoming businesses or religious groups, a place to get a haircut or get fitted for a bra or where to buy appearance-related items like breast forms, gaffs, packies or binders.

FORGE staff can also connect you to resources for meeting your daily needs, be it clothing or food or medications, and more.

FORGE is also a resource for connecting you with social and support groups, trans/non-binary or LGBTQ+ community events and online or social media-based community groups, where connection with other people in your local community may be found.

We have developed a large online library of FORGE-created publications, guides, videos and fact sheets to help grow your own knowledge, understanding and skills for caring for yourself, supporting others or meeting challenges related to gender identity.

2. Direct individual services and advocacy.

FORGE provides assistance with accessing resources, like obtaining health insurance, through private or public insurers (like BadgerCare/Medicaid), applying for public benefits to help support yourself, assisting with preparation for a job search or upcoming interview, or talking to school officials or employers about creating welcoming and affirming environments.

Our staff are comprehensively trained and highly experienced in providing direct advocacy for trans/non-binary individuals. If you think you'd benefit from assistance from a FORGE staff member in interacting with medical providers, insurance providers or others, FORGE staff may be able to assist you directly with scheduling appointments, understanding and advocating for insurance coverage of necessary medical care, or physically accompanying you to medical or other appointments where you'd like some support. FORGE staff successfully provide advocacy for students, employees or others who are facing discrimination or unfair treatment in these and similar environments.

FORGE has specific expertise in working with and supporting trans/non-binary survivors of violence, including sexual assault or intimate partner violence (or

domestic violence), dating violence, stalking, hate-based crimes and more. FORGE has specially trained advocates on staff to provide comprehensive services and advocacy for survivors of violence, which include helping you understand the legal system and your rights or offering support and safety planning. FORGE's advocacy can also include a staff advocate going with you to make a report or to just talk to law enforcement if you desire, or being with you and offering you support in the room during a medical exam.

Survivors of sexual violence in Wisconsin have the RIGHT to have an advocate with them when interacting with law enforcement and medical providers following an incident of violence. Please contact FORGE if you need an advocate or if you need support of any kind healing from violence.

3. Supports for trans/non-binary individuals.

FORGE staff are also here to offer support for trans/non-binary community members, including parents and guardians and other loved ones of trans/non-binary individuals. Our staff are caring, compassionate and supportive. We will listen without judgment. If you wish, our staff may provide peer-based counseling or advice, help you think about and identify any unmet needs you may have and offer suggestions for helping you identify and achieve your goals.

To request individual assistance from a FORGE staff member, see "How to Contact FORGE" below.

Monthly Skills & Information Meetings

FORGE provides Milwaukee-based in-person social support, education and resources for trans and non-binary individuals and loved ones (meetings are open to the general public, as well). Monthly meetings provide a friendly, facilitated setting for people to network, become more informed, gather resources, and share their personal experiences and stories.

Who Attends Meetings?

Meetings are open to all people interested in transgender or non-binary issues. We support and honor the many ways there are to be trans and the wide variety of people who fall under the broad category of loved ones, friends, family members, and allies. FORGE tries to offer a little something for everyone. Join us if you are new to gender issues and want a supportive place to explore. If you are well-versed in trans issues, we invite you to share your experiences and help elevate discussion to a more complex, philosophical level. Partners, allies, friends and professionals are always encouraged to attend on their own, or with a trans loved one (or person with whom they are working).

Meeting Format, Schedule & Location

Every FORGE meeting focuses on a pre-determined topic. Sometimes there will be a panel presentation or a guest speaker, sometimes we'll do small group exercises or watch trans-focused films, and sometimes we, as a group, will generate our own questions and answers. Each meeting begins with brief introductions and an ice-breaker question. We end each meeting with a closing question. Everyone in attendance will have an opportunity to speak, listen and be heard, or to pass if they prefer to remain quiet.

Meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month from 2:00pm – 4:00pm.

Meetings are currently held at [IndependenceFirst](#) in Milwaukee.

**IndependenceFirst
540 South 1st Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204**

For additional information, visit our website at <https://forge-wi.org/about/support-groups/>.

Parents Support Group

MKE Parents of Trans Kids is a group of parents and caregivers supporting each other on our individual journeys of love, acceptance and advocacy for our school-aged transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming children. Supportive, gently facilitated meetings offer parents and adult family members the opportunity to share their successes, concerns and stories of challenges and resilience. This space also provides a forum to learn from others, ask questions, seek feedback or just listen.

The group meets in Milwaukee on the third Sunday of each month from 2:00p.m. – 3:30p.m.

For additional information, email us at parents@forge-forward.org.

Kids' Drop-In Group

The FORGE kids' drop-in group is closely tied to our parents support group. Children and youth accompanying their parents to the parents' group are welcome to “drop-in” next door for adult-facilitated crafts, games, and conversation. This group strives to be responsive to the age and personal needs of each child.

If you are or know of a child or teen whose parent is not in the parents' support group, we would be happy to contact that parent to discuss the groups. Contact us at parents@forge-forward.org to begin a conversation.

Special Events

In addition to regular programming, FORGE sponsors special events of interest to the trans/non-binary/loved ones community. FORGE continues to be the primary sponsor of Milwaukee's annual Transgender Day of Remembrance event. We also participate in and support numerous collaborative LGBTQ+ community events, including participating as a co-sponsor of PrideFest's Health and Wellness area. FORGE also holds events for the community featuring speakers from Wisconsin and across the country, and events highlighting books, films and other topics of interest.

Sexual Assault Victim Advocacy

In Wisconsin, victim-survivors of sexual assault have the right to work with and be represented by a victim advocate. Victim advocates work closely with victim-survivors to help them understand their rights as victims in the criminal justice system, to provide needed information and resources to assist with recovery from assault, to be present with victim-survivors to support them during forensic medical exams and law enforcement interactions, and to represent them and their interests as they engage with medical and legal systems.

If you would like to discuss whether FORGE is able to provide victim advocacy for you or someone you know who has experienced sexual assault, please contact us at (414) 559-2123 or askFORGE@forge-forward.org.

OTHER FORGE SERVICES

Service Providers

Note: See also the separate "Resources for Providers" Section.

FORGE also maintains a library of publications and other multimedia resources to support service providers. Here you will find anti-violence and aging resources specific to transgender and non-binary individuals and communities, such as resources for supporting transgender and non-binary survivors, and creating inclusive environments for trans and non-binary individuals in shelters, support groups and traditionally sex-segregated spaces like restrooms.

FORGE provides both ready-made and design-to-fit trainings on a range of topics related to transgender and LGBTQ+ victims of crime, with particular emphasis on victim-survivors of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, dating violence, stalking and hate crimes.

FORGE can also provide service providers with consultation by phone or email to support their work with transgender and non-binary individuals.

We also make technical assistance available by phone or email to individual professionals, organizations and public agencies that need specific assistance with an emergent issue or in an area that is not addressed by FORGE's webinars or workshops.

FORGE staff can work on short- or long-term projects/goals and help find solutions to sometimes complex problems in working with or on behalf of transgender or non-binary individuals or communities. Contact us for more details about how we can be of assistance to you at askFORGE@forge-forward.org or (414) 559-2123.

Issue Advocacy

FORGE, often in collaboration with other LGBTQ+ organizations or providers, monitors, develops and responds to public policy initiatives that have the potential to affect the lives and well-being of trans and non-binary individuals and loved ones. FORGE is closely involved in responding to a broad range of critical issues relevant to the trans/non-binary/loved ones community both locally and nationally.

In addition to assisting with many federal-level initiatives, in recent years FORGE was a leader in successfully advocating for Milwaukee's 2018 ban on conversion therapy for youth, and worked closely with Milwaukee Police Department personnel to develop a robust set of operating procedures to ensure respectful and appropriate treatment of residents and visitors who identify as transgender, non-binary, intersex or gender non-conforming.

OTHER FORGE PROGRAM AREAS

Anti-Violence

In addition to our work in Wisconsin, FORGE is nationally recognized for our anti-violence work, leading training and technical assistance efforts nationwide to improve victim service professionals' ability to appropriately and respectfully serve trans and non-binary survivors of crime, particularly those experiencing sexual violence, intimate partner violence, dating violence, stalking and hate crimes.

Transgender Aging

FORGE is also a nationally recognized leader for our work on issues of aging in transgender and non-binary populations. The Transgender Aging Network is part of FORGE, and offers trainings, and consultations as well as an archive of publications at forge-forward.org. The Transgender Aging Network links professionals and others interested in trans aging issues via a listserv and Facebook page. A related listserv, ElderTG, offers English language peer support to trans elders and close loved ones ages 50+ worldwide.

CONNECT WITH FORGE

Online: www.forge-forward.org
www.forge-wi.org

Facebook: **FORGE**, <https://www.facebook.com/FORGE.trans/>

FORGE in Wisconsin,
<https://www.facebook.com/forge.wi/>

Trans Survivors,
<https://www.facebook.com/transsurvivors/>

#TransToo,
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TransToo/>
 (closed group for trans survivors of sexual assault)

Transgender Aging Network,
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/204737390007331/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FORGEforward>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/forge_forward/