

THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE

The Rainbow Initiative is a pilot program created by EMM to respond to General Convention 2022 Resolution D045:

“On Supporting LGBTIQ+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers”

The Rainbow Initiative pursues two main strategies:

1. Ensure that all EMM procedures and materials are fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ people
2. Work with Episcopal congregations and others to promote visibility and aid for LGBTQ+ people who have fled their countries of origin because of persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Focus on activity during June (Pride and World Refugee Day).



WHAT DOES “FORCED MIGRANT” MEAN ?

Definition:

A forced migrant is a person who is compelled to leave their country of citizenship or origin because of persecution.

Forced migrants may have many different immigration statuses, including:

- “Refugees” who have been recognized by the U.S. government as needing protection and then resettled in this country
- “Asylum seekers” who have entered the U.S. and then petitioned for permission to stay here permanently
- “Asylees” who have been granted that permission
- “Undocumented immigrants” who according to the U.S. Government do not have a legal right to stay in the country

“Internally displaced people” have fled persecution, but remained within their country of citizenship or origin. Many trans community members are talking about this becoming a reality in the United States.



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WHY SHOULD EPISCOPALIANS AND OTHER PEOPLE OF FAITH CARE ABOUT LGBTQ+ FORCED MIGRANTS ?

The call to “welcome the stranger” through protection and hospitality is deeply rooted in many religions, including ours. Christian scripture and tradition emphasize seeing Jesus in all people, and particularly in those who are persecuted and in need of help.

Religion is interwoven with the persecution many LGBTQ+ people experience. It can also be interwoven with their welcome and healing.

The Rainbow Initiative is beginning to work with partners at Episcopal seminaries and others to develop liturgical resources that will be useful for Pride services, and theological resources that will show how concern for LGBTQ+ forced migrants is an expression of our faith.

What are your answers to this question? Send them to rainbowinitiative@episcopalchurch.org.



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PARTICULAR CHALLENGES OF LGBTQ+ FORCED MIGRANTS

It is **illegal to be LGBTQ+** in about 70 countries, with persecution widespread in many more.

Religion is used to justify much of the persecution they face.

Still, many remain spiritual or religious, and much of the help they receive is motivated by religion.

LGBTQ+ forced migrants in the U.S. are **more likely to be asylum seekers** (30,000/year) or undocumented than refugees (1,000/year).

Discrimination often continues from people who share their backgrounds, as well as others

Consequently, they are often **unable to work legally and access benefits**.

Many suffer from **social isolation** and cannot rely on community support

Proving LGBTQ+ status can be difficult.



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Responsive Services for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Newcomers



Episcopal Migration Ministries

https://www.switchboardta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Written-Resource_Responsive-Services-for-TGNC-Newcomers_Info-Guide-1.pdf



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Responsive Services for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) Newcomers

Guidance for service providers based on research and practice

This guide helps service providers understand the distinctive challenges facing newcomers who are transgender or gender nonconforming (TGNC) and can help agencies that are engaging in training initiatives to ensure that all of their clients have access to appropriate services. It is based on a review of available resources, as well as the experience of [Episcopal Migration Ministries' Rainbow Initiative](#) and its partners, including Clark University's [Integration and Belonging Hub](#), [InReach](#), the [LGBT Asylum Task Force](#) of Hadwen Park Congregational Church, and [Oasis Legal Services](#). A compendium of resources is provided at the end of the guide.

The distinctive needs of TGNC newcomers

TGNC newcomers may present many of the same needs and strengths as those who are cisgender. But service providers can also face additional challenges related to identification and housing, intake, confidentiality, communicating across cultures, languages, and generations; legal needs; transition-related (or gender-affirming) care; social isolation; mental health; and referrals and partnerships.



Transgender describes people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender nonconforming describes people whose gender expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity.

GLAAD: Glossary of Terms (2022)

1

Guide

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TOPIC(S)

[Identity & Inclusive Services](#)

SUB TOPIC(S)

[Gender Equality](#)

POPULATION(S)



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THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE



CONSIDER BECOMING A RAINBOW INITIATIVE CONGREGATION / COMMUNITY (RIC)!

RICs will commit to continuing engagement with EMM about supporting LGBTQ+ forced migrants in some way during June.

EMM will work with them to discern what kinds of activities would be best for them, and provide them with the tools, information, and introductions they will need.

Contact

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Contact Information



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