

How Your Jewish Community Can Be a Safe Haven for Trans People

The new Administration's dizzying attacks on transgender and nonbinary people — and youth in particular — are cruel and dangerous.* These attacks also betray our Jewish values. As Jews, we believe that every human being is created *B'tzelem Elohim* — in the divine image. **To harm trans people is to betray the preciousness of each human being. To harm trans people is to deny the responsibility we all have for one another, *Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze Bazeh*.**

Since the inauguration, Keshet staff members' inboxes have been overflowing with pleas for answers and support. Jewish leaders and institutions have written to us wondering: *What can we do to support our trans youth?* And LGBTQ+ teens and their parents have reached out wanting to know: *What are Jewish organizations doing to stand up for our existence, our dignity, and our safety?* **This is the work of our moment.** We have the power — and the responsibility — to make our Jewish communities the safe havens that public spaces may not be. As many of our political leaders fail to protect members of our community, we must lead by example and build the just and inclusive world they refuse to create.

Jewish organizations, such as synagogues, Hebrew schools, day schools, camps, and JCCs, are private religious institutions. That means there are limits to the extent that the government can regulate your programs and policies. Your Jewish organization might be one of the only places where LGBTQ+ people, especially trans people, especially youth, can find affirmation. You have a unique role to play — a unique opportunity to live out your values — in supporting our trans, nonbinary, and intersex community members when secular institutions can't by being a safe haven for them.

Trans people have always been here and Jewish voices and leadership have always played a role in trans rights and care. As we commit to this work, we hold with us the memories of Berel-Beyle, a trans man who was fully a part of his 19th century shtetl community in Ukraine; of Leslie Feinberg, a Jewish trans writer and activist whose writing has changed so many lives; of Magnus Hirschfeld, a gay Jewish man discriminated against by the Nazi regime, who was the first person to perform gender-affirming surgeries. This fight is our inheritance.

** It is important to remember that executive orders cannot override the Constitution or become federal or state laws. We know this deluge is a tactic that is designed to shock, confuse, and terrify. While many of the policies the President is promoting will not be enforceable, we know the words themselves harm LGBTQ+ youth and their families.

Now is the time for action. Here is what your community can start doing today:

- Join [Thrive: The Jewish Coalition to Defend Trans and LGBTQ+ Youth](#) to add your organization's voice to critical federal and state advocacy and get personalized support in navigating this political climate.
- Display ["Trans Jews Belong Here" signs](#) — in your physical spaces, on your website, in your emails, and on social media.
- Ensure access to [gender-neutral bathrooms](#) and publicize this in your community.
- Commit to using the names and pronouns your LGBTQ+ members use for themselves.
- [Create policies](#) (like anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and non-discrimination) that affirm the dignity and safety of all members.
 - If you have already heard from LGBTQ+ community members that your space is affirming and supportive, write an official statement sharing that these policies are not changing and that now more than ever, you publicly support your LGBTQ+ members.
- Consult with [Keshet's Education & Training team](#) about next steps for your community.
- Bring [Keshet's Community Mobilization team](#) to your community to learn about the legislative landscape locally and federally and the ways we can fight for LGBTQ+ rights, Jewishly.

**Silence will harm your trans and LGBTQ+ members, especially trans youth.
Now is the time to make it clear: trans Jews will always belong in the
Jewish community.**

Over the coming weeks and months, there will be many more opportunities to take action. We look forward to doing that work together with you.

Additional resources:

- [The Role of Jewish Community Spaces Amid Hostile Legislation for LGBTQ+ Youth](#)
- [What you can do, right now, for your trans and nonbinary friends, family, students and colleagues](#)
- [Keshet's Community Belonging Guides](#)
- [Seven Jewish Values for Taking Action](#)
- [Services and Resources for Trans People and Their Families](#)
- [Trans Misconceptions and Facts](#)
- [The Trevor Project's 2024 National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)