

TRANS SAFETY TIPS

Staying Safe When Dealing with the Police

This card is designed to safely guide people of transgender experience through encounters with the police. The police often wrongly assume that people of trans-experience are criminals, so it is important to know your rights when dealing with the police. However, don't attempt to challenge an officer's actions while she/he has the upper hand! **Stay safe in the moment and wait until after you have been released to take action.**

Know that if you are stopped by a police officer, you do not have to answer the officer's questions, and you cannot be legally arrested for refusing to identify yourself. An officer must have a reasonable suspicion that you are committing, have committed, or about to commit a crime to detain you. If you are stopped by a police officer while driving a car, you must show your driver's license and registration. You do not have to consent to a search.

If You Are Approached by the Police

1. Don't run.
2. **Stay calm.**
3. Be polite and respectful, even if the officer is not.
4. Don't resist or touch the officer, even if you are innocent.
5. Keep your hands where the police can see them at all times.
6. Wait for instructions from the officer before making any movements.
7. Always carry proper identification (e.g., driver's license).
Remember: If the name or sex on your I.D. does not match your gender identity, simply say "Officer, _____ is the name that I go by, but my I.D. says _____, which is my birth name."
8. Say as little as possible – anything you say can be used against you.
9. Don't interfere with or obstruct the police even if you observe questionable police behavior.



Getting Through a “Pat Down” Safely

1. An officer has the right to pat down your clothing if he/she has a reasonable suspicion that you are carrying a weapon.
2. Do **not** physically resist a pat down.
3. Don't respond to any sexual remarks or gestures, or anti-transgender comments the officer may make.

If You Are Arrested

1. Calmly ask why you are being arrested.
2. **Immediately** ask to speak with an attorney.
3. If you can't afford an attorney, you have the right to a free attorney.
4. Don't make any statements about the incident unless your lawyer is present.
5. If you need medical attention or require time-sensitive medication (e.g., HIV, diabetes), you may ask to be taken to a hospital.
6. Be very careful when talking to other arrestees – they may be police informants.
7. You can request to be treated as a “special” if you fear that your safety is at risk. A “special” is an arrestee held in an area other than the general detention cells for their safety. However, remember, there is no consistent policy regarding “specials,” or whether you will be placed in a cell according to your gender identity.

If You Are a Victim of Police Misconduct

1. If you are injured, first seek medical assistance, then photograph your injuries soon as possible. The Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) can assist you.
2. Try to remember a description of the officer(s), and their name, badge, or patrol car number.
3. Write down **everything** you remember after the event as soon as possible, including whether witnesses were present.
4. After the incident, contact MTPC at 617-778-0519 to report police misconduct and address your legal concerns.



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Remember!

- **Stay safe in the moment and take action later.**
- **Be calm and respectful in all interactions with the police.**
- **Wait for instructions and don't resist or touch the officer.**
- **Say as little as possible.**



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