



## **Santa Clara County Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Expansive Community Needs Assessment**

Findings and  
Recommendations  
for Services  
Improvement  
from and for the  
Community

# Table of Contents

Introduction: About the SCC TGNBGE Community Needs Assessment	4
Executive Summary / Discrimination and Lack of Resources	6
Recommendations for the Improvement of Services for TGNBGE Residents of Santa Clara County	7
Existing Services	8
Discrimination in Educational Settings	10
Community Informed Solutions for Educational Settings	12
Discrimination in Employment Settings	13
Community Informed Solutions in Employment Settings	14
Moving Forward	15
References	16

## Acknowledgements

This effort would not be possible without the generous support from the Santa Clara Office of LGBTQ Affairs and their current and previous staff including:

Benny Arana O'Hara	Sera Fernando	Maribel Martinez
Jordan Betancourt	Crystal Haney	Daniel Moretti

The author would also like to thank the following partners for allowing us to utilize their locations for the photos included in this report:

Billy DeFrank LGBTQ+ Community Center  
San Jose State University Pride Center

Special thanks to our creative team and our breathtaking models:

Tiffany Woods - Photographer  
Querido Galdo - Graphic Designer

Models:

Alexia Diaz	Aliyah Ali	Anjali Rimi	Noriel Tejero
-------------	------------	-------------	---------------

Thanks too to those that participated but would rather not be named.

Most of all the author sends out a huge amount of gratitude to the community stakeholders that took the time to participate in the needs assessment process. Your perspectives will help us to continue to improve systems and programs for TGNBGE people in the county of Santa Clara.

This report is dedicated to the trans lives that were taken from us due to transphobia. May each of your legacies live on through the progress made through this report.



For more information about this report, contact the County of Santa Clara Office of LGBTQ Affairs  
**Phone (408) 678-2900 | Email [lgbtq@ceo.sccgov.org](mailto:lgbtq@ceo.sccgov.org) | Web <https://lgbtq.sccgov.org/>**

The County of Santa Clara is the **first in the nation** to have an Office of LGBTQ Affairs. According to their mission, this government office provides “leadership and support for the well-being and longevity of LGBTQ communities in Santa Clara County through coordinated, integrated approaches.”

# About the SCC TGNBGE Community Needs Assessment

**T**ransgender, nonbinary and gender expansive (TGNBGE) people experience disproportionate amounts of discrimination globally and more specifically in the United States (James et al., 2016). As a result, public discourse has recently included more about the social services needs and human rights of TGNBGE people. The County of Santa Clara is the first in the nation to have an Office of LGBTQ Affairs. According to their mission, this government office provides “leadership and support for the well-being and longevity of LGBTQ communities in Santa Clara County through coordinated, integrated approaches” (SCCOLGBTQA, 2020). The Office of LGBTQ Affairs invested in community based participatory research conducted by and for the TGNBGE community in 2018 by consulting with trans researcher Dani Castro M.A., M.F.T. to lead and conduct the largest study in the history of Santa Clara County for TGNBGE people.

Dani Castro, former project director for the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health’s Community Based Research at UCSF, is a nationally recognized and leading expert for health-related issues affecting all trans people. Dani has worked alongside her community to increase access to health and social services for all trans people on

**The Santa Clara County Office of LGBTQ Affairs invested in community-based participatory research conducted by and for the TGNBGE community.**



a national and international level throughout most of her life. She earned her graduate degree in counseling psychology from John F. Kennedy University in 2013. Ms. Castro utilizes her training to develop community-driven social justice coalitions and provided mental health services at multiple organizations for LGBTQI people and their families. She is a founding board member for the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health at UCSF, TAJA’s Coalition, and the Santa Clara County TransPowerment Program. She’s currently disabled and available for consultation on a case by case basis. This research was conducted in order to identify social and health services gaps for TGNBGE people and develop community identified solutions and recommendations to address those gaps.

This needs assessment was designed to answer the following guiding questions specific to the Santa Clara County TGNBGE community:

 **1. Existing Resources: What resources currently exist for TGNBGE people in Santa Clara County?**

- a. Are these services specifically for TGNBGE people?
- b. What services do these resources provide?
- c. How effective are these services for you?
- d. Have you experienced discrimination from service providers within these agencies due to transphobia?
- e. How safe do you feel accessing these services?
- f. How easy is it to access these services?
- g. Are these services culturally sensitive?
- h. Are these services provided in your primary language?

 **2. Needed Resources: What TGNBGE specific resources and/or services do you need that do not already exist?**

- a. What would make those services effective for you?
- b. What would make you feel affirmed in your gender identity when you access services?
- c. What would make you feel safe when you access those services?
- d. What would make those services more accessible?
- e. What would make those services culturally sensitive?



**3. Education: Have you ever experienced harassment and/or discrimination in school?**

- a. Did you experience discrimination while in school due to transphobia?
- b. Did you experience physical violence due to transphobia?
- c. Did you have to drop out of school or change schools?
- d. What would you change about schools to make them better for trans and non-binary people?



**4. Employment: Are you currently or have you ever been employed?**

- a. Have you experienced discrimination due to transphobia at work?
- b. Did you experience physical violence at work due to transphobia?
- c. Did you file a report or complaint about transphobia in the workplace?
- d. What would make work environments better for trans and non-binary people?

The responses were collected through various methods including one on one interviews, small focus groups, and written responses. All the anonymous responses were carefully recorded and analyzed in order to identify recurring themes, and establish community-identified recommendations. The findings were reviewed and vetted by a diverse group of anonymous TGNBGE individuals. What follows is a report of the findings from the survey and the TGNBGE community vetted recommendations for the improvement of services for TGNBGE citizens of Santa Clara County.

# Executive Summary

**T**he 2018 Santa Clara County Transgender and Nonbinary Community Needs Assessment (Heretofore the assessment) is the largest study ever conducted for this population in S.C.C.

This study includes feedback from 276 English and Spanish speaking TGNBGE individuals ranging from age 6 to 76 and from different areas of S.C.C. including Gilroy, Morgan Hill, San Jose, Willow Glen, Palo Alto, Milpitas, Cupertino, Santa Clara, Mountain View, Los Gatos, Campbell, Sunnyvale, Alum Rock, and Fruitdale. This report provides an abundance of detailed information that illuminates the discrimination and marginalization that transgender people experience in S.C.C., and provides recommendations for improvement.

## Discrimination and Lack of Resources

Respondents reported an alarmingly high rate of discrimination, lack of resources, and lack of effectiveness. Eighty percent of respondents experienced discrimination<sup>1</sup> directly related to their gender identity while attempting to access local services, and ninety percent (90%) of respondents chose to go outside of Santa Clara County to find culturally sensitive and welcoming services. One respondent was murdered during the process of authoring this report.



1. The discrimination experienced by participants included mis-gendering, harassment and public outing.

**80%**  
**of respondents  
experienced  
discrimination<sup>1</sup>**

**90%**  
**chose to go  
outside of Santa  
Clara County to  
find culturally  
sensitive and  
welcoming  
services**

**“It really sucks  
to have to go to  
San Francisco  
because it  
costs money  
and it’s not like  
these services  
can’t be made  
available here  
for us.”**

**-Age 22**



# Recommendations for the Improvement of Services for TGNBGE Residents of Santa Clara County

MULTILINGUAL SERVICES



**Access to multilingual legal services** including support related to discrimination, housing, policy making and advocacy, legal representation, personal identification gender marker and name changes, immigration support, incarceration and post-incarceration support services, and workshops including legal rights information.



**Increased access to multilingual health care services** including primary care, gender related care, mental health care and social services including crisis intervention services, substance use support services, health care navigation support, health insurance enrollment and navigation support services, domestic violence and intimate partner violence support services, support for survivors of violence and health care advocacy services.



**Multilingual professional development services** including educational institution navigation support services, guidance counseling, scholarship opportunities for education and small business development, employment opportunities with trans inclusive health care insurance plans, and employment placement services.



**Accessible housing services** available in multiple languages including shelter navigation and placement services for all ages, trans inclusive low-income housing opportunities, housing discrimination advocacy and support services, community-based outreach for the marginally housed and houseless, and food pantry and distribution services.



**Community mobilization and coalition building** available in multiple languages, a TGNBGE commission to advise the political landscape for TGNBGE people in SCC, field community grievances and triage and refer them to the appropriate county resources and services and establish ongoing recommendations for a safer and more inclusive county for TGNBGE people. This commission would also provide in-person cultural humility training for local organizations and agencies looking to improve services for trans and non-binary people.

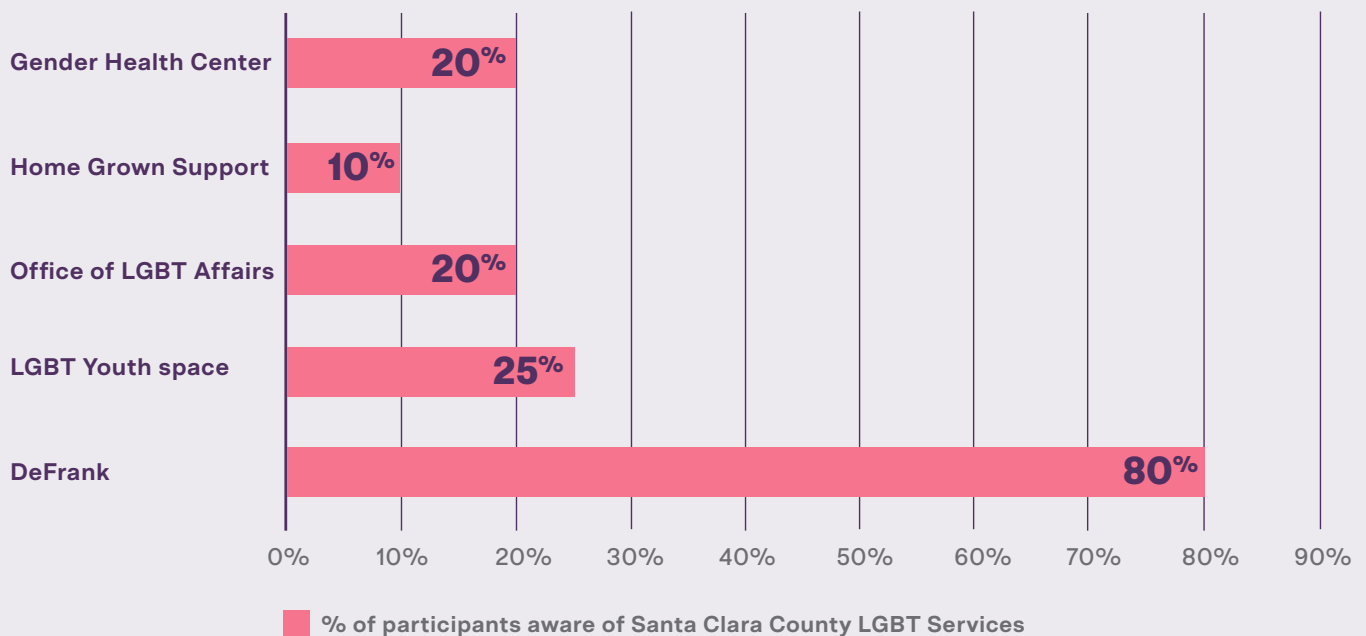


## Existing Services

**T**he County of Santa Clara has a lack of services specific to TGNBGE people. Given the sophistication and innovation of Silicon Valley, it is important that more services be made available for this historically underserved community. The services that do exist are few and far between and are overburdened and under-resourced. Sadly, the services that exist within LGB organizations are reportedly proving to be problematic. While the attempt to provide services is overall appreciated, it is time to raise the bar and meet the needs of TGNBGE people specifically.

**While the attempt to provide services is overall appreciated, it is time to raise the bar and meet the needs of TGNBGE people specifically.**

### Service Awareness





## Existing Services: What services currently exist for TGNBGE people in Santa Clara County?

Awareness of existing services is very limited for TGNBGE people in Santa Clara County, and there are only a handful of services (see graph of services awareness on previous page).

a. Are these services specifically for TGNBGE people?

**The only service specifically for TGNBGE people is the Gender Health Center.**

b. What services do these agencies provide?

(Listed in order of most responses)

- i. Support groups
- ii. Referrals
- iii. Health care
- iv. Community events

c. How effective are these services for you?

**35% said Very Effective**  
**60% said Effective**  
**5% said Ineffective**

d. Have you experienced discrimination from service providers within these agencies due to transphobia?

**80% said Yes**

e. How safe do you feel accessing these services?

**30% said Very Safe**  
**50% said Somewhat Safe**  
**20% said Unsafe**

f. How easy is it to access these services?

**50% said Easy**  
**35% said Kind of Easy**  
**15% said It's NOT Easy**

g. Are these services culturally sensitive?

**83% said No**  
**17% said Yes**

h. Are these services provided in your primary language?

**25% said No**  
**75% said Yes**

**“I don’t like going to these places because every time I do it’s like I have to prepare myself with a shield. I mean, it’s not that hard to ask for my pronoun...”**

**-Age 45**





# Discrimination in Educational Settings

**A**lthough the Bay Area has been historically touted as a safe haven and progressive region for the greater LGBTQ community, there remains a gap in services for people who are TGNBGE. There are various services that are available throughout the Bay Area specifically for this community, but many of those are outside of Santa Clara County and are limited in their scope to provide necessary services for TGNBGE people in Santa Clara County due to various reasons including their funding sources and limited resources. One of the service gaps identified by this assessment was legal services for TGNBGE community members in particular.

Based on national data, there are very high rates of discrimination and targeted acts of violence against TGNBGE people. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality, TGNBGE people experience a disproportionate amount of violence including harassment. In their report they find that 1 in 10 of those that were out to their families experienced violence, and 8% were kicked out of their homes. Those in kindergarten through twelfth grade experienced violence and with 17% of them having to drop out of school as a result (James et al., 2016).

Based on the assessment In Santa Clara County, TGNBGE K-12 students (n=56) experienced discrimination or some form of harassment due to transphobia at a rate of 50%, and most of those students were forced to drop out or transfer schools (36%). Transferring schools was often not the end of the harassment and discrimination. The discrimination and harassment didn't end in this age group, but instead went on through adulthood for those fortunate enough to make it into college. One in ten (of the 76 participants from the assessment) that attended college experienced discrimination due to transphobia. The transphobia manifested itself through bullying both on and offline/social media, physical violence, purposeful mis-gendering, name calling and exclusion from social circles.

Adults aged 24 to 77 (n=144) reported experiencing discrimination and harassment in educational settings throughout their lifetimes due to transphobia at a rate of 88%. Given these staggering rates of transphobia, it is recommended that all educational settings take the necessary community suggested steps to address the issue head on.<sup>2</sup>

**“My teachers were cool but they didn’t see it when I was made fun of in the bathroom or during recess. I didn’t feel safe...”**

**-Age 12**

2. Unless otherwise cited, all information provided is directly from the 2018 assessment.



ALL-GENDER  
RESTROOM





## **Community-Informed Solutions for Educational Settings**

It's challenging to address the issue of transphobic discrimination and violence while the question remains as to what exactly transphobia is. Although transphobia is defined as, "an aversion or hostility to, disdain for, or fear of transgender people" (Dictionary.com, 2021), it manifests in many different ways. Oftentimes the person experiencing the discrimination is told that they are the victim because they themselves are TGNBGE, when in fact the problem is that our society is transphobic. A step toward healing transphobia is to provide education for those who don't understand or are unknowingly or knowingly acting out of transphobia. The emphasis of any corrective action should therefore be placed on those who are being transphobic and not on those who are TGNBGE.

Legislation has existed since 2004 in California to protect TGNBGE people from transphobia in public places, but very little education and/or enforcement is available to institute these laws and policies (Transgender Law Center, 2021; AB-196 Discrimination, 2003-2004). Schools are legally responsible for providing safety for all students and especially those who are TGNBGE.

A requirement without a lack of guidance is ineffective. Schools have been left to innovate and implement practices to keep students safe how they see fit. The following recommendations were collected for and by TGNBGE people living in Santa Clara County in order to provide guidance for local schools:

- **Provide staff and student training to help students and staff alike understand the lived experiences of TGNBGE students including updates on laws and policies that currently exist for their protection.**
- **Creation of TGNBGE groups or social networks that have advisory capacities such as an advisory committee to inform the school as to how to keep the educational setting safe and welcoming for everyone.**
- **Provide reading materials and resources for TGNBGE students and their allies in places where students can easily access them.**
- **Combat transphobia by engaging in restorative justice discussions with those involved in bullying or other hurtful acts against TGNBGE students.**
- **Actively engage in ongoing research regarding ways to keep schools safe for TGNBGE students.**
- **Provide counseling services for TGNBGE students and their families.**
- **Participate in and organize TGNBGE annual events like Transgender Day of Visibility and Transgender Day of Remembrance.**
- **Provide access to legal services for TGNBGE students including name and gender change clinics and policy enforcement clinics.**

All of these measures are valuable tools that can be leveraged into existing educational settings and schools not only for the benefit of TGNBGE students, but also for all students and staff.



## Discrimination in Employment Settings

**T**ransphobia has impacted the lives of TGNBGE people in employment settings including those that are self-employed. Employment in this report includes any means of labor in order to financially survive. The reason for the broadened definition is a result of TGNBGE people having to do whatever it takes to survive in a transphobic society. U.S. based research has shown that TGNBGE people experience disproportionate amounts of discrimination in the workplace if they are fortunate enough to have a job (James et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the findings of this national report show that those of legal working age have an unemployment rate of 18% as compared to the national rate of roughly 5%. In the 2018 assessment, of those that were employed, 25% had experienced gender-based discrimination by their employer. Of those 25% that experienced discrimination, only 5% filed a report through the proper channels. Regardless of reporting or not, 99% of all those discriminated against were fearful of retaliation. Of the 5% that filed complaints, most ended up being terminated or leaving their job due to ongoing discrimination. Sadly, 2% experienced physical violence while at work by their employer. These alarming rates of discrimination highlight the urgency for a drastic change in policy and enforcement, education, training opportunities and a need for legal services to help mediate or provide legal assistance.

**“It was awful. I felt like I couldn’t turn to anyone because HR’s interest is for the company, and it’s so hard to prove things even with evidence. I’d rather keep my job. So no, I didn’t feel safe reporting anything.”**

**-Age 34**





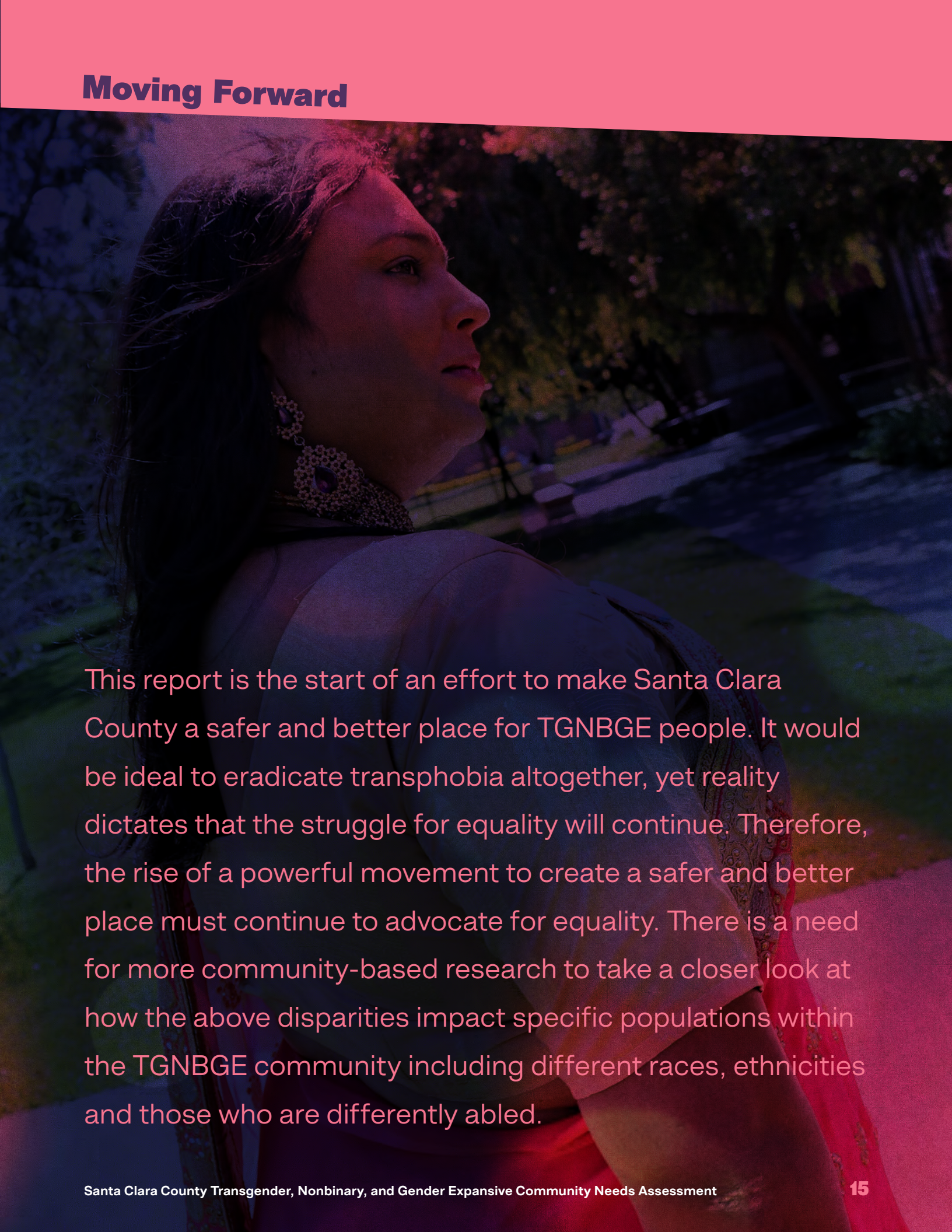
## **Community-Informed Solutions for Employment Settings**

The state of California was among the first to implement laws to protect TGNBGE people in the workplace (Transgender Law Center, 2021; AB-196 Discrimination, 2003-2004). TGNBGE people are listed as a protected class of people, and still this community struggles to feel safe and welcome in work settings. Following is a list of TGNBGE community-informed solutions for work settings:

- **Provide a safe environment free from transphobia for all workers.**
- **Hire TGNBGE people for high level positions, not just entry level positions.**
- **Support the ongoing education of TGNBGE people and include opportunities for professional advancement.**
- **Educate all workers about equal rights and cultural humility for all and specifically TGNBGE people. This information exchange should include the following topics: implicit bias, gender inclusive policies, language, pronoun usage and best practices for inclusivity in the workplace.**
- **Enforce existing policies that protect TGNBGE people and create new ones as necessary.**
- **Support and celebrate transgender focused events like Transgender Day of Visibility and Transgender Day of Remembrance to help spread education and information to the workforce.**
- **Provide TGNBGE affirming mediation and counseling services.**
- **Provide health insurance that covers gender affirming procedures.**
- **Understand and institute the use of correct pronouns.**
- **Eliminate transphobia and its ideologies by enforcing gender inclusive national, state and local laws.**
- **Provide resources for TGNBGE people including access to legal services and leaflets with information specific to the needs of the community.**
- **Foster a safe space for TGNBGE people including social groups and events.**
- **Post TGNBGE policies clearly and visibly and be prepared to answer questions regarding them.**
- **Respect individual choice to be open or private about one's gender identity.**

These community informed solutions are a good start to combating transphobia in the workplace, and will help all people feel safer in the workplace. These are only a starting point for employers. Having an employer supported TGNBGE advisory group to inform ongoing improvements would greatly benefit any employer.

## Moving Forward



This report is the start of an effort to make Santa Clara County a safer and better place for TGNBGE people. It would be ideal to eradicate transphobia altogether, yet reality dictates that the struggle for equality will continue. Therefore, the rise of a powerful movement to create a safer and better place must continue to advocate for equality. There is a need for more community-based research to take a closer look at how the above disparities impact specific populations within the TGNBGE community including different races, ethnicities and those who are differently abled.

## References

CA Assembly Bill text. Bill Text - AB-196 Discrimination. (n.d.). Retrieved January 8, 2022, from [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=200320040AB196](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=200320040AB196)

Dictionary.com. (n.d.). In *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved September 26, 2021 from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/transphobia>

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.

Santa Clara County Office of LGBTQ Affairs. (2020, July 7). *About the Office of LGBTQ Affairs: Mission*. Retrieved July 9, 2020, <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/lgbtq/About/Pages/home.aspx>

Transgender Law Center. (2005-2021). In *Transgenderlawcenter.org*. Retrieved September 26, 2021 from <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/resources/know-your-rights/faq-the-gender-nondiscrimination-act>