

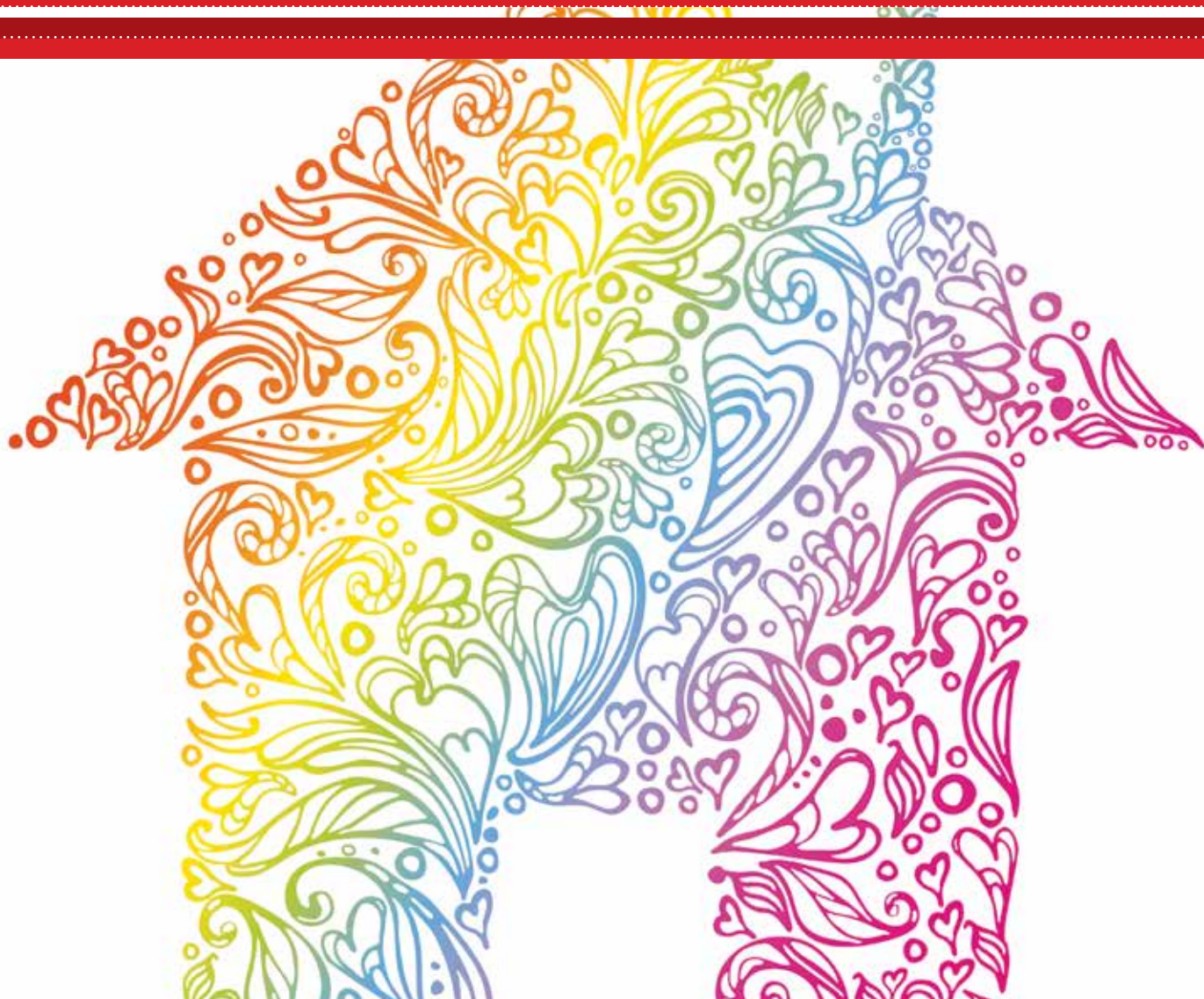
**THE COMMUNITY  
JUSTICE PROJECT**

GEORGETOWN LAW



# CASA RUBY

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SERVING THE TRANSGENDER  
COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



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## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

This strategic plan was prepared by Jason Amirhadji, Jessica DeStefano, and Michelle Mirabal, student attorneys from Georgetown University Law Center's Community Justice Project. It is the result of interviews with the clients and volunteers of Casa Ruby and stakeholders in the District of Columbia, research into the needs of the transgender community, and analysis of this information.

## THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROJECT

The Community Justice Project (CJP) is one of fifteen law clinics at Georgetown University Law Center. CJP is committed to giving students an appreciation for the complexity of working for social justice, an understanding of the variety of skills and strategies that lawyers can use to seek justice, and the belief that they have the capacity to make a difference throughout their lives as lawyers. CJP students represent individual clients in litigation matters and non-profit and governmental organizations in policy, legislative, or strategic matters. Each semester, CJP students work in subject matter areas that have included poverty law, housing, court reform, community organizing, transactional law for nonprofits, health and disability law, environmental law, criminal justice and prisoner issues, juvenile justice, and international women's rights. CJP students are litigators, counselors, advisors, capacity-builders, strategic planners, policy analysts, legislative advisors, and community organizers who represent individual clients in hearings and help organizational clients with complex, high priority projects.

## CASA RUBY

Casa Ruby is a multicultural community center and safe space serving transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming individuals in Washington, D.C. Through employment assistance, HIV testing, counseling, and capacity building, Casa Ruby enables individuals to overcome discrimination, poverty, and other obstacles so they may reach their full potential. With community outreach and collaboration with other agencies, Casa Ruby unites, strengthens, and empowers the transgender community.

Casa Ruby's mission is to create success stories, particularly within transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming communities of color. Its vision is a world where transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming people pursue their dreams without fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project owes a debt of gratitude to the stakeholders, community members, and government officials who generously shared their candid insight into the needs of the D.C. transgender community and the role of Casa Ruby. It also has benefitted greatly from the clients, board members, and volunteers who took the time to help inform the future direction of Casa Ruby. This process would not have been possible without the initiative and drive of Ruby Corado, the founder and executive director of Casa Ruby. Finally, this product was greatly enhanced at every stage thanks to the tireless efforts and guidance of Colleen Shanahan, Lisa Pollan, and Jane Aiken.

## GLOSSARY

*Gender Expression:* The ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and other forms of presentation. Gender expression also works the other way as people assign gender to others based on their appearance, mannerisms, and other gendered characteristics. All people have gender expression, not just transgender people.<sup>1</sup>

*Gender Identity:* A person's inner concept of self as male or female or both or neither. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity that matches their assigned gender at birth. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their assigned gender. Some of these individuals choose to live socially as the other gender and may also hormonally and/or surgically change their bodies to more fully express their gender identity. All people have gender identity, not just transgender people.<sup>2</sup>

*Gender Nonconforming:* Individuals whose behaviors and/or interests fall outside what is considered typical for their assigned gender at birth. Someone who identifies as "gender nonconforming" is not necessarily transgender. To the contrary, many people who are not transgender do not conform to gender stereotypes in their appearance, clothing, physical characteristics, interests, or activities.<sup>3</sup>

*Genderqueer:* Genderqueer individuals typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and sexual orientation.<sup>4</sup> The term "genderqueer" represents a blurring of the lines around gender identity and sexual orientation.

*LGBT:* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.

*Sexual Orientation:* Romantic or sexual attraction to people of a specific gender.<sup>5</sup>

*Transgender:* An individual whose gender identity does not match their assigned birth gender. A *transman* is a person who was assigned to the female gender at birth but has a male gender identity, while a *transwoman*, is a person who was assigned to the male gender at birth but has a female gender identity.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes used as an umbrella term that refers to people who live differently than the gender presentation and roles expected of them by society.<sup>7</sup> This includes transsexuals, drag queens, cross dressers, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming individuals.

*Transition:* The process by which a transgender individual lives consistently with his or her gender identity, and which may (but does not necessarily) include changing the person's body through hormones and/or surgical procedures.<sup>8</sup>

*Transsexual:* A term for people who seek to live in a gender different from the one assigned at birth and who may seek or want medical intervention (through hormones and/or surgery) for them to live comfortably in that gender.<sup>9</sup>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of a project by The Community Justice Project at Georgetown University Law Center to identify the needs facing the transgender community in Washington, D.C. and the actions Casa Ruby can take to address those needs. Casa Ruby is a multicultural community center and safe space serving transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming individuals in Washington, D.C. This report uses interviews with third party stakeholders, interviews with Casa Ruby clients and volunteers, and key reports and surveys to analyze the needs facing the transgender community in Washington, D.C. The report then recommends strategic priorities for Casa Ruby to address the needs facing the community.

**The report concludes that the most important service offered by Casa Ruby is its community center. The mere existence of a transgender center has a positive psychological effect on D.C.'s transgender community. Casa Ruby is a home for people who are otherwise lost and empowers clients and volunteers. The community center crosses demographic lines to provide a safe space to unite the transgender community in the District of Columbia.**

The report identifies the following key needs facing the transgender community in D.C.:

- Access to affordable and culturally competent health care,
- Assistance obtaining employment and getting out of underground economies,
- Assistance overcoming discrimination in housing, medical and legal services, and employment,
- Help navigating available resources to access legal, medical, and housing services,
- Access to transgender-friendly and competent service providers, government officials, businesses, and employers, and
- Increased personal safety and an improved relationship with the police.

The report recommends that Casa Ruby address these needs by:

- Continuing to provide HIV testing and free contraceptive devices and serve as a meeting space for transgender support groups,
- Creating an employment services program to assist clients with the job application process and teach clients skills such as networking, developing a resume, and preparing for an interview,
- Maintaining databases of transgender-friendly health care providers, legal service providers, and employers,

- Engaging in resource guidance by connecting clients to transgender-competent service providers, creating a mentor program, and developing a case management system to ensure clients needs are met,
- Facilitating training sessions on transgender cultural competency for employers, government officials, businesses, and service providers, and
- Working with the Metropolitan Police Department to bridge the divide between the police and the transgender community.



## INTRODUCTION

The transgender community in Washington, D.C. has seen great progress in the past decade. Legal protections and public resources have increased, while acts of government discrimination and intolerance have decreased. Yet recent studies and community voices indicate that challenges still exist. Many transgender people remain on the margins of society with a number of unmet needs. Casa Ruby already helps meet these needs as a community center, direct service provider, referral source, and advocate for transgender individuals. As Casa Ruby expands, it is looking to focus its efforts and expand its services to provide the most benefit to the transgender community.

The Casa Ruby project team collected information from a number of sources, including published reports, such as the 2011–2012 D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment,<sup>10</sup> *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*,<sup>11</sup> and *Transvisible: Transgender Latina Immigrants in U.S. Society*.<sup>12</sup> The project team also met with stakeholders to determine the unmet needs in the D.C. transgender community and how Casa Ruby can most effectively meet those needs. The stakeholders included:

- Leaders of direct service organizations serving the LGBT population
- Leaders of direct service organizations serving the Latino population
- Transgender advocates
- D.C. government officials
- Representatives of the Metropolitan Police Department
- Casa Ruby clients
- Casa Ruby volunteers
- Casa Ruby board members

The team's research and conversations with stakeholders focused on the following questions:

- How is Casa Ruby viewed in the community and what populations does Casa Ruby serve?
- What are the needs of the D.C. transgender community, how are these needs currently being met, and what role does Casa Ruby currently serve in meeting these needs?
- What are the current gaps in meeting the needs of the D.C. transgender community, what are the greatest priorities, and what is most important for Casa Ruby to focus on?
- How can Casa Ruby help address the needs of the D.C. transgender community, and what resources are available to assist Casa Ruby in doing so?

Based on this analysis, the report identifies key areas where Casa Ruby can expand and focus its services to address the unmet needs of the D.C. transgender community. These areas are: Health Care, Employment Assistance, Housing Assistance, Legal Assistance, Capacity Building for the Transgender Community, and Building a Better Police Relationship.

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Accordingly, this report first describes Casa Ruby's role in D.C.'s transgender community, outlining its management structure, services provided, and community center. The report then describes the existing needs in the transgender community, how Casa Ruby currently addresses those needs, and recommendations for Casa Ruby's programs in the future. Finally, the report suggests next steps for Casa Ruby's strategic growth. The appendix to the report also provides one-page summaries of each recommended program, to be used with different audiences, including funders, community members, and government officials.

## CASA RUBY'S ROLE IN THE D.C. TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

Casa Ruby is a multicultural community center that helps transgender individuals reach their full potential through health promotion, employment assistance, counseling, and advocacy. Casa Ruby fights for justice and equality for transgender people and works to increase the resources available to transgender individuals. Casa Ruby works to unite the transgender community and help its clients overcome discrimination, harassment, and violence to succeed.

Casa Ruby was founded in June 2012, as a community center in D.C.'s Pleasant Plains neighborhood and a place where individuals of any heritage, socioeconomic background, or gender identity can receive on-site assistance. Casa Ruby wants to be the premier transgender resource and community center in Washington, D.C. and is focusing its efforts and expanding its services to effectively address the needs of the community.

**Conversations with clients, community organizations, and government officials highlight Casa Ruby's key strengths, including:**

- 1. An empathetic level of care for all clients**
- 2. Visibility as one of the strongest voices in the D.C. transgender community**
- 3. The ability to unite transgender community members within one organization**

## Casa Ruby's Management and Operations

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ruby Corado, the executive director of Casa Ruby, is a prominent advocate for Latino and LGBT rights in the D.C. metro area and a transwoman. Ruby Corado has more than a decade of experience advocating for transgender rights and facilitating treatment for HIV-positive individuals.

After emigrating from El Salvador, Ruby settled in the Dupont Circle neighborhood where she began welcoming LGBT Latinos into her home.<sup>13</sup> In 1995, Ruby became a volunteer at Whitman-Walker Health, an organization that provides medical and legal services to people with HIV/AIDS, and eventually became an employee.<sup>14</sup> Ruby became engaged in transgender activism after a friend of hers was murdered for being transgender.<sup>15</sup> She has been instrumental in improving the climate for transgender people in D.C. For example, Ruby worked with the D.C. Trans Coalition to improve the treatment of transgender inmates.<sup>16</sup> As a result of Ruby's advocacy, D.C. law now allows transgender inmates to be housed according to their gender identity.<sup>17</sup>

Ruby has been a constant force in the transgender and immigrant communities, and an important collaborator with other leaders in government and nonprofit organizations. D.C. Mayor Vincent

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Gray described Ruby as “extremely influential in many positive changes we’ve seen in the District.”<sup>18</sup>

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Casa Ruby’s board members come from a variety of backgrounds and have specific expertise in social services, fundraising, advocacy, and law.

Casa Ruby is served by dedicated volunteers who are committed to the transgender community.<sup>19</sup> Many volunteers are involved in the operational aspects of Casa Ruby, including:

- Community members who run a drop-in center,
- Employment counselors who provide job skills and placement assistance,
- Physicians who provide HIV testing,
- Psychologists who counsel clients,
- Attorney volunteers who offer immigration assistance,
- Attorney volunteers who assist with Casa Ruby’s organizational management,
- Grant writers who help obtain funding,
- Information technology experts who manage a client information database, and
- Media relations experts who publicize Casa Ruby functions and events.

Casa Ruby volunteers serve as liaisons to different segments of the larger LGBT community, such as the broader gay and lesbian communities. Many of Casa Ruby’s volunteers are bilingual, allowing the organization to serve as a welcoming community center for both Spanish and English speaking clients.

### **Populations Served and Services Currently Offered**

Casa Ruby offers a variety of services to the D.C. community. An informal survey of clients between August and October 2013 revealed the following characteristics:

- A significant number of clients are transgender individuals and gay men,
- A majority of clients are Latino or Black,
- Many clients speak Spanish as a primary language, and
- Many clients are homeless or living with family members or friends.

Currently, Casa Ruby works with numerous local government and non-profit agencies to provide the following programs and services for the transgender community:

#### SOCIAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- Drop-in center with hot food and clothing
- Computer access
- Resource and recreational center
- Referrals for legal counseling, especially criminal and immigration law
- Housing counseling, especially emergency and transitional housing
- Counseling regarding public benefits and financial issues
- Translation and notary public services
- Passport and legal documentation review and application

#### HEALTH PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

- Mental health information and referrals
- HIV and STD testing and counseling
- HIV prevention education for individuals and groups
- Cholesterol, glucose, blood pressure and BMI screenings and referrals for additional screenings

#### CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Job skills training, including medical screening and technician training
- Job placement referrals
- English as a Second Language classes
- Spanish language classes

### **Casa Ruby's Core Strength: The Community Center**

Leaders of local organizations recognize Casa Ruby as a safe space for transgender individuals. This strength is in part due to Ruby Corado's personal background as a transwoman and a community leader. To maximize this strength, Casa Ruby currently runs a daily drop-in center that provides individuals with hot meals, clothing, a place to meet people like themselves, and services, including HIV testing on a walk-in basis. The community center provides services by partnering with community groups, churches, and organizations such as D.C. Central Kitchen. Trained volunteers provide HIV testing and

***"Everyone who comes through these doors feels like they belong."***  
**—Kaprice W., client**

counseling. The center also provides a physical space for events and programs such as job training. Additionally, the center facilitates a sense of community by offering its facilities to outside transgender organizations and programs for activities. For example, the D.C. Trans Coalition meets monthly at Casa Ruby, as does a peer-run radical mental health support group aimed at queer and transgender individuals.

Currently, Casa Ruby is open to the entire neighborhood, regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation. Though this was not an intentional decision, it evolved from staff and volunteers independently encouraging locals to use the services offered at the drop-in center. Clients, partner organizations, and government officials expressed that Casa Ruby is a welcoming place for the general Latino population. While Casa Ruby's stated target population is not Latino-specific, Ruby Corado's continued presence in the Latino community and Casa Ruby's Spanish name help make Hispanic clients feel comfortable seeking services at the center. Most, if not all, of Casa Ruby's volunteers are bilingual, an important characteristic that enables Casa Ruby to meet the language and cultural needs of this clientele. As a result, Casa Ruby has created a climate in which people from a variety of cultures and experiences feel welcome.

#### **Why Casa Ruby?**

**There are several transgender organizations in the greater D.C. metropolitan area and advocates observed that these organizations can be divided by geography, race, and/or loyalties. Advocates expressed that transgender people need a space where they are welcome regardless of their background or organizational affiliation. Some leaders suggested a need for an organization that does not engage in the politics of the transgender community, but remains neutral and accessible to all.**

**Casa Ruby is the only community center in the D.C. metro area primarily dedicated to serving the transgender community. Casa Ruby has identified that it is important to target its services towards transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming people while ensuring that all clients recognize that they are entering a transgender-focused space at Casa Ruby. Advocates recognized Casa Ruby as a place that bridges divides within the community.**

**As a result, many community members see Casa Ruby as a place that can unite the transgender community and help fulfill the community's needs. The leader of one transgender organization said that one of the most important services Casa Ruby provides is its mere existence; transgender people are proud that the organization exists and that has a positive psychological effect. One government official said that the most critical direct service Casa Ruby offers is a sense of community for the transgender population.**

## IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF THE D.C. TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CASA RUBY'S ROLE

This section identifies the existing needs for D.C.'s transgender community: Health Promotion, Employment Assistance, Housing Assistance, Legal Assistance, Capacity Building, and Building a Better Police Relationship. The section then analyzes how these needs align with Casa Ruby's current work, and finally makes recommendations for how Casa Ruby can structure future programs to meet these needs going forward.

It is important for Casa Ruby to focus on sustainability so that it continues to function as a resource for transgender people. Casa Ruby should add or expand programs to address community needs where there are funding opportunities, resources, and organizational capacity to sustain these programs. As an organization centered around its community center, Casa Ruby is best positioned to offer direct programs to serve some needs and to offer resource guidance to meet other needs. In this way, Casa Ruby can maximize its strengths and have the most impact with available resources.

### **Direct Programs**

As a community center, Casa Ruby offers some direct programs. This section analyzes community needs and recommends focusing in-house services on health promotion and employment assistance.

#### HEALTH PROMOTION

##### **Identified Needs**

Transgender people have significant health care needs. These needs include access to: (1) transition-related care, (2) affordable health care, (3) transgender sensitive providers, (4) mental health care, including substance abuse, and (5) HIV services.

First, transgender individuals have specific needs related to transition such as counseling, hormone replacement therapy, and a variety of surgeries. According to the 2011 national transgender survey,<sup>20</sup> 85% of transgender people have either had hormone replacement therapy or hope to have it in the future.<sup>21</sup> The survey identified that at least 25% of transwomen, and 43% of transmen have undergone at least one transition-related surgery, while an additional 64% of transgender individuals have expressed a desire to have some transition-related surgery in the future.<sup>22</sup> In a 2013 survey of transgender Latina immigrants, 75% reported that female hormones were part of their mental health regimen.<sup>23</sup>

As procedures and hormone replacement therapies can be expensive, and are excluded from most insurance plans, low-income transgender people may turn to cheaper options. In the transgender Latina immigrant survey, 56% of participants reported injecting off-label substances into their body to enhance their physical appearance.<sup>24</sup> Often these "black market" alternatives prove to be harmful, and sometimes fatal, for users.<sup>25</sup>

Additionally, health providers may require mental health treatment for transgender people seeking hormone replacement therapy or transition-related surgery.<sup>26</sup> Under the World

Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care, hormone replacement therapy can be initiated by a referral from a mental health provider. The World Professional Association recommends medical providers require 1–2 letters from a qualified mental health professional depending on the type of surgery sought.<sup>27</sup>

Second, transgender people may struggle to access affordable health care. The lack of affordable health care is related to a lack of insurance. In the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment survey, 28% of transgender people are currently uninsured and 20% of transgender individuals reported being denied health care because they are transgender.<sup>28</sup> According to the transgender Latina immigrant survey, 65% of respondents did not have any kind of health care coverage.<sup>29</sup> These numbers are even more shocking when compared to the general population: only 8% are uninsured.<sup>30</sup>

Third, it may be difficult for transgender people to find medical care from culturally sensitive providers. According to the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment, 44% of people surveyed identified access to transgender-sensitive health care as a top priority.<sup>31</sup> The transgender Latina immigrant survey found that 56% of respondents felt discriminated against at a clinic or emergency room.<sup>32</sup> Further, the survey found that 46% of respondents found it difficult to find medical service providers who treated them with respect.<sup>33</sup> As a result of this discrimination, transgender individuals may be hesitant seeking help unless they know that the medical provider is accepting and trans-friendly.

Fourth, transgender individuals may have an increased need for mental health or substance abuse services. According to the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment, 65% of male and 55% of female transgender individuals have seriously considered suicide.<sup>34</sup> According to the transgender Latina immigrant survey, 75% of respondents have felt depressed in the past year.<sup>35</sup> Further, 72% of transgender individuals reported past or present alcohol abuse, 58% reported marijuana abuse, and 34% cocaine use.<sup>36</sup> Further, due to discrimination, violence, internalized transphobia, and stigma, transgender people may experience “minority stress,” chronic stress caused by stigmatization.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, transgender people need access to HIV testing and care. According to the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment, 1 in 3 transgender individuals that responded had tested positive for HIV.<sup>38</sup> This is particularly alarming in light of the fact that 2.4% of the general population of D.C. is HIV positive, and this comparatively lower rate for D.C.’s general population is considered indicative of an epidemic.<sup>39</sup> Thus, there is a need for transgender individuals to have access to HIV testing, and for follow-up services for HIV-positive and negative individuals.



**HIV-negative individuals expressed concerns that centers that provide HIV testing and provide services to transgender individuals are largely focused on individuals who are HIV-positive. When their negative test results were returned, these clients felt abandoned by and unwelcome in the organization and uncomfortable using other services that are not necessarily HIV specific.<sup>40</sup>**

### **Current Role**

Casa Ruby currently provides HIV testing to transgender individuals and the local community on a walk-in basis at its community center. These services are grounded in Ruby Corado's history of providing health services for the LGBT community, beginning with her work at the HIV/AIDS clinic at Whitman-Walker Health. Many of Casa Ruby's clients are drawn by word of mouth about the testing capabilities of the community center, where Casa Ruby also provides free condoms and other contraception to its transgender clients, and the broader community.

***"I came to Casa Ruby two years ago with a friend who is HIV positive. He was without insurance and I knew Casa Ruby was the best place for him to get tested and receive help. Today, all of his medical needs are being met because of Casa Ruby's support."***  
**—Leonidas T., client**

Further, Casa Ruby provides group counseling, led by a volunteer psychologist, to its clients for substance abuse and mental health. Casa Ruby also serves as a meeting space for D.C. Radical Mental Health, a mental health peer support group aimed at transgender and queer individuals.

### **Role Recommendations**

Because it provides a uniquely transgender-focused space, Casa Ruby should continue the basic health care services that it currently offers, including its HIV testing, HIV counseling, and free contraception programs. In addition, Casa Ruby should expand its role in providing meeting space for existing transgender-friendly groups that address HIV issues, mental health concerns, substance abuse, and transition-related concerns. For example, Casa Ruby is a natural meeting space for transgender individuals to hold Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings to address addiction rates in the community. As a place already identified as transgender-friendly, people in search of these types of services might feel more comfortable accessing them at Casa Ruby.

Casa Ruby should identify other organizations that provide culturally sensitive medical care. Casa Ruby can do this by interviewing clients to learn about their experiences with different service providers, reaching out to service providers to learn whether they have experience working with transgender patients, and working with other organizations such as Whitman-Walker to identify service providers who have demonstrated transgender competency. Casa Ruby should compile this information into a database of organizations that provide transgender-related care and general health care that is sensitive to the needs of transgender people.

Further, Casa Ruby can identify mental health providers specifically trained to help transgender people determine whether medical transition is desirable. Casa Ruby can also flag mental health providers that advise transgender reparative therapy to ensure clients are not inadvertently referred to such organizations. Finally, Casa Ruby should note which organizations are affordable, or offer free services, and direct clients towards low-cost healthcare options. As a potential source of revenue for Casa Ruby, providers could apply to be listed in Casa Ruby's database.

## EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

### **Identified Needs**

Transgender people experience high rates of unemployment. According to the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment, only 50% of transgender individuals are currently employed, and 34% work in underground economies.<sup>41</sup> A national transgender discrimination survey found that transgender people experience more than two times the rate of unemployment of the general population.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, transgender people experience discriminatory hiring and firing practices.

The national survey identified that 26% of survey respondents reported losing their jobs because they were transgender or gender nonconforming.<sup>43</sup> Of the transgender Latina immigrant survey respondents, 57% said it was "very difficult" to access secure and well-paid employment.<sup>44</sup> Thirty-three percent of the survey respondents reported enduring harassment or termination as a result of their race, gender identity, or immigration status.<sup>45</sup>

As a result of employment discrimination, 16% of respondents in the national transgender discrimination survey reported being driven to work in underground economies, in positions such as sex workers or drug dealers.<sup>46</sup> In fact, 11% of respondents reported that they had engaged in sex work for income, compared to an estimated 1% of the general population.<sup>47</sup> The D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment found that 70% of respondents were current or former workers in the underground economy.<sup>48</sup>

Many of the issues facing the transgender community, including poverty, homelessness, incarceration, and health problems are correlated with unemployment. The national survey found that respondents who had lost their jobs due to transphobic discrimination were six times more likely to live in extreme poverty (defined as a household income of \$10,000/year or less) than the general United States population.<sup>49</sup> Respondents who lost a job due to transphobic bias were four times more likely to be homeless, 85% more likely to become incarcerated, and seven times more likely to be HIV positive than the general population, (two times more likely than the transgender respondents who had not lost a job due to bias).<sup>50</sup>

The executive director of a transgender organization emphasized the interconnectedness of the issues facing transgender people: because they are discriminated against, transgender people have difficulty finding employment, and because they have difficulty finding employment, transgender people lack stable housing. A lawyer who works with LGBT populations believes that help locating a job with non-hostile employers and navigating the hiring process is one of the most

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pressing unmet needs of the D.C. transgender population. Thirty percent of D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment respondents identified job-training programs, and 35% identified employment discrimination, as one of the primary needs facing the community.<sup>51</sup>

**One LGBT advocate identified the current lack of resources for transgender people to better their lives and emphasized the importance of work training programs in getting transgender people off of the streets and out of underground economies.**

### **Current Role**

Casa Ruby currently provides employment assistance, including preparing resumes and cover letters, and helps clients secure placements in full-time permanent positions. Casa Ruby recruits and supports transgender people for the Project Empowerment program, an employment program offered by the D.C. government.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, Casa Ruby offers employment-focused events. For example, in August 2013, Casa Ruby hosted a Washington Marriott Marquis Hotel Jobs Training Program registration and information session for unemployed LGBT people. The training program was designed to prepare clients for jobs at the new Marriot Marquis Hotel that will be opening in D.C. in 2014, and at least twenty-five Casa Ruby clients completed applications through the program.

### **Role Recommendations**

Casa Ruby is uniquely positioned to provide employment assistance. Casa Ruby already provides employment services for transgender clients, conducts employment training and recruitment programs, and is connected with the job placement initiatives offered by the D.C. By focusing on employment services, Casa Ruby can address an important and pressing need within the transgender community.

To better address the employment needs of the transgender community, Casa Ruby should focus on direct services related to job skills and training. Casa Ruby can help clients identify available positions for which they are qualified and guide them through the application process by assisting with resume, application, and interview preparation. Casa Ruby can also host job search workshops. For example, there could be a series of workshops that teach clients how to network, use different databases to search for jobs, create a resume, dress for an interview, present themselves in an interview, etc. Additionally, there could be drop-in hours at the community center during which a staff member would provide individualized career counseling and assistance with job applications and resumes. This program would be most successful with at least one full-time staff member with career counseling experience.

Casa Ruby can also adapt the model used by the Transgender Employment Program (TEEI) at the San Francisco Center.<sup>53</sup> TEEI conducts trainings to increase the number of transgender-friendly employers. Trainings may include basic trans-competency, an overview of employment needs unique to the transgender community such as transition-inclusive health insurance, and effective methods of recruiting transgender employees. One model for LGBT competency training is the

Resource Center in Dallas.<sup>54</sup> The Resource Center provides trainings to a variety of audiences, including schools, businesses and government.<sup>55</sup> They “use an integrative model that is both didactic and experiential through discussion, role-play, group exercise and group processing in a variety of settings.”<sup>56</sup> The Resource Center addresses client needs by supplementing their three full-time training staff with experts in different fields such as human resources.<sup>57</sup> Casa Ruby could offer trainings like these as part of outreach efforts, or as a potential source of revenue.

Finally, Casa Ruby can expand its existing employment services by maintaining a database of transgender-friendly employers. TEEI maintains a similar program for LGBT employees where employers apply to be listed in the database and are charged a fee for the listing after the first six months. Casa Ruby would compile this database using information from its current employment programs and could serve a particular need by identifying small employers through networking and outreach.

### **Sex Worker Programs**

**Forty-one percent of the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment respondents were sex workers. Sixty-three percent of those within the female spectrum reported having engaged in sex work.<sup>58</sup> The D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment found that 42% of current and former sex workers engaged in sex work because they believed it was their only option for income. Further, in the transgender Latina immigrant survey, 34% of respondents worked in the sex industry, some as a way to supplement the income made at low paying jobs.<sup>59</sup>**

**D.C. area leaders identified the potential for Casa Ruby to help sex workers obtain jobs outside of sex work. Currently, there are no such programs in D.C. aimed at transgender sex workers. HIPS offers programs for sex workers, but they are not aimed exclusively at transgender individuals and are focused on harm reduction, rather than assisting sex workers with finding other means of employment.<sup>60</sup>**

**Casa Ruby can establish a program for sex workers, potentially after a more extensive employment services program is established. Casa Ruby could engage in a range of services, from outreach to skills training to job search assistance to a diversion program in collaboration with the D.C. courts. While a diversion program is an ambitious possibility, it would maximize Casa Ruby’s role in the community by creating partnerships with the Metropolitan Police Department and the D.C. courts to have individuals arrested or at risk referred to Casa Ruby. This would be a large project, and would require extensive research into the requirements of an ongoing collaboration with the D.C. courts.**

## Resource Guidance

Local leaders and government officials expressed that transgender people need help navigating the various social service, government, and legal systems available to them. Many transgender people are eligible for services such as affordable health care or cash assistance, but may not possess the knowledge or experience to access such services. Discrimination against transgender people presents a further barrier to accessing services. While Casa Ruby can address some needs directly, as discussed above, it should guide clients to existing resources for other needs. This section identifies those needs that are best suited for Casa Ruby's resource guidance services.

As a preliminary matter, Casa Ruby currently offers clients referrals to outside service providers. These referrals are based on the cultural competency, accessibility, and effectiveness of such providers, gathered from Ruby Corado's rich personal experience and institutional knowledge. As Casa Ruby increases the number of clients it serves and the services those clients access, Casa Ruby should create a more formalized tracking and case management system for this type of resource guidance. By compiling and maintaining a database of transgender-friendly organizations, Casa Ruby can assist transgender people in locating and navigating culturally competent services. This could involve confidential electronic data management as well as the involvement of a trained case manager or social worker.

Although such a system would require funding for increased infrastructure and staffing, it would allow Casa Ruby to better evaluate service providers, collect more robust data to inform future efforts, and help meet clients' needs consistently and comprehensively. This would increase both Casa Ruby's effective use of available resources and its ability to offer its clients a high standard of service and care. Finally, in addition to guiding clients to resources, Casa Ruby can build on its cultural competency training experience to work with direct service providers and government agencies to ensure that these organizations provide transgender-friendly services.

### **Mentorship Program**

**"Casa Ruby has had a positive impact on my life. I know better than anyone that you need community and support to make any changes in life. I want to be a mentor to share my experience and everything that I have learned, and help another individual succeed."**

**—Kaprice W., client**

**Transgender people come to Casa Ruby and find a mentor in Ruby Corado who provides moral support and helps them succeed. As Casa Ruby continues to grow, it can replicate this success and supplement its direct programs and resource guidance by providing clients with mentors. Casa Ruby could recruit successful former clients to be mentors to newer members of the transgender community. Mentors can help their mentees identify services and navigate the systems necessary for accessing those services.**

## HOUSING ASSISTANCE

### **Identified Needs**

Transgender people have difficulty securing housing at all levels, from emergency shelters to long-term homes. At the time of the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment, 25% of transgender people in D.C. were homeless and 40% of respondents reported having been homeless at some point.<sup>61</sup> The national transgender discrimination survey found that 19% of transgender people have experienced homelessness as a result of either discrimination or family rejection based on their transgender status.<sup>62</sup> This is more than two times higher than the lifetime rate of homelessness for the general population.<sup>63</sup> Even those who were not homeless reported having difficulty securing housing.<sup>64</sup> Twenty-eight percent reported being denied a home or apartment as a result of their transgender status, while 20% were evicted because they were transgender.<sup>65</sup> Of respondents from the transgender Latina immigrant survey, 41% said it was “very difficult” to access safe and affordable housing.<sup>66</sup>

Respondents who identified themselves as transgender at a Washington, D.C. shelter were asked about their experiences. Of those surveyed, 54% were harassed, 35% were physically assaulted, and 28% were sexually assaulted by shelter staff or residents.<sup>67</sup> Forty-nine percent left the shelters because they felt unsafe.<sup>68</sup> Transgender people reported being forced to live as the wrong gender, 36% did so to feel safe and 34% did so as a requirement to stay at the shelter.<sup>69</sup> Not only did transgender people report unsafe conditions, they reported being denied shelter entirely. Twenty-eight percent were denied access to shelters, while 22% were thrown out of shelters.<sup>70</sup> The D.C. Human Rights Act prohibits shelters from denying accommodations on the basis of transgender-status and requires shelters to house transgender clients in the facilities that match their gender identity.<sup>71</sup> However, third party stakeholders identified that not all shelters are fully educated on their legal duties and have not been trained in transgender cultural competence.

### **Current Role**

Currently Casa Ruby works to help clients with housing on an as-needed basis. If an individual comes into the community center in distress and in need of housing, Casa Ruby works to find a shelter or place to stay that night, addressing the immediate need. Casa Ruby specifically helps transgender clients find housing at the Wanda Alston House, a housing program for homeless LGBT youth.

### **Role Recommendations**

Casa Ruby could address the problem of access to housing and housing discrimination in several ways. First, as discussed above, Casa Ruby can build upon its existing informal referral program to guide clients to appropriate resources such as transgender-sensitive housing options through a more structured comprehensive resource guidance program, as discussed above.

Second, Casa Ruby could build awareness among transgender people of their rights regarding shelters and housing discrimination. Casa Ruby could conduct Know Your Rights trainings independently or in partnership with the D.C. Trans Coalition, an organization that already conducts trainings on a variety of issues. Casa Ruby could also create brochures, posters, or

advertisements explaining transgender rights as they relate to housing. These materials could be made available at Casa Ruby, other organizations frequented by transgender clients, and even at the shelters.

Third, Casa Ruby can train shelters in transgender cultural competency. This training could complement the trainings discussed above for employers and medical service providers. Each of these trainings would address common issues, such as basic transgender knowledge and use of bathrooms and other sex-segregated facilities. Casa Ruby could also include experts in the trainings, such as attorneys who are familiar with the non-discrimination laws protecting transgender people in housing.

## LEGAL ASSISTANCE

### Identified Needs

Many community members expressed that transgender people have difficulty accessing legal services, such as immigration and criminal defense. While transgender individuals can access most legal services in D.C., attorneys who specialize in representing transgender clients have expressed that there are not enough culturally competent transgender attorneys in most areas. Currently, TransLaw is the only legal services organization in D.C. that focuses exclusively on serving the transgender population, but it only provides name and gender change assistance.

Community members expressed that this was a particular concern in the criminal context, where transgender people lack sufficient access to culturally competent defense attorneys. This can be especially problematic for those facing incarceration since transgender inmates experience mistreatment.

### Current Role

Casa Ruby currently helps clients find legal services on an as-needed basis. If a client of Casa Ruby has legal needs, such as immigration, housing, or criminal law problems, Casa Ruby works to find a local lawyer to help the client. As part of these efforts, Casa Ruby has referred clients to local legal services providers and law school clinics.

### Role Recommendations

TransLaw, an organization of D.C. lawyers that currently provides attorneys with cultural competency training, has agreed to partner with Casa Ruby to provide training to legal services providers. Building upon feedback from Casa Ruby's clients' experiences, TransLaw could identify legal service providers that would benefit from training on transgender issues. TransLaw would then offer the legal service provider free training on legal issues specific to the transgender community and best practices for working with transgender clients. In this way, Casa Ruby would

***"I came to Casa Ruby after arriving from Texas. I was frightened and scared because I had a deportation hearing, and had no money for a lawyer. Upon arriving at Casa Ruby, I immediately felt secure and knew that the people there would get me the help I need. Today, I have my asylum, am working as a beautician, and feel free. Because of Casa Ruby, I am not afraid anymore."***

**—Vianna F., client**

serve as a vital link in ensuring the increased cultural competency of legal service providers for transgender clients in D.C.

## **Capacity Building**

Casa Ruby is a recognized voice in the D.C. transgender community because of its unique role as a transgender-focused space that provides direct services and resource guidance to the community. As part of this role, Casa Ruby necessarily builds the capacity of outside organizations and government agencies to better address the needs of transgender individuals. In this way, Casa Ruby combines individual advocacy with community capacity building that creates broader change. As a result, Casa Ruby is part of the political landscape and should consider preserving and strengthening its relationships with other organizations and institutions wherever possible. Two ways that Casa Ruby can build capacity are by continuing to act as a voice for the transgender community and by conducting transgender competency trainings. A specific issue that Casa Ruby can address is improving the relationship between members of the transgender community and the police.

### VOICE FOR THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

#### **Identified Needs**

In D.C., the transgender community is a marginalized group. Community members and leaders regularly mentioned the discrimination experienced by the transgender community, even within the LGBT community. Such discrimination presents barriers for transgender people to access housing and employment, as well as culturally competent health care and legal services.

Although there are several organizations representing the transgender community in national politics<sup>72</sup> and D.C. politics,<sup>73</sup> there are still local issues impacting the community that go unaddressed. D.C. government officials themselves emphasized the importance of having transgender individuals represented in discussions that affect the population at large. For instance, while truancy among school children is an issue that affects the entire population, this issue impacts the transgender population in unique ways since transgender youth are disproportionately victimized in schools, which affects overall absenteeism. The 2011 National School Climate Survey found that students who were victimized as a result of their gender expression were about three times more likely to have missed school in the past month than their non-victimized peers.<sup>74</sup> In this way, it is important to have the transgender population represented during discussions of broader problems for both the transgender community and the community at large.

Like all communities, the transgender community is divided when it comes to certain issues. This can present a barrier to change when a necessary level of agreement and unity cannot be reached. For example, while some in the transgender community support sex worker diversion programs, there are others who would prefer to focus energy and resources on campaigning for legalization of sex work.<sup>75</sup> As a result, there is a risk that some people within the community will view a diversion program as further stigmatizing sex workers. There also is division related to the scope and speed of progress. For example, when Maryland first began trying to pass a gender identity

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non-discrimination bill, there was division in the transgender community regarding the inclusion of public accommodations.<sup>76</sup> Some supporters wanted to push the bill forward without a provision for public accommodations to ensure provisions for employment and housing, while others were afraid that if the bill passed without public accommodations, adding public accommodations in the future would be extremely challenging.

### **Current Role**

Casa Ruby currently engages in capacity building to improve local systems and programs for the transgender community. This capacity building begins with Casa Ruby's advocacy on behalf of individuals. For example, when a client is encountering barriers with government offices or community organizations, Casa Ruby and Ruby Corado's advocacy for the client can translate into systemic change in that government office or community organization. As a result, Casa Ruby has become an important voice for the transgender community in creating community change.

### **Role Recommendations**

Casa Ruby's inherent role as a voice for the transgender community means that Casa Ruby should be intentional in playing this role. There are three alternative approaches that Casa Ruby could use to focus on capacity building.

First, Casa Ruby could continue to engage in its current programs while increasing its presence as transgender voice. The benefit of this approach is that it allows Casa Ruby to have a voice in any policy decision affecting the transgender community of D.C. This approach allows Casa Ruby to participate as much as possible in the message presented to policymakers. However, the downside of this approach is the potential for Casa Ruby's increased public presence to alienate government officials from whom the organization desires grant money or other support. Similarly, this approach makes Casa Ruby's public stance more visible and could alienate segments of the transgender community if Casa Ruby is involved in more controversial issues. Finally, this option runs the risk of diverting Casa Ruby's resources — both time and energy — from Casa Ruby's complementary goals of expanding its direct and resource guidance programs.

Second, Casa Ruby could focus on mentoring other individuals to serve as voices of the D.C. transgender community, with the goal of conserving Casa Ruby resources. This approach has the benefit of strengthening multiple transgender voices, while allowing Casa Ruby to maintain a central role. It also allows Casa Ruby to focus its resources on expanding its direct and resource guidance programs. However, one downside of this approach is that it would require Casa Ruby and Ruby Corado to invest the time to mentor and train others, and could possibly diminish Casa Ruby's own presence as a distinct voice in the long term. Additionally, this option might not be sustainable if other individuals are unable to sufficiently establish themselves as voices for the transgender community.

Third, Casa Ruby could partner with other organizations such as the D.C. Trans Coalition to build capacity by strengthening individual voices in the transgender community. Similar to the second approach, Casa Ruby could focus on building other transgender advocates, which allows Casa Ruby to influence the growth and direction of transgender advocacy while freeing Casa Ruby to focus its own resources on strengthening its direct and resource guidance programs. One potential

downside to this approach, especially in the short term, is that policymakers who respect Ruby Corado personally might be less aware of Casa Ruby's behind-the-scenes role and therefore less likely to take action in response to these new voices.

**Capacity Building Through Cultural Competency Training**

**Many third-party stakeholders expressed the belief that Casa Ruby's efforts are best spent training individuals and organizations in transgender competency. As discussed in the context of health, employment, housing, and legal services, above, Casa Ruby's experience conducting cultural competency training puts it in a prime position to effect change simply through trainings.**

**Casa Ruby should provide trainings to help individuals, organizations, and government agencies navigate conflict resolution, policy development, client sensitivity, and employee sensitivity based on gender identity and or gender expression. These trainings for health care providers, legal services providers, housing providers, government agencies, the police, and employers can create increased capacity and positive change for the transgender community in D.C.**

**BUILDING A BETTER POLICE RELATIONSHIP**

One area where Casa Ruby can make a unique contribution to capacity building and change for the transgender community is the relationship between the transgender community and the Metropolitan Police Department of D.C. (MPD).

**Identified Needs**

Transgender people are disproportionately victimized by hate crimes and police harassment. According to the transgender Latina immigrant survey, 69% of respondents knew of a transgender individual who was murdered for his or her gender identity, 61% had been a victim of sexual abuse, 78% had experienced random acts of violence such as being attacked on the street or insulted, and 34% reported being robbed because they were transgender.<sup>77</sup> According to officials within MPD, this disparity is largely the result of the discrimination faced by the community, as well as transgender D.C. residents' concentration in high crime neighborhoods. Additionally, MPD representatives suggested that, because of their transgender identity or appearance, transgender people in D.C. who live in high crime areas are more likely to be targets. Despite the high level of crime and harassment directed at the transgender community, the transgender Latina immigrant survey found that 80% of those who suffered sexual violence, and 77% of those who suffered other forms of violence, did not report it to the police.<sup>78</sup> This may be because transgender individuals tend to be less comfortable getting the police involved when they are victims of crime. Transgender people need encouragement and assistance reporting crimes, particularly those who are low-income, of color, undocumented, or victims of trauma.

In addition, domestic violence is a significant problem within the transgender community.<sup>79</sup> One transgender advocate expressed concern that when police respond to domestic violence calls in which one party is transgender, the transgender person is always arrested regardless of whether they were the aggressor. Representatives of the MPD acknowledged the perception that transgender victims of domestic violence are likely to be arrested. They attributed this perception to D.C.'s mandatory arrest requirement for reports of domestic violence and the corresponding tendency to arrest both parties. MPD representatives identified this as an area that would benefit from more officer training.

Arrests are particularly problematic for transgender individuals as they are exposed to mistreatment once they enter the criminal justice system. Once in jail or prison, 54% of the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment respondents report being housed with the wrong gender.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, 33% were denied access to hormones and 35% were denied access to gender appropriate clothing.<sup>81</sup> Transgender individuals reported being victimized, either by other inmates, officers or staff, while incarcerated. Fifty-two percent of respondents were harassed, 33% were physically assaulted, and 31% were sexually assaulted by other inmates.<sup>82</sup> Thirty-three percent were harassed, 11% were physically assaulted, and 11% were sexually assaulted by officers or staff.<sup>83</sup>

Currently, relations between the transgender community and the police are strained because many transgender people feel targeted by the police. The transgender Latina immigrant report states that 45% of participants felt no support from local authorities.<sup>84</sup> The D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment found that 58% of respondents had interacted with the police.<sup>85</sup> Of those, 31% reported being harassed by the police, while 16% and 6% respectively reported being physically and sexually assaulted by the police.<sup>86</sup> Further, 33% were treated with disrespect and 40% were referred to by the wrong name or pronouns.<sup>87</sup> Forty-six percent of individuals reported that the police treated them with respect and 23% were referred to using the correct name and pronouns.<sup>88</sup> Representatives of the MPD said they believe tension between the transgender community and the police largely result from misunderstandings. Since certain types of sex work are criminalized within D.C., officials within the MPD have expressed concern that transgender people can interpret police enforcement of such restrictions as being particularly motivated by transphobic bias. However, MPD officials acknowledged that they could do better and expressed a desire to improve relations.

The transgender community's lack of trust in the police, whether based on perception, reality, or both, decreases the safety of the community as they do not feel like they have access to police assistance. The national transgender discrimination survey found that 46% of transgender people feel uncomfortable seeking assistance from police.<sup>89</sup> MPD expressed concerns that transgender victims will sometimes avoid going to the police for help because they fear the police will view them as prostitutes and that this problem is further compounded when the victim is also undocumented. Though an MPD official expressed that the transgender community's feeling of discrimination stems from perception more than reality, she expressed a desire for this perception to change.

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### **Current Role**

Representatives of the MPD expressed that they view Ruby Corado as an important resource on transgender issues, placing Casa Ruby in a unique position to build upon this positive relationship with the MPD.

### **Role Recommendations**

Building upon Ruby Corado's personal relationships with MPD leadership, Casa Ruby can help mediate and heal the relationship between the transgender community and the MPD. Casa Ruby could help train officers on interacting with the transgender community. In addition, Casa Ruby can facilitate town halls or similar spaces for parties to air concerns and work together to develop a positive relationship.

Sex worker programs, including a future diversion program, could also aid in improving transgender-police relations. The police identified sex work as an issue in the transgender community, both because it is illegal and often the basis of negative interactions that are perceived as police harassment. A diversion program at Casa Ruby could help move transgender people out of sex work and improve the perception of sex workers by law enforcement officials. Casa Ruby could also participate in broader community efforts to decriminalize certain types of sex work in D.C. to reduce the stigma associated with transgender sex work. Further, Casa Ruby could partner with the MPD to provide services for transgender youth, potentially as part of a diversion program, to address the issue of LGBT youth participating in gang violence.<sup>90</sup>

## **CASA RUBY'S NEXT STEPS**

Moving forward, Casa Ruby will benefit from prioritizing these recommendations and developing a timeline for implementation. Each of these initiatives requires increased resources to succeed. Government funders and private donors can play a critical role in helping to ensure Casa Ruby's sustained presence and support for the transgender community in the District of Columbia.

Casa Ruby is poised to expand and focus its work in the D.C. transgender community. By leveraging its core strengths to address some of the greatest unmet needs in the D.C. transgender community, Casa Ruby can maximize the services it offers its clients while maintaining its role as a welcoming, safe space.

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Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> “On the Team” is a report that was prepared by the National Center for Lesbian Rights, The Women’s Sports Foundation, and It Takes a Team! on equal inclusion of transgender student athletes. The definitions used are standard definitions used in other reports on transgender issues. DR. PAT GRIFFIN AND HELEN A. CARROLL, ON THE TEAM: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENT ATHLETES 27 (2012) (adapted from Gender Spectrum, *A Word About Words* available at

[http://www.genderspectrum.org/images/stories/Resources/Family/A\\_Word\\_About\\_Words.pdf](http://www.genderspectrum.org/images/stories/Resources/Family/A_Word_About_Words.pdf)), available at <http://www.nclrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/TransgenderStudentAthleteReport.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY, TEACHING TRANSGENDER 15 (2009), available at [http://transequality.org/Resources/NCTE\\_Teaching\\_Transgender.pdf](http://transequality.org/Resources/NCTE_Teaching_Transgender.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> ON THE TEAM: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENT ATHLETES at 27.

<sup>9</sup> TEACHING TRANSGENDER at 16.

<sup>10</sup> In 2012, the D.C. Trans Coalition launched the D.C. Trans Community Needs Assessment Survey, the first survey of the experiences of transgender people in D.C. D.C. TRANS COALITION, THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT 6 (2013).

<sup>11</sup> The National Transgender Discrimination Survey was conducted by a joint task force formed by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to address the lack of data on discrimination experienced by transgender people. It is “the most extensive survey of transgender discrimination ever undertaken” and incorporates responses from over 7,500 transgender people in the United States. JAIME M. GRANT, LISA A. MOTTET, JUSTIN TANIS, JACK HARRISON, JODY L. HERMAN, AND MARA KEISLING, INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY (2011) available at

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[http://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS\\_Report.pdf](http://endtransdiscrimination.org/PDFs/NTDS_Report.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> TransVisible is a survey of 101 transgender Latina immigrants. THE TRANSLATIN@ COALITION, TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY (2013).

<sup>13</sup> Sandra Lilley, *Transgender Latina Creates Safe Haven for Multicultural LGBT Community*, NBC Latino, May 30, 2013, available at <http://nbc-latino.com/2013/05/30/transgender-latina-creates-safe-haven-for-multicultural-lgbt-community/>.

<sup>14</sup> Jenny Rogers, *Ruby Can’t Fail: How Ruby Corado Became One of D.C.’s Most Important Trans Activists*, Washington City Paper, June 5, 2013, available at <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/citydesk/2013/06/05/ruby-cant-fail-how-ruby-corado-became-one-of-d-c-s-most-important-trans-activists/>.

<sup>15</sup> *Transgender Latina Creates Safe Haven for Multicultural LGBT Community*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ruby Can’t Fail: How Ruby Corado Became One of D.C.’s Most Important Trans Activists*.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> The Community Justice Project Interviews of Casa Ruby volunteers, Fall 2013 (notes on file with authors).

<sup>20</sup> INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY at 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 78.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 79.

<sup>23</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 24.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* at 25.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> WORLD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TRANSGENDER HEALTH, STANDARDS OF CARE FOR THE HEALTH OF TRANSSEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE 26 (2012).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at 27.

<sup>28</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 5.

<sup>29</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 22.

<sup>30</sup> The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *Health Insurance Coverage of the Total Population*, <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/total-population/> (last accessed Dec. 5, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 23.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>34</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 6.

<sup>35</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 26.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE, THE HEALTH OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING 20–21 (2011).

<sup>38</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 5.

<sup>39</sup> DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HIV/AIDS, HEPATITIS, STD, AND TB ADMINISTRATION (HAHSTA), ANNUAL EPIDEMIOLOGY & SURVEILLANCE REPORT 8 (2012).

<sup>40</sup> The Community Justice Project Interviews of Casa Ruby clients, Fall 2013 (notes on file with authors).

<sup>41</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 6.

<sup>42</sup> INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY at 51.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 53.

<sup>44</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* at 19.

<sup>46</sup> INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY at 64.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.* at 65.

<sup>48</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 2.

<sup>49</sup> INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY at 66.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 1.

<sup>52</sup> The District of Columbia, Department of Employment Services, *Project Empowerment Program*, <http://does.dc.gov/service/project-empowerment-program> (last accessed Dec. 2, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> The SF LGBT Center, *Transgender Employment Program (TEEI)*, <http://www.sfcenter.org/resources/transgender->

[economic-empowerment-initiative-0](http://www.sfcenter.org/resources/transgender-economic-empowerment-initiative-0) (last accessed Nov. 29, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Resource Center Dallas, *Cultural Competency Training*, <http://www.rcdallas.org/education-advocacy/cultural-competency-training> (last accessed Nov. 29, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> Other underground jobs included babysitting, beauty services without a license, day labor, drug sales, and busking. THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 2.

<sup>59</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 21.

<sup>60</sup> HIPS works to assist female, male and transgender individuals engaging in sex work in Washington, DC lead healthy lives. HIPS uses a harm reduction model to address the impact that violence and drug use have on the lives of individuals engaging in sex work. HIPS does not try to persuade people away from this type of work. HIPS, <http://hips.org/> (last accessed December 3, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 4.

<sup>62</sup> INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY at 112.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

<sup>64</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 4.

<sup>67</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 4.

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

<sup>71</sup> D.C. MUN. REGS. tit. 4 §§801.1, 802.1 (2006).

<sup>72</sup> The National Center for Transgender Equality and Trans People of Color Coalition advocate for policy change to benefit transgender people, while the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund focuses on impact litigation designed to remove barriers facing the community. Additionally, the Gay and Lesbian Task Force houses a Trans Civil Rights Project which focuses on policy advocacy for the transgender community, while the National

Center for Lesbian Rights focuses heavily on transgender issues, both through litigation and advocacy.

<sup>73</sup> The D.C. Trans Coalition (DCTC) has played a large role in advocating for the transgender community. For example, DCTC was integral in getting the D.C. Human Rights Act amended to include a chapter on gender identity and gender expression. Additionally, DCTC worked with MPD to gain protections for transgender people during their interactions with the police, which were formalized in the General Order on Handling Interactions with Transgender Individuals. Further, there are several advocacy organizations in the DMV area that focus on transgender issues such as Gender Rights Maryland and Gender Empowerment Maryland, but these organizations are less focused on D.C. transgender issues.

<sup>74</sup> JOSEPH G. KOSCIW, EMILY A. GREYTAK, MARK J. BARTKIEWICZ, MADELYN J. BOESEN, AND NEAL A. PALMER, *THE 2011 NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY: THE EXPERIENCES OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH IN OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS* 40–41 (2011).

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g. Amanda Hess, *D.C. LGBT Activists Push to Legalize Prostitution*, *Washington City Paper*, June 17, 2010, available at <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/sexist/2010/06/17/dc-lgbt-activists-push-to-legalize-prostitution/>.

<sup>76</sup> Daniel Villarreal, *Why are Maryland's Trans Activists Celebrating the Death of the Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Bill?*, *Queerty*, April 1, 2011, available at <http://www.queerty.com/why-are-marylands-trans-activists-celebrating-the-death-of-the-gender-identity-anti-discrimination-bill-20110401/>.

<sup>77</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 29–30.

<sup>78</sup> *Id.* at 31.

<sup>79</sup> For example, 19% of respondents to the national survey reported experiencing domestic violence by a family member. INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY at 89.

<sup>80</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 8.

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*

<sup>82</sup> *Id.*

<sup>83</sup> *Id.*

<sup>84</sup> TRANSVISIBLE: TRANSGENDER LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. SOCIETY at 4.

<sup>85</sup> THE 2011–2012 WASHINGTON, D.C. TRANS COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT at 7.

<sup>86</sup> *Id.*

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*

<sup>89</sup> INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY at 162.

<sup>90</sup> Courtland Milloy, *Gay black youths go from attacked to attackers*, *Washington Post*, September 27, 2011, available at [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-09-27/local/35274245\\_1\\_gay-youths-lesbian-communities-sexual-identity/](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-09-27/local/35274245_1_gay-youths-lesbian-communities-sexual-identity/).





APPENDIX  
ONE-PAGE SUMMARIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Casa Ruby is a multicultural community center and safe space serving transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming individuals in Washington, D.C. Casa Ruby's mission is to create success stories, particularly within transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming communities of color. Its vision is a world where transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming people pursue their dreams without fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence.

As Casa Ruby grows, it is looking to focus its efforts and expand its services to provide the most benefit to the transgender community. To guide that effort, Casa Ruby asked The Community Justice Project at Georgetown University Law Center to produce a report that identifies the needs of the transgender community in Washington, D.C. and the actions Casa Ruby can take to address these needs.

The report identifies the following key needs facing the D.C. transgender community:

- Access to affordable and culturally competent health care,
- Assistance obtaining employment and getting out of underground economies,
- Assistance overcoming discrimination in housing, medical and legal services, and employment,
- Help navigating available resources to access legal, medical, and housing services,
- Access to transgender-friendly and competent service providers, government officials, businesses, and employers, and
- Increased personal safety and an improved relationship with the police.

The report recommends that Casa Ruby address these needs by focusing on strategic priorities including:

- Continuing to provide HIV testing and free contraception and serve as a meeting space for transgender support groups,
- Creating an employment services program to assist clients with the job application process and help clients develop job search skills,
- Identifying and compiling information on transgender-friendly legal service providers, health care providers, and employers,
- Engaging in resource guidance by connecting clients to transgender-friendly service providers, creating a mentorship program, and developing a case management system,
- Facilitating training sessions on transgender cultural competency for service providers, government officials, businesses, and employers, and
- Working with the Metropolitan Police Department to improve the relationship between the police and the transgender community.

### THE NEED

Transgender people have significant and unique health care needs. Transgender people who are transitioning may need counseling, hormone replacement therapy and a variety of surgeries. It is important that health care providers are culturally sensitive because transgender individuals often experience discrimination and may be hesitant to seek medical attention for fear that the medical provider will not be transgender-friendly.

Transgender individuals have an increased need for mental health care and substance abuse counseling, as there are higher rates of addiction in the transgender community than in the general population. Transgender individuals also experience significantly higher rates of HIV/AIDS, and therefore need access to HIV testing and follow-up care. As many transgender individuals are low-income, these health care services must be affordable.

### CASA RUBY'S CURRENT ROLE

Casa Ruby currently provides HIV testing and contraception to transgender individuals and the local community on a walk-in basis at its community center. A psychologist who volunteers at the center leads substance abuse and group counseling sessions. Casa Ruby also serves as a meeting space for a mental health peer support group for transgender individuals.

### CASA RUBY'S INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THIS STRATEGIC PRIORITY

- Continue to provide HIV testing, contraception, counseling, and meeting space for existing transgender-friendly groups that address HIV issues, mental health, substance abuse, and transition-related concerns, such as Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous.
- Identify culturally competent health care providers through outreach, interviews with clients about their experiences with different service providers, and partnerships with other organizations such as Whitman-Walker.
- Identify organizations that are affordable or offer free services.
- Create a database of culturally sensitive and affordable providers, which in the future could become a source of revenue if organizations apply to be listed in the database.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



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- Working with the Metropolitan Police Department to improve the relationship between the police and the transgender community.

### THE NEED

Transgender people experience high rates of unemployment. According to the Washington, D.C. Transgender Needs Assessment, only 50% of transgender individuals are currently employed, and 34% work in underground economies. Local leaders have emphasized that finding a job with a non-hostile employer and navigating the hiring process is one of the most pressing unmet needs of the D.C. transgender population. Additionally, there are currently no programs in D.C. aimed at helping transgender sex workers obtain alternative employment, and in interviews with The Community Justice Project, D.C. area leaders identified Casa Ruby as being uniquely positioned to create such a program.

### CASA RUBY'S CURRENT ROLE

Casa Ruby currently helps clients prepare resumes and cover letters and secure full-time permanent positions. Casa Ruby also recruits and supports transgender people in the Project Empowerment program, a job training and placement program offered by the D.C. government, and offers employment-focused events. For example, Casa Ruby hosted a registration and information session to help unemployed LGBT people secure jobs at Marriott hotels.

### CASA RUBY'S INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THIS STRATEGIC PRIORITY

- Continue to help clients identify available positions for which they are qualified and provide individualized help with resume, application, and interview preparation.
- Offer job-search workshops on networking, online job search strategies, and interview attire.
- Maintain a database of employers that welcome transgender employees.
- Hire a career counselor to work with clients.
- Conduct cultural competency trainings to increase the number of transgender-friendly employers. These trainings could be a source of revenue for Casa Ruby.
- Consider providing employment services, including a diversion program in partnership with the D.C. courts, for sex workers after a more extensive employment services program is established.

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### THE NEED

Local leaders and government officials have expressed that transgender people need help navigating the various government, legal, and social services available to them. Many transgender people are eligible for services such as affordable health care or cash assistance, but may not have the knowledge, experience, or familiarity with the relevant systems to access these services. Discrimination against transgender people presents an additional barrier to accessing services.

### CASA RUBY'S CURRENT ROLE

Casa Ruby currently offers clients referrals to outside service providers. These referrals are based on the cultural competency, accessibility, and effectiveness of such providers, gathered from Ruby Corado's rich personal experience and institutional knowledge. Transgender people regularly come to Casa Ruby and find a mentor in Ruby Corado. Ruby provides them with moral support and helps them to become more confident and successful in accessing resources.

### CASA RUBY'S INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THIS STRATEGIC PRIORITY

- Continue to assist transgender people in locating and navigating culturally competent services.
- Follow up with clients to ensure that they successfully access available services and collect client data to monitor client progress and outcomes.
- Maintain a database of culturally sensitive housing opportunities, legal assistance, and medical services.
- Hire a dedicated caseworker to ensure that clients' needs are consistently and comprehensively addressed.
- Train service providers on cultural competency to increase the number of providers that can meet transgender clients' needs.
- Create a formal mentor program by matching clients with Casa Ruby volunteers who have had similar experiences. Mentors can provide emotional support and help mentees identify and successfully navigate services for which they are eligible.

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### THE NEED

The transgender community is a marginalized group in Washington, D.C. and remains largely discriminated against, even within the LGBT community. Such discrimination makes it difficult for transgender people to access housing and employment, as well as culturally competent health care and legal services. Although there are several organizations representing the transgender community in national and D.C. politics, there are still local issues impacting the community that go unaddressed. In interviews with The Community Justice Project, D.C. government officials emphasized the importance of having transgender individuals represented in discussions that affect the population at large.

Transgender people have significant safety concerns as they are disproportionately victimized by crime and also experience higher rates of police harassment. In addition, the national transgender discrimination survey *Injustice at Every Turn* found that 46% of transgender people feel uncomfortable seeking assistance from police. The D.C. Transgender Needs Assessment found that 33% of respondents had been treated with disrespect and 40% had been referred to by the wrong name or pronoun.

### CASA RUBY'S CURRENT ROLE

Casa Ruby has become an important voice for the transgender community in creating community change. Casa Ruby currently engages in capacity building by advocating on behalf of individuals and working to improve local systems and programs for the transgender community. Additionally, in interviews with The Community Justice Project, representatives of the Metropolitan Police Department expressed that they view Ruby Corado as an important resource on transgender issues.

### CASA RUBY'S INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THIS STRATEGIC PRIORITY

- Increase Casa Ruby's presence as a transgender voice in the community and mentor others to advocate for the D.C. transgender community.
- Provide transgender cultural competency training to health care providers, businesses and employers, housing providers, and homeless shelters.
- Partner with existing organizations to identify providers that would benefit from existing trainings, and to provide trainings to public accommodations, shelters, and detention facilities. Partner with TransLaw to identify legal service providers that would benefit from TransLaw's transgender cultural competency training.
- Train police officers to interact appropriately with the transgender community and transgender sex workers, and facilitate town hall meetings for transgender individuals and police officers.

# THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROJECT

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