

Trans:Thrive at San Francisco Community Health Center: How We Cultivate Belonging, Hope, Joy, and Thriving



OUR LOCATION

As part of San Francisco Community Health Center (SFCHC), Trans:Thrive is a community drop-in space located in **San Francisco, CA**.

Photo Description: Our 8000 square-foot space (opened in early 2023) is the first stand-alone facility of its size dedicated to trans people's lives in SF.



WHO WE SERVE

Trans:Thrive exists to create safe spaces, services, and events for the entire trans, nonbinary, and gender-expansive community in San Francisco.

- We are a **“for us, by us”** organization – we are led by and for trans, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people. We are powered by a self-generating cycle of leadership development, meaning that our leaders mentor future and emerging leaders.
- We strive to be **accessible, low-barrier**, and to center clients who are **multiply marginalized**, such as folks who are: Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), unhoused or marginally housed, living with or at risk for HIV, survivors of violence, and eligible for Medi-Cal.

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This poster summarizes Trans:Thrive's CRDP-funded work and will be presented at the annual CRDP convening in 2026.

OVERVIEW

Our Goals

Trans:Thrive is a community-based drop-in center led for and by transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people in San Francisco. Our name is an acronym which stands for: Transgender Resource and Neighborhood Space (Trans), and Transgender Health & Resource Initiative for Vital Empowerment (Thrive). Our goals expand beyond merely reducing disparities and health symptoms: **we are grounded in a vision of universal thriving**, where clients can build protective factors and reach their aspirations.

Compared to cisgender people, trans people experience higher rates of discrimination, violence, homelessness, isolation, psychological distress, and suicidality. We aim to help reduce these disparities by promoting clients' sense of belonging, access to trans-led and trans-centered health services, social support, basic needs supports, and joy through self-expression.

Trans:Thrive Program Components

As a trans-led and client-centered space, our programming responds directly to clients' needs, barriers, goals, and cultural values. Below are **5 core program components** which staff designed, and later articulated, as “community-defined evidence practices” supported by CRDP.

Drop-in center , a welcoming “one-stop shop”	5 days a week (15 hrs/week) of community-based drop-in space with hot meals, social support, case management, referrals and system navigation, and basic needs items (e.g., hygiene kits, snacks, and harm reduction supplies). Ongoing community outreach and collaboration with local community organizations.
Trans-led activities that promote joy, fun, and self-expression	Weekly events such as Bravo Martes (Spanish-language games with prizes), a writing and poetry group, and Friday night dinners with karaoke. Large-scale special events, such as TransGiving and Sparkle Soiree. Digital storytelling workshops in which participants can share personal stories and the impact of Trans:Thrive on their lives.
Extravagant shopping experiences to promote healthcare engagement, self-expression, joy, and safety	Monthly gender-affirming shopping experiences (SHE Boutique and Folk ‘n’ Swagger) where clients can select gender-affirming clothing and accessories. These events include a wide range of sizes and styles, and a safe environment to explore gender expression. Clients earn credits (points) to attain highly sought-after items by engaging in services. These programs were designed to incentivize healthcare engagement.
Trans-led social support groups	Trans-led social support groups that center specific populations, such as: a neurodivergent group, a transmasculine support group, and 50+ and Fabulous.
Therapist-led meditation group	Weekly mindfulness-based group, Transformative Mindfulness.

OUR LOCAL EVALUATION

We conducted an exploratory evaluation to assess the implementation of Trans:Thrive between May 2022-May 2025 (the CRDP Phase 2 Extension period), which marked a period of significant growth for Trans:Thrive.

Key learning questions:

1. In what ways might Trans:Thrive influence clients' mental health and well-being?
2. What core components of Trans:Thrive's model are most essential for the program's success (particularly in reducing mental health disparities)?
3. How could Trans:Thrive be improved?

Evaluation approach:

- Our evaluation primarily draws from qualitative data sources, including interviews with Trans:Thrive clients (n=14) and staff members (n=7), program-level data, landscape research, and ongoing conversations with leadership and staff.
- **Key Strength:** Our local evaluator and Trans:Thrive staff collaborated closely on designing and implementing the evaluation, ensuring that our approach is grounded in the expertise of trans, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people who have directly experienced and led public health programs for LGBTQ+ communities.
- **Key Limitation:** Our ability to analyze program data was limited by data system barriers at the time of data collection. For example, previously, Trans:Thrive primarily collected intake assessments and attendance data on paper which limited our ability to compare the same client over time; Trans:Thrive is currently transitioning to electronic data collection via iPads.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1) **With a larger and more welcoming location, Trans:Thrive has increased its reach as a drop-in community center that supports trans people's existence.** Trans:Thrive's new space is the first stand-alone facility of its size dedicated to improving trans people's lives in San Francisco. Interviewees described this space as a “refreshing” safe haven, “a sense of home that I may not have had otherwise,” “a mini family reunion,” and place to make friends.

~557 unique clients served
between May 2022-May 2025

~200 unique clients per month

[estimated # of clients during CRDP Phase 2 Extension]

“The new space really gave us opportunities to be creative on what we can offer the trans community.”

– Trans:Thrive leader



Photo Description: Waiting room at Trans:Thrive. It features a welcoming reception desk, comfortable furniture (couches and chairs), a TV on the wall, and a trans flag banner.

- 2) **Staff intentionally design Trans:Thrive as a client-centered, compassionate antidote to various forms of pain that many clients experience, such as isolation, exclusion, hopelessness, homelessness, and discrimination.** Trans:Thrive supports clients' mental health and well-being by helping to cultivate their sense of belonging, hope, joy, and thriving.

Theme

How Clients, Volunteers, and Staff Describe Trans:Thrive

BELONGING

A safe haven and a “home base.” A radically welcoming place to go where everyone is valued, where people can gather to celebrate holidays, to mourn, and to meet friends. A low-barrier “one-stop shop” that can help clients access multiple types of services to support their holistic well-being.

HOPE

Staff and volunteers as role models (or possibility models), inspiring people to believe in themselves and see a positive vision for their future. A radical, collective re-conditioning (challenging the way many trans people are conditioned to feel limited, alone, and without hope). A place to reinforce messages of community resilience (“this isn't our first rodeo”).

JOY

Fun, affirming shopping experiences (through SHE Boutique and Folk ‘n’ Swagger) where clients feel confident, safe, and cared for. Creative, playful activities like karaoke, playing games, and creating artwork. A place filled with laughter.

THRIVING

A beautiful self-generating cycle of leaders and role models. A place where staff are consistent, reliable, and help clients break down their goals into manageable steps. A place that offers (or connects clients with) resources such as therapy, education and employment support, case management, housing referrals, and affirming healthcare.

“[Trans:Thrive] really saved my life, and I'm eternally grateful. And now I get to work with the agency; I get to be one of the staff and share the gift that they gave me.”



Photo Description: Photograph of a person holding a large transgender pride flag with blue, pink, and white stripes waving against a clear sky during an outdoor event.

OUR NEXT STEPS

Trans:Thrive and San Francisco Community Health Center will continue to show up relentlessly as leaders to expand our capacity, deepen our impact, and create a possibility model for spaces that center trans people's joy, belonging, and thriving during escalating threats. As of 2026, our next steps and aspirations include:

- Secure a larger, long-term space to make Trans:Thrive a permanent sanctuary, refuge, and community hub for trans people in San Francisco
- Hire more providers and increase services offered (e.g., gender-affirming care clinic, therapy, case management)
- Develop data infrastructure and learning routines which allow staff to track and monitor clients' progress over time
- Continue to oppose funding cuts to LGBTQ+ healthcare and anti-LGBTQ+ policy (e.g., engaging state legislature and our local Health Commission)
- Continue to expand and protect spaces and services that improve trans people's quality of life
- Continue to deepen Trans:Thrive's partnership with Taimon-Booton Navigation Center (TBNC), a 75-bed emergency shelter which prioritizes safe housing for transgender, gender non-conforming & intersex people. (SFCHC assumed management of TBNC in 2024.)

“When it came to me being homeless, they really did hold my hand through the whole thing, and they just really were there in my like true time of need that... I just didn't know how I was going to get through.”



Photo Description: Photograph of a colorful parade float from SF Pride 2025 featuring the San Francisco Community Health Center as the organizational grand marshal. The float is decorated with pink, blue, and white fringe, adorned with flowers, and carries people celebrating with rainbow flags and festive attire along a city street.