

Assessment of needed services

For case-managers and advocates

About me

I was born on 21st May 1986. I was born in New York, but have spent most of my life moving, thanks to my father's being in the military. I have lived in England, Alabama, Germany, North Carolina, Texas and California. The amount of moving I have done has given me a new perspective on the world. I view myself as a citizen of the world as opposed to viewing myself as a citizen of any particular state or country.

I am an autistic transgender male, which means that I definitely don't fit into the category that I was supposed to fit in when growing up. Although I knew about my autism when I was growing up, most of my case workers' energies were focused on making me "normal," rather than working with my autism and trying to find solutions that worked for me. I'd like to change that now. I've known I was transgender since I was eleven years old, but didn't come out until I was around twenty years old, when I started using male pronouns socially and started using a male name. Unfortunately, because of various issues, I have not been able to take care of my medical or legal transition needs.

Since moving to California to escape emotionally abusive and transphobic parents, I've struggled with housing, employment and social services.

My interests are broad and varied: I've learned about evolutionary biology, typography, art history, philosophy, politics, European history and several other subjects. I'm an integrative learner. In fact, I sometimes find it hard to list my interests because of my learning patterns. I see the world in a very non-linear way. Ideas from multifarious disciplines combine in my mind; they are not discrete interests to be separated neatly. This is related to my integrative learning style, and it is not conducive to certain sorts of work, although it is perfectly apposite for a lot of research and academic work.

I'd call myself a geek if I didn't have so many interests.

I'm interested in political activism, although I wish I had more energy to participate in it. I support LGBT rights, autistic advocacy and youth rights. I served on the Board of Directors of the National Youth Rights Association from 2005 to 2006, before I came out as transgender.

I want to prove that I can do much, much more than what was expected of me.

Summary of my conditions

Specific needs: Autism

I have been diagnosed with some form of autism since my early childhood – first an “atypical autism” diagnosis of PDD-NOS, which was changed later to a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome not long after it was added to the DSM-IV. Personally, I think that I fit the label of “atypical autism” more than I do “Asperger autism,” based on what I have read about autism. I am also familiar with the diagnostic criteria, and do not think that I fit the stated Asperger criteria, although I think I am somewhere on the autistic spectrum. I’m just not an Asperger- or Kanner-type autistic.

Most of my autistic-spectrum impairments are sensory and organisational, rather than social or intellectual. I haven’t had that many problems with social interpretation in the past several years beyond the misinterpretations that most neurotypical people experience. My autism is also not the kind that makes it difficult for people to think abstractly. In fact, I tend to be a lot better at abstract thought than purely concrete thought.

I have sensory integration problems that affect my perception of the world. For example, it is difficult for me to notice everything when I try to clean a space. That is because clutter does not immediately register to me as “clutter”; rather, *it registers to me as part of the environment*, even though I know intellectually that it is not. This perceptual problem makes it hard to work at jobs that require that I attend to clutter constantly, like at certain retail jobs and any job that involves cleaning. Most physical jobs are actually very hard for me because of this. It isn’t that I can’t notice detail *in and of itself*; it’s dependent on the situation. If it is an abstract detail, or an aesthetic detail, I’m far more likely to notice it.

I also find particular situations overwhelming. For example, when I am given too much paperwork to fill out, I tend to get a bit confused. It is not that I cannot understand intellectually how such things work, but it is much harder for me to act in the same way that a “neurotypical” person would. I am able to read about aesthetic theory, but I cannot for the *life* of me work out how to deal with certain social services without assistance. I have run into trouble with this, because despite my desire to find the services I need, I become quite overwhelmed and cannot complete all the tasks. People sometimes think that I do not care enough about my needs, or that I am not being “proactive,” but that is not the truth. I often have every desire to get things done, but I have to struggle with my being easily overwhelmed.

I also struggle with a phenomenon common to autistics called “inertia.” When I experience inertia, I want to do something very badly, but I cannot call up enough inner strength to get that thing done, even if it is vitally important. I will often ask for help in these situations because of it, although I sometimes feel bad about it because I have been taught that I should not seek help at these times, even when I do find things overwhelming.

I also do not do well with large crowds – mostly because of the noise crowds generate, as well as all the sensory stimuli.

I communicate best in writing, whether it's handwritten or through email or chat. I'm capable of speech – in fact, when I'm comfortable, I can be pretty talkative – but talking too much in overwhelming situations is very stressful. I've considered text-to-speech devices – or better, a laptop with a good text-to-speech program – once I can afford them for those times when it's more difficult for me to actually talk.

Specific needs: Transgender

I'm a female-to-male (FTM) transsexual. I would like to change my body to match my internal self-perception, which is that of a somewhat androgynous male. I already use male pronouns in my daily life. I would like to start hormone therapy to give myself secondary male sexual characteristics, and in the future, I want to have surgery (a mastectomy and a hysterectomy – surgical attempts to make "penises" for transgender men are horrible) to complete the process. I'd also like assistance in getting my name legally changed, for both transgender- and abuse-related reasons.

Specific needs: Abuse recovery

I am a survivor of emotional abuse, and it's caused me to experience panic attacks, anxiety attacks and PTSD-like symptoms. I would like counselling to talk about this so that I can put this behind me and focus on trying to make my life better, instead of being pulled down by the past.

Targets

Housing

For the short term, I would like emergency and transitional housing. I want to avoid sleeping outdoors for numerous reasons: I do not want to be raped or assaulted, I do not want to get ill, I don't want to be out of touch with those who can help me, and I do not want to get involved in "street 'culture.'" Any housing I was placed in would have to have connections to needed services so that I can focus on my goals, rather than more basic needs.

Ideally, if I am going to stay in the San Francisco Bay Area, I would like to live in one of the suburbs, like San Mateo, instead of San Francisco proper. This is because suburbs are quieter. I still would like to be near the city, though, so that I can still access things that I need.

For the long term, I would like to live semi-independently, probably with a part- or full-time caretaker familiar with autistic-spectrum disorders to help me with the daily tasks that I find onerous, as well as things like time-management and appointments. I would like to help to educate my caretaker on my autistic and transgender issues so that there would be an understanding between us about how we would work together. I'd like to use the spare energy that I have on education and work.

Employment

Jobs (that is, short-term work)

As I mentioned in the 'specific needs' section, traditional entry-level employment ranges between "extremely difficult" and "impossible" for me. People have thought that I was unwilling to work, or uninterested in working, because of bad experiences at retail and food-service jobs, and my reluctance to apply to more of those jobs afterwards. That is not the case: I would just like a job that focuses on my strengths, rather than my weaknesses, and it is hard for me to do that before I finish my formal education. All the *careers* I want require a considerable amount of formal education; I would need PhDs and a law degree.

Before I complete my formal education, I would like to get a job that uses skills that I have, rather than ones that I *do not* have. If I cannot get such a job, I am willing to use public assistance, although I would *much rather work*. I would like assistance in getting jobs that I would perform well in. I have several marketable skills, including, but not limited to:

- *graphic and web design*
- *writing* (I have a good command of the English language and enjoy expressing ideas in writing)
- *word processing and basic computer applications*
- *typing* (between 70 and 90 wpm)
- *languages* (I am competent in Spanish and French, and can understand several other languages)
- *operating systems* – I have at least working knowledge of Windows, Mac OS and Ubuntu Linux operating systems.

I think I would need accommodations for time management and organisation at any job that I worked at. Before being hired, I would appreciate help with resume writing, interviewing skills and job-hunting, especially for an autistic transgender person. I have had some job-skills training, which has helped, but I still see the process as being overwhelming.

Careers

I am interested in studying law so that I can practise civil-rights law, especially as it applies to LGBT people. I have a strong commitment to justice and ethics, and want to make sure that others do not experience similar injustices to the ones that I have experienced. I consider ethics important in both a philosophical and pragmatic sense, and find that defending others' civil rights would be a good application of that commitment.

I would also like to teach at a university, either as well as, or in lieu of, practising law (if I can't do it for some particular reason).

Education

I need to get back into formal education. Although I have been teaching myself since I withdrew from my last college, I need formal credentials in order to pursue my desired careers. I don't want to study just to "get a better job," either: I consider learning important for its own sake. Learning is something I pursue with the same zeal as I do more basic necessities, and it has always been that way for me. I would

also like to use what I have gained from my education to give something back to the community, particularly for LGBT people.

Educational goals:

- I would appreciate help in searching for the right places for me to study, filling out applications and making sure that everything is in order. I am intellectually capable of studying, but a lot of the preliminary procedural tasks can be stressful.
- I'd like to study at a community college first (perhaps CCSF) to get my general education requirements out of the way, and so that I can improve my grades. While I did not *fail* at my first college, I do not find my marks satisfactory.
- I'm considering philosophy and biology as my majors for a few reasons. Philosophy because that would give me a good academic background to study law (as American law is based on Western philosophical traditions), and biology because I've always found it interesting. Evolutionary biology is my favourite division of biology. I consider evolution miraculous – not in a spiritual sense, but in a sense that reflects the wonder of the universe.
- I'd like to look for accommodations, particularly for organisation and time management, since those are my two weak points. I could discuss other accommodations once I'm enrolled, but these are the ones that stand out to me right now.
- After I finish my courses at a community college, I would like to transfer to a more selective college in the area that can give me the intellectual challenge I need. I tend to do my best when I'm in an academically rigorous environment, as opposed to one in which most classes are "easy A's."
- After that, I'd like to go to law school (for me to focus on civil rights law) and graduate school (for me to focus on evolutionary biology). I'm not certain I can do both concurrently; I would probably have to go to graduate school first. The reason why I say that is that I would have to start focusing on my law career right after law school, and I would have to expend my energy on doing things like passing the state bar exam. If I deal with the graduate education first, then I'll be able to focus my attentions on law later, and have the scientific background just in case I cannot practise law for whatever reason.
- My ambition is to study law at Harvard or Yale, and read biology at Oxford. I understand that these are indeed ambitious goals, but there is just something about time-honoured, intellectually rigorous institutions that appeals to me.

Mental and physical health

I would like to see a therapist or counsellor for the emotional abuse history and the resultant panic and anxiety attacks, as well as the autism and transgender identification.

I am in excellent physical health – I rarely even *catch cold* – but I would like health care as a safety net. I have also been told that Medi-Cal insurance will cover certain

expenses, so I would like to get their services so that I can have those costs covered.

I'd like to start hormone therapy to get myself looking more masculine finally.

Miscellaneous

Name change

I would like assistance with my legal name change. My female name, besides not matching my gender identity, is associated with great psychological distress. I grew up in a household where my identity was "policed" – I could never be anything besides what I was told I was, and any attempt to say that I was not what they assumed was summarily quashed. It has come to the point that I cannot even write it, say it or use it on forms. Because of this, I would really like to get that name change done before a lot of these other things on my list, so I do not ever have to worry about it again. Along with the psychological issues surrounding it, there is also that mass of paperwork and the numerous procedures that I have to deal with in order to get it done!

Other skills

I have never learned how to drive, and I'd like to learn how if processing issues don't get in the way.