

## **Transgender Resource Center**

### **Security Services in the Work with Trans People that Would Lead to Sexual Harassment**

#### **Press Conference**

#### **Press Statement**

“Security Services in the Work with Trans People that Would Lead to Sexual Harassment” is a research project conducted by the Transgender Resource Center. The project has been funded by the Equal Opportunities Commission under its “Funding Programme of Research Projects on Equal Opportunities 2013/14”. This study was undertaken from July to November 2014. A total of 17 local and foreign transgender people were interviewed in order to understand their unpleasant experiences with three security departments (namely the Police Force, Immigration Department and Correctional Services Department) in Hong Kong.

The research findings revealed that relevant security officers might not have a good understanding of the transgender persons who showed great changes in the body and appearance at different stages of their gender transition period. In this connection, there might be misunderstanding between the security officers and transgender persons with respect to comments or procedures (e.g. body search), which would probably make the transgender persons having the feeling of being sexually harassed. The most easily neglected area was that the security officers disclosed the identity of the transgender person, which caused sexual harassment against the concerned party.

The respondents expressed that individual security officers’ attitudes, tone and eye contact of the officers, are crucial factors in determining if they were sexually harassed or disrespected. Some comments were spoken with no ill-intention but the transgender persons felt embarrassed. They included: "Are you a man or a woman?", "You do look like a woman (I wouldn't know if not being told)" (cases of trans-women), "Why have you become like this?", "How can I believe you by the way you look?", and so on. There should be clear guidelines for officers of the afore-mentioned security departments when they deal with the transgender persons. However, training on practical case-study appeared lacking such that frontline officers did not have sufficient sensitivity to deal with those cases related to transgender persons.

In general, the guidelines in the security departments work according to the gender shown on the identity documents. Since different countries have their own gender recognition policies, the existing guidelines cannot provide protection for the transgender persons. Apart from this, the security officers will probably be queried about some improper treatments towards the transgender persons and related issue of sexual harassment. This research has made recommendations in relevant areas (including: forms of addressing, use of words and attitudes, briefing procedures, body searches, attires, medical assistance, supporting documents or information, gender recognition, enhance training and communication with transgender community). It is expected that relevant security departments will consider these recommendations for improvement in future.

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