

Trans in Custody

A guide for counselors to help incarcerated trans individuals access gender-affirming chest binders



Point of
Pride

Preface

Since 2016, Point of Pride has been committed to ensuring access to healthcare for the most vulnerable members of our community. We firmly believe that trans rights are human rights, and that supporting incarcerated trans individuals in accessing gender-affirming needs is a critical aspect of upholding those human rights. Access to gender-affirming care and support is an essential step towards promoting safety, health, and successful reentry into society.

This guide aims to introduce you to a specialized garment called a chest binder and educate you on how it can profoundly and positively impact the lives of trans and non-binary individuals who need them. Additionally, you will learn how you can help incarcerated individuals request a free chest binder through our donation program.

We would like to express our gratitude to Elizabeth Munksy, Executive Director of LGBTQ+ Affairs at the NYC Department of Correction, for her collaboration in developing this guide. We would also like to thank you, the counselors who work one-on-one with incarcerated trans individuals, for your dedication to supporting their human rights.

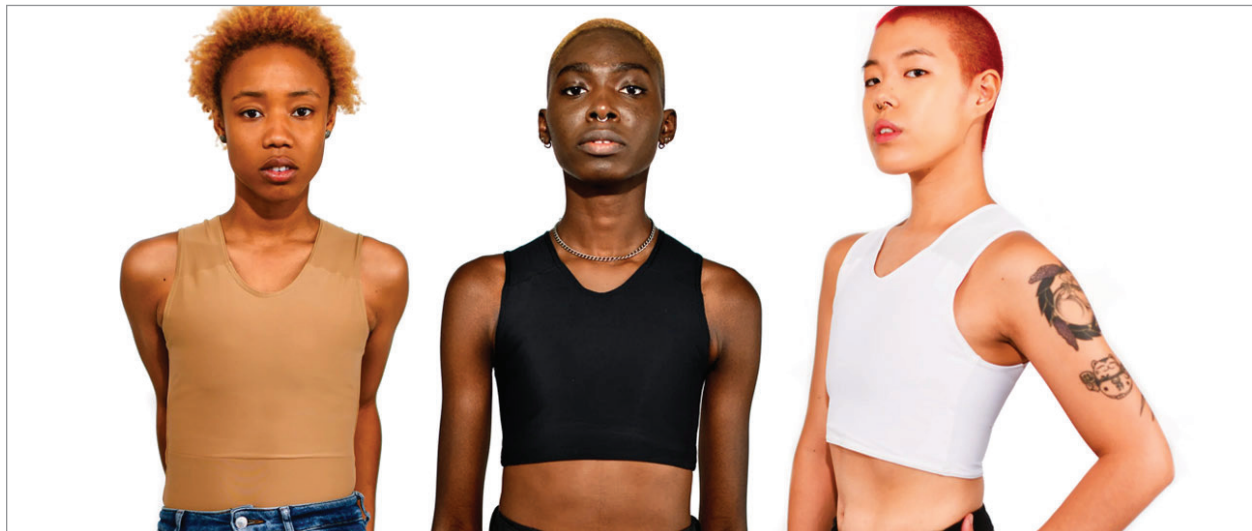
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Understanding the need & impact

What are chest binders?

Chest binders are specially-designed compression garments that fit tightly across a person's body to more safely and comfortably flatten their chest. For transgender men and non-binary individuals, chest binders allow them to have a more masculine or gender-neutral appearance. According to several studies including one from the International Journal of Transgender Health,¹ chest binders lessen gender dysphoria, improve body image, enhance self-esteem, and help people feel more affirmed in their gender identity.



How do they work?

Chest binders are constructed out of nylon and spandex, with an inner panel on the front of the garment to provide compression. They can come in any color, but are often white, black, or tan in color. They do not contain any metal or other hard materials. When worn underneath a shirt, a chest binder resembles a snug-fitting undershirt or sports bra.

Why do they matter?

Without access to chest binders, trans people are far more likely to turn to unsafe binding methods to compress their chest, such as Ace bandages, plastic wrap, surgical garments, duct tape, or other materials. These methods can cause strain or even serious physical injury such as skin irritation (rashes, blisters), breathing issues (shortness of breath, chest pain, fainting), and even fractured ribs.

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Chest binders' impact on trans individuals in custody

A properly-fitting chest binder protects against health risks while also providing positive emotional and mental health benefits. A 2017 study² found that the mental health effects of binding safely “were almost universally positive” among those surveyed, with more than 70% of individuals reporting a positive mood and decreased dysphoria, depression, anxiety, and suicidality.

Chest binders' impact on your facility

As stated previously, we can see the significant positive mental health impact chest binders can have for transgender men and non-binary people in custody. This positive impact can result in an overall improvement with the person in custody's compliance, which can lead to fewer incidents.

1. Fung, K. A., Zucker, I. K., & Pryor, J. (2020). The impact of chest binding on mental health in transgender individuals. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 21(1), 26-32. doi: 10.1080/26895269.2019.1709717

2. Peitzmeier, S., Gardner, I., Weinand, J., Corbet, A., & Acevedo, K. (2017). Health impact of chest binding among transgender adults: A community-engaged, cross-sectional study. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 18(4), 1-15. doi: 10.1080/13691058.2016.1191675

Ensuring chest binders are permissible items

Check with the correctional facility or country sheriff to see if chest binders are allowed as undergarments. The permissible items list is usually available on their website or in public spaces for families and loved ones to know what items they can send.

If chest binders are on the list...

Bookmark, print out, or otherwise note any information you find that lists chest binders as a permissible undergarment item. If there's a policy number or point of contact, save that info as well.

If chest binders are not on the list...

You will first request to add them. Please follow your jurisdiction's protocols for making requests to add permissible items.

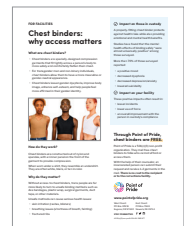
Here are some helpful tips to advocate on behalf of the incarcerated individual:

1. Research local laws related to gender identity and gender expression

Start by identifying the government agencies that oversee laws, rules, and regulations related to gender identity and expression in your area. This may include state or local human rights commissions, oversight bodies, legislative bodies, law enforcement agencies, or LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations. Check for existing laws or policies that protect transgender individuals from discrimination based on gender identity or expression. Then, stay up to date on any changes or updates to laws by subscribing to newsletters from government agencies, following relevant legal or advocacy groups on social media, or attending community events or town hall meetings.

2. Provide leadership with information

On page 9, you can find a one-sheet that covers a lot of the content in this packet in a shortened version, specifically tailored for correctional facility leadership.



3. Repeat information as necessary

Consistently emphasize the benefits of chest binder access, including how it can benefit both the individual and the facility. Mention applicable nondiscrimination laws.

4. Connect with LGBTQ+ non-profits, trans competent doctors, and other jurisdictions

Network with organizations and experts who are trans-affirming and can offer you supplementary information and/or support as you advocate on behalf of incarcerated trans individuals. Connect with people from jurisdictions where chest binders (or other gender-affirming items) have been approved. By referencing these connections, facility leadership may be more receptive to implementing trans-inclusive policies.

Where to purchase a chest binder

If financial means allow for the purchase of a chest binder, we recommend the following retailers:

- [gc2b.co](#) is proudly trans-owned and operated, and has high-quality binders for all body shapes and sizes from XXS–5XL.
- [Origami Customs](#) is a trans-owned and operated underthings retailer specializing in gender-affirming products, including custom, made-to-measure binders.
- [Underworks](#) has a number of different style binders, the most popular being their double-front compression shirt and tri-top compression shirt.
- [Shapeshifters](#) offers custom, made-to-measure chest binders.

We also recommend reaching out to local LGBTQ+ organizations in your area, if possible, for additional and/or local recommendations. [CenterLink's Community Center Directory](#) is a great tool to find organizations and trans groups near you.

You'll still want to ensure chest binders are permissible items, and that your mailroom is aware of the package.

How to request a free chest binder through Point of Pride

Founded in 2016, Point of Pride is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. One of the programs we offer is a chest binder donation program, in which we mail free garments directly to trans people who cannot otherwise access them. 100% of purchase and shipping costs are covered by Point of Pride.

There is no cost to the recipient or to the corrections facility.

✔ Step 1

Check with the correctional facility or country sheriff to see if chest binders are on the permissible items list as an undergarment item.

If chest binders are on the list, take note. Most jurisdictions place their permissible items list on their website or other public space as it informs family and loved ones what they can send.

If chest binders are not on the list, you will first request to add them. Please follow your jurisdiction's protocols for making requests to add permissible items.

✔ Step 2

Print the Application Packet (included as the last two pages of this booklet), and provide it to the person in custody.

Page 1 is what is returned to Point of Pride.

Page 2 contains a printable measuring tape with instructions so the recipient can measure themselves to determine their correct size.

The image shows a 'Request for Free Chest Binder' form from Point of Pride. The form is divided into three main sections: 'Recipient Information', 'Facility Information', and 'Custodian's Information'. Each section contains several fields for data entry, such as name, address, phone number, and facility details. There are also checkboxes and a section for 'Custodian's Signature'.

✔ Step 3

Once the Application Form has been completed, scan and email a PDF or send a high-resolution photo to us at binders@pointofpride.org.

✔ Step 4

Point of Pride will reply to confirm receipt of the request as well as the approximate wait time, and then email you again once the binder is in the mail with a tracking number.

✔ Step 5

Once you've received the tracking number, speak with the mail receiving room at your facility to ensure they will not refuse the package.

Suggested language:

"I'm writing to inform you that (name of incarcerated person) will soon receive an approved package from sender Point of Pride. This envelope mailer will contain 2 chest binder garments, which are chest compression garments made of nylon and spandex. These garments are permissible items and approved undergarments. Please ensure all mail room officers are aware so that the package is not refused. Thank you."

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Frequently Asked Questions

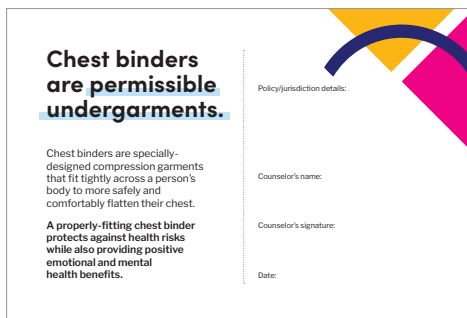
Have a question not answered here? Please email us at binders@pointofpride.org.

“What does packaging look like?”

Packaging for our mailed garments is extremely discreet. Your items will be shipped in a plain white mailing envelope. The sender’s name is “Point of Pride.” Nothing with the words “LGBT” or “trans” appear on the packaging.

“What is included in the package?”

The package will contain 1-2 binders, a note of support meant to brighten the recipient’s day, and a few copies of an informational card on safer binding techniques and care instructions. (This informational card contains a blank space for the person in custody or you, their counselor, to write down policy/jurisdiction details. This is so that officers who may search their room are aware that the binders are permissible items.)



Side 1: Space for policy/jurisdiction details



Side 2: Safer binding tips & care instructions

“What happens if the binder is refused by the mail receiving room?”

Point of Pride will make every effort to get a binder to the person in custody, though we unfortunately cannot guarantee delivery. In the event a package is refused, we’ll connect with you, their counselor, to determine the best next steps regarding another shipping attempt.

“The person in custody lost their binder/it was damaged/it was confiscated. What is your replacement policy?”

Point of Pride will evaluate replacements on a case by case basis. Please email binders@pointofpride.org.

FOR FACILITIES

Chest binders: why access matters

What are chest binders?

- Chest binders are specially-designed compression garments that fit tightly across a person's body to more safely and comfortably flatten their chest.
- For transgender men and non-binary individuals, chest binders allow them to have a more masculine or gender-neutral appearance.
- Chest binders lessen gender dysphoria, improve body image, enhance self-esteem, and help people feel more affirmed in their gender identity.



How do they work?

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When worn under a shirt, they resemble an undershirt or sports bra. They are often white, black, or tan in color.

Why do they matter?

Without access to chest binders, trans people are far more likely to turn to unsafe binding methods such as Ace bandages, plastic wrap, surgical garments, duct tape, or other materials.

Unsafe methods can cause serious health issues:

- skin irritation (rashes, blisters)
- breathing issues (shortness of breath, fainting)
- fractured ribs

✔ Impact on those in custody

A properly-fitting chest binder protects against health risks while also providing emotional and mental health benefits.

Studies have found that the mental health effects of binding safely “were almost universally positive” among those surveyed.

More than 70% of those surveyed reported:

- a positive mood
- decreased dysphoria
- decreased depression/anxiety
- lowered suicidality

✔ Impact on your facility

These positive impacts often result in:

- fewer incidents
- an overall improvement with the person in custody's compliance

Through Point of Pride, chest binders are **FREE.**

Point of Pride is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. They mail free chest binders to folks who cannot afford or access them.

With the help of their counselor, an incarcerated person can submit their request and receive 1-2 garments in the mail. **There is no cost to the recipient or to the corrections facility.**



www.pointofpride.org

West Coast: PO Box 10991
Eugene, OR 97440
East Coast: PO Box 7824
Newark, DE 19714

STAY CONNECTED   

A 501(c)(3) non-profit. EIN: 81-2185477



Request for Free Chest Binder

Recipient's Information

Name	
Size Check one	<input type="checkbox"/> XXS <input type="checkbox"/> Large <input type="checkbox"/> 3XL <input type="checkbox"/> XS <input type="checkbox"/> X-Large <input type="checkbox"/> 4XL <input type="checkbox"/> Small <input type="checkbox"/> 2XL <input type="checkbox"/> 5XL <input type="checkbox"/> Medium
Quantity Allowed by Jurisdiction Policy Check one	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Allowed Colors Check all that apply	<input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Tan <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Mailing Address Please write the full name and address exactly how it should appear on the mailing label.	
Other Notes Optional	

Counselor's Information

Name	
Title	
Email	

Once this Application Form has been completed, scan and email a PDF or send a high-resolution photo of completed form to binders@pointofpride.org.

Point of Pride will reply to confirm receipt of the request as well as the approximate wait time, and then email you again once the binder is in the mail with a tracking number.

Once you've received the tracking number, speak with the mail receiving room at your facility to ensure they will not refuse the package.

Sizing

Instructions for Counselor

Print this document at 100% size with no scaling to ensure accuracy.

Cut the strips leaving the grey tabs on the edge. Attach the strips by placing the grey tab beneath the previous strip using glue or tape.

Instructions for Recipient

Do not wear a bra or any other compression products when measuring yourself.

First, measure your chest size. The chest measurement should be taken all the way around your torso. The measuring tape should not compress your chest tissue but should touch your body. If the measuring tape is not touching your body, it's too loose.

Next, measure your shoulder width. Place the measuring tape at the point of one of your shoulders. Then stretch the tape to the point of your other shoulder. Don't wrap the measuring tape all the way around your shoulders for this measurement—just point-to-point.

	XS	S	M	L	XL
Chest Size	< 32"	32-34"	34-36"	36-38"	38-40"
Shoulder Width	< 13"	13-16"	14-17"	16-20"	20-23"

	2XL	3XL	4XL	5XL
Chest Size	40-42"	42-44"	44-47"	47-52"
Shoulder Width	20"+	20"+	20"+	20"+

If you're in between two sizes, please round up to the larger size. Do not intentionally go down in size: you will not be able to put your binder on.

