

Pride Center of SA launches project to facilitate transgender document change process

First clinic will be held Saturday

By Sarah Acosta - Reporter

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SAN ANTONIO - Passports, drivers' licenses and birth certificates all have names and genders on them, but when transgender individuals wish to change their legal information on any of those documents, it can be a difficult and expensive process.

The Pride Center of San Antonio is trying to change that by holding its first free clinic Saturday in order to ease that legal process for the transgender community.

It's a process that Jamie Zapata, a transgender woman, said is important for her community.

"I started around 10 years old, and then I completely came out as female when I was 14," Zapata said.

Zapata was born a male. After she went through the transition of becoming a female in her preteens, she was forced to drop out of high school because the school wouldn't let her identify as female.

She said she has faced many obstacles as a transgender woman, including being assaulted by a bouncer at a nightclub after she presented her ID, which marked her as male.

"He tried to run me over in the parking lot, so my life has been threatened because I was outed because of my ID," Zapata said. "It definitely puts us in harm's way."

It's for situations such as Zapata's that the Pride Center of San Antonio, along with St. Mary's University School of Law, is holding a free clinic for the transgender community. There will be pro bono law students and attorneys at the center to assist people in legally changing their names and gender markers on their official forms of documentation or IDs.

Robert Salcido, executive director of the Pride Center, said it can be an expensive and very difficult process.

"Texas doesn't have a uniform process, so when we go from county to county or judge to judge, it can greatly differ from one to another," Salcido said.

The clinic will be going through Travis County, which has a much more streamlined process than Bexar County.

Salcido said Pride Center officials will also be talking with Bexar County judges in the future in an attempt to make it a more uniform process for the transgender community.

Zapata said she needs to get her birth certificate changed to read female.

"I've pretty much avoided the whole situation because I haven't wanted to deal with it," Zapata said.

She plans on attending the clinic to start the process.

"I would definitely feel uncomfortable going into a courthouse if that were the case by myself," Zapata said. "There's been nobody there to guide me, so this will be a great opportunity to take advantage."

The clinic will be from 2 p.m.-3:30 p.m. Saturday at the Pride Center of San Antonio at 1303 McCullough Ave., Suite 160.

Attendees need to get there promptly at 2 p.m. because there will be an informational session. You don't need to bring any documentation to the first session.

A second clinic will follow on April 20, when the filing process will begin.

The nonprofit is asking people to preregister on its [website](#).

<https://secure.givelively.org/event/pride-center-san-antonio/gender-affirmation-project-info-session>