

Trans-Inclusion Quick Guide

This guide is provided to you to help you help your department, office, organization, or institution be more inclusive and accommodating to the transgender community who are your students, staff, faculty, visitors, customers, and more. We have outlined a few areas where we ask you to assess your inclusion and create positive change to better serve your population.

It is important to note that when you are making a process or facility more transgender friendly you are often helping other populations you serve such as persons with disabilities, parents, non-traditional students, and many more.

- **Addressing Harassment:** Everybody has a role in interrupting and discouraging harassment against transgender people (and even people who are perceived to be transgender, whether or not they actually are). Modeling respectful language and behavior is the first step toward creating an environment free from harassment. However, if you observe or overhear someone being harassed, interrupt if you can, and always report the incident to the proper organization.
- **Education and Training:** Include transgender identities and issues in any diversity training offered for staff, faculty and students. Examine current diversity training curricula, find speakers and written materials through the Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life.
- **Forms, Publications & Websites:** Do you have a paper form which asks people to choose from "male" or "female"? What about a website where you must make a choice? Why are you gathering this information? Consider allowing people to make multiple selections, none, or to write in their gender. See the Transgender Commission's *Recommendations for Collecting Trans Inclusive Data*.
- **Internal Policies:** Often we create documents with unnecessary or inappropriate use of pronouns. Consider reviewing public documents to see if they need to be gender specific. Clothing, uniform, and dress codes are an example of an internal policy to review.
- **Language:** Think about the most common questions you ask your co-workers/classmates, and whether or not they are inclusive of transgender experiences. For example "Are you dating anyone?" could replace "Do you have a boyfriend?" as a more inclusive question.
- **Name Change:** Many trans and gender non-conforming people will either want to or be able to change their name. In order to be respectful, it is important to acknowledge a person's chosen name, regardless of legal status. Examine your forms and policies and make room for "preferred name" on forms, and encourage office/classroom communities to acknowledge chosen names. Paychecks, rosters, filing systems, mailing lists are some areas to examine.
- **Privacy:** Treat the gender identity of anyone you interact with as a private, confidential matter. Interrupt and discourage office/classroom gossip regarding an individual's gender expression or identity.
- **Pronouns:** Try not to assume that you already know what pronouns a person might prefer. Rather, in order to treat each person with respect, it is better to ask which pronouns we should use in referencing them. Also, share your pronouns first before asking others what they use.
- **Resources:** Many people have little to no experience with transgender people or issues, and have a lot of questions. Provide your office, department, or classroom community with as many resources as possible. Encourage your office, department, or classroom community to explore these websites, and to continue their individual self-education.
- **Restrooms:** Restrooms, changing areas, and locker rooms can be some of the most gender polarized and intimidating areas in our buildings. We urge you to consider changing signage on any currently existing single stall restrooms so that they are gender-open and not designated for a specific gender.
- **You Need Not Wait :** You need not wait until someone comes out as transgender to start creating a safer, more welcoming environment for everyone. In fact, we recommend that you start having conversations with the people around you on this subject right away!

In all of these areas it may be helpful to remove yourself from the societal viewpoint of two genders. Consider yourself a person that doesn't fit into this system, with restrooms with male/female signs, or the fact that your office may not allow you to wear clothing comfortably for you to express who you are. How can you be part of the change?

Being A Trans Ally

Transgender encompasses many different gender presentations and identities. From Male-to-Female and Female-to-Male to Femme Queen, Boi, Female-born man, Transwoman, Tomboy, Butch, Crossdresser, and many more. Many people who may not identify as "transgender" still face discrimination based on their gender expression and for not conforming to traditional gender presentations.

- **Avoid making assumptions about a trans person's sexual orientation.**
Gender identity is different than sexual orientation. Being gay doesn't mean you're trans and being trans doesn't mean you're gay. Sexual orientation is about who we're attracted to. Gender identity is about how we see ourselves. Trans people can identify as gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, etc.
- **If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask. Politely and respectfully.**
Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so also. Think about sharing your pronoun first – "Hi my name is Kim, I use he/him pronouns, what pronouns do you use?"
- **Confidentiality, Disclosure and "Outing".**
Knowing a trans person's status is personal information and up to them to share with others. Gwen Araujo and Brandon Teena were both murdered when others revealed their trans status. Others routinely lose housing, jobs and friends. Do not casually share this information, or "gossip" about a person you know or think is trans.
- **Avoid assuming the path a transperson is on regarding surgeries or hormones.**
Affirm the many ways all of us can and do transcend gender boundaries, including the choices some of us make to use medical technology to change our bodies. Some trans people wish to be recognized as their gender of choice without surgery or hormones; some need support and advocacy to get respectful medical care, hormones and/or surgeries. Not to mention that many health care needs of trans folks are denied by health insurance companies and financially inaccessible to many.
- **Avoid policing public restrooms and locker rooms.**
Recognize that gender variant people may not match the little signs on the restroom door or your expectations. Encourage businesses and agencies to have gender inclusive restrooms and locker rooms. If appropriate, offer to accompany a trans-person to the bathroom if they would like assistance. Also, call out other's policing of gender in restroom and locker room spaces.
- **Don't just add the "T" without doing work.**
"LGBT" is now commonplace language to show support for queerness. To be an ally for individuals and communities marginalized due to gender and sexuality, people need to examine their own gender stereotypes and transphobia and be willing to defend trans people and celebrate trans lives.
- **Listen to trans voices.**
The best way to be an ally is to listen to trans people themselves. Check out websites, books, organizations and other resources by and for trans and gender non-conforming peopl. Talk to trans folks in your community. They are the experts on their own lives!

Taken from **Transgender Training and Advocacy** by Samuel Lurie. From the University of Minnesota Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life, Transgender Commission <http://glbta.umn.edu/trans/ally.html>