

Working with Transgender Colleagues



With the transgender community becoming more visible, it is not surprising that people may have some questions. The decision to transition to the opposite gender is a very private one. When people decide to make their transition public and live openly, it can be a very challenging time for them. Without a doubt, this is the time when family, friends, and co-workers need to be supportive and respectful. It is important that you respect a person's privacy and how much of their private life and decision to transition they want to share with others. If someone shares personal information with you, be careful about who you share this with. Respect a person's privacy and keep their trust.

Communication Tips

- When transgender men (born female but identify as male) and transgender women (born male but identify as female) begin to live openly in their preferred gender, the use of pronouns can become confusing. When speaking with someone who is transgender listen to hear what pronouns they are using. If you are unsure as to which pronoun to use, it is okay to ask for clarity: “What pronouns do you prefer (She/Her or He/Him)?”
- Respect and use the name that they now use.
- Use open-ended questions that don't make assumptions such as:
 - * “Do you have a partner?” instead of “Are you married?”
 - * “Are you in a relationship?” instead of “Do you have a boy/girlfriend?”

Restrooms

The issue of which restroom to use often becomes a problem for transgender women and men. Using a “Male/Female” sign on a single use restroom is one solution; another is the use of an “All Gender Restroom” sign.



Acceptance Saves Lives

Showing acceptance to friends, family, and colleagues plays a critical role in helping anyone going through transition to know that they are supported in their life choice. “Transgender people who are accepted by their family are less likely to smoke or abuse drugs and alcohol, less likely to attempt suicide, less likely to be incarcerated..... and significantly less likely to experience homelessness.” (National Transgender Discrimination Survey)

Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity

Sexual orientation and gender identity are not the same. Find out more about these and other terms at HRC.org/resources/entry/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions

Find out more at:

- **GLAAD:** Transgender FAQ: GLAAD.org/transgender/transfaq
- **PFLAG:** Straight for Equality Transgender page StraightForEquality.org/trans
- **Human Rights Campaign:** HRC.org/resources/category/transgender
- **Susan's Place:** Provides news for the transgender community and also member chats and information: Susans.org