

Create a Safe and Inclusive Workplace for Transgender Employees

Resource Type: Articles

Topic: HR Risk and Employment Practices

Transgender people may experience discrimination in many ways, including at work. Employers have a legal and moral responsibility to accommodate the needs of transgender workers and not tolerate discrimination. Here are best practices and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming workplace for transgender employees. NOTE: keep in mind that some of the practices below may not be legally required in your state, or may not be required for small employers. Before adopting new policies that expand protections beyond what is required based on your location and/or size, consider discussing your plans with an employment attorney licensed in your state.

Take the Human Rights Campaign's [Gender Identity and Gender Expression Workplace Review](#) to gauge your organization's protections for transgender employees.

1. **Ensure your nondiscrimination policy includes gender identity or expression as a protected category.**

2. **Review organizational policies to ensure they are transgender-inclusive.**

Some examples:

- Do your administrative policies ensure the use of the name and pronouns that correspond to a person's gender identity?
- Do you have a policy that allows people to use restrooms and locker rooms for whatever gender they identify with?
- Do you have inclusive options to allow self-identification of gender identity on internal forms?
- Are your dress codes gender-neutral?
- Do your policies spell out the requirement to keep employees' health status confidential?

Names, Pronouns, and Transitions

3. **Honor transgender employees' chosen names and correct pronouns. Use them every time you refer to the person.** If you slip up, apologize and correct yourself. Do the same with your team members. Communicate that you expect them to do it with each other (and with you, too).

4. **Create written gender transition guidelines. This will help ensure your organization is proactive and respectful to employees who transition while they work for you.** Guidelines should cover issues such as who has the responsibility to help an employee manage their workplace transition. The guidelines should also cover the creation of a comprehensive communications plan for colleagues and clients. And the guidelines should cover providing additional resources such as training and education that may be necessary.

5. **Treat each transition individually.** One transgender employee may want to make a bold public statement of their identity. Another may wish to quietly do their work with their new name and identity. The employee's wishes should shape every aspect of their transition plan.

Show Teammates How to Support Employees Who Transition

6. **Share best practices with your staff on how to support employees who transition.** Encourage employees who see biased behavior to name it clearly, and in a respectful manner. That could involve a private conversation with a colleague to explain the potential harm of a comment they made.
7. **The very best practice to support transgender employees is to ask what they need.** A manager should ask a transgender employee how they'd like to handle it when someone makes a biased comment. The employee may wish to advocate for themselves, or prefer that someone else step in. The manager should share that preference with the team as the transgender employee wishes.
8. **Listen to other employees' concerns about a team member's transition, but don't back down on support for transgender staff.** If employees express discomfort to you about their colleague's transition—such as not wanting to use the same restroom as a transgender person—hear them out. Reiterate your organization's commitment to supporting the employee's transition and why it's important. Suggest alternative approaches if necessary. For example, the person with concerns can use a different restroom than the transgender person uses. Remind employees that they have the right to their opinions, but they also must work with all types of people and treat them with respect.

Commit to Continue Learning

9. **Review the resources below to increase your knowledge of ways to create a safe and inclusive workplace!** A powerful theme in *Think Again*, by Adam Grant, is that a commitment to changing our minds and behaviors is essential for leaders who desire to learn and grow in their roles. As you learn more about a new or unfamiliar topic, look for ways to apply new insights and share what you're learning!

Resources:

- [Transgender Inclusion In The Workplace – A Toolkit For Employers](#), Human Rights Campaign
- [Model Transgender Employment Policy](#), Transgender Law Center
- [Employing Transgender Workers](#) – Society for Human Resource Management
- [Creating A Trans-Inclusive Workplace](#) – *Harvard Business Review*