

Key Terms

Gender Identity

A person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being male, female, something other, or in-between. We all have a gender identity.

Gender Expression

An individual's characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine.

Transgender

An umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity and/or gender expression is different from their birth assigned gender. Transgender women are people who transition from male-to-female (MTF). Transgender men are people who transition from female-to-male (FTM).

Gender Non-Conforming

Gender non-conforming people have, or are perceived to have, gender characteristics that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations.

Transition

The process of changing genders from one's birth assigned gender to one's gender identity. There are many different ways to transition. For some people, it is a complex process that takes place over a long period of time, while for others it is a one- or two-step process that happens more quickly. Transition may include social aspects such as:

- "Coming out": telling one's family, friends, and/or co-workers
- Legal aspects changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents
- Medical aspects such as accessing hormone therapy or possibly medically necessary surgical procedures.

Not all transgender people access medical care as part of their gender transition. Whether they do so does not make their gender transition any less real.

Transgender Law Center changes law, policy, and attitudes so that all people can live safely, authentically, and free from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression.

If you are looking for additional support hiring or working with transgender professionals contact the nation's first transgender employment program, **Transgender Economic Empowerment Initiative (TEEI)**. Visit www.teeisf.org or call 415-865-5632.

To learn more or to get help, please contact **Transgender Law Center** at www.transgenderlawcenter.org.



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Tips for Working with Transgender Coworkers

An information and resource publication for employees



Tips for Working with Transgender Coworkers

Transgender people are employed in every industry and profession throughout the country, and deserve a safe and inclusive workplace. Although employment discrimination based on gender identity is illegal almost everywhere, many transgender people still face harassment and unfair treatment on the job. Helping to ensure that your workplace is free of discrimination and harassment is very simple. The following tips can help you comply with the law while making your workspace safe and welcoming for all employees.

1. DEMONSTRATE RESPECT. Transgender coworkers do not expect any special treatment. They simply want to be respected. Treating a transgender coworker with respect means addressing them by the name and pronoun that reflects their gender identity. Unless they tell you otherwise, transgender women want to be referred to with the pronouns “she” and “her” and transgender men want to be referred to with the pronouns “he” and “him.” If you are unsure of what pronoun to use, you can politely ask your coworker how they would like to be addressed. Also, just like all coworkers, transgender people do not want other employees talking about them behind their backs or making fun of them. Treat your coworkers the way you would want to be treated at work.

2. RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR PERSONAL VALUES AND THE COMMUNITY VALUES OF YOUR WORKPLACE. Some people have political, cultural, and/or religious objections to someone being transgender. Being professional and respectful to a transgender coworker does not require abandoning these beliefs. It does, however, mean that you may not act upon them in the workplace and instead that you uphold common workplace values of dignity and respect for all your coworkers. Transgender and non-transgender employees want to be treated respectfully; the best way to do that is to separate out private values from workplace conduct.

3. RESPECT YOUR COWORKER’S CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY. Many non-transgender people have a lot of questions about their transgender coworker’s gender transition. However, it is inappropriate to ask a coworker – transgender or not – questions about their private medical history, such as whether they have had surgery. It is likely that some coworkers feel comfortable enough with one another to discuss private issues, but it is important that you not assume that your transgender coworker will want to discuss their private health care matters with you if you ask. Instead allow your coworker to initiate any conversation about their transition. And if they do share such information with you, remember to keep it private and not discuss it with others unless you are told that it is OK to do so.



4. DON’T ASSUME THAT YOUR TRANSGENDER COWORKERS KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ALL TRANSGENDER ISSUES. While some transgender coworkers may have a special interest in discussing transgender-related issues, others may not. It might make sense to you to discuss a news story or movie about a transgender issue with your coworker. The same might be true if you have a question about a transgender civil rights or medical issue. Before doing so, however, make sure that your coworker really wants to discuss these things. What you may find is that they have other shared interests with you that they’d much rather discuss. Just because someone is transgender does not mean that they wish to discuss every transgender-related issue that may arise.

5. HELP COWORKERS WHO ARE HAVING TROUBLE WITH ANOTHER EMPLOYEE’S TRANSITION. Sometimes one of your non-transgender coworkers may have difficulty showing respect to their transgender coworker. Others may mistakenly use the transgender coworker’s old name out of habit and may need to be gently reminded about the new name or pronoun. Other times, the person may have trouble separating their personal values from the community values of the workplace. In those instances, it is helpful if you talk to them about how their behavior affects not only your transgender coworker, but you as well. This will help them understand that their actions have larger consequences than they may know.