



Transgender people are employed in every industry and profession and – just like everyone else - they deserve a safe and inclusive workplace. Although employment discrimination based on gender identity is illegal in many states and localities, transgender people still face harassment and unfair treatment on the job.

The following tips can help you to make your workplace safe and welcoming for all employees.



DEMONSTRATE RESPECT

Transgender coworkers do not need or want special treatment - they simply want to be treated respectfully. 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.” Additionally, some trans people prefer different pronouns such as “the” and “them.” 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.



UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORKPLACE AND PERSONAL VALUES

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 and the best way to do that is to separate out private values from workplace conduct.

AVOID BEING INTRUSIVE

It is normal to 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, including questions about surgery and medications. 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. And if they do share such information with you, remember to keep it private and not discuss it with others unless you are explicitly told that it is OK to do so.

DON'T EXPECT YOUR COWORKER TO BE AN EXPERT ON TRANSGENDER ISSUES

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.

SUPPORT INCLUSION

Nobody should have to worry about whether they're allowed to use the toilets at work, so make sure your trans colleague feels safe in these and other same sex spaces. Welcome trans colleagues at appropriate same sex events and be proactive about it so that they don't have to ask if they can come along. Even if your colleague isn't particularly sociable, this will help to make the workplace feel more welcoming.

HELP COWORKERS WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO ACCEPT A TRANS EMPLOYEE

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.