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Template for Gender Transition Guidelines

How to use this template: Please read carefully and adjust the language to reflect your company culture. Specific references to the company name, internal policies, the EAP (if you have one) and the ERG (if you have one) are noted in ***bold italic***.

Company Gender Transition Guidelines

Introduction

Company is an advocate for diversity and equal employment opportunities for all qualified candidates. We do not discriminate on the basis of gender identity or expression. We believe that providing a work environment based on respect, trust, and collaboration creates an exceptional employee experience where employees can bring their whole selves to work and thrive in their careers.

These guidelines are intended for **Company's** transgender and gender non-conforming employees, their coworkers, managers, human resource professionals, LGBT employee group leaders and others who may be involved in a workplace gender transition. It covers best practices for employees and managers as well as how to address customers and clients.

Transgender is a broad umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. This includes people who socially and medically transition, as well as others who simply feel their assigned sex at birth does not reflect their true gender.

About Gender Transition

While the majority of people are comfortable with, and identify with, the physiology and identity they are assigned at birth, there is a portion of the population who are not. These people may or may not identify as transgender. Generally they may take steps to actively change their:

Physiology – which can include hormones, surgery or sex reassignment surgery – i.e. male-to-female or female-to-male, or

Expression – for example clothing, mannerisms, voice, jewelry, vocabulary – to better express and interact with the world as they truly are.

The process of a transgender individual publicly changing his or her gender presentation in society is known as “transitioning”. Not everyone who considers themselves transgender will undergo a medical

(or physiological) transition and those that do may take *all* the steps available to them, or *only some* of them. *Gender transition is a personal process and it is important to note that there is no one way to transition.*

The person transitioning usually legally changes their name as well as their clothing and appearance to coincide with their gender identity. Some will make body changes such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT), sex reassignment surgery (SRS), and/or other components. These changes are medically necessary for people with gender dysphoria and take place under strict medical supervision.

Because of existing stereotypes both in the workplace and society in general, many transgender individuals face difficult situations/interactions in their personal, professional, family, and financial lives simultaneously. This can lead to high stress levels, particularly when individuals are in the initial stages of transitioning.

It is important to realize that each individual undergoing a transition will have their own set of unique factors which will require a customized plan. It is also important for the individual to work with their manager and HR representative in an open and honest way to allow for a smooth process in the workplace.

Best Practices for the Transitioning Employee

If you are the transitioning individual, you have the right to openly be who you are. This means that while still maintaining professional expectations, you may express your gender identity, characteristics or expression without fear of consequences.

With this right, however, also comes the expectation that you will work with others to ensure they understand your needs and you understand the expectations of you.

As part of a team, it is important for you to do your part to make the transition successful and one of the first steps is to inform key personnel who can assist you.

Your first point of contact may be:

- your immediate manager
- your HR representative
- a member of **Company's Employee Assistance Program**
- or a member of your local **LGBTQ Employee Resource Group**

It is important that at some point your immediate manager or HR representative becomes part of your support team.

Remember, as with all employees, you are covered under **Company's** non-discrimination policy; however, **Company** must be aware of your situation in order to provide support. Take the time to explain to the person that you've selected to speak with, your intentions, needs, and concerns. Be aware that your manager and/or HR representative and others may not be educated about transgender issues and may not understand clearly what your needs may be.

You should also be prepared to spend some time educating people, but you don't need to do it alone. Your local **LGBTA Employee Resource Group** can help you think through your ideas and prepare for those discussions. Your local **LGBTA Employee Resource Group** and **Employee Assistance Program** can also get you in touch with other employees who may have transitioned in the workplace and may be able to assist you with questions you may have.

You can access your local **LGBTA Employee Resource Group** by emailing _____. This is a confidential email address only accessible by a senior manager who oversees the LGBTA area of focus.

Best Practices for Managers and HR Representatives

Company is committed to and supports diversity. If someone who reports to you informs you of their desire to transition or if an individual in your workplace is currently in the transition process, your support is critical.

Key Principles

- If you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the transition process, **allow the transitioning individual to educate you** (if they are willing). Additional education and support is available from the *Employee Assistance Program* or the *LGBTA Employee Resource Group* as well as your HR representative.
- **Listen carefully** to what the individual is telling you about how they'd like to be treated. For example, do they want to keep their transition as quiet as possible or do they wish to celebrate publicly?
- **Be open-minded** and discuss the transitioning individual's needs and concerns.
- If you oversee, manage, or lead an employee who is transitioning, it is important that you **demonstrate an understanding, and use a sensitive approach** to their needs and concerns.

Based on past experiences of bias, it may be quite stressful and frightening for the employee to make themselves vulnerable to a person upon whom their job depends. It is important that you make it clear that your conversation will be held in confidence. Also ask their permission to talk to the HR representative for further assistance.

- **Explain any questions and concerns you might have** and ask their opinion on matters covered in subsequent sections.
- Once the employee has made contact with the people manager or HR representative, information must be gathered **before planning the steps** of transition can begin.

The HR representative needs to know when the transitioning employee expects to start to present themselves in their new gender. Usually by the time an employee comes to HR, they will have a date or timeframe in mind for presenting themselves in their new gender.

The employee may also have an idea about when they may need to take some time off for medical needs. These dates can change, depending on the person's readiness at each stage.

- **Provide support:** Employees that have decided to transition are normally exposed to various levels of stress. It is important that you provide information on the *Employee Assistance Program* and other resources for the employee to seek one-on-one counseling during the transition process.

- If the transitioning employee prefers to move work locations, the business should work on a best-effort-basis to move the employee to a similar role, within an appropriate distance.
- If the individual is married or partnered, ask how you should refer to them during and after the transition, e.g. partner, wife, husband, etc. and identify if there are any implications to employer-provided benefits.

Initial Conversations

When an employee contacts their manager or HR representative to explain they are planning to transition and wants to start presenting in their new identity, the employee will need to be assured that we will work with them to help make their transition as smooth as possible. It is often with great anxiety that the individual has come to this point as they would have heard stories from other individuals who have transitioned in the workplace who may have been treated badly at work, so this assurance is important.

Second, the employee should be reassured that the information they share will be treated with absolute confidentiality. The employee has probably taken great care to safeguard their status and wants to be sure this information will be disclosed at an appropriate time and in a respectful manner.

In addition, the employee would like to feel confident that the individuals who will help plan their transition will take steps to inform themselves about transgender and the transition process.

Finally, the transitioning employee would like to be assured that they will have input into planning the steps of their transition at work. The employee should always have the main voice in the timing of beginning to work in their new gender role and any changes in their workplace routine.

Respecting the Individual's Privacy

Not only do the specific steps of transition and their timing vary, individuals also differ in how public they want to be as they transition.

Some individuals prefer that very few people know they are about to transition and hope that after the transition they can quietly blend in as members of their new gender. Others are committed to educating the public about transitioning and are eager to answer questions, and continue to talk openly about being transgender long after transition.

Work situations vary, too. The type of workforce; the nature of work being done; the amount of interaction the individual employee has with peers and customers and the surrounding culture all have a bearing on how the transition should be handled. For all these reasons, **there is no single formula for managing transitions in the workplace.**

It is important to work closely with the employee to ensure we respect their privacy and their preference on the amount of information that should be shared with the rest of the employees. It is essential that open and honest communication be established to build trust for each party. With each right, also comes responsibility or an expectation. A successful transition in the workplace can only occur with commitment and understanding of each involved party.

Control over the flow of information is very important in managing the transition process. The manner in which co-workers and clients are informed about the employee's change and the timing of this

disclosure are critical in making the transition progress smoothly. Therefore, confidentiality should be a primary concern in the early stages of transition planning.

Dealing with Customer Standards

Transgender individuals who deal with customers are held to the same appearance and behavior standards as everyone else. Serving clients is no reason to deny a transitioning individual the right to dress and present in their chosen gender. Client and employee preference is not a reason to deny a transitioning individual the right to dress and present in their chosen gender.

Communicating with clients may require difficult conversations so a meeting should be held with the transitioning employee beforehand to clarify how certain situations should be handled.

Telling Co-Workers

If the transitioning employee has a people manager who has not been part of the initial conversation but will be impacted by the transition, they should be told about the upcoming transition shortly before the employee's co-workers are told.

A meeting is usually the best setting for informing co-workers, and the need for appropriately timed and respectful communication about the transitioning employee should be stressed.

This information meeting should be timed to occur a week or two **before** the transitioning individual begins presenting themselves in their new gender role. Not everyone needs to be informed; however, co-workers, managers and other employees with close contact should be included.

At this meeting, it is extremely important to reinforce **Company's** commitment to diversity and be supportive of the employee as they deal with this difficult medical issue. You should also be aware of how helpful it can be to everyone involved to have senior management express support. A letter or memo of support for the individual as they deal with this issue as well as restating the commitment to **Company's** diversity vision will go a long way to both lessening the stress on the individual transitioning and avoiding potential backlash from fellow employees.

It is also important to recognize that people's feelings about sex and gender are issues that can raise strong emotions and discomfort. While stressing to everyone that this is a medical issue, like many others, employees should be encouraged to examine their feelings and speak to the appropriate resources if necessary. HR representatives, as well as subject matter experts who are there to provide training, can be a valuable resource to draw out feelings and avoid potential situations before they become a problem.

Sometimes the employee who is transitioning wants to personally tell a few co-workers with whom they are close before everyone else is told. This is fine as long as these co-workers are asked to keep the information confidential. All other co-workers should be told at the meeting that one of their co-workers will be transitioning and who that person is. The transitioning employee can be present at the beginning and may wish to speak either personally or in the form of a letter that can be read or handed out; however, it is usually best for them to then leave so that the other employees feel comfortable asking questions or raising concerns. This disclosure meeting should also include a training component.

It is strongly recommended that the manager and HR representative work closely with an outside expert on transgender issues and gender transition. This expert should be at the initial meeting to answer any questions employees may have. If possible, have the expert available for 1-on-1 sessions for additional information and support.

Managing Day-to-Day Issues in the Workplace:

Appearance Standards

A transgender employee is permitted to dress consistently with their gender identity and is required to comply with the same standards of dress and appearance that apply to all other people in their workplace and similar position. Managers have the same right to review a transitioning individual's professional attire as they do any other individual.

If a transgender employee dresses inappropriately, this should be addressed in a manner consistent with any other employee. Dress codes requiring employees to wear appropriate clothing apply to all employees and should be clarified.

Any concerns should be addressed with the employee directly. Take care not to use personal opinions to judge a colleague's professional appearance. If the individual dresses or behaves inappropriately according to the dress code, this issue should be dealt with in the same manner it would be addressed with any other individual.

Restroom and Locker Room Access

Restroom and locker room access issues need to be handled with sensitivity. It is our obligation to provide transgender people with the same level of facility access available to non-transgender people. However, we must consider and be aware of the emotional responses of co-workers that share facilities with a transgender co-worker.

Our policy is that all employees are permitted to use the facilities that correspond with their gender identity. For example, a person who identifies as a man is permitted to use men's restrooms, and a person who identifies as a woman is permitted to use women's restrooms. All employees should determine the most appropriate and safest option for him- or herself.

Where possible, **Company** has provided additional options including:

- Single-occupancy gender-neutral (unisex) facilities; and
- Use of multiple-occupant, gender-neutral restroom facilities with lockable single occupant stalls.

Note: any employee may choose to use these options, but no one, including a transgender person, is required to.

As with restrooms, all employees have the right to use the locker room appropriate to their gender identity. **Company** has taken steps to provide for additional privacy in its locker rooms for those employees who desire more privacy – not just a transgender employee – but any employee who values increased privacy.

Conversations with co-workers around concerns about restroom and locker room access are usually best handled by the training expert at the initial meeting as they have the experience to deal with the matter appropriately. Co-workers, who still have personal concerns about sharing a restroom or locker room with a transgender individual, should be invited to have an honest discussion with an appropriate manager or HR representative. In the long run, co-workers uncomfortable with sharing a restroom with a transgender individual should be the ones asked to travel to a different floor or work area to use the facilities (do not ask the transgender person to go out of their way).

Name and Gender Changes

Legal name and gender “marker” (i.e., “M” or “F” on legal identity documents) changes can sometimes take months or even years to get updated depending on the circumstances. Until then, every effort should be made to use the new name and gender marker on all documentation. (e.g. email, phone directory, company identification card or access badge, name plate, etc.) The only exception is where records must match the person’s legal name, such as on payroll and insurance documents.

Employees with a legal change of name and/or gender marker should notify HR via *(insert your company process here)*. This change should update all internal and benefits-related systems.

In everyday written and oral communication, the new name and pronouns should be used when the individual is ready.

Using the Appropriate Pronoun

If a co-worker is transitioning and you are not certain which pronouns to use, it is appropriate to respectfully ask his or her name and which pronouns you should use.

In general, it’s considered insensitive to refer to someone by the wrong pronoun once you have established what he or she prefers. Transitioning individuals should also be prepared to understand honest mistakes and help educate their co-workers as necessary.

Continued and prolonged use of the incorrect name and/or pronouns to refer to a colleague can be considered harassment and will be addressed under *Company’s Harassment, Discrimination & Violence in the Workplace Policy*.

Leave Benefits for Employees

Managers should provide sufficient flexibility to meet the individual’s needs for appointments. Time off for medical appointments and procedures is to be granted on the same basis as for any other scheduled medical appointments and procedures.

Medical Care

Employees (and covered dependents) in the process of transitioning may wish to have appropriate medical care to support their transition including treatments such as hormone replacement therapy and/or gender reassignment surgery. *Company’s* health insurance provides coverage for transgender care as follows:

Summarize coverage here and attach summary of plan benefits to this document

Employees who have questions or difficulty accessing coverage are encouraged to contact ***Department Name & Contact Person*** for assistance.

As with other aspects of a transition, plans should be discussed and communicated only with affected parties in order to manage expectations and to minimize disruption. Medical information, including surgery plans communicated by an individual, should be treated confidentially.

Right to Privacy & Confidentiality

Transgender employees at **Company** have the right to be who they are without unnecessary disclosure of medical information or gender history. In addition, current and prospective employees who encounter problems concerning identification documentation, such as payroll and insurance forms, should feel comfortable raising those concerns with their manager or HR representative.

The transgender status of an individual is considered confidential and should only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis, and only with the consent of the individual. However, transitioning individuals are encouraged to participate in the necessary education of their co-workers at whatever level they are comfortable.

Addressing Concerns of Co-workers and Customers

The likelihood of negative reactions can be reduced by establishing a culture of appreciation of differences, providing adequate training, and treating all employees fairly.

A diverse workplace means that employees must be able to work with all kinds of people. It is not required that they “believe in” or accept an individual’s right to be transgender. All employees are entitled to their beliefs, but everyone should be required to treat the transitioning employee and every other employee, with respect and without bias. A lack of knowledge about transgender issues has the potential for creating misunderstanding and tension in the workplace.

While everyone is expected to conduct themselves in accordance with **Company’s Harassment, Discrimination & Violence in the Workplace Policy**, we must also ensure that a forum is made available for individuals to express their concerns, ask questions and learn about transitioning in the workplace. It is important to always have a subject matter expert available to help in answering questions or concerns.

“Sensitivity” Training

In addition to a potential workgroup meeting where the individual’s manager or HR representative may announce the transition, training or briefing sessions for employees on transgender issues are recommended. Training helps reduce fear of the unknown and helps promote a positive work environment for all employees. Training or briefing sessions should be completed prior to the individual’s transition. This provides important information to co-workers, managers and customers on what to expect when the individual begins his or her transition. Establishing some level of comfort as to what the transition is and why it is happening is important for preventing future misunderstandings or issues.

Monitoring for Signs of Resentment & Hostility

Co-workers sometimes feel resentful of the transgender employee. They may believe that the transgender employee is being given special privileges, is being allowed to get away with things they could not, or is being given more attention and consideration than they are. HR representatives should remind these employees that they are protected by the same laws and policies that protect the transgender employee. If they were in a minority with regard to race, nationality or religion, or if they became disabled, they too would receive appropriate accommodation and protection against discrimination that the transgender employee is receiving.

In some workplaces, co-workers express their hostility toward the transgender employee (due to a lack of knowledge). They may express this by refusing to use the new name and correct pronouns, verbally harassing the employee or refusing to work with the employee. The transgender employee will often not report such behavior because they believe it may increase the harassment and reinforce the idea that the transgender employee is trying to get others in trouble. Reporting the behaviors may be seen as a sign of weakness or may bring retaliation.

Managers must be proactive in monitoring behavior toward the transgender employee and provide a way for the employee to report harassment confidentially. Any harassment that is taking place should be dealt with immediately to send a clear message to all employees that this behavior is unacceptable and will have consequences for the employees involved.

People who raise concerns about a transgender co-worker should be coached to differentiate personal beliefs from appropriate workplace behaviors where necessary. They will need to work cooperatively with their co-workers regardless of their gender identity and failure to do so could result in disciplinary action. The employee should also be provided with ***Company's Harassment, Discrimination & Violence in the Workplace Policy***.

If people express concern regarding the appearance of a transgender co-worker after reviewing ***Company's*** policies or if they are curious about the change in appearance of an employee who has transitioned, the people manager should meet with team members individually to inform them of the change and to answer questions.

Coaching the Transitioning Employee

Sometimes a transitioning employee is excited about the changes they are going through and wants to share the details with others, but co-workers may object to hearing about their transition. A caution to the transitioning employee to discuss these matters only after checking to make sure everyone within hearing wants to listen, or saving these conversations for outside the workplace, may be all that is needed.

Some transgender employees may be too sensitive about people making honest mistakes with their name and pronouns. The employee should be reminded to give people a chance to get used to their new presentation. The transitioning employee has had years to learn to cope with the fact that their gender identity did not match their body, and their co-workers may need some time to adjust as well.

HR Representative Role

In addition to ensuring these best practices for managers are followed, HR representatives need to ensure that the people manager is supported throughout the entire transitioning process. Regular check-ins not only with the manager and the transitioning employee are important.

HR representatives need to work closely with the manager and the transitioning employee to ensure individual and team meetings are scheduled appropriately and the proper external support is being leveraged.

HR representative also need to keep a close 'pulse' on the business unit to ensure there are no negative issues in the workplace that are not being addressed.

Lastly, HR representatives are advised to check-in over the long term and not just during the initial transition process. Some issues may not surface until some time has passed and the initial focus on transition is over.

Contact your employee advisory contract if you have additional questions.

For external training support, contact the **senior manager for Corporate Diversity** overseeing the area for LGBTA.

Terminology

The following terms are ‘text book’ definitions. Considerations should be taken around level setting in each conversation to ensure everyone involved is using the applicable terms in the same way.

Ally – An ally is a supporter or advocate for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender community. Being an ally is about using inclusive language, showing respect and support for your colleagues and in this case, members of the LGBT community through your actions and your words. Typically, allies to the lesbian, gay and bisexual people are straight and allies to transgender people are cisgender.

Cisgender is a term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior aligns with those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. It is the accepted term for people who are “not transgender.”

Gender The term “gender,” while often used interchangeably with “sex,” refers specifically to the behavioral, cultural, psychological or social traits typically associated with one sex, rather than biological characteristics.

Gender Dysphoria Many transgender and gender non-conforming people experience discomfort from the strong internal sense that their true gender identity does not match their physical sex. The medical term for this discomfort, which can be severe, is “gender dysphoria,” and it is listed as a mental disorder in the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition” published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2013. Not all transgender people experience or are diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

Prior to 2013, gender dysphoria was previously diagnosed as “gender identity disorder” or GID, but the APA replaced the word “disorder” with “dysphoria” in the diagnostic label as it is not only more appropriate and consistent with familiar clinical sexology terminology, it also removes the connotation that the patient is “disordered” and the associated stigma.

Gender Expression refers to all of a person’s external characteristics and behaviors — such as clothing, grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions — that represent or express one’s gender identity to others. Social or cultural norms can vary widely and some characteristics that may be accepted as masculine, feminine or neutral in one culture may not be assessed similarly in another.

A person’s gender expression may also be referred to as their “**gender presentation.**” Workplace practices should generally apply to an employee’s full-time gender presentation.

Gender Identity, distinct from the term “sexual orientation,” refers to a person’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. Gender Non-conforming refers to individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender. Gender non-conforming, like transgender, is an umbrella term and includes people who may identify as “genderqueer,” as neither a man nor a woman, or as “gender fluid.”

Gender Transition refers to the process through which a person modifies their physical characteristics and/or gender expression to be consistent with their gender identity. It is important to note that gender

transition is an individual and personal process, and there is no “one correct way” to transition. Gender transition may, but does not necessarily, include hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgeries and/or other medical or surgical components. The transition process may also include non-medical components such as telling one’s family, friends and/or co-workers, and changing one’s name and/or gender on legal documents such as one’s driver’s license, birth certificate and social security card.

Any physical part of someone’s transition process is generally conducted under medical supervision based on a set of standards developed by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and endorsed by major medical associations such as the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Psychological Association (APA).

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

Sex refers to the classification of people as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of biological characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs.

Sexual orientation describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example, a man who transitions from male to female and is attracted to other women would be identified as a lesbian or a gay woman.

Transgender refers to people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad, umbrella term and is good for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for transgender.” (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun or verb, thus “transgender people” is appropriate but “transgenders” and “transgendered” are often viewed as disrespectful.)

Transgender, as an umbrella term, encompasses transsexuals, genderqueers and other gender non-conforming people. Not all people who consider themselves, or who may be considered by others, as transgender will undergo a gender transition.

Additional Resources

HRC – Human Rights Campaign - The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is the largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) lobbying group and political action committee in the United States. The HRC mission statement is "HRC envisions an America where gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are ensured equality and embraced as full members of the American family at home, at work and in every community." www.HRC.org/workplace/transgender

PFLAG - Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is a group of family members and friends of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people. According to PFLAG's mission statement, the organization "promotes the health and well-being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. www.PFLAG.org

Guidance for the Transitioning Employee: Developing a Plan

Our culture values process-oriented planning. We recommend creating an engagement plan to help smooth the transition process. A plan also helps reduce uncertainties and provides a common road map for everyone.

1. Get support from the people around you As a transitioning individual, you should try to create a support team. Try to involve your manager, HR representative and/or other supportive co-workers to work together to develop an appropriate plan for you and your business. The following is a suggested list of things to consider and discuss with your support team.

2. Develop a stakeholders list

- Who are all the people in the work group you may need to engage at some point during the transition? Example, HR representative, NAME
- When do they need to be engaged?
- Are there any specific issues that need to be addressed sooner rather than later?

3. Create a timeline – suggested: what are your milestones?

- Discuss the expected timeline
- Block out dates such as legal name change, transition milestones and other events.
- Review the stakeholder list and develop the program to allow time for education.
- Anticipated time off required for medical treatment, if known.

4. Things to Consider

- How would you like your team to find out about your transition? (e.g. letter, face-to-face meeting, individual discussions, your manager/HR representative)
- Will you need to make workspace changes during the transition?
- How long do certain HR functions take? (e.g. legal name changes, company directories, etc.)
- How do you think your clients should be informed?
- When will you need to process any necessary changes to professional licenses?
- List all the things that a new employee must do during the first week of employment. How long do these normally take?
- Do a search for your current name on the company's intranet for team rosters and other references. How many of these pages will need to be altered or removed?

Guidance for Co-Workers

The moment a friend, loved one, colleague or acquaintance makes the decision to ‘come out’ as transgender, is always a unique event. Understand that when someone ‘comes out’ to you, it is an act of trust – and that person deems you trustworthy. There is no one ‘right’ way to demonstrate your support – and being supportive does not require you to march in parades or become an activist. (Although you are welcome!)

Be as open and honest as you would like your co-worker to be with you.

- If this is new for you -- and if you feel awkward, say so.
- Ask your co-worker to be honest with you about what you say or do, which may make him or her uncomfortable.
- Let your co-worker know if they say or do something that makes you uncomfortable.
- Ask the ‘dumb questions’ but also understand if the person declines to answer. Usually these questions are best asked of the external facilitator/support because they are a neutral third party and are usually happy to help both during and afterward the training is complete.
- Take the time to talk and be prepared to listen.

Here are some “ally” behaviors that help create an inclusive workplace:

- Don’t make assumptions about a person’s sexuality or gender. Not everyone’s appearance or behavior plays to stereotypes.
- Know and understand **Company’s** policies on sexual orientation and gender identity: non-discrimination, harassment, domestic partner benefits, bereavement leave, etc.
- Let your co-workers know that you won’t tolerate even subtle forms of discrimination or harassment in the workplace.
- Join your local **LGBTA Employee Resource Group** network.

Why become an ally?

- Make a positive impact on a fellow employee’s life
- Become a better leader
- Personal and professional growth
- Personal satisfaction
- Help create a better and more productive workplace
- Career networking
- Champion and celebrate all aspects of diversity