

# **Supporting Transitioning Employees**

**GUIDELINES FOR BEST PRACTICES**

# Understanding the Basics

## 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.

## Transitioning

is a process of making changes related to one's gender identity and/or gender expression. A person who is transitioning may make physical and social changes to reflect their gender identity. For example, they may choose a new name, go by different pronouns, and/or wear different styles of clothing. However, transitioning looks different for each individual, and these steps are not required. Respecting all transgender people is vital regardless of what their transition process looks like.

# How Can I Support Transitioning Employees?

## What are my Responsibilities as a Manager/Supervisor?

### DO:

- » Make it clear to transitioning employees that your actions will be dictated by their needs. The employee needs to know that their choices matter and decisions will not be made for them.
- » Politely ask which name and pronouns the transitioning individual would like to use at work, and refer to the individual this way consistently. This sets an example for other staff to follow.
- » Remind staff of their responsibility to respect trans colleagues.

### DO NOT:

- » Disclose the person's trans identity to anyone else without their consent.
- » Ask to see proof of an employee's legal name or gender change. Employees have the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns of their choice in the workplace regardless of legal documentation.
- » Ask the individual personal questions about their transition, such as whether they plan to get surgery or take hormones. These topics are not relevant to the person's work performance, and it is inappropriate to ask out of curiosity.

# Key Principles

If you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the transition process, **allow the transitioning individual to educate you** (if they are willing).

## 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.

Also ask their permission to talk to the HR representative for further assistance.

# Initial Conversations

The employee will need to be assured that we will work with them to help make their transition as smooth as possible.

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.

## Respecting the Individual's Privacy

**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.

## Pronoun Etiquette

If you don't know what pronouns to use, listen first. If you must ask which pronoun the person uses, start with your own. For example, "Hi, I'm Alex and I use the pronouns he and him. What about you?" Then use that person's pronoun and encourage others to do so.

## Restrooms

### Gender-Neutral Restrooms




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 on-transgender people. However, we must consider and be aware of the emotional responses of co-workers that share facilities with a transgender co-worker.

**Recommended 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 themselves.

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, coworkers 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).

## Additional Resources

### Office of LGBT Affairs

-  [phila.gov/lgbt](https://phila.gov/lgbt)
-  (215) 686-0330
-  [lgbtinfo@phila.gov](mailto:lgbtinfo@phila.gov)

## Uniform / Dress Code

**Recommended policy is that transgender employees are permitted to dress consistently with their gender identity** and are 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.

## Declared Name / Legal Name

### Definitions

**LEGAL NAME:** An individual's legal name as it appears on official governmental documents, such as social security cards, licenses, passports, and tax forms. **This is often referred to as "Dead Name"**

**DECLARED NAME:** An alternative to an individual's legal first name, used by a person to refer to themselves as designated in College systems and records.

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 permitted 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.