

It's more than a bathroom issue:
Gender identity and expression issues in science

Cianán Russell

Georgia Institute of Technology

intraa

Definitions

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to transsexuals, crossdressers, androgynous people, genderqueers, and gender non-conforming people. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.”

Gender Identity: An individual’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 Expression: How a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

Transition: The period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. Transitioning may include changing one’s name, taking hormones, having surgery, or changing legal documents (e.g. driver’s license, Social Security record, birth certificate) to reflect their new gender

Transgender Prevalence

- There are no hard numbers to quote
- Estimates put the number of transgender individuals between 0.25% and 1% of the US population
 - Between 400 and 1600 ACS members on the transgender spectrum

Discrimination and Consequences

- 26% of transgender people have been fired because of their gender identity
- 97% of transgender people have been harassed on the job
- 19% of transgender people have been homeless because of their gender identity
- While only 7% of the US population have incomes below the poverty line (\$10,000 per year)
 - 15% of transgender people live below the poverty line
 - 28% of Latin transgender people and 35% of Black transgender people live below the poverty line

Corporate and University Protections

- Of the approximately 4000 colleges and universities in the US, 390 (about 10%) have nondiscrimination policies that include gender identity and/or expression¹
- 43% of Fortune 500 companies include gender identity in their nondiscrimination policies²

¹ Transgender Law and Policy Institute; transgenderlaw.org

² Human Rights Campaign; hrc.org

Common Issues

What issues do you think would come up for transgender individuals in your workplace?

Common Issues

- Coming out to coworkers, clients
- Impact on work environment
 - Productivity issues
 - Working/personal relationships
 - Exclusion/marginalization
- Clothing, appearance
- Restrooms, locker rooms
- Healthcare policies
- Transgender HR issues

Recommendations: Coming out

- Designate a point of contact in HR
- Offer training and educational materials to employees
- Mutually plan a transition strategy
- Strive for least restrictive options
- Promote respect for personal privacy

Recommendations: Work environment

- Model the values that you want your employees to display
- Offer training and educational materials to employees
- Provide an avenue for employees to voice concerns
- Avoid unnecessary changes to team dynamics
- Anticipate a period of adjustment

Recommendations: Clothing and appearance requirements

- Expect adherence to current dress policy (e.g., business casual) by all employees
- Support a transgender employee in wearing clothing consistent with his or her gender identity
- Communicate this support to others in the workplace

Recommendations: Restrooms and locker rooms

- Make safety of transgender person a primary consideration
- Don't assume that a transgender employee poses a threat to other employees simply because he or she is transgender
- Make sure adequate facilities are available for all employees, including transgender employees
- Work with employees to find least restrictive alternatives
- Don't disproportionately burden the transgender person
- Consider unisex restrooms

Recommendations: Healthcare

- Ensure that transgender people receive the same level of medical services as other employees
- Provide training for company health care and benefits professionals
- Advocate for insurance policies that cover transgender related treatments
- Consider allowing transgender people to see their own doctors for physicals

Recommendations: HR issues

- Implement written HR Guidelines that address the process of workplace transition
- Be aware of and sensitive to personal documentation issues
- Communicate commitment to gender identity policies
- Serve as a guiding resource to departments when issues arise

Acknowledgements

- American Chemical Society Professional Relations Division, Gay, Transgender and Allies Subdivision
- Indiana Transgender Rights Advocacy Alliance (INTRAA)