



Union Guide to Discussing LGBTQ People and Issues

As LGBTQ issues continue to be at the forefront of our national dialogue, it is important for union members and leaders to be able to discuss these topics effectively and non-offensively. This guide seeks to introduce the basic language and concepts inherent in any discussion of the LGBTQ experience in the workplace.

Pride at Work's Perspective

- We are pro-union and pro-equality. In keeping with the labor movement motto, “an injury to one is an injury to all,” we support a strong and progressive labor movement that promotes full equality and respect for LGBTQ workers and their families.
- Unions have a moral and legal obligation to their members to provide fair representation, which includes representing LGBTQ union members and their unique issues equally.
- Unions have a proud track record of standing up for civil, human, and women’s rights, and union organizing continues to be one of the most effective ways for the LGBTQ community and all workers to fight discrimination, poverty, and income inequality.

The Basics

LGBT/LGBTQ – Stands for **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender**, and **Queer**. The order and letters included can vary, but LGBTQ is considered standard, currently.

Lesbian – a woman whose primary romantic, emotional, physical, and sexual attractions are to other women.

Gay – a man whose primary romantic, emotional, physical, and sexual attractions are to other men. The term is also sometimes used generically to describe sexual orientation regardless of gender.

Bisexual – a person who has significant romantic, emotional, physical, and/or sexual attractions to members of both sexes. The frequency, intensity, or quality of attraction is not necessarily directed toward both sexes equally.

Transgender – a broad term that applies to people who live all or substantial portions of their lives expressing a sense of gender that differs from the sex and gender role they were assigned to at birth. It includes transsexuals, people who feel their biological sex fails to reflect their true gender, and people who refuse to identify with any gender. "Trans" is a prefix that signifies over, beyond, or on the other side. Combined with gender, it gives the idea of a gender spectrum, rather than a male vs. female dichotomy.

Questioning – a term for people who are unsure of their sexuality and still in the process of exploring and wish not to be labeled.

Queer: an umbrella term used by some in place of LGBTQ to be more inclusive (e.g. “The queer

community crosses all demographic lines”). Also sometimes used as a term of identity (e.g. “I am a queer woman.”) which generally indicates an open-ended identity.

Use of the word “Queer” Opinions vary on the use of “queer” – it has historically been a slur, but some in the LGBTQ community have reclaimed it as their own. For broad public usage and in formal written materials, and especially for allies, “LGBT” or “LGBTQ” are more appropriate.

What is an ally?

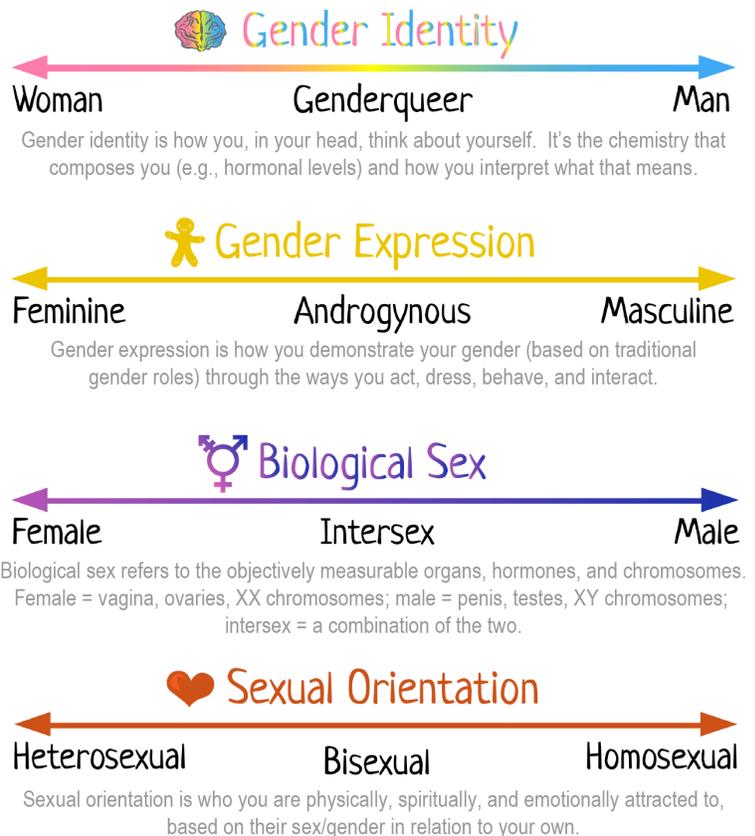
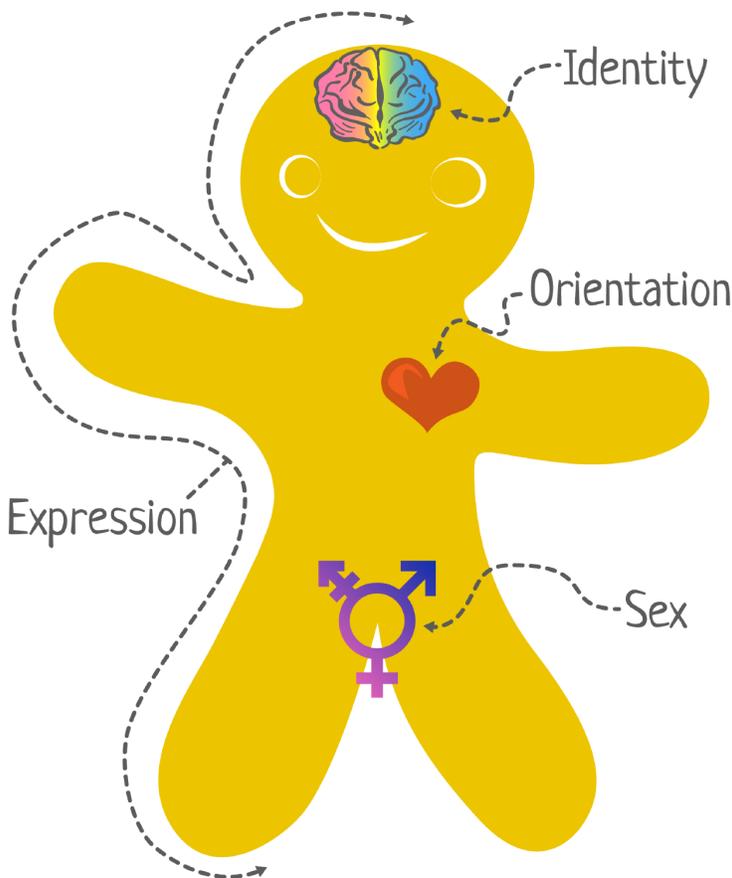
In LGBTQ terms, an ally is any heterosexual (“straight”) person who opposes heterosexism and homophobia and supports LGBTQ individuals and causes.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Biological Sex

As the graphic below illustrates, sexual orientation, biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression are separate and distinct parts of your identity. Understanding these concepts is key to understanding LGBTQ issues and priorities.

Sexual orientation: Everyone has a sexual orientation, even if we haven’t thought about it. Your sexual orientation is simply how we describe physical and emotional attraction between two people. Heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual are examples.

The Genderbread Person



What is Gender?

Gender is not the same as sex. Sex refers to the biological differences between women and men. Gender refers to the different social roles that define women and men in a specific cultural context. Your gender is assigned at birth based on those attributes. Gender identities and roles vary greatly in different societies and cultures. Age, race, and class are major factors that determine our gender roles. Over a lifetime, these roles can be fluid.

Biological sex: Your DNA and physical anatomy make up your biological sex. Male, female, and intersex are the terms used to describe one's biological sex.

Gender identity: A person's innate sense of gender – how one thinks of one's own gender. For most of us, our biological sex and gender identity are not in conflict.

Gender expression: The way in which a person presents their gender – the outward way one's gender identity is expressed.

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad 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, thus "transgender people" is appropriate but "transgenders" is often viewed as disrespectful.) In the same vein, "transgendered" is also not an appropriate term. The converse term is cisgender.

Cisgender: A term used to describe a person who is comfortable with the gender identity and expression they were assigned due to their physical attributes. The converse term is transgender.

About Homophobia

Homophobia is negative feelings, attitudes, actions or behaviors towards anyone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc. - or perceived to be any of these. Institutionalized homophobia refers to homophobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions.

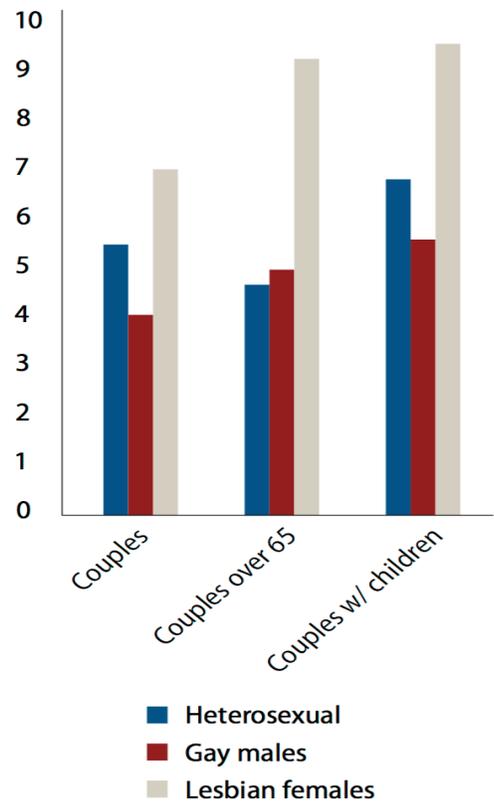
Transphobia and **Biphobia** refer to similar feelings, attitudes, and actions specifically directed towards transgender or bisexual people, respectively.

LGBTQ Economic Facts

- Among women 18-44 years old, more than a quarter of bisexual women are poor (29.4%) and more than 1 in 5 lesbians are in poverty (22.7%), a rate higher than the poverty rate among heterosexual women (21.1%).
- Similarly, a greater percentage of gay (20.5%) and bisexual men (25.9%) fell at or below the federal poverty line than heterosexual men (15.3%).
- For both women and men in the Gallup data, one in five LGBTQ people who live alone report an income at or below the poverty level. The poverty rate for heterosexual people living alone is lower.
- Children in same-sex couple households are almost twice as likely to be poor as in married different-sex couple households.
- African American children in gay male households have the highest poverty rate (52.3%) of any children in any household type, and the rate for African American children living with lesbian couples is 37.7%.
- Low levels of education tend to increase poverty more for women in same-sex couples than for men.
- Women in same-sex couples are more likely to be among the “working poor,” with higher poverty rates than for men in same-sex couples or different-sex married couples.
- Women in same-sex couples who have a disability are more likely to be poor.

Poverty amongst couples and families

Poverty rate



Graphic Source: Center for American Progress
Economic Data Source: Williams Institute

Additional Terms

Asexual: A sexual orientation characterized by a persistent lack of sexual attraction toward any gender.

Pansexual: A sexual orientation not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity.

Gender non-conforming: Refers to people who do not follow other people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

Transsexual: An older term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth who seeks to transition from male to female or female to male. Many do not prefer this term because it is thought to sound overly clinical.

Genderqueer: A term used to describe those who do not subscribe to conventional gender

distinctions but identify with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders.

Intersex: A term used for people who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex conditions are also known as differences of sex development (DSD).

Transvestite: An outdated term that refers to people who sometimes cross-dress, or dress in clothing typically associated with the opposite sex. Many cross-dressers are heterosexual and typically present themselves in a manner consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Cross-dresser: The appropriate term for someone who identifies in this way. Note that many people who identify as transgender do not identify as cross-dressers.

About Pride at Work

We are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender labor and our allies. UNION YES!

Pride at Work is a nonprofit organization and an officially recognized constituency group of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations.) We build power for LGBTQ working people and organize support between the organized labor movement and the LGBTQ community for social and economic justice. In addition to our national Pride at Work office, we have chapters that organize at the state and local level around the country.

Our Mission

We seek full equality without restrictions or barriers for LGBTQIA+ individuals in our workplaces, unions, and communities, creating a Labor Movement that cherishes diversity, promotes inclusion, encourages openness, and ensures safety & dignity. We do this through education, alliances, and building solidarity across our large and diverse communities.

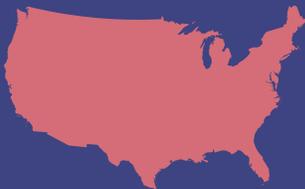
Organizing in the spirit of “An Injury to One is An Injury to All,” we oppose all forms of bias and discrimination on the job, in our unions, and in the public square based on sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, veteran status, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, age, disability, HIV status, marital status, religion, or political views.

We recognize that true justice and equality can only be achieved through an organized and empowered working class. We seek to promote the ability of all working people to self-organize and act collectively to advance the power, needs, and interests of the working class in addition to the principles of justice, true democracy, and equality.



PRIDE AT WORK

UNION



A UNION CONTRACT CAN SHIELD YOU FROM DISCRIMINATION IN THE 28 STATES THAT CURRENTLY DO NOT HAVE ANY LAWS PROTECTING LGBTQ WORKING PEOPLE FROM BEING FIRED.

WHETHER IT'S COVERAGE FOR HIV/AIDS MEDICATION OR GENDER CONFIRMATION SURGERY, PEOPLE IN UNIONS HELP ENSURE LGBTQ WORKING PEOPLE HAVE THEIR HEALTHCARE NEEDS MET.



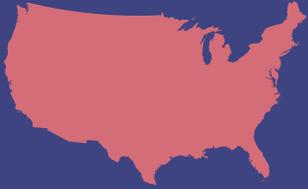
STANDING TOGETHER IN UNION PREVENTS WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION. IN DISPUTES WITH YOUR EMPLOYER, A UNION REPRESENTATIVE CAN ACT AS YOUR ADVOCATE TO ENSURE A FAIR AND EQUITABLE RESOLUTION.

CONTRACTS CAN ADDRESS WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS, SUCH AS BATHROOM ACCESS, WHICH CAN HELP TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING PEOPLE FEEL SAFER AND MORE RESPECTED AT WORK.



BY JOINING TOGETHER IN UNION WE BUILD POWER, WHICH ULTIMATELY HELPS US CHANGE THE RULES TO BENEFIT US ALL - INCLUDING LGBTQ WORKING PEOPLE. WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER.

SINDICATO



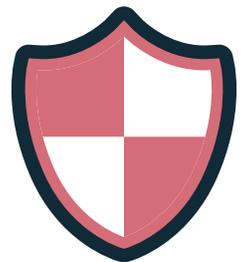
UN CONTRATO DEL SINDICATO LE PUEDE PROTEGER DE LA DISCRIMINACIÓN EN LOS 28 ESTADOS QUE TODAVÍA NO TIENEN LEYES PROTEGIENDO A LOS TRABAJADORES LGBTQ DE SER DESPEDIDOS.

TANTO PARA LOS MEDICAMENTOS DEL VIH/SIDA COMO PARA CIRUGÍA DE CONFIRMACIÓN DE GÉNERO, EL SINDICATO PUEDE ASEGURAR QUE LOS TRABAJADORES LGBTQ TIENEN SEGURO DE SALUD ADECUADO Y ACESIBLE.



LUCHANDO JUNTOS EN EL SINDICATO PREVIENE EL ACOSO Y LA DISCRIMINACIÓN EN EL LUGAR DE TRABAJO. EN CONFLICTOS CON SU EMPLEADOR, UN REPRESENTANTE DEL SINDICATO LE DEFIENDE PARA ASEGURAR UNA RESOLUCIÓN JUSTA.

LOS CONTRATOS DEFIENDEN A LAS NORMAS DE SEGURIDAD EN EL LUGAR DE TRABAJO, COMO EL ACCESO AL BAÑO, LO QUE AYUDA A LAS PERSONAS TRANSGÉNERO SENTIRSE MÁS SEGURAS Y RESPETADAS EN EL TRABAJO.



LUCHANDO JUNTOS EN EL SINDICATO, CREAMOS EL PODER QUE NOS PERMITE A CAMBIAR LAS REGLAS PARA BENEFICIAR A TODOS - INCLUYENDO A PERSONAS LGBTQ. SOMOS MAS FUERTES JUNTOS.



Nondiscrimination: Legal Protection for LGBTQ Working People

At a glance:

- In the majority of states (28), it is legal to fire a worker for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender¹.
- Pride at Work supports a federal ban on discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, such as the Equality Act.
- Union contracts are legally enforceable in every state. An inclusive union contract (one that includes non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression) can serve as legal protection for LGBTQ working people.

Union contracts can prevent discrimination and lead to stability for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) working people. If your union contract has a non-discrimination clause on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, you have legal protection in the case of discrimination. **Unions must enforce these clauses and create environments where LGBTQ members feel comfortable bringing reports of discrimination to union leaders.**

We know that LGBTQ people face various forms of discrimination in the workplace. Union non-discrimination clauses can protect from:

- **Firing**
 - According to the General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative survey on American social trends done by the University of Chicago, 16 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) respondents reported ever having lost a job because of their sexuality.²
 - Meanwhile, 16% of transgender respondents to the National Center for Transgender Equality's 2015 US Transgender Survey (USTS) also reported having lost a job in their lifetime because of their gender identity or expression.³
- **Denying promotions or not hiring**
 - 18% percent of LGB respondents had experienced employment discrimination in applying for and/or keeping a job because of their sexual orientation. (GSS)
 - 30% of transgender respondents to the USTS reported being fired, denied a promotion, or not hired for a job because of their gender identity or expression.

¹ In December 2012, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) adopted a plan (the Strategic Enforcement Plan) that includes "coverage of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals under Title VII's sex discrimination provisions, as they may apply" as a top Commission enforcement priority. While coverage of LGBT employment discrimination under Title VII remains an evolving area, it is still an important one. See https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/lgbt_examples_decisions.cfm for "Examples of Court Decisions Supporting Coverage of LGBT-Related Discrimination Under Title VII" and https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/litigation/selected/lgbt_facts.cfm for the most recent (7-08-16) Fact Sheet: Recent EEOC Litigation Regarding Title VII & LGBT-Related Discrimination."

² GSS Numbers are reprinted from Jennifer C. Pizer, Brad Sears, Christy Mallory, and Nan D. Hunter, *Evidence of Persistent and Pervasive Workplace Discrimination Against LGBT People: The Need for Federal Legislation Prohibiting Discrimination and Providing for Equal Employment Benefits*, 45 Loy. L.A. L. Rev. 715 (2012)

³ 2015 US Transgender Survey found here: <http://www.ustranssurvey.org/>

- **Verbal, physical, and sexual harassment**
 - 35 percent of LGB respondents to the GSS reported ever having been harassed at work. Fifty-eight percent reported hearing derogatory comments about sexual orientation and gender identity in their workplaces.
 - 15% of respondents to the USTS who held a job in that year were verbally harassed, physically attacked, or sexually assaulted.
- **Unsafe or inaccessible bathrooms**
 - 59% of respondents to US Transgender Survey avoided using a public restroom in the last year, and nearly one third (32%) limited the amount they ate and drank to do so.
- **Inadequate healthcare coverage**
 - LGBTQ people may have different healthcare needs from their straight coworkers. Union negotiated health plans must meet the needs of their LGBTQ members, from covering gender transition-related care to covering HIV prevention and treatment.
- **Benefit sharing based on outdated definitions of family**
 - Many union-negotiated employee benefits, such as healthcare and leave policies, are based on a legal definition of marriage and family. Even though same-sex marriage is legal, many LGBTQ families – among others – are not based around marriage for a variety of reasons. We must expand our definition of family to include the many variations that exist both through blood *and* affinity.
- **Fear of coming out**
 - According to the GSS, one third (33 percent) of LGB employees were not open about being LGB to anyone in the workplace. A staggering 53% of respondents to the USTS who had a job in the past year reported hiding their gender identity at work to avoid discrimination.
- **Delays in resolving conflicts**
 - An inclusive union contract is a legally enforceable document that provides an LGBTQ employee with explicit timelines to solve instances of discrimination through the grievance procedure.
- **Lack of representation**
 - Unions provide lawyers and/or arbitrators during disciplinary actions as well as grievances to ensure the employer follows the letter of the contract and treats all employees – including those who are LGBTQ – with dignity and respect.

What can labor do?

- **A collective bargaining agreement is enforceable in every state.** We can protect our members by ensuring our contracts have strong non-discrimination language that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.
- In many communities, labor's voice is powerful. When our leaders speak out publicly against the conditions their fellow members face at work, it can have a dramatic impact on the lives of their members. **We must stand up and speak out for our LGBTQ members.**
- Labor's legislative advocacy is in support of our members' needs. **It is vital that we add LGBTQ non-discrimination to our legislative portfolios in every lawmaking body where we have a voice.** Labor has legislative advocates – both paid and volunteer – in every state and there are LGBTQ members in every union.
- **Pride at Work staff is always ready to provide support on this or other LGBTQ-related topics.** We can help ensure your contract language is inclusive of LGBTQ working people and uses the most up to date language. We can also review talking points to help hone your message when talking to the media or lobbying state and local government. Other resources include: trainings for leadership, staff, or rank-and-file members; convention, conference, or meeting speakers and panelists; and much more.



Transgender Working People Have Specific Needs – Unions Are the Answer

At a glance:

- Union contracts are the only legal form of protection against employment discrimination for transgender working people in 33 states. Union contracts should protect workers at every point of their transition. Union contracts must also contain strong language to encourage the hiring, developing, and promoting of transgender people.
- Transgender individuals may have unique healthcare needs before, after, and during transition, as well as outside of transition altogether. Unions can ensure that their transgender members have the healthcare necessary for their particular needs.
- Reasonable access to a restroom is a workplace safety and health concern. Transgender employees must have access to restrooms that correspond to their gender identity, in compliance with OSHA guidelines.

From workplace safety to fair access to housing, transgender people are under attack. They are three times more likely than the general population to be unemployed and twice as likely to live in poverty.¹ Once they have a job, they face losing it because of their gender identity or expression, being denied a promotion, or being verbally harassed, physically attacked, and/or sexually assaulted at work.² Most insidiously, trans working people have come to expect this kind of mistreatment at work. **A full 77% of respondents to the US Transgender Survey reported taking steps to avoid mistreatment in the workplace**, such as hiding or delaying their gender transition or even quitting their job.³

Transgender people are also union members. The US Transgender Survey found that of the respondents who were employed, 13% were members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.⁴ This compares to the 12% of wage and salary workers in the US who are members of a union.⁵

We know that the power of unions, when leveraged properly, can protect transgender working people from the kinds of discrimination that have become too typical in the workforce. Union contracts with non-discrimination clauses that include gender identity and expression are legally enforceable protections for transgender workers. Everything from healthcare that includes gender conformation

¹ NCTE, US Transgender Survey, pg.140

² According to the US Transgender Survey, 30% of respondents who had a job in the past year reported being fired or denied a promotion because of their gender identity or expression, and 15% reported being verbally harassed, physically attacked, and/or sexually assaulted while at work.

³ Pg.148

⁴ Pg.140

⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). *Union Affiliation of Employed Wage and Salary Workers by Selected Characteristics, 2014-2015 Annual Averages*.

surgery to establishing trans and non-binary inclusive restrooms as a workplace safety concern are issues that unions can lead on.

There are hundreds of ways that transgender people are discriminated against at work. Here are just a few:

- **Being fired:** In 33 states, it is perfectly legal to fire a transgender worker for their gender identity or expression.
- **Hiring & promotions:** The unemployment rate in the transgender population is over 15% and many more face repeated and pervasive discrimination in hiring and promotions.
- **Unsafe or inaccessible bathrooms:** Reasonable access to a restroom is a workplace safety and health concern. For transgender workers, entering a restroom in public or at work can be a terrifying experience.
 - OSHA issued guidelines for transgender restroom access at work: "Every employee, including transgender employees, should have access to restrooms that correspond to their gender identity."
- **Transgender-inclusive healthcare:** The first step to ensuring transgender union members have access to proper medical care is to remove exclusionary language from insurance policies.
 - **Transition-related care:** Not all trans people decide to undergo gender confirmation surgery, but those who do decide to undergo surgery must be covered.
 - **Cost:** Employers and insurers may claim this coverage is expensive. Studies have shown otherwise. It is important to remember that unlike a benefit such as vision or dental, this is a health benefit that a finite number of members will ever use. At the same time, it can have an extraordinary impact on the life of the member needing this coverage.
 - **Medical necessity:** To address management or insurer concerns of opening the door to procedures such as elective cosmetic surgery, it is better recommended to use language such as, "medical necessity as recommended by the guidelines of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health."

All of these issues that transgender working people face are discrimination. If their union contract has an enforceable, inclusive nondiscrimination policy on the basis of gender identity and expression then they have legal and effective recourse.

What can Labor Do?

- **A collective bargaining agreement is enforceable in every state.** We can protect our members by ensuring our contracts have strong nondiscrimination language that prohibits discrimination the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.
- In many communities, labor's voice is powerful. When our leaders speak out publicly against the conditions their transgender members face at work, it can have a dramatic impact on the lives of their members. **We must stand up and speak out for our transgender members.**
- Labor's legislative advocacy is in support of our members' needs. **It is vital that we add LGBTQ nondiscrimination to our legislative portfolios in every lawmaking body where we have a voice.** Labor has legislative advocates – both paid and volunteer – in every state and there are LGBTQ members of every union.
- **Pride at Work staff is always ready to provide support on this or other LGBTQ-related topics.** – We can help ensure your contract language is inclusive of LGBTQ working people and uses the most up to date language. We can also review talking points to help hone your message when talking to the media or lobbying state and local government. Other resources include: trainings for leadership, staff, or rank-and-file members; convention, conference, or meeting speakers and panelists; and much more.



Workplace Health and Safety: Bathroom Access

At a glance:

- Access to bathrooms is a condition for a safe and stable work environment for all working people. OSHA mandates that every employee must have access to a bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity.
- Bathroom access is a constant worry for transgender and other people who don't strictly adhere to societal gender norms: 59% of transgender people avoided using a public restroom in the past year because they were afraid of confrontations.¹
- Likewise, union contracts should have nondiscrimination language that includes "gender identity and expression" as a protected class. Denying someone access to a bathroom is discrimination and our contracts can protect workers with this simple change.
- "Bathroom bills" such as North Carolina's HB2 are popping up in several states. These bills discriminate against transgender and non-binary people and labor should oppose them strongly.

Unlike many of their cisgender (non-transgender) counterparts, transgender and non-binary (those who believe gender is a spectrum, not just male or female) people must worry about where they are going to use the restroom on a daily basis. 59% of respondents to the National Center for Transgender Equality's 2015 US Transgender Survey avoided using a public restroom in the last year, and nearly one third (32%) limited the amount they ate and drank to do so. Eight percent reported a urinary tract infection, kidney infection, or another kidney-related problem as a result of avoiding the bathroom. These fears are not unfounded: one in ten respondents reported that someone denied them access to a restroom in the past year, while 12% reported being verbally harassed while accessing a restroom.

Bathroom access is an employee health and safety issue. According to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), "Every employee, including transgender employees, should have access to restrooms that correspond to their gender identity."

Unions have the power, and responsibility, to ensure that transgender and non-binary working people have access to safe bathrooms in their workplace. Even in those states that do not cover bathroom access under law, **a union contract that includes non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression is a legally enforceable method of ensuring that trans and non-binary workers have safe access to bathrooms.**

¹ NCTE, US Transgender Survey, pg.15

Bathroom bills: Legalizing hate & criminalizing bodies

Since 2017, 19 states have considered restricting bathroom access based on biological sex and in most cases, these bills failed. While each attempt is slightly different, it is clear that **bathroom bills are still the policy of choice for anti-LGBTQ and anti-worker lawmakers**. In 2019, only Indiana introduced what is considered a “traditional” bathroom bill that seeks to restrict bathroom usage by biological sex. But other states, including Texas, Georgia, and Tennessee, have found new ways to target LGBTQ people.

This new approach to bathroom bills is to attempt to expand indecent exposure statutes in order to target trans and gender non-binary body people in public facilities under the guise of so-called religious liberty. **These bills would literally criminalize trans and gender non-binary people for using the restroom or changing clothes in a locker room.**

Safe, clean bathroom access isn't just a workplace issue – it's a public health issue that affects us all. Organized labor has the power to stand against these bills in state-houses across the country.

What can labor unions do?

Labor unions have played an important role in protecting and advancing civil and human rights. Bathroom bills like NC HB2 are attacks on the fundamental freedoms and rights that labor unions and their allies have won over the past century. In addition to preventing individuals from doing something as mundane and human as using the bathroom, they also prevent cities from raising minimum wages and renegotiate hard-earned protections against racial and gender-based discrimination.

- **A collective bargaining agreement is enforceable in every state.** We can protect our members by ensuring our contracts have strong nondiscrimination language that prohibits discrimination the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.
- In many communities, labor's voice is powerful. When our leaders speak out publicly about the harm bathroom bills and unsafe access to bathrooms will do to workers, it can have a dramatic impact on the debate around this type of legislation. **We must stand up and speak out for safe and inclusive workplaces.**
- Labor's legislative advocacy is in support of our members' needs. **It is vital that we add opposition to these bathroom bills to our legislative portfolios in every lawmaking body where we have a voice.** Labor has legislative advocates – both paid and volunteer – in every state and there are LGBTQ members of every union.
- **Pride at Work staff is always ready to provide support on this or other LGBTQ-related topics.** – We can help ensure your contract language is inclusive of LGBTQ working people and uses the most up to date language to assure your members they will not be discriminated against when using the restroom. We can also review talking points to help hone your message when talking to the media or lobbying state and local government. Other resources include: trainings for leadership, staff, or rank-and-file members; convention, conference, or meeting speakers and panelists; and much more.



De-Mystifying Gender Pronouns

At a glance:

- The concept of gender is expanding and our language around it is too. Everyone deserves to be called by the name and pronoun they prefer – it's a matter of dignity and respect.
- It's always OK to respectfully ask someone which gender pronouns they prefer. Never single out someone over their gender pronouns.
- In meetings and large groups, it can be challenging to ensure everyone feels included. Including pronouns on nametags, asking people to state their preferred pronouns during introductions, or providing stickers or buttons are just some of the ways to make space for learning gender pronouns within the group.
- Don't let others be disrespected. If you know someone is being mis-gendered, respectfully and, perhaps discretely, let the speaker know the correct gender pronouns for that person.

Many of us are accustomed to binary gender pronouns – he/him/his or she/her/hers when referring to a person whose gender we know (or presume to know.) They/them/theirs is often used when we don't know the gender of the person to whom we're referring.

A few examples:

- Micah works second shift, he likes to sleep late most mornings.
- Pat is going on vacation next week to Puerto Rico, she's planning to bring me back a souvenir.
- The new person will start next week, what did you say their name is?

Research has shown that gender isn't quite as either/or as we once believed and our language needs to adapt to keep up with current understanding. It's important to respect how others identify, but it can feel daunting to someone who isn't used to the idea of non-binary gender.

Ask, ask, ask

Don't worry – we all make innocent mistakes and generally, folks will understand when you misspeak. Intentionally mis-gendering someone, or in other words, not using the pronoun they prefer, is incredibly disrespectful.

When you are in a setting that includes transgender and gender non-binary people, which pronoun to use may require you to listen and sometimes even ask the person what their preferred pronoun is. For example:

- It's so nice to meet you, Alex. I didn't catch your preferred pronoun; do you have a preference?
- Hi, I'm Gretchen and I prefer they/them as my pronouns. What should I use for you?

There are many ways you can ask someone their preferred pronoun. Just remember – if you are unsure of someone's gender, it's worse not to ask at all than to stumble over your words.

There are a lot of pronouns in use today that you may encounter, but there are three that are the most common: he/him/his, she/her/hers, and they/them/theirs.

Meetings and large groups

There are several ways you can manage pronouns in meetings and large groups. Any, all, or none of these could be adapted for your specific situation:

- Collect information at registration and include preferred gender pronouns on nametags
- Ask those who are comfortable to do so to state their preferred pronouns when they introduce themselves to the group
- Share your own pronouns when the group in your introduction and encourage others to do the same
- Make available pronoun buttons so anyone who wants to can pick one up to indicate their preferred pronouns

These are just a few of the most common examples. **It's never OK to single out anyone or make it seem like you're focusing on pronouns just for their benefit.**

Correcting others

Being mis-gendered can make someone feel disrespected or offended. If you are in a group and someone in the group is mis-gendered, allow that person space to correct the speaker about their preferred pronouns. If given the chance to speak, be sure to use the appropriate pronouns when referring to that person. Some people don't like a lot of attention paid to their pronouns while others may feel strongly. If it happens repeatedly or seems intentional, it's OK to ask the mis-gendered person if they would like for you to correct folks if it continues.

If someone who isn't present is mis-gendered, gently, and maybe discretely, correct the speaker and let them know the other person's preferred pronouns. For example:

- I think Adrian prefers they/them/their pronouns, but yes, aren't they a great worker?

What can labor do?

- Organized Labor's role has always been to ensure the dignity and respect of working people. This is no different. **Every working person deserves to be called by the name and pronouns they prefer.**
- **A collective bargaining agreement that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression as classes protected from discrimination can help.** If an employer or fellow employee is repeatedly and intentionally mis-gendering someone, that is discrimination and should be dealt with under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement.
- Contracts can also contain specific language about how to treat transgender and gender non-binary workers. **Proper usage of pronouns should be included in that language.**
- **Pride at Work staff is always ready to provide support on this or other LGBTQ-related topics.** We can help ensure your contract language is inclusive of LGBTQ working people and uses the most up to date language. We can also review talking points to help hone your message when talking to the media or lobbying state and local government. Other resources include: trainings for leadership, staff, or rank-and-file members; convention, conference, or meeting speakers and panelists; and much more.