



SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER STAFF AT PNNL

A Guide for All Staff

WE ARE COMMITTED

At PNNL, we are committed to solving the world's most challenging problems and answering its most elusive questions. Diversity of people and thought is part of our unique social fabric and a key to our research success. It is also a daily personal commitment and an expectation. We strive to encourage and enhance an inclusive, professional environment where everyone respects and values individual differences. Each employee has a role to play and a responsibility to act. By providing a work environment of respect, trust, collaboration, and cooperation, PNNL can fulfill its mission of conducting great science and fostering technological advancement.

An Inclusive Workplace

For PNNL to succeed, all staff must be able to contribute to their maximum abilities. Ensuring that everyone thrives in their careers requires maintaining a safe, professional workplace in which every employee can bring their whole self to work. Transgender staff often face a unique set of challenges in the workplace. Thirty percent of respondents to the **2015 U.S. Transgender Survey** reported being fired, denied a promotion, or experiencing other workplace mistreatment because of their gender identity or expression within just one year of taking the survey. Given these challenges, this guide is intended to help all staff understand the best ways to support their transgender colleagues.

Additional resources from PNNL include:

"Transitioning While at PNNL: A Guide for Transgender Staff"

"Supporting PNNL's Transgender Staff: A Guide for Managers"

If you need help understanding this document or would like to have a conversation about the content, please contact the Manager, Diversity & Inclusion, EEO or your Human Resources (HR) Manager.

PURPOSE

This document is a resource for all staff to understand key topics related to PNNL's transgender staff. While awareness of transgender issues is at an all-time high, misconceptions about transgender individuals and the issues they face can lead to misunderstandings in the workplace. We all want to create an inclusive, professional work environment, but many staff find it difficult to know how to support their transgender and gender non-conforming colleagues.

IN THIS GUIDE:

- *PNNL's non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy*
- *Clarifications on common terminology*
- *Guidance on names/pronouns*
- *Information that dispels common misconceptions*
- *Specific examples of how to support your colleagues*
- *Links to external resources*

POLICY

PNNL advocates for diversity, inclusion, and equal employment opportunities. PNNL's Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy includes protecting gender identity and expression.

Per our Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy:

"We strive to create and maintain a culture that enables the achievement of the highest levels of innovation, creativity, and problem solving. Consistent with all state and federal anti-discrimination laws, we will not tolerate discrimination, including harassment, in any form on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, perceived or actual disability, or any other status or characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law. Allegations of discrimination will be thoroughly and promptly investigated and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken."

DEFINITIONS

The definitions provided here are not intended to label employees but rather to help staff understand these topics, and encourage communication and inclusivity. Although employees may not choose to use these terms to describe themselves, all employees are protected under PNNL's Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy regardless of how they identify. You can find more information about terminology through **PFLAG's Straight for Equality Project**.

Definitions Specifically Related to Gender Identity:

Assigned sex: The sex (e.g., male, female, intersex) assigned to an infant at birth.

Cisgender: An umbrella term that can describe people whose gender identity and/or expression corresponds to their sex assigned at birth.

Gender: A set of social, psychological, or emotional traits often influenced by societal expectations that commonly classify an individual as either feminine or masculine.

Gender-affirming surgery: Surgical procedures that help people adjust their bodies in a way that more closely reflects their gender identity. Not every transgender person desires or has the resources for gender-affirming surgery.

Gender dysphoria: Distress caused by a conflict between a person's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which they identify.

Gender expression: An individual's characteristics and behaviors (such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions) that may be perceived commonly as masculine or feminine.

Gender identity: A person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being male, female, or something other or in-between, regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity.

Gender non-conforming: This term describes people who have, or are perceived to have, gender characteristics, behaviors, or appearances that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. These expectations vary across cultures and time. Some, but not all, gender non-conforming

people are transgender, and some, but not all, transgender people are gender non-conforming.

Misgender: The action of identifying someone as an incorrect gender (e.g., using he/him pronouns for someone who uses she/her pronouns). This can be intentional or accidental.

Non-binary: An understanding that gender is more complex than only having the binary categories of male and female. People who identify as non-binary may not feel comfortable within the gender binary and may feel most comfortable identifying with neither binary gender, both, or some combination. They may also use terms such as NB, genderfluid, or genderqueer to describe themselves.

Non-binary or gender-neutral/inclusive pronouns: Binary pronouns align with the concept of binary gender, with he/him used for male and she/her used for female. Gender-neutral pronouns are ones that do not denote gender (e.g., singular they: "Alex is a good employee. They have been working here a long time."). Some non-binary people prefer other pronouns, such as ze/zir or ze/hir ("Alex is a good employee. Ze has been working here a long time."). They may also use gender-neutral titles such as Mx., Dr., or prefer no title at all.

Transgender: An umbrella term that can describe people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from their sex assigned at birth. Transgender is an adjective. It is grammatically incorrect to call someone "a transgender" or "transgendered." "Trans" is a common shorthand for transgender and the two can usually be used interchangeably.

- **Transgender man:** A person whose sex assigned at birth was female but who identifies as male
- **Transgender woman:** A person whose sex assigned at birth was male but who identifies as female

Transition: The process some transgender people go through to begin living as the gender with which they identify. This may or may not include changing their name and pronouns, clothing, bathroom and facility usage, hormone therapy, surgery, and/or other medical procedures.

Transsexual: Considered offensive and out of date by many, a term used to describe those who have undergone some form of gender-related surgery. Some people who identify as

transsexual do not identify as transgender and vice versa. Transgender is a safer term to use unless you know the individual prefers transsexual.

Additional Definitions:

Asexual/aromantic: A term that describes people who experience limited or no sexual/romantic attraction. Asexual/aromantic people may identify with any sexual orientation.

Coming out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity, and begins to share that with others. There are many different degrees to being out: some may be out to friends only, some may be out publicly, and some may be out only to themselves. It is up to each person, individually, to decide if and when to come out.

Intersex: A term that describes people born with bodies that do not align with binary definitions of sex as either male or female. This may or may not be related to their chromosomal makeup (e.g., XXY rather than XX or XY) or to their body's physical development.

LGBTQ+: A common abbreviation that refers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. The "+" symbol refers to the inclusion of identities not captured in LGBTQ. Some examples include intersex, asexual, and questioning (i.e., questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity). In some cases, you may see LGBTQQIA+ used to include more additional identities.

LGBTQ+ ally: An LGBTQ+ ally is someone who may not identify as LGBTQ+ but supports those with LGBTQ+ identities with visible actions. Ally behavior includes listening to the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, speaking up when people use hurtful or ignorant language/actions against LGBTQ+ people, respecting people's pronouns, and finding other ways to be visibly supportive.

Queer: Historically a derogatory word, queer has been reclaimed as an inclusive term to include sexual

orientations and gender identities that are either non-heterosexual or not cisgender. Although it is widely used, particularly by younger individuals, some people are still uncomfortable with the use of the word because of its history.

Sexual orientation: A person's physical or emotional attraction to people. Straight, gay, bisexual, and queer are some ways to describe sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is distinct from gender identity and expression. Transgender people can be gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or straight, just like cisgender people. Transgender and cisgender are gender identities, while gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and straight are sexual orientations.

It is important to note that every single person has a:

- **Sex assigned at birth** (e.g., male, female, intersex)
- **Gender identity** (e.g., cisgender, transgender, non-binary)
- **Gender expression** (e.g., masculine, feminine, non-conforming)
- **Sexual orientation** (e.g., straight, gay, queer)

All of these identities are welcome and protected at PNNL. Everyone has the right to a safe, professional workplace.

SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER COLLEAGUES

The process of a transgender person changing their gender presentation in society is known as “transitioning.” A person transitioning may change their name, clothing, and appearance. It is up to the person transitioning to decide what their needs are for their transition. Each person will have their own set of unique factors and desires that will require a customized plan for transitioning.

Your Role:

As a colleague of a transitioning employee, respecting your transgender peers largely comes down to maintaining a professional work environment. You can help support your colleague(s) by listening to their needs and respecting their individual gender identity and expression.

If you have been told a transitioning employee’s new name and pronouns, make sure to use them as directed, just as you would when learning someone’s title, nickname, or new last name. If you are having trouble making the change, try practicing at home. Putting in time on your own to make yourself familiar with someone’s new name and pronouns is something small you can do that will have a big impact. You have an opportunity to make your colleague feel more safe, understood, and respected at work.

NAME/ PRONOUNS

Using someone’s correct name and pronouns is both a form of mutual respect and courtesy and a key way to make people feel understood and accepted. Employees should have an opportunity to inform you of their name and pronouns and decide how they

would like to inform other staff members. Using the correct pronouns is particularly important because being misgendered (being identified as an incorrect gender) can be hurtful, embarrassing, and create unnecessary workplace tension.

Because gender identity is internal, keep in mind you cannot always identify a person’s gender by looking at them. If someone corrects you regarding their gender, be respectful. While many transgender employees identify with she/her or he/him pronouns, non-binary or genderfluid people may prefer a gender-neutral pronoun such as they/them (e.g., “Alex is a good employee. They’ve been working here a long time.”). If someone comes out to you as transgender, that initial discussion is a great opportunity to ask the person what pronouns and name they would like you and others to use. Keep in mind that this might change over time and that some people have multiple pronouns they are comfortable using.

Creating Opportunities:

It’s important to create opportunities for staff to share their pronouns without singling out transgender employees. Here are some ways you can create opportunities to ask for or offer pronouns:

- *During the interview process, if an interviewee communicates a preferred name and/or pronouns, be sure to use them. While the application process may require legal names, it’s good practice to allow interviewees to disclose preferred names, not just for transgender employees, but for any employee whose preferred name differs from their legal name.*
- *Normalize including pronouns in email signatures (e.g., Jane Smith, she/her, Energy and Environment Directorate, PNNL). By providing your own pronouns, you normalize sharing pronouns, which allows transgender employees to share their own without inherently outing themselves as transgender. This small action can help your colleagues feel more comfortable and welcome at work.*
- *While running meetings or events, make offering pronouns a part of the introduction. By making this a routine, you normalize the process without singling out transgender employees. When you introduce yourself – in meetings or in one-on-one interactions*

– you can offer your own pronouns with your name to expand awareness of pronoun use and helps others remember that they cannot necessarily determine someone's pronouns from their appearance alone.

- Add a pronoun button or sticker to your lanyard or badge holder (contact prism@pnnl.gov for one).
- If you would like to directly ask for someone's pronouns, you can consider asking, in a private setting, in the same professional, simple manner you would ask for someone's name (e.g., "I'm sorry if I missed this earlier, but would you mind reminding me what your pronouns are?"). You can also use Hub (hub.pnnl.gov) as a resource to learn someone's pronoun and add your own.

Pronoun Misuse:

While you may make mistakes after just learning someone's new name or pronouns, it is important to put in the effort to get them right. If you do make a mistake, do your best to calmly and quickly correct it. Transgender employees may feel uncomfortable with the extra attention that an extravagant apology can bring, so keep any apology short and to the point. Remember that if you are having trouble making the change, practicing at home can be extremely helpful. If you do not know someone's pronouns, pay attention to how others interact with the employee, consider asking your shared manager about correct behavior, or consider asking the transitioning employee in private. Note that pronouns are not limited to "she" or "he," but can also include non-binary pronouns such as "they" and "ze."

Mistakes happen and correcting other staff can be a great way to help support your transgender colleagues. If you hear a staff member using the incorrect name or pronouns for any employee, there are a number of ways you can deal with the situation:

- Model the correct name and pronouns for the staff member (e.g., "Oh, you mean Sarah? She's been working on a different project.").
- If necessary, you may need to give a more explicit, gentle correction (e.g., "Just to be clear, Sarah uses she/her pronouns.").
- Having attention drawn to being misgendered can be uncomfortable for many transgender people. Some staff members may prefer to move on and only offer a correction in a less public setting. In some cases, it may

be appropriate to privately consult the individual to see how they would like the situation to be handled.

- Consistently misgendering a person can constitute a hostile work environment and should be taken seriously. If you observe this behavior, reach out to the Human Resources Diversity, Inclusion, and EEO manager, or your local HR team.

People are sometimes confused about what name or pronouns to use when talking about a transgender person when referring to the time before they publicly came out as transgender. When talking about an individual in the past, it is always appropriate to use their current name and pronouns, unless they specifically indicate otherwise.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- **Appearance Standards:** A transgender employee may dress consistently with their gender identity or expression, and must comply with the same standards of dress and appearance that apply to all other people in their workplace and similar position. Dressing in a gender non-conforming manner does not violate PNNL workplace appearance standards.
- **Restroom and Locker Room Access:** All employees have the right to use restrooms, locker rooms, and facilities that align with their gender identity, or that they feel most comfortable using. If preferred, all PNNL staff may use single-stall or all-gender facilities, but it is a personal choice and not a requirement. For a list of some available single-stall restrooms and showers, visit prism.pnl.gov.
- **External Sponsors and Collaborators:** Serving PNNL's sponsors and collaborators is not a reason to deny a transitioning person the right to present themselves in accordance with their gender identity. If you need resources to develop a communication plan for external partners, you are welcome to contact the HR Diversity, Inclusion, and EEO Manager or your local HR team. PNNL holds the same high standards for anti-discrimination and anti-harassment with our external sponsors and collaborators as it does with PNNL employees. Encourage your staff members to report inappropriate behavior whether or not it occurs between staff members at PNNL or with external stakeholders.

- **Statement of Confidentiality:** A person's transgender status is considered confidential and should only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis, and only with the transitioning person's consent. Transitioning individuals should communicate with their coworkers at whatever level they are comfortable.
- **Educating Others:** While some transgender people are happy to help educate their colleagues, it is not an employee's responsibility to educate others about their

identity. If you have specific questions for a colleague, be sure to keep them professional. Questions about current or future medical status, other than discussing required leave time, are generally not appropriate. Consider reaching out to HR or looking through the resources at the end of this document for answers to general questions.

Tips for Success

THINGS TO AVOID	SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES
DO NOT call someone "a transgender" or "transgendered." "Transgender" is an adjective used to describe a person and is not a noun. Referring to someone in this way is othering, and can create feelings of isolation and concerns for safety.	
DO NOT call someone "transsexual" unless you know they prefer the term. Although some people do identify as transsexual, it is more commonly used within a medical context and is generally considered an out-of-date and offensive phrase.	INSTEAD you can say "a transgender person," "a transgender man," "a transgender woman," "a person," "a man," or "a woman." Referencing a person's transgender status can out someone as transgender, so first make sure they are comfortable with other people knowing.
DO NOT call someone "an FTM," "an MTF," "a female-to-male transgender person," or "a male-to-female transgender person."	
DO NOT disclose someone's status as transgender to other people without express permission.	INSTEAD if you are worried a colleague does not know the correct pronouns for a transgender colleague, you can start off the conversation by using your transgender colleague's correct name and pronouns in natural conversation.
DO NOT ask about surgeries or medical procedures a transgender person has had or plans to have.	
DO NOT comment on whether you could or could not tell that someone is transgender.	INSTEAD remember that every staff member has a right to privacy about their medical information.
DO NOT use the term "sex change" in reference to surgical procedures.	INSTEAD remember that preferred terminology includes "gender-confirmation surgery" or "genital reconstruction surgery" and remember that every staff member has a right to privacy about their medical information.
DO NOT ask what someone's "real name" is.	
DO NOT avoid using someone's pronouns or name just because they are unfamiliar to you.	INSTEAD try practicing someone's pronouns and name at home to make it easier to get it right in person.
DO NOT use someone's old pronouns or previous name.	

REMEMBER

Respecting your transgender colleagues mostly comes down to maintaining a professional work environment. Respecting your colleagues' names, pronouns, and titles is an important part of sustaining a workplace where all employees feel supported and welcomed. Likewise, all employees have a right to maintain the privacy of their personal medical information.

External Resources:

Trans Toolkit for Employers: The Human Rights Campaign created a toolkit that provides practical guidance in creating a more inclusive workplace for transgender and gender non-conforming employees.

PFLAG: Founded in 1973, PFLAG (formerly Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) has 400 volunteer-run chapters that support family and friends of LGBTQ+ individuals as well as LGBTQ+ people themselves.

Our Trans Loved Ones (PDF): Created by PFLAG, it provides questions and answers for parents, families, and friends of people who are transgender or gender expansive.

PFLAG Benton/Franklin: By uniting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) with families, friends, and allies, PFLAG is committed to advancing equality through its mission of support, education, and advocacy.

PFLAG's Straight for Equality Project: A national outreach program that provides information and resources that help straight allies understand their role in supporting and advocating for LGBTQ+ people.

GLAAD's Tips for Allies of Transgender People: These are tips that can help you move toward being a better ally to transgender people. Of course, this list is not exhaustive and cannot possibly include all the "right" things to do and say — because there is often no one "right" answer to every situation you might encounter. When you become an ally to transgender people, your actions can help change culture, making society a better, safer place for transgender people, and for all people who do not conform to gender expectations.

Talking About Pronouns: The Human Rights Campaign compiled these useful guidelines on how to talk about pronouns and why using the correct pronouns is an important step in affirming transgender people.

Issues Affecting Transgender People: The National Center for Transgender Equality compiled this information about existing laws and policies that affect the transgender community.





**Pacific
Northwest**
NATIONAL LABORATORY

Questions or Concerns:

If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to the HR Diversity, Inclusion, and EEO Manager:

Manager

Diversity & Inclusion, EEO

Diversity.Inclusion.EEO@pnnl.gov



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