

Some Do's and Don'ts for working with LGBTQ/T Folks

DON'T...

Make assumptions about someone's gender identity, or sexuality

DO...

Use gender neutral language and inclusive language to open the door to all survivors.

Inclusive language:

- *Use the term "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend", or "husband/wife"*
- *Ask "are you seeing someone?" or "are you in a committed relationship?" instead of "do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?" or "are you married?"*

Gender Neutral language:

- *Instead of "She is going to go to the doctor tomorrow" say "They are going to go to the doctor tomorrow" or "Sarah is going to go to the doctor tomorrow".*
- *Instead of "He has to pick up his clothing voucher by the end of the week" say "They have to pick up the clothing voucher by the end of the week" or "Sam has to pick up the clothing voucher by the end of the week"*

DON'T...

Ask invasive questions about someone's body

DO...

Respect people's identity.

If a survivor identifies themselves as woman, then they are a woman. If a survivor identifies as a man, then they are a man. To ask someone how far they have transitioned or questions about their body is sexual harassment. To be open to all transgender survivors you must be willing to accept and respect the individual's identity. Not everyone chooses to undergo medical transition or has access to the resources needed to undergo medical transition. To require someone to undergo medical procedures to conform to a certain body type is not empowering and is not inclusive of the diversity of people that are a part of the transgender community.

DON'T...

Out someone's sexual orientation or transgender status

DO...

Talk to the person before advocating on their behalf.

Outing a survivor to other staff, shelter residents, or other service providers is not empowering. When we take away a person's choices and make decisions for them we are perpetuating the same use of power that the abuser used against them. Instead have a conversation with the survivor ask them if they want you to tell people they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or transgender (LGBQ and/or T). If the person does not feel safe in letting people know that they are LGBQ and/or T then do not tell anyone. If the individual is coming into shelter do not out them. Instead think ahead and in your shelter guidelines let everyone know that you work with all survivors regardless of sexual orientation and gender and that shelter residents may be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer men, women, and/or transgender.

DON'T...

Ignore the importance of using the right pronouns

DO...

Use the pronoun that someone asks you to use. When you mess up a pronoun- correct yourself, apologize and move on.

Accept that you may mess up. That is part of being a good ally. When you mess up don't make a huge deal, don't apologize profusely. Just correct yourself, apologize, and move on. To put a lot of energy into apologizing only puts more focus on the other person. Your focus should instead be on figuring out for yourself how not to make the same mistake again.

DON'T...

Ignore when others use incorrect pronouns

DO...

Model the correct pronoun usage

When someone uses the wrong pronoun just continue the conversation and slip in a sentence that uses the correct pronoun.

i.e. Jo uses feminine pronouns (she, her).

A DTA worker says to you "Jo needs to pick up his medication at the local pharmacy before the appointment".

You respond "ok, I can make sure that she gets to the pharmacy before the appointment".

Note: It is always a good idea to make sure that the person you are working with is out about their gender before correcting someone's pronoun. There may be instances when an individual may choose not to be out. Someone may make this decision for safety reasons, because they are afraid they will not have access to the service, or because they simply don't want to deal with explaining their gender identity to yet one more person.

DON'T...

Use language like, "I am working with a woman, who is really a man", "She says she's a man but she is obviously a woman", or "He is not a 'real woman'".

DO...

Respect an individual's identity and use the terms that someone uses for themselves. Mirror a person's language.

If you are trying to create a safe and welcoming environment for transgender folks then you need to remove language like "real woman" and "real man" from your vocabulary. Respecting someone's identity quite simply means using the language that a person uses for themselves without judgment and mirroring their language back to them. If an individual identifies themselves as woman, then they are a woman, period. If an individual identifies as a man, then they are a man, period.

DO...

- **Speak up when someone makes homo/bi/transphobic or heterosexist remarks**
- **Be aware of your own biases**
- **Remember: If you know one LGBTQ/T person, you know one LGBTQ/T person – Treat people as individuals and don't expect a single person to represent an entire community.**