

BEING AN LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING BUSINESS

Things you can do for your employees, customers, and community.

EXTERNAL/AFFIRMING CUSTOMER & CLIENT EXPERIENCE

1. Creating an Affirming Customer/Client Experience

- Use visible signs of welcome like rainbow or trans flags or “All are welcome here” signs.
- Normalize pronouns in appropriate ways. Invite (but do not require) staff to add pronouns to name tags, business cards, and email signatures.
- Train customer-facing staff.
 - Provide training on inclusive language, avoiding assumptions about gender or relationships, and how to handle misgendering or bias incidents.
 - Emphasize treating every customer with dignity, privacy, and respect.
- Update intake and customer information forms.
 - Allow customers to self-identify their name, pronouns, and if relevant, gender identity, and sexual orientation, with inclusive options and a write-in option.
- Ensure inclusive restroom access.
 - Post signage that lets customers know they may use the restroom that best aligns with their gender identity.
 - Whenever possible, provide at least one all-gender restroom.

2. Community Impact

- Represent diversity in your marketing and media.
 - Use images and stories that reflect real diversity in all forms, including LGBTQ+ people and families, without stereotyping or tokenizing.
- Evaluate your supply chain and partners.
 - Support vendors and partners who share a commitment to inclusion.
- Celebrate LGBTQ+ awareness year-round.
 - Celebrate Pride Month—and also recognize other important dates (e.g., Trans Day of Visibility, National Coming Out Day, Spirit Day).
 - Support local LGBTQ+ organizations through donations and volunteering.



INSIDE YOUR ORGANIZATION

3. Setting the Stage for LGBTQ+ Inclusion

- Use inclusive job descriptions.
 - Clearly state your commitment to equal opportunity and inclusion.
 - Use gender-neutral, skills-based language. Avoid gender-coded wording (like “aggressive” or “nurturing”) that may signal a gender preference.
- Strengthen your nondiscrimination policy.
 - Include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
 - Make sure employees know where the policy is and how to report concerns.
- Adopt an inclusive dress code/uniform policy.
 - Ensure your guidelines are gender-neutral and apply equally to everyone.
 - Allow clothing, hairstyles & accessories that reflect employees’ gender identities and cultural/racial identities (e.g., natural hair, head coverings, etc).
- Create a Gender Transition & Affirmation Guide. Provide a proactive plan leaders and employees can use to ensure trans and non-binary employees are provided the same workplace experience as their peers after they come out.

4. Leadership, Culture and Policies

- Invest in education for leaders and staff.
 - Provide annual training for key leaders (and ideally all employees) on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE).
 - Include practical scenarios, inclusive language, and how to respond to bias or harassment.
- Embed inclusion into your mission, values, and policies.
- Equitable coverage. Use gender-neutral language (e.g., “spouse/partner”). Ensure same-gender partners receive the same benefits as different-gender partners.
- Family-building benefits that honor diverse families.
 - Include adoption, foster care, surrogacy, and other paths to parenthood.
 - Ensure leave policies apply to all parents, regardless of gender or path to parenting.
- Healthcare coverage that supports transgender, gender-diverse, and intersex people.
 - Provide inclusive coverage of gender-affirming care and related services.
 - Confirm that plan language is up to date and does not contain exclusions that disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ employees.

