

LGBTQIA+

Tompkins County Office of Human Rights

Do

- Take some time to understand the definitions associated with LGBTQIA+.
- Display a “Safe Space” placard in your office. Displaying this sign will let others know you support full participation of all members of the workplace, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, characteristics, or expression.
- Ensure that County programs and services aren’t inadvertently discriminating against employees and/or clients based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Discrimination doesn’t need to be intentional to be unlawful.
- Review office policies and vital documents to ensure gender-neutral language.
- Use a gender-neutral dress code, if you have one.
- Ask “What is your preferred pronoun?” as a voluntary question on applications, interview materials, and general inquiry forms.
- Always use a person’s chosen name and pronoun. All individuals should be addressed with their chosen name (and associated pronoun), regardless of whether it has been changed legally or within the staff directory. If there are certain situations where a different name or pronoun should be used, make sure to let others know.
- Establish an inclusive and clear bathroom policy that permits use by gender identity.
- Include significant others in work functions where spouses are invited. If you know a co-worker is involved in a relationship, include that co-worker’s partner in the same work functions where spouses or dates are normally invited. If you are unsure how to refer to someone’s partner, ask them.
- Apologize and move forward, if you get something wrong (like a name or pronoun).

Don’t

- Discriminate against clients and/or co-workers based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. It’s not just a good idea. It’s the law.
- Create office and benefit policies that inadvertently discriminate against employees or clients based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Discrimination doesn’t need to be intentional to be unlawful.
- Stereotype co-workers and/or clients based on their non-conforming behaviors, expressions, or attire.
- Ask an LGBTQIA+ individual to speak on behalf of the LGBTQIA+ community. An individual identifying as part of a group does not mean that individual represents the group as a whole. If LGBTQIA+ employees or clients want to offer their perspective as an LGBTQIA+ individual, they will.
- Permit sexist, homophobic, transphobic jokes or comments. These types of remarks are harmful and are unacceptable in the workplace. If you hear a co-worker or client talking inappropriately, let them know that the remarks are offensive, or ask your supervisor to intervene. This will reinforce your support of a “safe” workplace.
- Assume everyone is heterosexual. Although it is difficult to establish precise demographics figures, it is estimated that 5-10% of the global population are gay, bisexual or lesbian. Popular stereotypes of behavior and appearance are just that: stereotypes. It’s not safe to assume that people who fit these stereotypes are LGBTQIA; likewise it’s not safe to assume that LGBTQIA people fit these stereotypes. If someone says that they are married, remember it may not be to a person of the opposite sex.
- ‘Out’ a LGBTQIA+ colleague. LGBTQIA+ individuals frequently feel invisible or alone. Many fear losing their jobs, reputations, or even their careers. Respect the privacy of the individual. Even in a supportive environment, some people may never feel comfortable coming out. The value you add is providing a supportive workplace atmosphere without insisting that they self-identify.