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Creating an Inclusive and Affirming Workplace for Transgender Employees: A Guide for Employees

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Introduction

The University of Connecticut is committed to providing a safe and supportive working and learning environment for all members of its community. In particular, all University community members have the right to safely express their gender identity, to be judged based on their merit and ability, and to be free from discrimination and harassment based on protected classifications. As part of its commitment to ensuring the professional and academic success of transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary employees, the University has adopted this guide.

Purpose of this Guide

The guidance in this document may be particularly helpful for managers and supervisors, who are uniquely positioned to provide inclusive and affirming workplace environments that positively impact the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. This guide is part of the University's ongoing efforts to ensure that the workplace is welcoming for transgender employees, and to reduce unintentional, exclusionary practices so that employees can perform to their full potential. It aims to provide managers and supervisors with practices that will foster affirming workplace environments inclusive of all gender identities and gender expressions, and includes a list of resources for further information.

The goals of this guide are to:

- Offer guidance on inclusive and respectful terminology and language
- Offer guidance on how to best support transitioning employees
- Provide University and other resources

For specific guidance related to transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary students, the Rainbow Center maintains an online resource guide, Transgender@UConn, <https://rainbowcenter.uconn.edu/transgender-uconn-basic-information/>.

Key Terminology and Language Used in this Guide

(Source: GLAAD Transgender Glossary of Terms)

It is important to remember that definitions may vary depending on a person, and/or their culture. It is imperative that individuals are allowed to identify how they choose, and that the people around them mirror the language a person uses describe themselves. Language and terminology are often evolving and changing.

Gender Expression

External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture.

Gender Identity

A person's internal, deeply held sense of their own gender. A person's gender identity is not necessarily the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) (adj.)

A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional US expectations of masculinity and femininity. ***Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming.*** The term is not a synonym for *transgender* or *transsexual* and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming.

Sex Assigned at Birth (ASAB)

The classification designated to a person at birth as male or female [or intersex in some states] based on the appearance of their external genitalia. (In US society this designation is what is written on the birth certificate.) A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender Affirming Surgery (GAS)

Gender Affirming Surgery is the term that has been adopted widely by the transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary community. Refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions, and is only one small part of transition. Avoid the phrase "sex change operation." Do not refer to someone as being "pre-op" or "post-op." Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries. *It is best to avoid overemphasizing the role of surgeries in the transition process.*

Sexual Orientation / Sexual Identity

The desire or lack of desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.

Trans (adj.)

Used as shorthand to mean *transgender*. Because its meaning is not precise or widely understood, be careful when using it with audiences who may not understand what it means. Avoid unless used in a direct quote or in cases where you can clearly explain the term's meaning in the context of your story.

Transgender (adj.)

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including transgender, gender non-conforming, and/or non-binary. Some people who identify as transgender choose to take steps towards outwardly expressing their gender identity (see: Transition). However, not all people who identify this way want or are able to do so and their identity is not dependent upon their physical appearance.

Transition

The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person and are deeply personal. A person's transition can include some or all of the following personal, social medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and pronouns that affirm their identity; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery.

Transsexual (adj.)

An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions, including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries. Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual* is **not** an

umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and identify with the word *transgender*. It is best to ask which term the person uses. If *transsexual* is used by the individual, use as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.

Recommended Language

The language that we use in our day-to-day work is important, and sets the tone of our working environment. As such, it is important that we know what language is problematic and what language is inclusive. Generally, we should encourage individuals to use language that is inclusive of all genders. For example, using “honorable guests” instead of “ladies and gentlemen,” “sibling” instead of “brother” or “sister,” “spouse” or “partner” instead of “husband” or “wife,” and “you all” or “folks”¹ instead of “you guys.”

In regards to the transgender community, managers and supervisors should be aware of the following problematic and recommended language:

Problematic	Recommended	Rationale/Usage
"transgenders" or "a transgender"	"transgender people" or "a transgender person"	<i>Transgender</i> should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Usage: “This department is transgender inclusive.”
“transgendered”	“transgender people” or “a transgender person”	The adjective <i>transgender</i> should never have an extraneous “-ed” tacked onto the end. Usage: “Tony is a transgender person.”
"sex change," "pre-operative," "post-operative," or “sex reassignment surgery”	"medical transition," “gender confirming surgeries,” and/or “gender affirming surgeries”	Using these problematic terms inaccurately suggests that a person must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process(es) of transition. Note: It is advised to refrain from inquiring about an employee’s surgery status.

Names, Pronouns, and Gender Markers

Pronouns

If you aren't sure of a person's pronouns (and there isn't someone around to let you know), ask, or refer to them by their name only— making a pronoun assumption is the worst option. One way to be respectful is to share your own pronouns first. For example: “I use the pronouns he/him/his. I want to make sure I address you correctly. What pronouns do you use?” Another way is to ask is, “How would you like to be addressed?” This may be challenging at first, but a person who often experiences being addressed incorrectly may see it as a sign of respect and that you are interested in getting it right.

Previous Names

If you are aware of the name an employee used before transitioning, or a name an employee no longer uses or identifies with, do not use it or reveal it to others. If you are aware that an employee used to go by different pronouns, you should also not reveal this information to others. Well-meaning comments

¹ You may also see folks written as ‘folx’. This is a more inclusive term that the transgender community has adopted.

like, “I knew Gina when she was Bill,” even if meant to be supportive, reveal personal information about the employee, and unnecessarily draw attention to their transgender identity.

Addressing Mistakes

If you make a mistake about someone’s pronouns or name, correct yourself. This also saves the person who was misidentified from having to correct you/the person before it is planted in the minds of anyone else who heard the mistake. As supervisors and managers, it is essential that we model respectful behavior and keep in mind that our staff pay close attention to the ways we interact with our employees. Managers should be proactive to also inquire privately as to how the transgender employee would like them to respond in the instance someone misidentifies them.

Campus Record Services

<i>This table will help to clarify which records on campus require a legal name or gender marker change, and which can be modified without pursuing a change in legal documentation.</i>			
Record	Office to Contact	Chosen/Used Name	Legal Name
CoreCT, Insurance & Payroll Documents	Human Resources (860) 486-3034 Hr.uconn.edu		✓
Directory	University IT Services 860-486-4357 uits.uconn.edu	✓	
Email Address & Display Name	University IT Services	✓	
Gender Marker	Office of the Registrar registrar@uconn.edu 860.486.3331		✓
Husky One Card	One Card Office onecard.uconn.edu 860-486-3129		✓

Updating Employee Information

Upon request of an employee, managers should update the name listed on name plates, doors, websites, mailboxes, business cards, directories, and any other location to reflect the name they use/choose. Additionally, photos should be updated to reflect an employee’s current gender expression.

Restroom and Locker Room Access

Restrooms and locker rooms at the University of Connecticut “are considered places of public accommodation; therefore, discrimination based on sex, including gender identity or expression, in such places is prohibited by Connecticut law” (Governor Malloy, 2017). Students, faculty, staff, employees, and guests at the University of Connecticut have the right to use restrooms and locker rooms that most closely correspond to their gender identity regardless of their sex assigned at birth. Individuals who need or desire increased privacy are encouraged to access an all gender single-stall restroom or changing space, when available. No individual shall be required to use an all gender single-stall restroom

or changing space. Any alternative arrangements requested by transgender individuals should be accommodated in a manner that maintains confidentiality around their identity. The most current list of gender inclusive restrooms on the Storrs campus can be found on the Rainbow Center's website at www.rainbowcenter.uconn.edu.

University Policies

Managers and supervisors should remain mindful of the University's Policies prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and related interpersonal violence, as well as the conduct expectations set forth in the Employee Code of Conduct. Any concerns or complaints will be handled consistent with these campus policies and utilize the University's existing investigatory procedures.

- **Policy on Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity**
“Equal employment opportunity (EEO) means nondiscrimination - that is, hiring and promoting without regard to ... sex, ... sexual orientation, ... gender identity or expression, or other factors which cannot lawfully be the basis for employment actions, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification” (Source: policy.uconn.edu/?p=102).
- **Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Interpersonal Violence**
“The University of Connecticut is committed to maintaining a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living and working environment for all members of the University community – students, employees, and visitors. Academic and professional excellence can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination, discriminatory harassment or interpersonal violence. Discrimination diminishes individual dignity and impedes equal employment and educational opportunities” (Source: policy.uconn.edu/?p=2884)
- **General Rules of Conduct (Employee)**
“Employees are forbidden to engage in the conduct listed below and may be disciplined or dismissed for doing so. The list is not exhaustive. ... K. Conducting oneself in any manner, which is offensive, abusive, or contrary to common decency or morality; carrying out any form of harassment including sexual harassment” (Source: policy.uconn.edu/?p=384).
- **Non-Retaliation Policy**
The University encourages individuals to bring forward information and/or complaints about violations of state or federal law, University policy, rules or regulations. Retaliation against any individual who, in good faith, reports or who participates in the investigation of alleged violations is strictly forbidden (Source: policy.uconn.edu/2011/05/24/non-retaliation-policy).

University Resources

Employee Assistance Program

hr.uconn.edu/eap

(860) 486-1307

Arjona Building, Room 136

Human Resources

hr.uconn.edu

(860) 486-3034

Allyn Larabee Brown Building

Depot Campus Unit 5075

Office for Diversity and Inclusion

diversity.uconn.edu

(860) 486-2422

Budds Building Room 311

Office of Institutional Equity

equity.uconn.edu

(860) 486-2943

Wood Hall, Room 134

Rainbow Center

rainbowcenter.uconn.edu

(860) 486-5821

Student Union 403

Additional Guides

- Creating an Inclusive and Affirming Classroom: A Guide for Faculty (Creating Inclusive Classrooms) <https://rainbowcenter.uconn.edu/creating-inclusive-classrooms/>
- Transgender @ UConn: A Resource Guide for Students, Faculty, and Employees <https://rainbowcenter.uconn.edu/transgender-uconn-basic-information/>

References

GLAAD Transgender Glossary of Terms

<https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

Governor Dannel P. Malloy (2017). Exec. Order No. 56, 3 C.F.R. 2.

<http://portal.ct.gov/en/Office-of-the-Governor/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2017/02-2017/Gov-Malloy-Signs-Executive-Order-Protecting-Transgender-Students-in-Connecticut-Schools>