**TRANS ALLIES TOOLKIT**

# Don't assume you can tell if someone is transgender

Transgender people don't all look a certain way or come from the same background, and many may not appear "visibly trans." Indeed, many trans people live most of their lives with very few people knowing their trans status.

# Don't make assumptions about a trans person's sexual orientation.

Gender identity is different than sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is about who we're attracted to. Gender identity is about how we know our own gender. Trans people can identify as gay, straight, bisexual, asexual, or any other sexuality that fits them.

# Be careful about confidentiality, disclosure, and "outing."

Some trans people feel comfortable disclosing their trans status to others, and some do not. Knowing a trans person's status is personal information and it is up to them to share it with others. Do not casually share this information, or "gossip" about a person you know or think is trans. Not only is this an invasion of privacy, it also can have negative consequences in a world that is very intolerant of gender difference—trans people can lose jobs, housing, friends, and sadly have even been killed upon revelation of their trans status.

# Do not tolerate anti-trans remarks or humour in public spaces.

Consider strategies to best confront anti-trans remarks or jokes in your classroom, lab, office, living group, or organization. Seek out other allies who will support you in this effort.

# If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask.

Be polite and respectful when you ask a person which pronoun they prefer. Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so. If you make a mistake, correct yourself and move on—do not call great attention to your mistake, as this will likely make the person uncomfortable. Own that you made a mistake, and work to do better next time.

# Don't ask a trans person what their "real" name is.

For many trans people, being associated with their birth name is a tremendous source of anxiety, or it is simply a part of their life they wish to leave behind. Just as someone who asks you to call them by a nickname, respect the name that a trans person is currently using.

# Don't ask about a trans person's genitals or surgical status.

Think about it—it wouldn't be considered appropriate to ask a cisgender (non-trans) person about the appearance or status of their genitalia, so it isn't appropriate to ask a trans person that question either. Likewise, don't ask if a trans person has had "the surgery." If a trans person wants to talk to you about such matters, let them bring it up.

# Don't assume what path a trans person is on regarding surgery or hormones, and don't privilege one path over another.

Affirm the many ways that all of us can and do transcend gender boundaries, including the choices some of us make to use medical technology to change our bodies. Some trans people wish to be recognized as their gender of choice without surgery or hormones; some need support and advocacy to get respectful medical care, hormones, and/or surgery.

# Don't police public restrooms.

Recognize that gender variant people may not match the little signs on the restroom door—or your expectations! Encourage schools, businesses, and agencies to have unisex bathroom options.

# Don't just add the "T" without doing work.

"LGBT" is now a commonplace acronym that combines lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender under the same umbrella. To be an ally to trans people, both straight cisgender people **and** the rest of the LGBTQ+ community need to examine their own gender stereotypes, their own prejudices and fears about trans people, and be willing to defend and celebrate trans lives.

# Know your limits as an ally.

Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know everything! When supporting a trans person who may have sought you out for support or guidance, be sure to point that person to appropriate resources when you've reached the limit of your knowledge or ability to handle the situation. It is better to admit you don't know something than to provide information that may be incorrect or harmful.