

Transgender 101: For Local Businesses in Greenburgh

Current State of Affairs:

The LOFT Community Center in White Plains (<https://www.loftgaycenter.org/>) performed a formal needs assessment of Westchester LGBTQ+ community members in 2018. We expect the needs to be greater now due to the increasing number of people identifying as TGNCNB (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgbt-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx>), and lingering anti-transgender sentiment and increase in anti-transgender hate crimes created by the Trump administration and the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, 1 in 50 members of Generation Z identify as TGNCNB.

This Needs Assessment document can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-I62hlf7N5PNU40cEEyZmtYRk9BX09NY2InQ2NPQkswR1NR/view>.

The main findings were:

- About one in six (15.5%) participants reported having a mental health disability.
- More than one in five (22.5%) participants lived under 200% of the federal poverty line.
- Participants indicated that lack of LGBT+ - friendly options was a top barrier for receiving services such as support group, individual counseling, and benefits navigation services.
- Participants prioritized the greatest needs for the community as: additional LGBTQ+ social spaces (29.5%), sensitivity training for police (19.7%) and government, businesses, and agencies (17.6%).
- About two-thirds of respondents (65.0%) had experienced at least one microaggression “occasionally” or more often. This included being harassed about gender expression (13.5%) or sexual orientation (12.4%). Almost one in ten (8.4%) had been mistaken for a sex worker at least once.

How to engage with transgender, gender nonconforming, & nonbinary (TGNCNB) customers:

*Note: Dominant western culture is very gendered, though around the world many cultures honor multiple genders (see below for additional resources). Many of us are so used to immediately putting people into categories of “female” and “male.” Additionally, we are taught that men and women look certain ways and act certain ways according to their gender. This is social conditioning which is a big culprit for the entrenched transphobia, misogyny, and sexism in our culture. This packet of information will help you better understand how we are all impacted by false notions of gender we were taught and will help you support TGNCNB people in all realms of your business/organization and your life.

Adapted from “Engagement” by Sandy Turner, PhD, LCSW, Associate Professor Fordham (2021):

- What is Engagement?
 - “Form a positive connection with the customer, make them feel safe and comfortable.”
 - Keep in mind a transgender person may have developed mistrust of cisgender business professionals/service industry due to prior mistreatment in this setting
 - Be mindful not to go overboard on the friendliness to try to appear sensitive. It often backfires. The more you learn about trans experiences, the more comfortable you will likely feel and less likely you will intentionally or unintentionally cause someone to feel ‘othered’.
- Example Introduction:
 - “My name is _____. My pronouns are _____. What are your pronouns?”
 - Don’t assume someone’s gender by looking at them
 - Don’t assume “sir”, “maam”, “Mr”, or “Miss”
 - Use your pronouns when introducing yourself (or have on your nametag, or wear a pronoun pin, if possible)
 - Indicates it is safe for your customer to state their pronouns
 - He/him/his
 - She/her/hers
 - They/them/theirs
 - Neopronouns (Xe/Xem/Xyr)
 - <https://www.glsen.org/activity/pronouns-guide-glsen>
 - <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Pronouns%20Resource.pdf>
- Empathy: Try to put yourself in their shoes.
 - Avoid “I understand” or “I feel you” statements if you are cisgender. Unless you are transgender; you don’t.
 - Read memoirs and reflect on personal stories of transgender folks.
 - Spend time thinking about how gender has affected your life and how the world may see/treat you differently if you were a different gender.

- Active listening:
 - Be comfortable respecting your customer's method of gender expression (e.g., someone who appears to you to be a woman wearing a man's suit may actually identify as a man; someone who appears to you as a man wearing a woman's dress may actually identify as a woman; or they may identify as both or neither). Validate this person's identified gender.
- Mindfulness:
 - Avoid judgement. (and we all have it- be mindful of it, because it will show up on your face; shock because of someone's existence may be a very upsetting experience to witness)
 - Admit to knowledge gaps and mistakes. If a mistake is made, quickly admit to it, sincerely apologize once, and most importantly, make efforts to do better next time (this is the most essential step!)
 - Develop capacity for awareness.
 - Don't call a customer "fascinating."
 - Don't ask a question "out of curiosity" that is not related to their service for example: "When are you getting 'THE' surgery?"
- Communication Strategies:
 - Avoid questions and comments you would not ask or make to a cisgender customer (i.e., never ask about surgeries, dating or genitals- obviously).
 - Admit when you made a mistake and apologize (& do better next time).
 - Validate the customer's experience (don't show surprise, shock, curiosity at their statements).
- Boundaries:
 - Treat the customer for the problem they are presenting to you for, don't ask unnecessary questions out of curiosity.
 - Use google or read a book or attend a lecture if you want information about being trans (see Resource List below).
- Self-care and self-awareness:
 - Be aware of your privilege in society as a cisgender person, and don't deny/invalidate a trans person's lived experience.
 - Admit when you don't know something, and seek expert advisement/supervision to help you.
 - Remind yourself you are not a bad person for not knowing; we are all born into a society. You are responsible for learning and if you feel shame making mistakes, connect with cis friends about this shame rather than apologizing profusely to a TGNCNB person who may be harmed by the disclosure.
- Great Resource from the National LGBT Cancer Network on engaging TGNCNB patients in a healthcare setting: <https://www.aamc.org/what-we-do/equity-diversity-inclusion/lgbt-health-resources/videos/vanessa-goes-to-doctor>

- Great resource from Zencare for psychotherapists treating the TGNCNB community:
https://blog.zencare.co/trans-inclusive-gender-affirming-therapy-private-practice/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=therapist-newsletter-6-3-2021-pride-2021&term=copy&utm_source=Therapist+Newsletter&utm_campaign=5061037115-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ecfbbb934d-5061037115-331840106.

How to engage with the TGNCNB employees/peers/colleagues:

- Harassment and job bias for transgender colleagues/employees:
 - **Common:** 25% lost jobs, 75% report workplace discrimination (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2021)
 - Landmark Supreme Court case, Bostock v. Clayton County, decided on June 15, 2020: **federal law prohibits anti-transgender discrimination** in employment.
 - Sexual harassment against TGNCNB people looks different than against cisgender people, and many cisgender people may not even be aware when they might be committing such harassment against TGNCNB community members.
 - Specific definitions of harassment against the LGBTQ community have been named by recent California law, a state which is leading the way in reducing workplace bias against the transgender community. Below, are quick resources about this law and some definitions that might be useful. I know these examples may sound obvious or absurd to someone who hasn't personally experienced them, but they happen very commonly and can be very harmful to a LGBTQ+ employee.
 - <https://www.employeeharassmenttraining.com/gender-identity/>
 - <https://www.easylama.com/blog/sb-396-california-training-requirements>
 - <https://compliancegroup.com/blog/senate-bill-396-protects-transgender-workplace-opportunities/>
- The below is a New York-based harassment training that includes an example of harassment of a transgender and nonbinary employee. Includes definitions and explanations of gender expression, identity and sexual orientation.
 - <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cchr/training/english/index.html>
- Common pitfalls and issues to address:
 - **Misgendering/deadnaming:**
 - To intentionally not use the pronouns and name preferred by an employee is harassment. You do not have to understand an employee's pronouns to respect them by using their preferred pronouns and name.
 - Stop saying "sir" and "maam." It assumes a gender binary and assumes you know what a person's gender is just by looking at them.
 - Don't ask a nonbinary person to use male or female pronouns because they/them/their is "too hard."
 - Singular they pronouns have been used in the English language for centuries and is now accepted into major English dictionaries: <https://mrsexsmith.medium.com/the-singular-they-is-grammatically-correct-dammit-c2288778004f>

- **Don't Ask/Don't Tell:**
 - Discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity are still often considered inappropriate to discuss in the workplace. This leads to a toxic environment.
 - A heteronormative standard is found in most workplaces (e.g., asking a man: "What does your wife do?"). Use the word "partner" instead.
- **Restricting gender expression:**
 - Do not police or gate-keep an employee's hair length, jewelry, makeup, nail-painting and clothing choices, because this could be significant to the employee's gender expression.
 - Don't assume someone's gender by the way they look (e.g., for those employee's assigned male at birth, transgender women often face the dilemma of outing themselves vs being forced to wear traditional "male" attire while in the closet).
 - Don't expect someone's internal sense of gender identity matches their outward gender expression (i.e., just because someone looks like a woman to you, don't assume that is their identity and experience).
- **Gendered spaces:**
 - Gender neutral or gender inclusive spaces are preferred.
 - If only gendered bathrooms/locker-rooms/etc are available, then allow the employee to use the space of the gender they identify with.
 - A transperson is much more likely to be the victim of a sexual assault in a gendered space rather than a cisgender person.
- **Othering:**
 - It is not appropriate to ask an LGBTQ+ employee about their genitals, their intimate (sex) life, their personal health information (e.g., plans for surgery and hormones), or any other questions/comments which would be considered inappropriate to ask a cisgender employee.
 - For example, it is inappropriate to tell a transgender person you have a transgender child/friend/cousin, etc., when it is not relevant to the conversation.
 - Also, you could be inadvertently outing your family member or friend without their permission.
 - A second example is that it is not always appropriate to compliment a LGBTQ+ person on their "bravery", and/or ask "when did you learn/know you were gay/trans/bi/etc"?
- **The best way to combat this is education and awareness.**
 - Make an effort to confront personal biases and learn about the experiences of transgender and non-binary people.
 - Plan ahead!
 - Make sure your institution/organization has a formal, written policy for employees who need assistance with coming out and/or transitioning in the

workplace. <https://daelynn.medium.com/are-your-people-ops-trans-affirming-70e4ac3fb039>

- Have a committee with mentorship and resources (including support services and ombudsman) to provide to an employee who will be coming out and/or transitioning in the workplace.
- Make sure your employee's health insurance policies include gender-affirming care and mental healthcare services at affordable rates. For instance, it is illegal in New York to deny an employee medically-necessary, gender affirming healthcare (Movement Advancement Project, 2021): <https://www.lgbtmap.org/>

WPATH transgender resource list:

Adapted from the World Professionals Association of Transgender Health website (2021):

<https://www.wpath.org/about/mission-and-vision>

Healthcare and Insurance

- Detailed info on your healthcare rights: <http://www.transequality.org/know-your-rights/healthcare>
- How to file a federal healthcare discrimination complaint with EEOC: <http://www.eeoc.gov/field/littlerock/charge.cfm>
- How to file a federal healthcare discrimination complaint with HHS: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/complaints/index.html>
- HHS decision affirming Medicare coverage for transition related healthcare: <http://www.hhs.gov/dab/decisions/dabdecisions/dab2576.pdf>

USA Resources List:

- National Center for Transgender Equality, <https://transequality.org/know-your-rights>
- Transgender Law Center, www.transgenderlawcenter.org
- Lambda Legal, <https://www.lambdalegal.org/issues/transgender-rights>
- National Center for Lesbian Rights, <http://www.nclrights.org/our-work/transgender-law/>
- GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), <https://www.glad.org/our-impact/cases/?issues=transgender-rights&type=advocacy>
- American Civil Liberties Union, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights>
- Sylvia Rivera Law Project, <https://srlp.org/>
- Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund, www.transgenderlegal.org

General Transgender Theory & Experience:

- Mock, Janet (2014). *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More*. New York: Atria.
- Girschick, Lori B. (2008). *Transgender Voices: Beyond Women and Men*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Serano, Julia (2007). *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Emeryville: Seal Press.
- Valentine, David (2007). *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Stryker, Susan & Aren Aizura, eds. (2013). *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*. New York: Routledge. Stryker, Susan & Stephen Whittle (2006). *The Transgender Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Valerio, Max Wolf (2006). *The Testosterone Files: My Hormonal and Social Transformation from Female to Male*. Emeryville: Seal Press.
- Green, Jamison (2004). *Becoming a Visible Man*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Wilchins, Riki (2004). *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*. Los Angeles: Alyson Books.
- Rose, Donna (2003). *Wrapped in Blue: A Journey of Discovery – a memoir*. Round Rock: Living Legacy Press.
- Namaste, Vivian K. (2000). *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cromwell, Jason (1999). *Transmen & FTMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders & Sexualities*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Prosser, Jay (1998). *Second Skins: the body narratives of transsexuality*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bornstein, Kate (1994). *Gender Outlaw: On men, women and the rest of us*. New York: Routledge.

Transgender History:

- Stryker, Susan (2017). *Transgender History, second edition: The Roots of Today's Revolution*. Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Stryker, Susan (2008). *Transgender History*. Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Meyerowitz, Joanne (2002). *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Feinberg, Leslie (1996). *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Transgender Law & Policy Texts

- Levi, Jennifer L., & Monnin-Browder, Elizabeth E. (Eds.) (2012). *Transgender Family Law: A Guide to Effective Advocacy*. Bloomington: Authorhouse.
- Bender-Baird, Kyla (2011). *Transgender Employment Experiences: Gendered Perceptions and the Law*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Weiss, Jillian T. (2007). *Transgender Workplace Diversity: Policy Tools, Training Issues, and Communication Strategies for HR and Legal Professionals*. North Charleston: Booksurge Publishing.
- Currah, Paisley, Juang, Richard. M., and Minter, Shannon P. (Eds.) (2006). *Transgender Rights*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Health, Medical, and Psychology Texts

- Witten, Tarynn M., and Eyler, A. Evan (2012). *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Aging: Challenges in Research, Practice & Policy*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ehrensaft, Diane (2011). *Gender Born, Gender Made: Raising Healthy Gender-Nonconforming Children*. New York: The Experiment Publishing.
- Ettner, Randi, Monstrey, Stan, & Eyler, A. Evan (Eds.) (2007). *Principles of Transgender Medicine and Surgery*. New York: The Haworth Press. Second Edition (2016), Ettner, Monstrey, & Coleman, Eli (Eds.)
- Lev, Arlene Istar (2004). *Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working With Gender-Variant People and their Families*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Clinical Practice Press.

Children and Adolescent (for Adults, by non-clinical authors)

- Brill, Stephanie and Pepper, Rachel (2008). *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*. San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Beam, Chris (2007). *Transparent: Love, Family, and Living the T with Transgender Teenagers*. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc.

Children and Adolescent (for Youth, by non-clinical authors)

- Rainess, Seth Jamison (2015). *Real Talk For Teens: Jump-Start Guide to Gender Transitioning and Beyond*. Transgress Press.

Intersex-related

- Zieselman, KM (2020). *XOXY: A Memoir*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Greenberg, Julie (2012). *Intersexuality and the Law: Why Sex Matters*. New York: NYU Press.
- Karkazis, Katrina (2008). *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*. Durham, Duke University Press.
- Preves, Sharon E. (2003). *Intersex and Identity: The Contested Self*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Dreger, Alice Domurat (1998). *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.