

a practical guide to trans, gender diverse and non-binary inclusion



our commitment



Nicole Bartholomeusz
Chief Executive of cohealth

We are proud to release 'A practical guide to trans, gender diverse and non-binary inclusion', a guide providing cohealth staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure a culturally safe and inclusive environment, helping us work congruently with our core values of social equity and respect.

At cohealth, we are committed to providing responsive health and community services that respect the human rights of all people, celebrates their diversity and promotes their participation in all aspects of their health and wellbeing.

We want all trans, gender diverse and non-binary co-workers and consumers to feel welcome and a sense of belonging when they walk through cohealth's doors. These guidelines are an important step in achieving this.



This document has been written in collaboration with the Zoe Belle Gender Collective (ZBGC) and LGBTIQ Education & Advocacy Project (LEAP). cohealth would particularly like to thank Starlady (ZBGC) and Jeremy Wiggins (LEAP) for their valuable contributions. This guide has been informed by the National LGBT Health Education Centre's, Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Confirming People resource.



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which our offices stand and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the sorrow of the Stolen Generations and the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



everyone is welcome at **cohealth**

introduction



cohealth staff showing support to the LGBTIQ community during Wear It Purple Day

Many trans, gender diverse and non-binary (TGDNB) people experience stigma and discrimination in their day-to-day lives, particularly when seeking health care. As a result, many fear they will be treated disrespectfully by health care staff, which can lead to them delaying access to necessary health care services. Similarly, TGDNB people can experience barriers to employment and may fear being excluded or discriminated against in the workplace.

cohealth is committed to providing culturally safe and inclusive environments, evidenced by our human rights-based practice and promotion of social and health equity. **Cultural safety occurs when individuals feel safe to bring their whole selves to cohealth, where there is no denial or challenge of their identity.** All staff are responsible for creating an environment that responds to the needs of TGDNB people.

This guide provides co-workers with a clear understanding of how to create a safe and inclusive service and workplace for TGDNB people. It explains duty of care as well as legal obligations of anti-discriminatory practice.

This guide will provide practical advice on:

- Inclusive communication
- Safe disclosure and maintaining confidentiality
- Welcoming and safe environments

basic terminology

Cisgender: a person who exclusively identifies with their gender assigned at birth.

Gender diverse: an umbrella term that is used to describe gender identities that demonstrate a diversity of expression beyond the binary framework of male and female.

Gender identity: our internal sense of self that may be masculine, feminine, neither, both or moving around freely.

Gender marker: Markers that denote someone's gender identity (for example, M, F or X).

Gender pronouns: the pronouns used to describe gender, for example: he/him/his, they/them/theirs, she/her/hers.

Misgendering: the deliberate or accidental use of a pronoun, title, or other gendered language that does not match a person's gender identity.

Misnaming/deadnaming: the deliberate or accidental use of an old name or legal name instead of a person's chosen name.

Pronoun cueing: the deliberate use of words or actions to send a 'cue' to others about someone's gender and preferred pronouns.

Non-binary: a broad term referencing gender identities and/or experiences that aren't exclusively male or female.

Transgender/trans: a person who does not exclusively identify with their gender assigned at birth.



inclusive communication

Inclusive communication is a way to demonstrate respect, build trust and address exclusion and discrimination that TGDNB people face. TGDNB people often change their pronouns, names and/or gender markers to better reflect their gender identity. Some people change them officially on their legal documents, while some do not (for various reasons).

It's important to affirm and respect everyone's gender identity and how they would like to be referred to. This right is protected through the Commonwealth *Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013*.

Greeting people

It is essential not to make assumptions about someone's gender identity based on their name, how they look, their mannerisms or how they sound. Misgendering, misnaming or deadnaming are the most common forms of systemic discrimination that impact TGDNB people and can cause significant distress. If you are unsure about a person's affirmed name and pronoun, politely ask. If you make a mistake about a person's name or pronoun, politely apologise and try to remember next time. Be aware that some questions related to gender are personal and discretion is important. The following script can be used as a guide to ask someone about their pronouns or gender identity:

Try asking: **"What pronouns do you use?"** or **"How would you describe your gender identity?"** It can feel uncomfortable if you are not used to asking this question but making an assumption about someone's pronoun is more uncomfortable.

Tip!

Create an environment of accountability. Use pronoun cueing to help your co-workers. Don't be afraid to politely correct your colleagues if they use the wrong names and pronouns, or if they make insensitive comments. Constantly having to correct others can be exhausting for TGDNB people so having colleagues take on responsibility helps remove some of that burden.

Some people introduce their own pronoun first, for example **"Hello, I am Toni, I'll be your GP today and my pronouns are they, them, theirs. Would you like me to record what pronouns and/or titles you would like to use at this service?"**

If you do make a mistake, you can say something like: **"I'm sorry for using the wrong pronoun/name. I did not mean to disrespect you. Let me try again"**

One way to prevent misgendering is to avoid using terms that indicate gender when you address people you don't know.

For example, instead of asking "How may I help you, sir?" you can simply ask, **"How may I help you?"** You can also avoid using "Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms." **by calling someone by their chosen name** or by using their first and last name together.

It is also important to avoid gendered terms when talking to others about someone whose gender identity is not yet known to us.

For example, rather than saying "he/she needs a follow-up appointment" you can say **"The consumer is here in the waiting room"** or **"Dr Reed's 11:30 consumer is here."** You can also use "they" instead of "she" or "he". For example, you can say: **"They are here for their 3pm meeting."**

Once a person has disclosed their chosen name, gender identity and pronouns, it is important to use their preferences in all future correspondence and continue to use them even when they are not present (if they have given permission).



Recording personal details

Consumers are provided with a registration form at their first cohealth visit and are invited to include optional information about their gender identity, sexuality and intersex variation status. This information helps cohealth to provide inclusive services that meet the healthcare needs of consumers. Importantly, this section provides an opportunity for people who are TGDNB to self-identify how they would like their gender identity, pronouns and name to be recorded.

Sometimes you might find that the name on a person's identification and Medicare card is different from the one they would like to record in cohealth's systems. It is important that you are prepared for this possibility and that you record the name and gender the consumer discloses upon registration.

In a situation where a consumer's name or gender does not match their Medicare card or medical records, you can ask: **"Could your records be under a different name?"** or **"What is the name on your Medicare card?"** It may be useful to explain why you need this information, for example: **"We need this information for our billing purposes."** You can then cross-check identification by looking at date of birth and address. Never ask a person what their "real" or "legal" name is. Consumers may feel offended because these terms assume that their chosen names are not valid.

Asking TGDNB people invasive questions about their bodies (for example medical affirmation, hormone replacement therapy and/or surgical status) without a valid medical reason may be considered sexual harassment under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010. Consumer may need appropriate referrals and/or clinical care but this should be handled sensitively and respectfully.

Avoid asking unnecessary questions. Before asking a TGDNB person a personal question, first ask yourself: **Is my question necessary for their care or am I asking it for my own curiosity?** If for your own curiosity, it is not appropriate to ask. Think instead about: **What do I know? What do I need to know? How can I ask for the information I need to know in a sensitive way?**

safe disclosure and maintaining confidentiality

Tips!

- It is important not to **misgender or deadname consumers when making referrals.**

- Sometimes people aren't **"out" with their gender identity in all settings, so you need to make sure you won't be placing them at risk when using their chosen name and pronouns in all correspondence (including what name, title and pronouns consumers would like on their mail or referral letters).**

It is important that you ask questions about gender identity and pronoun preferences in an affirming and respectful way. It sends a message to TGDNB people that they are recognised, acknowledged and valued. Best practice is to explain why information about a consumer's gender identity may be relevant and to remind them that disclosure is optional. Respectful responses to disclosure and confidentiality are integral to a TGDNB person's experience of a service and workplace. **It's important to balance creating invitations for people to disclose with their right to privacy.**

Consumers should be reassured that any information they provide will be stored securely, remain confidential, and only be shared with cohealth co-workers or other agencies if they have given permission. Record and clarify with the consumer whether it is appropriate to disclose/share information about their name, pronouns and gender identity. Additionally, consumers should be advised of their right to change or remove any information at any time.

Consider asking: **"Would you like information on your gender identity, affirmed name and pronouns shared to other staff members at our service?"** and **"Would you like me to use your affirmed name and pronoun in the referral letter I write?"**



welcoming & safe environments

Tip!

Wearing pronoun badges, rainbow lanyards and TGDNB flags are a great way for staff to show their support of the TGDNB community.

Given the high rates of discrimination and exclusion that TGDNB people experience, it is important to create an environment where people feel safe and welcome. Visual signs of support demonstrate an awareness of the barriers that the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) community experience.

It is also important to ask consumers if they have any requirements regarding their safety, for example, room assignment or access to bathroom amenities.

Bathrooms

When a person asks to use the bathroom or asks where the bathrooms are located, it is important to not assume which toilet they should or would like to use. TGDNB people should not be forced to use all gender bathrooms; instead, point them to all available bathrooms by saying something like:

“We have three bathrooms on site – the men’s and women’s toilets are just over there to the left, and the accessible all-gender toilet is just down the corridor to the right”.

cohealth aims to provide multiple, all-gender self-contained cubicles/washrooms at each site. Not all cohealth offices are able to accommodate this due to site layout and other variables. We support the rights of TGDNB people to use the toilets they feel most comfortable with.

trans, gender diverse and non-binary people are welcome in here

please use the toilet of your choice



In some situations, people may raise concerns about using toilets signed with TGDNB inclusion. In cases of concern or misunderstanding it is recommended to:

- Acknowledge the persons complaint and ask them to clearly explain what their concern is.
- Explain to the person that the sign is to send a message that we respect the human rights of everyone to feel safe and welcomed in our service. In addition, you can:
 - Explain that it is illegal for us to ask a trans, gender diverse or non-binary person to use a restroom that does not reflect their gender identity or which they feel unsafe using. It’s their human right – a right we support and feel is important to acknowledge – which is why we have chosen to display the signs.
 - Refer them to our consumers’ rights and responsibilities policy.
 - Refer them to our complaints process and policy.
- If a situation escalates, refer the person to a senior manager on site and record the event in Riskman.
- Refer them to a single-stalled all-gender accessible bathroom (where available).
- Inform them that cohealth has a zero-tolerance policy in regards to harassment and/or abuse towards TGDNB people.

how to be an ally



respect

that people have the right to define their gender. Affirm people's gender identities, pronouns and chosen names.

listen

to the unique experiences of TGDNB people. Avoid speaking on TGDNB people's behalf. Promote self-determination.

consult

with TGDNB people in the design, delivery and evaluation of effective healthcare services.

challenge

transphobic jokes and comments. Create an environment of accountability.

learn

from TGDNB advocates in your community. Stay informed by checking out books, blogs, and reliable TGDNB websites.

share

that you're a trans ally to your network and explain why. Look for opportunities to educate others to promote TGDNB inclusion.

where to learn more



Rory & Starlady, Zoe Belle Gender Collective

cohealth is committed to supporting and improving pathways to employment for TGDNB people. We are fortunate to have a number of TGDNB co-workers at cohealth and we value their contribution to our work and our workplace culture and values.

cohealth is proud to be partnering with the Zoe Belle Gender Collective, an independent trans and gender diverse advocacy organisation auspiced and supported by cohealth. ZBGC staff are employed within cohealth's Diversity team. ZBGC is an excellent resource and training about TGDNB inclusive practice can be provided for teams.

To get in touch with ZBGC, email: zbgc@cohealth.org.au
www.zbgc.org.au

additional resources

Churchill Recommendations on Best Practice in Trans and Gender Diverse Health: www.leaphq.org

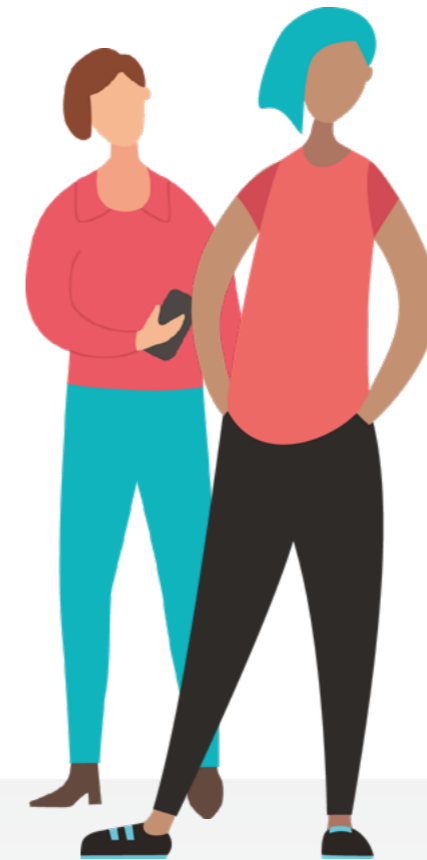
Equinox Gender Diverse Health Centre: www.equinox.org.au

Minus18: www.minus18.org.au

Transgender Victoria: www.transgendervictoria.com

YGender: www.ygender.org.au

best practices for a transgender-affirming environment



best practice

When talking about a person whose personal information you do not know, avoid pronouns and other gendered terms. Use gender-neutral words such as “they” or the consumer’s chosen name.

examples

“It’s Simon’s first day working at cohealth; they are working in the mental health team.”

“Mary is here in the waiting room. Mary is here for the 3pm appointment”

Don’t make assumptions about gender, pronouns and chosen names. Always ask and be aware that discretion may be important to some people.

“How do you currently describe your gender identity?”

“What pronouns do you use?”

“Hi, I’m Frances, I use she/her pronouns; what pronouns do you use?”

Educate people who need more information about why we ask about gender identity.

Consumer: “Why are you asking this question?”

Response: “We don’t like to make assumptions about people’s gender identities; cohealth is inclusive of trans and gender diverse consumers. This section of the question may not be relevant to you.”

best practice

Ask respectfully about consumer names if they do not match cohealth’s records. Always ask if consumers have a different name they’d like us to use.

examples

“Could your file be under another name?”

“Perhaps the name we have on file is the same as that on your Medicare card? Would you like me to add another name to our file?”

Did you slip up? Politely apologise.

“I apologise for using the wrong pronoun. I did not mean to disrespect you. Let me try again”

Only ask for information that is required.

Ask yourself: What do I know? What do I need to know? How can I ask in a sensitive way?

If someone asks for directions to the bathroom, don’t assume which option they’d prefer.

Point people to all available bathrooms.

When addressing a group of people, avoid using gendered terms like “ladies and gentlemen.”

“Good morning everyone, thanks for your time today.”

