

Quick Guide: Qualities of a Gender-Affirming Pharmacy INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

The language pharmacies use to communicate with patients can affect how safe, included and welcome they feel. This section includes strategies that pharmacists and pharmacy staff can use to ensure that all communications with transgender and gender diverse patients are respectful and inclusive.

AVOID GENDERED TERMS

Though pharmacists and pharmacy staff often use terms like ma'am and sir to show respect to patients, these terms make assumptions about patient gender and should be avoided. Similarly, when calling a patient by name in a waiting room or over the intercom, consider using just their last name. This avoids the use of gendered terms like Mrs., Ms., or Mr., and the potential of calling a patient by their non-preferred first name.

ASK ALL PATIENTS FOR GENDER AND PRONOUN INFORMATION

Using the correct pronouns to refer to your patients is an important part of showing respect and creating a safe and welcoming pharmacy. It is not possible to know which pronouns someone uses simply by their appearance, and

assuming can do more harm than good. The best thing to do is ask. There are many ways to do this, such as:

- What pronouns do you use?
- My name is Sam and my pronouns are they and them. How about you?
- How do you like to be addressed?

If a patient declines to answer, politely accept. Let them know that all patients are being asked so you can provide optimal care.

PRACTICE USING NEW PRONOUNS⁴

It can be difficult to use pronouns that are new to you. The best solution is to practice! One way to do this is by reading a children's book and replacing familiar pronouns with those that are unfamiliar to you. The graphic shows some common pronouns and how they are used in the pharmacy context.

| She/Her/Hers | They/Them/Theirs | He/Him/His | Ze/Zir/Zirs | Ze/Hir/Hirs |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| She is here now. | They are here now. | He is here now. | Ze is here now. | Ze is here now. |
| Her vaccine is ready. | Their vaccine is ready. | His vaccine is ready. | Zir vaccine is ready. | Hir vaccine is ready. |
| That call is for her. | That call is for them. | That call is for him. | That call is for zir. | That call is for hir. |
| She removed herself from the waiting list. | They removed themselves from the waiting list. | He removed himself from the waiting list. | Ze removed zirsself from the waiting list. | Ze removed hirsself from the waiting list. |
| This perscription is hers. | This perscription is theirs. | This perscription is his. | This perscription is zirs. | This perscription is hirs. |

⁴The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, "All Children-All Families: Pronouns 101," <https://www.thehrcfoundation.org/professional-resources/all-children-all-families-pronouns-101>

ENSURE WRITTEN FORMS ARE INCLUSIVE

The way pharmacies communicate to patients in writing, often through forms, has an impact on the extent to which they feel safe, included and welcome. Include pronouns on your forms and utilize a two-step question to gather the patient's name (ask the name they go by and their legal name) and gender (ask their gender identity and their sex assigned at birth). If possible, allow patients to write out their gender identity rather than offering predetermined categories. You can also provide written materials at pharmacy windows to help patients communicate their gender and pronoun information to providers.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO UPDATE PATIENT INFORMATION

A person's pronouns may change over time. In the same way that patient information such as allergies is continually updated, allow patients to update their name, gender and pronoun information. You can do this by including name, gender and pronoun fields on all forms. You can also listen for "pink flags" from patients when asked for their identifying information (e.g., "my file is listed under ____"). This may prompt you to ask if the patient uses a different name and/or pronouns than what you have on file.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MISGENDER SOMEONE?

Misgendering is referring to someone, intentionally or unintentionally, as a gender other than the one with which that person identifies. Persistent or unaddressed misgendering can harm the relationship of trust between you and your patient and make them feel unwelcome at your pharmacy.

For example: Misgendering occurs when a patient who identifies as a woman is referred to using the terms like "sir," "he," "man" or "gentleman."

MANAGING MISTAKES:

If you misgender someone and notice right away, the best course of action is to quickly apologize and correct your mistake. This models accurate and respectful use of pronouns for others who may be present and shows your commitment to addressing the error.

"His prescription is - I'm sorry - their prescription is ready."

If the mistake is realized later, addressing it with a brief apology is the best practice. It is important to center the patient and not over-apologize; this can shift the focus from addressing the mistake to the patient feeling pressured to reassure you.

"I'm sorry that I used the wrong pronoun the last time you picked up your prescriptions. I'll be more careful next time."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This quick guide is excerpted from *Providing Inclusive Care and Services for the Transgender and Gender Diverse Community: A Pharmacy Resource Guide* published by the Human Rights Campaign and the American Pharmacists Association. For the full guide and other quick guides focused on the six qualities of a gender-affirming pharmacy, visit thehrfoundation.org/TransPharmacyGuide.



1 Knowledge of key LGBTQ terms



4 Visible symbols of support



2 Inclusive communication



5 Staff training



3 Gender-related data management



6 Knowledgeable and patient-centered care