MAYORS PLAYBOOK:

TOOLKIT FOR LGBTQ+ MUNICIPAL EQUALITY



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THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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MAYORS PLAYBOOK:
TOOLKIT FOR LGBTQ+ MUNICIPAL EQUALITY

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THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

January 2025

Dear Mayor:

The U.S. Conference of Mayors has long championed the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. In 1984 the organization adopted policy calling for the legal protection of those rights at all levels of government, making it the first organization of elected officials to do so. In 1991 it adopted policy calling for granting the protection of federal hate crimes laws to all citizens, including LGBTQ+ communities, and in 2009 it adopted policy supporting marriage equality. America's mayors have been at the forefront of the battle for marriage equality, employment discrimination protections, the repeal of don't-ask-don't-tell, decriminalizing HIV, and opposing right-to-discriminate laws across the country. The Conference will continue the fight to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ Americans.

In 2019 the Conference established the LGBTQ+ Alliance to lead its work on LGBTQ+ advocacy, policy, and protections, which are increasingly under assault nationwide.

At the Alliance's request, the Conference conducted a survey to identify mayoral and city actions and policies that support the LGBTQ+ community and make cities inclusive. Among the survey's findings for the 83 cities in 29 states that responded:

- 88% have supported and/or advocated for legislation at the city, state or federal level to protect the rights of and support the LGBTQ+ community.
- 77% have an enforceable non-discrimination ordinance that expressly covers sexual orientation and gender identity.
- 69% have made engagement with the LGBTQ+ community a priority of their administration.
- 63% have established partnerships that help engage LGBTQ+ youth.
- 94% provide health care and/or other benefits to same sex spouses or domestic partners.
- 66% of the cities provide transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits that expressly cover transgender healthcare needs.

At a time when the LGBTQ+ community is under attack, we have been working closely with the Human Rights Campaign Foundation to provide information to mayors on specific actions they can take to protect LGBTQ+ rights and build inclusive cities. This excellent toolkit prepared by HRCF will help you to do just that.

Todd Gloria
Mayor of San Diego
Co-chair, LGBTQ+ Alliance

Satya Rhodes-Conway
Mayor of Madison
Co-chair, LGBTQ+ Alliance

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director

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HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

January 2025

Dear Mayors and Municipal Leaders,

At a time when LGBTQ+ Americans face unprecedented challenges at the state level, our cities remain beacons of hope and progress. That's why I'm proud to present the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's newest resource: The Mayors' Playbook: Toolkit for LGBTQ+ Municipal Equality.

This comprehensive guide arrives at a critical moment. Our 2024 Municipal Equality Index has revealed a remarkable truth: even as some state legislatures push discriminatory policies, local leaders are standing firmly for equality. In fact, a record-breaking 130 cities – more than 25% of those rated – achieved perfect scores, demonstrating that inclusive communities are thriving communities.

The Mayors' Playbook transforms our decade-plus of research and best practices into actionable steps for local leadership. Whether you're just beginning your journey toward LGBTQ+ inclusion or looking to build upon existing initiatives, this toolkit provides clear, practical guidance drawn from real success stories in cities like Tempe, Arizona and Champaign, Illinois.

We're especially proud to launch this resource at the 93rd Winter Meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors. The Conference's establishment of the LGBTQ+ Alliance in 2019 showed remarkable foresight, and this toolkit builds upon that commitment to ensuring every resident can live openly and safely in their community.

The Playbook isn't just a checklist – it's a roadmap for weaving LGBTQ+ equality into the fabric of your municipal operations. From non-discrimination ordinances to inclusive city services, from employee benefits to community engagement, we've distilled complex policies into clear, implementable actions.

Your role as local leaders has never been more vital. While state-level challenges persist, you have the power to create immediate, meaningful change in your communities. This toolkit equips you with the resources to do exactly that, regardless of your starting point or your state's political climate.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation stands ready to support you in this important work. Together, we can ensure that every American city becomes a place where LGBTQ+ people can thrive, contribute, and live authentically.



With determination and hope,

Kelley Robinson

President
Human Rights Campaign

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

Introduction

LGBTQ+ communities and issues are increasingly visible and present in the national dialogue with each passing year. As a result, it is crucial that local leaders are able to effectively discuss issues impacting their LGBTQ+ residents as they strive to create an inclusive environment.

In fact, more and more people are identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual. According to a 2023 Gallup survey, "more than one in five Gen Z adults, ranging in age from 18 to 26, identify as LGBTQ+, as do nearly one in 10 millennials (aged 27 to 42)." The study notes that it is likely that the LGBTQ+ population will exceed more than 10 percent of the U.S. adult population within the next 30 years. This is particularly important for city leaders because as the LGBTQ+ community grows, demand for LGBTQ-inclusive policies, services, infrastructure, and other resources will also grow.

This toolkit is designed to help mayors, other city executives, senior or mid-level management, and human resources professionals learn about issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community. The information, policy and practice recommendations, and resources provided by this toolkit will assist leaders dedicated to building more inclusive communities.

Contextualizing the LGBTQ+ Landscape

Whether you are in a state that supports LGBTQ+ equality or not, municipalities have substantial and meaningful power to support LGBTQ+ people that shouldn't be overlooked. Federal and statewide laws regarding LGBTQ+ people and their families are constantly evolving. In 2024 alone, the Human Rights Campaign tracked over 830 LGBTQ-related bills in state legislatures across the country. It is hard to overstate how serious this moment is for LGBTQ+ youth and their families. According to a Trevor Project 2024 Survey on Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People, nearly 2 in 5 (39%) LGBTQ+ young people said that they or their family have considered moving to a different state because of anti-LGBTQ+ politics and laws. LGBTQ+ adults and parents of LGBTQ+ youth are now reckoning with some really difficult and seriously life-altering questions. Is it better to leave home to find a safer life in a different part of the country? Or should they stay in a community where their families are rooted but where their rights are eroded by the day? To make matters worse, many state legislatures are also putting local governments in the line of fire through state preemptive measures, limiting the ability of municipalities to govern on certain issues.

There is no better time to familiarize yourself with the needs and issues of the LGBTQ+ community. City leaders are much closer to the people they serve than those in federal and state legislatures. They are accustomed to and more adept at putting aside partisanship to solve the very real problems of discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. Until full nationwide equality is realized, cities must continue to lead the way on vital protections for LGBTQ+ residents, visitors, and workers. In doing so, city leaders will help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all residents. This toolkit will cover more information regarding LGBTQ+ state legislation, state preemption, and ways to advocate for your communities.

Imperative of Inclusivity

As much as the LGBTQ+ community benefits from strong municipal leadership, municipalities can also greatly benefit from inclusivity and the rich diversity present in their communities. A growing body of research shows that openness to diversity and inclusion is not a byproduct of communities that achieve economic prosperity, but rather a key element in the formula that leads to economic growth.

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The Fortune 500 has long utilized inclusive workplace policies as proven recruitment and retention tools. Diversity and inclusion enhance an employer's reputation, increase job satisfaction, and boost employee morale. Similarly, municipalities and their employees benefit from LGBTQ-inclusive workplace policies and practices.

Furthermore, businesses actively take into account local laws and policies as well as metrics for inclusivity when making decisions about where to headquarter, relocate, or expand. Companies do their best to mitigate risks and without strong local protections, businesses face the possibility of expensive legal claims and actions. Even cases that can be defended are costly to litigate and can be damaging to an employer's reputation, ultimately distracting from the work at hand. As a result, many of them would rather avoid conducting business in certain localities than run the risk of alienating employees or customers.

Cities are in constant competition for residents, visitors, employees, and businesses. A demonstrated commitment to equality through laws and policies that protect everyone, including LGBTQ+ people, sends a clear message that all are welcome and valued. Non-discrimination laws and other inclusive policies give cities a competitive edge, safety for valued community members, and a sense of belonging for all.

City of Springfield, IL Testimonial:

"At the City of Springfield, we are committed to making Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) a central pillar of our policies and practices. DEI is not just a checkbox or a passing trend—it is the foundation upon which we build a unified and strong community. By embedding DEI into every aspect of our operations, we ensure that every voice is heard, every perspective is valued, and every individual has the opportunity to thrive. This commitment is essential to creating a workplace and a community where everyone feels respected and empowered to contribute to our collective success."

—Mayor Misty Buscher

Acknowledging Common Municipal Challenges

Throughout this toolkit, we will ask you to consider what you can do to make your municipality more inclusive of LGBTQ+ residents and visitors. We acknowledge that for many readers this thought exercise does not exist in a vacuum. This toolkit shares many detailed recommendations while respecting that a number of factors may boost or inhibit a city's ability, or incentive, to adopt the laws and policies this toolkit suggests.

Considerations of city size and resources are built in throughout the toolkit, providing alternative paths to achieving the same goals. Opposition from state legislatures is also a concern for many cities who hail from states with anti-equality laws. Many of the best practice recommendations included in this toolkit respect the dynamic relationship between the state and local government, focusing on practices and policies that can be enacted on the local level. However, state preemption is a very real and impactful concern for many municipalities. While state preemption is prohibitive, the toolkit also addresses what this means for local leaders and how to continue supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

Whether you are new to working on LGBTQ+ issues, serving a small city with limited resources, or hailing from a state with anti-equality laws, this toolkit is designed to support all municipal

leaders who are dedicated to building inclusion in their community. This toolkit introduces you to some ways to engage on common issues that may arise within LGBTQ+ communities, provides suggestions for policy language, and highlights the work of exemplary cities. For those who may need a review of terms and definitions to give you a foundational language, please find the Terms to Know section at the end of the toolkit. Ultimately, the toolkit is meant to support you in providing the best services, policies, and community-building opportunities possible.

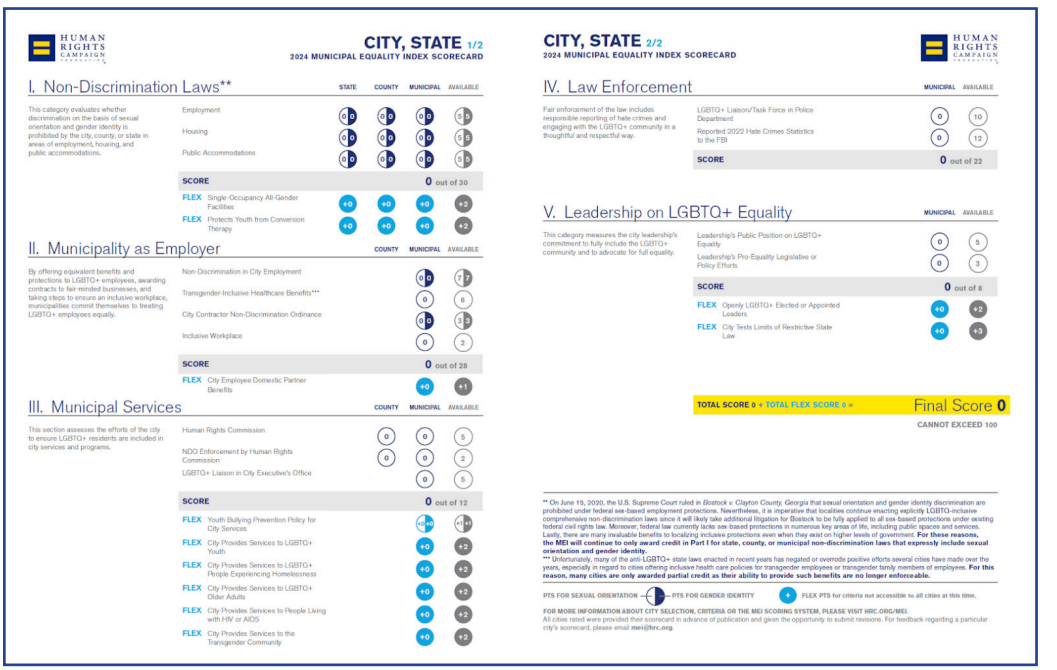
Evaluate Your City

For many city leaders, it can be surprising how often laws, policies, and practices do not reflect the municipality's values of diversity and inclusion. As a result, it is incredibly important to evaluate your city to better grasp where to get started, identify quick fixes, determine more long-term projects, and understand the needs of your community.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation created the *Municipal Equality Index (MEI)*, the only comprehensive nationwide assessment of LGBTQ+ equality in the areas of municipal policies, laws and services, to better understand how municipal work intersects with LGBTQ+ people and issues. MEI scorecards evaluate each city's non-discrimination laws, LGBTQ-inclusive employee practices, inclusiveness in city services and law enforcement, and their leadership's outspoken commitment to equality.

The MEI currently rates 506 municipalities of varying sizes from every state in the nation. If your city is currently rated by the MEI, this is a great way to evaluate how inclusive your city's laws and policies are of LGBTQ+ people. Cities not only receive a numerical score out of 100, but also are given a roadmap of laws and policies that municipal leaders can use to make their community more inclusive. The MEI team also holds monthly webinars in the spring for city leaders to attend and learn more. For cities not currently rated by the MEI, city leaders can choose to self-submit. For more information on the self-submit process, please visit our website.

Sample MEI Scorecard



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CITY, STATE 1/2
2024 MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX SCORECARD

I. Non-Discrimination Laws**

	STATE	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Employment	◐	◐	◐	5
Housing	◐	◐	◐	5
Public Accommodations	◐	◐	◐	5
SCORE				0 out of 30
FLEX Single-Occupancy All-Gender Facilities	+0	+0	+0	+2
FLEX Protects Youth from Conversion Therapy	+0	+0	+0	+2

II. Municipality as Employer

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Non-Discrimination in City Employment		◐	7
Transgender-Inclusive Healthcare Benefits***		0	6
City Contractor Non-Discrimination Ordinance		◐	3
Inclusive Workplace		0	2
SCORE		0 out of 28	
FLEX City Employee Domestic Partner Benefits		+0	+1

III. Municipal Services

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Human Rights Commission	0	0	5
NDO Enforcement by Human Rights Commission	0	0	2
LGBTQ+ Liaison in City Executive's Office		0	5
SCORE		0 out of 12	
FLEX Youth Bullying Prevention Policy for City Services		+0	+1
FLEX City Provides Services to LGBTQ+ Youth		+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to LGBTQ+ People Experiencing Homelessness		+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to LGBTQ+ Older Adults		+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to People Living with HIV or AIDS		+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to the Transgender Community		+0	+2

CITY, STATE 2/2
2024 MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX SCORECARD

IV. Law Enforcement

	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
LGBTQ+ Liaison/Task Force in Police Department	0	10
Reported 2022 Hate Crimes Statistics to the FBI	0	12
SCORE	0 out of 22	

V. Leadership on LGBTQ+ Equality

	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Leadership's Public Position on LGBTQ+ Equality	0	5
Leadership's Pro-Equality Legislative or Policy Efforts	0	3
SCORE	0 out of 8	
FLEX Openly LGBTQ+ Elected or Appointed Leaders	+0	+2
FLEX City Tests Limits of Restrictive State Law	+0	+3

TOTAL SCORE 0 + TOTAL FLEX SCORE 0 = Final Score 0
CANNOT EXCEED 100

** On June 15, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* that sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination are prohibited under federal sex-based employment protections. Nevertheless, it is imperative that localities continue enacting explicitly LGBTQ-inclusive comprehensive non-discrimination laws since it will likely take additional litigation for Bostock to be fully applied to all sex-based protections under existing federal civil rights law. Moreover, federal law currently lacks sex-based protections in numerous key areas of life, including public spaces and services. Lastly, there are many invaluable benefits to localizing inclusive protections even when they exist on higher levels of government. **For these reasons, the MEI will continue to only award credit in Part I for state, county, or municipal non-discrimination laws that expressly include sexual orientation and gender identity.**

*** Unfortunately, many of the anti-LGBTQ+ state laws enacted in recent years has negated or overrode positive efforts several cities have made over the years, especially in regard to cities offering inclusive health care policies for transgender employees or transgender family members of employees. **For this reason, many cities are only awarded partial credit as their ability to provide such benefits are no longer enforceable.**

PTS FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION — PTS FOR GENDER IDENTITY — FLEX PTS for criteria not accessible to all cities at this time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CITY SELECTION, CRITERIA OR THE MEI SCORING SYSTEM, PLEASE VISIT HRC.ORG/MEI
All cities rated were provided their scorecard in advance of publication and given the opportunity to submit revisions. For feedback regarding a particular city's scorecard, please email mei@hrc.org.

In addition to evaluating your own city, it is important to understand what other cities are doing to improve municipal equality. The MEI also provides up-to-date information regarding regional trends, insight into how other cities of similar sizes are faring, and testimonials from other city leaders about their work on LGBTQ+ issues — often at the opposition of state legislators. In addition to the MEI, the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) released its first-ever survey — *Building an Inclusive City: How Mayors are Supporting and Involving LGBTQ+ Residents* — detailing the latest ways mayors across 83 cities are supporting and empowering the LGBTQ+ community in their cities. Key findings from the survey include:

- 93% of the surveyed city mayors have issued proclamations or undertaken other specific efforts to recognize their cities' LGBTQ+ communities.
- 88% of these mayors have supported and/or advocated for legislation at the city, state or federal level to protect the rights of and support the LGBTQ+ community.
- 77% of the surveyed cities have an enforceable non-discrimination ordinance that expressly covers sexual orientation and gender identity.
- 51% of the surveyed city mayors have designated a staff member in their office or in the city government who is responsible for working with and handling issues related to the LGBTQ+ community.

In the survey, mayors also provided these examples of local initiatives or efforts: providing transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits, passing city ordinances prohibiting conversion therapy or discrimination based on gender or sexual identity, and speaking out whenever there have been incidents or rhetoric attacking LGBTQ+ individuals or the community as a whole.

Mayoral Leadership

Local governance is the foundation of our communities and no one is more in tune with the issues present in their neighborhoods than mayors. Mayors are expected to be both subject-matter experts as well as representatives of their diverse communities. They know the importance of having community-facing staff members who understand the issues that LGBTQ+ individuals face and utilize their position of power to advocate for the people they serve.

This section provides suggestions on how mayors can lead on LGBTQ+ issues, build safeguards against discrimination and better represent the needs of their community.

Human Rights Commission

Human Rights Commissions are community-facing, city-created bodies tasked with helping to end prejudice and discrimination within the city. Even in jurisdictions where LGBTQ+ equality isn't explicitly a part of the commission's charter, these commissions investigate complaints, educate the city, and sometimes enforce non-discrimination laws. Human Rights Commissions serve as important bridges between constituents and their city. Human Rights Commissions can have paid or volunteer staff and vary in size and mission, as the commission serves the population of the community. The commission should meet regularly, with meetings widely posted and open to the public. We highly encourage cities to offer LGBTQ-specific resources and programming.



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Examples of Human Rights Commission activities include:

- Create caucus groups to address specific discrimination-related issues in the community;
- Recommend pro-equality policy changes and advise the council or city executive;
- Issue reports and studies on diversity, inclusion, and discrimination;
- Receive and investigate discrimination complaints;
- Host panels or discussions and provide resources or workshops on issues of diversity;
- Monitor state and federal nondiscrimination legislation and evaluate its impact on the local community;
- Recognize community members who work to promote diversity and inclusivity; and
- Fundraise for community diversity initiatives.

They can be created by executive action or ordinances and should be adequately funded and empowered to enforce citywide non-discrimination laws. The nationwide best practice in enforcing non-discrimination ordinances is to create a Human Rights Commission that oversees the receipt and investigation of the claim, any settlement proceedings, and the authority to issue a right-to-sue letter if cause is found and the parties are unable to come to a settlement.

Examples of Enforcement Mechanisms:

- ***Enforcement via private right of action.*** This is simple and less expensive for the city to administer, but it comes with different challenges. Politically this can be among the most challenging paths forward because public debates about discrimination are often met by unfounded concerns about opening the floodgates to frivolous claims. Some cities allow complainants the ability to bring an action immediately, but generally cities offer complainants the ability to bring a civil claim should settlement proceedings be unsuccessful.
- ***Enforcement by the City Executive.*** An alternative that combines a more robust investigatory and settlement role for the city with less cost than staffing a Human Rights Commission is vesting the City Attorney's office, the City Manager's office, or other executive office in the city with the authority to investigate, conciliate, and even prosecute respondents who are not cooperative. The size of the city is a relevant consideration when determining whether this enforcement option is appropriate.
- ***Enforcement by Topical Committees.*** Finally, enforcement duties may be assigned to various committees dealing with the areas in which discrimination is being prohibited — for example, a Housing Commission may be vested with the power to prohibit discrimination in housing. This approach has the benefit of combining topical expertise with enforcement. To be successful the committees in question must be adequately staffed; this is a tempting option for smaller cities looking to avoid incurring enforcement costs, but volunteer commissions

will likely not be able to manage these claims effectively. However, this can be an effective option for larger cities that have or will create appropriate committees and staff them sufficiently.

These entities should also be given the authority to review municipal laws and policies for unintended disparities and propose revisions or other potential solutions. Local commissions should be composed of diverse community members — including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents, LGBTQ+ residents, and those with intersecting marginalized identities — who possess thorough understandings of systemic racism, intersectionality, and equity. Human rights commissioners should regularly consult with local advocates representing LGBTQ+ people, BIPOC communities and those with multiple marginalized identities. Moreover, local human rights commissions should make it part of their mission to end the epidemic of violence against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, which disproportionately affects Black and Brown transgender women.

LGBTQ+ Liaison

An LGBTQ+ liaison to the City Executive, either the Mayor or City Manager's office, is responsible for looking at city policies and services through an LGBTQ+ lens and speaking up when a policy or service might exclude LGBTQ+ people. This position is also known to be a friendly ear to constituents who want to bring LGBTQ-related issues to the city government but are fearful they might be dismissed or misunderstood. Liaisons should elevate LGBTQ-related concerns to the city executive and other city officials. LGBTQ+ persons who work in the city executive's office should not be expected to fulfill this role unless they serve as the official LGBTQ+ liaison. This role may be assigned to existing city staff, but should be officially designated as the staff member responsible for working with and handling issues related to the LGBTQ+ community.

Job duties for an LGBTQ+ Liaison to the City Executive could include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting, advising, and consulting with the mayor, city manager, city council and other city officials on LGBTQ+ issues;
- Providing training or organizing a training with an expert on LGBTQ+ topics, such as creating an inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ employees, etc.;
- Developing and implementing strategies to address the needs of vulnerable groups within the LGBTQ+ community (e.g. youth, people experiencing homelessness, older adults, people living with HIV or AIDS, transgender, non-binary, or bisexual persons, people of color, etc.);
- Meeting with business owners, community groups, and individuals of the LGBTQ+ community to identify unique needs and solicit feedback on relevant laws, policies, and services;
- Serving as a representative of the city government at LGBTQ+ community events;
- Identifying and attending trainings and/or conferences related to LGBTQ+ issues;
- Implementing a city government recruitment program that actively advertises to the LGBTQ+ community; and
- Developing and maintaining an open, trusting relationship between the LGBTQ+ community and city officials, including the mayor, city manager, and city council.

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City of Memphis, TN Testimonial:

"As the LGBTQ+ Liaison, I have been at the forefront of connecting essential services to the LGBTQ+ community in Memphis, ensuring that their needs are met promptly and effectively. One significant example was when OUTMemphis, a vital organization supporting homeless LGBTQ+ youth, reported brown water coming out of their faucets at one of their shelters. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, we immediately coordinated with our local utility company to reroute services, flush the lines, and restore clean water to the shelter within hours. This quick response highlighted the importance of constituents having a direct connection to city officials and our city's commitment to the well-being of our LGBTQ+ community members, especially those most vulnerable."

—Renee Parker Sekander, LGBTQ Liaison to the Mayor

Speaking Out Against Anti-LGBTQ+ State Legislation

LGBTQ+ people across the country are feeling the devastating and chilling effects of anti-equality state legislation that has irrevocably impacted hundreds of families, schools, and municipalities. State legislators have taken a particular interest in undermining and preempting municipal efforts to support the LGBTQ+ community, specifically transgender and non-binary youth. In 2023, 134 gender-affirming care ban bills were introduced nationwide and 21 were enacted, effectively eliminating access for youth to age-appropriate, medically-necessary health care backed by decades of research and supported by every major medical association. And while the 2024 legislative season saw a shift in momentum as LGBTQ+ and allied communities responded to these attacks with resilience and power, it also saw an increase in the number of states enacting bans on gender-affirming care. To learn more about gender-affirming care and statewide bans that impacted city-provided healthcare benefits, please see our Personnel section.

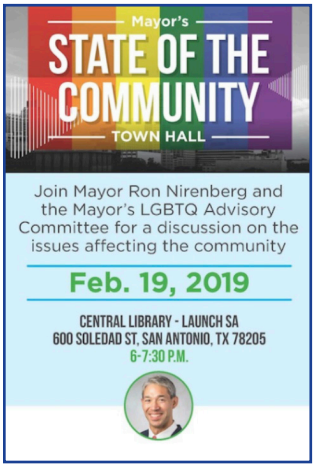
Because municipalities are think tanks for innovation and progress, preemption laws have been commonly used in recent history to curtail municipal governance, targeting issues from municipal bans on firearms and smoking in public, to paid sick leave and setting a living wage. While municipalities are well situated to address their constituents' needs, state legislators have made it clear that they are willing to undermine local governments in order to attack the LGBTQ+ community. In fact, the first states that passed laws eradicating the authority of cities to pass non-discrimination ordinances that protect LGBTQ+ people were targeting local city ordinances: Nashville, Tennessee passed such an ordinance that was preempted by the state legislature in 2011; Fayetteville, Arkansas did the same in 2014 followed by nearly immediate passage of a preemption law in 2015; and in 2016, North Carolina's HB2 was passed in a special session made necessary, according to its proponents, to prevent Charlotte's newly enacted non-discrimination law from going into effect before the regular legislative session began. In 2023, Florida enacted SB 170, which discourages cities from embracing non-discrimination ordinances that include protections for the LGBTQ+ community.

While state legislators inhibit equality to score political points, municipal leaders continue to take on the responsibility to serve and protect their communities. Safeguarding LGBTQ+ individuals against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and healthcare are not political issues. The well-being of people depends on access to adequate healthcare. And access to gender-affirming care has the same effect as healthcare does in general: a healthier, more productive, more representative workforce and community. These

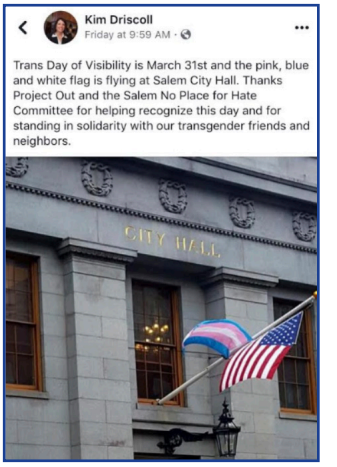
benefits coincide with increases in employee satisfaction and morale, leading to healthier communities, better quality of life, and environments of greater belonging. As a result, many cities have taken initiative by finding creative ways to provide LGBTQ+ people access to the resources they need, passing city resolutions and proclamations affirming the need for equality, and speaking out against discriminatory state legislation. The 2024 MEI found that a record-breaking 53 cities took action against state restrictive measures this past year. Comparatively, only 30 cities did so in 2019, nearly doubling over the last five years.

Below are some ways cities can push back against anti-equality state legislation and affirm LGBTQ+ equality:

- Advocate against restrictive state law through council resolutions or declarations and engagement with state legislators.
- Consider passing city resolutions or proclamations continuing to affirm the need for equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community.
- Promote LGBTQ+ equality by engaging with allied organizations and advocacy groups to ensure LGBTQ+ needs and perspectives are understood.
- Find creative ways to help LGBTQ+ people access the resources they need.
- Speak out against discriminatory state legislation and educate the legislature and the public about the costs of discrimination for the city.
- Partner with other municipalities to speak out against restrictive state laws and find creative solutions to common issues.
- Take every opportunity for city leadership to take a public position on LGBTQ+ equality, including but not limited to coming out in favor of LGBTQ+ rights, supporting LGBTQ+ community organizations publicly, attending a Pride parade and celebrating other LGBTQ+ awareness days, partnering with LGBTQ+ groups to create solutions to city problems, etc.
- Stay up to date on latest state legislative trends regarding LGBTQ+ rights



Examples of Supportive Messages



Although many of these suggestions can feel nominal or symbolic, it is essential for mayors and other city leaders to remember that as leading experts on local issues, advocacy from city executives carries substantial weight. City officials acknowledging the equal dignity of LGBTQ+ people sends a message of hope to LGBTQ+ youth and residents. The Trevor Project 2024

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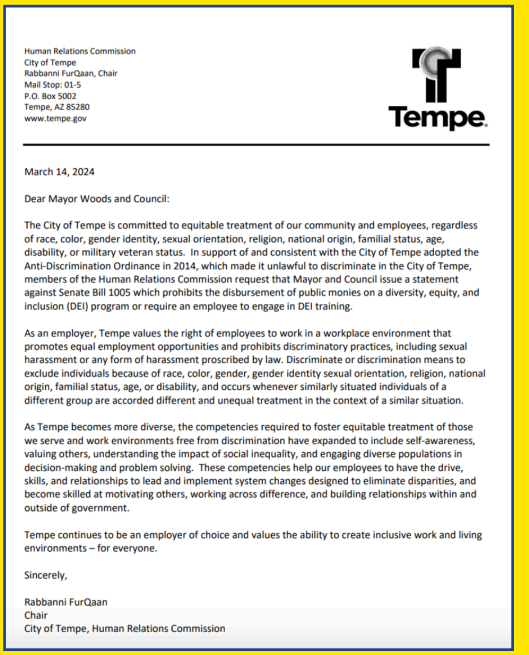
Survey on Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People notes that 81 percent of LGBTQ+ youth feel that "standing up for me" is the best way to show support and acceptance. Additionally, 77 percent of LGBTQ+ youth reported that "not supporting politicians that advocate for anti-LGBTQ legislation" was another great way for people in their life to show their support.

City of Amherst, MA Testimonial:

"Those of us who are in the LGBTQ community or have loved ones in the LGBTQ community know there is no such thing as a bubble of protection from hate or bias. It shows up in subtle ways, and obvious ways, all of them causing harm. . . While our proclamations and flag raisings are symbolic, let this proclamation carry power in its message of love, care, compassion, and fight. We will continue to fight, continue to love, and continue to care for our community."

— Ana Devlin Gauthier, Town Councilor

City Spotlight: Tempe, AZ



Human Relations Commission
City of Tempe
Rabbanni FurQaan, Chair
Mail Stop: 01-5
P.O. Box 5002
Tempe, AZ 85280
www.tempe.gov

Tempe.

March 14, 2024

Dear Mayor Woods and Council:

The City of Tempe is committed to equitable treatment of our community and employees, regardless of race, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, familial status, age, disability, or military veteran status. In support of and consistent with the City of Tempe adopted the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance in 2014, which made it unlawful to discriminate in the City of Tempe, members of the Human Relations Commission request that Mayor and Council issue a statement against Senate Bill 1005 which prohibits the disbursement of public monies on a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) program or require an employee to engage in DEI training.

As an employer, Tempe values the right of employees to work in a workplace environment that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including sexual harassment or any form of harassment proscribed by law. Discriminate or discrimination means to exclude individuals because of race, color, gender, gender identity sexual orientation, religion, national origin, familial status, age, or disability, and occurs whenever similarly situated individuals of a different group are accorded different and unequal treatment in the context of a similar situation.

As Tempe becomes more diverse, the competencies required to foster equitable treatment of those we serve and work environments free from discrimination have expanded to include self-awareness, valuing others, understanding the impact of social inequality, and engaging diverse populations in decision-making and problem solving. These competencies help our employees to have the drive, skills, and relationships to lead and implement system changes designed to eliminate disparities, and become skilled at motivating others, working across difference, and building relationships within and outside of government.

Tempe continues to be an employer of choice and values the ability to create inclusive work and living environments – for everyone.

Sincerely,

Rabbanni FurQaan
Chair
City of Tempe, Human Relations Commission

Policy Development

Non-Discrimination Ordinance

The Conference's survey found that 77% (60) of the responding cities have an enforceable non-discrimination ordinance that expressly covers sexual orientation and gender identity.

No one should be denied the right to work, rent a home, or be served in a place of public accommodation because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Non-discrimination laws have, historically, worked to protect people from discrimination based on their identity. Preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity ensures that LGBTQ+ residents are not discriminated against based on this aspect of their identity.

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Additionally, ensuring that all city residents, workers, and visitors are protected from discrimination is not just the right thing to do. Full inclusivity drives economic growth.

Cities are in constant competition for residents, visitors, employees, and businesses. A demonstrated commitment to equality through laws and policies that protect everyone, including LGBTQ+ people, sends a clear message that all residents, visitors, workers, and businesses are welcome and valued. Inclusive non-discrimination laws give cities a competitive edge. Cities must continue to lead the way on vital protections for LGBTQ+ residents, visitors, and workers. In doing so, city leaders will help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all residents while encouraging real economic growth that benefits everyone.

CITY ACTION: Cities should enact comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinances that expressly cover sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations. These ordinances should be free from any carve-outs, including those that prohibit or restrict individuals from using facilities that accord with their gender identity.

City Spotlight: Portland, OR

The city boasts comprehensive nondiscrimination policies in employment, housing, and public accommodations unencumbered by carve-outs with the intent to ensure "that every individual shall have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the life of the City and that discriminatory barriers to equal participation in employment, housing, and public accommodations be removed."

Ban Conversion Therapy

"Reparative" or "conversion" therapy is a dangerous practice that targets LGBTQ+ youth and seeks to change their sexual or gender identities.

So-called "conversion therapy," sometimes known as "reparative therapy," is a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. Such practices have been rejected by every mainstream medical and mental health organization for decades, but due to continuing discrimination and societal bias against LGBTQ+ people, some practitioners continue to conduct conversion therapy. Minors are especially vulnerable, and conversion therapy can lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide.

Efforts to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity have no scientific merit, and have, in fact, been proven to be incredibly detrimental to one's health and wellbeing.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: Conversion therapy bans enacted on both the state and local level have seen their fair share of legal challenges across the country. In most cases, including Washington state and Colorado, the bans have been upheld by the courts. In one case against local governments in Florida, however, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that conversion therapy bans in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama could not be enforced.

CITY ACTION: City officials can and should take leadership on protecting their younger residents from the fraudulent practice of conversion therapy by exercising their legislative authority to protect their health, safety, and wellbeing.

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Sample Youth Mental Health Protection Ordinance

Whereas, contemporary science recognizes that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender is part of the natural spectrum of human identity and is not a disease, disorder, or Illness;

Whereas, conversion therapy has been rejected by every major medical and mental health organization, including the American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Counseling Association, American Psychoanalytic Association, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, National Association of Social Workers, and the Pan American Health Organization.

Whereas, conversion therapy leads to critical health risks including anxiety, depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide.

Whereas, minors are especially vulnerable to the harms associated with conversion therapy.

Whereas, the City has a compelling interest in protecting the physical and psychological well-being of minors, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, and in protecting its minors against exposure to serious harms caused by conversion therapy.

Section 1. Definitions.

"Sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts," also referred to as "conversion therapy," means any practices or treatments that seek to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender. Sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts do not include counseling that provides assistance to a person undergoing gender transition or that provides acceptance, support, and understanding of a person or facilitates a person's coping, social support, and identity exploration and development, including sexual-orientation-neutral interventions to prevent or address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices, as long as such counseling does not seek to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity.

"Medical or mental health professional" means any individual who is licensed by the City or State to engage in a profession related to physical or mental health, including any interns, trainees, or apprentices who provide medical or mental health services under the supervision of a licensed medical or mental health professional

Section 2. Conversion Therapy Prohibited.

No medical or mental health professional shall engage in sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts with a minor within the City.

Section 3. Enforcement.

The City Attorney shall enforce the provisions of this ordinance. If the City Attorney receives a report of a violation of this ordinance, the City Attorney or the City Attorney's designee shall mail to the medical or mental health professional written notice to immediately cease and desist the violation. The failure of the medical or mental health professional to immediately cease and desist shall subject the medical or mental health professional to the civil fine provided in Section 4 of this chapter.

Section 4. Penalties.

A violation of Section 2 of this chapter is a **[Class XX]** Civil Offense. Each day in violation constitutes a separate offense.

Section 5. Severability.

If any provision or clause of this chapter or its application to any person or in any circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this chapter which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this chapter shall be severable.

Section 6. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective on **[Date].**

City Spotlight: Kansas City, MO | *Conversion therapy of minors prohibited*

All-Gender Single-Occupancy Facilities

Most people take unhindered access to restrooms and other sex-segregated facilities for granted. Unfortunately, this is far from reality for many transgender and gender nonconforming people who often face stress and anxiety when accessing sex-segregated spaces like public restrooms. Transgender and gender nonconforming individuals face an increased risk of violence and harassment in everyday life, and this risk is often amplified in sex-segregated spaces.

City officials should make the safety and wellbeing of transgender and gender nonconforming residents a top priority. Cities should enact comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinances that expressly cover sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations. These ordinances should be free from any carve-outs that prohibit individuals from using facilities that accord with their gender identity. Further, city leaders should act swiftly to remove carve-outs allowing discrimination in restroom access where they exist.

> **CITY ACTION:** Municipal officials can implement administrative policies expressly protecting the right of residents and city employees to access facilities that align with who they are while on city property, accessing city services, and participating in city programs. In addition, city executives should issue rules designating all single-occupancy restrooms on city property as "all gender."

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Further, municipal legislators should extend this rule to all residents by passing an ordinance that requires all single-user sex-segregated facilities within city limits to be designated as "all gender."

Making single-user facilities open to everyone regardless of gender makes sense on every level. Not only does it provide a safe space for transgender and gender nonconforming residents, but it benefits everyone by reducing line wait times. People will no longer have to wait for an occupied single-user restroom while the bathroom for the gender they don't identify with goes unutilized.

Moreover, all-gender restrooms eliminate the problems that people with disabilities or others who have personal attendants of a different gender sometimes run into when accessing gendered restrooms. Lastly, making single-use restrooms open to all makes it easier for parents or guardians with children of a different gender to access a restroom.

Sample Ordinance to Require Single-Occupancy Facilities to be Designated All-Gender

Be it ordained by the City Council of [City], [State] as follows:

Section 1: The Municipal Code of the City of [City], [State] is hereby amended to create a new Article entitled "All-Gender Single-Occupancy Facilities" to read as follows:

All-Gender Single-Occupancy Facilities.

(a) All single-occupancy restrooms in any business establishment, place of public accommodation, and city-owned building or facility shall be designated as all-gender for individual, family, or assisted use. This includes single-occupancy restrooms intended for use by city employees or employees of a business or public accommodation.

(b) Existing business establishments, places of public accommodation, and city facilities subject to this section shall have sixty (60) days from the effective date of this ordinance to comply by replacing existing gender-specific signage on the exterior of covered facilities with signs that do not indicate a specific gender (such as signs that read "restroom"). New businesses, places of public accommodation, and city facilities shall be in compliance with this section immediately upon opening to the public.

(c) During any inspection of a business or a place of public accommodation by an inspector, building official, or other local official responsible for code enforcement, the inspector or official may inspect for compliance with this section.

(d) For the purposes of this section, "single-occupancy facility" and "single-occupancy restroom" means a toilet facility with no more than one water closet and one urinal with a locking mechanism controlled by the user.

Section 2: This ordinance shall become effective on **[date]**.

City Spotlight: Champaign, IL | *Use of Facilities*

City of Santa Monica, CA Testimonials:

"Following the successful conversion of restrooms at several city parks, the city of Santa Monica is set to complete all-gender restrooms at the beach and Pier this month. The effort is in partnership with the Santa Monica Pier Corporation and is partially supported by a $40,000 grant from the office of Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Lindsey P. Horvath. Santa Monica beaches and Pier are among the top-visited destinations in the region. Now, visitors will have expanded access to a basic life necessity, regardless of their gender identity. The all-gender restrooms also benefit those who need to assist someone of a different gender, such as a caregiver or parent.

"Santa Monica embraces people of all gender identities. The all-gender signage is a significant advancement in our work to ensure our spaces are accessible to everyone. Moreover, the all-gender signage sends the important message that Santa Monica's spaces are welcoming spaces for all genders and gender identities."

— Deputy City Manager and LGBTQ+ Liaison Christopher Smith

Youth Bullying Prevention Policy

Bullying is a pervasive and extremely harmful problem that affects youth and their families in communities across the nation. Every young person deserves to live, learn, and grow in an environment that is safe, supportive, and fully inclusive. Unfortunately, for too many young people — particularly at-risk groups like lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth — school and the wider community are places that bring fear of bullying.

Though no single definition of bullying is ubiquitously utilized, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Department of Education worked together to create the first uniform federal definition of bullying in 2014. According to this definition, bullying includes any unwanted, aggressive behavior among youth that is repeated (or likely to be repeated) and involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Bullying includes making threats, spreading rumors, intentionally excluding someone from a group, and physical or verbal attacks. Importantly, bullying can occur through the use of communication tools like text messages, email, online chat, and social media. Bullying that occurs through these channels is known as cyberbullying.

Bullying inflicts severe and lasting physical, psychological, social, and educational harm. Bullied youth are more likely to engage in drug or alcohol use and experience anxiety and depression, which can lead to suicidality and other self-destructive behaviors. Bullied youth are also more likely to experience negative academic outcomes, including an increased risk of dropping out of school. Furthermore, studies show that the negative social, physical, and mental health effects of bullying persist well into adulthood.

LGBTQ+ youth and those perceived to be LGBTQ+ face a disproportionately high risk of being bullied. According to the 2013 National School Climate Survey, 74.1% of nearly 8,000 LGBTQ+ students surveyed nationwide reported being verbally harassed during the previous school year because of their sexual orientation and 55.2% because of their gender

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expression. Furthermore, 27.9% reported being physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. Additionally, the 2015 YRBS revealed that over 59.1 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students and students who reported being unsure of their sexual orientation were targets of bullying on school property, compared to just 18.8 percent of heterosexual students — a prevalence rate of almost 3.4 times more than their heterosexual counterparts. The same observation held true for cyberbullying. The prevalence of cyberbullying was more than 3.5 times higher for LGB and unsure students nationally than their heterosexual counterparts.

CITY ACTION: It is imperative that cities do everything in their power to ensure that their youth — including especially-at-risk LGBTQ+ youth — are safeguarded from the harms of bullying. Municipalities are uniquely positioned to holistically protect youth from bullying. First, while anti-bullying school district policies that enumerate sexual orientation and gender identity are vital, many cities lack direct control over school district rules and regulations. Municipalities in this position can still address the problem by actively working with school boards to educate them about the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive anti-bullying policies and advocating for their enactment.

Further, although much of the existing research on bullying focuses on youth in schools, it is clear that bullying often spills over into other realms of the daily life of youth. One such area is the wide range of youth services that many cities support or provide directly. These include services provided by a city's parks and recreation department or public library, for instance. Municipalities generally exercise a great deal of control over policies governing participation in city services or the use of city facilities. Consequently, cities can and should take immediate and wide-reaching action to protect all youth from bullying while accessing city services or facilities.

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Sample Ordinance Prohibiting Bullying in all Youth-Serving City Services, Activities, Programs, and Facilities

Purpose

This policy protects the dignity and safety of youth served by the City of **[City Name]**. This policy prohibits bullying, harassment, and intimidation in all youth-serving city services, activities, programs, and facilities.

Definitions

"Bullying" shall be defined as any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct whether physical, electronic, or verbal that:

- May be based on a youth's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or on a youth's association with a person or group with any of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and

- Can reasonably be predicted to:

  + Place the youth in reasonable fear of physical harm to their person or property;

  + Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the youth's physical or mental health;

  + Substantially interfere with the youth's academic performance or attendance; or

  + Substantially interfere with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, programs, facilities, or privileges provided by an agency or contractor or agent thereof.

Prohibition against Bullying

- Acts of bullying, including cyberbullying, whether by youth, volunteers, or staff, are prohibited in all youth-serving city services, activities, programs, and facilities.

- Retaliation against a youth, volunteer, or staff member who reports bullying, provides information about an act of bullying, or witnesses an act of bullying is also prohibited.

- All agencies and departments that provide services, activities, programs, and facilities for youth and third party organizations that receive city funding for services and programs that include youth shall establish a clear policy for reporting, addressing, and preventing bullying as defined above. This policy shall include a requirement for annual training for all staff on said policy and on best bullying prevention practices.

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City Spotlight: Miami Beach, FL | *Miami Beach Anti-Bullying Policy*

Community Engagement

Every city and town, regardless of size or state politics, offers meaningful support and services to their residents and visitors to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing. City leaders dedicated to inclusivity and equality not only include non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people in these services, but also prioritize increasing access to these services for the most vulnerable members of their communities.

While cities generally try their best to minimize obstacles to these different programs, barriers to access continue to exist especially for LGBTQ+ people, BIPOC folks and those with multiple marginalized identities. Equity means providing tools and resources according to need such that historically disadvantaged communities truly have the same access to opportunities intended to be equally available to everyone. This takes into account the unequal footing traditionally marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ people and Black and Brown communities, start off on because of the effects of historical and existing systemic marginalization and discrimination.

This section identifies particularly vulnerable members of the LGBTQ+ community and suggests various ways to provide and target services, shelters, and programs to the unique needs of each population.

Thought Exercise

While we understand that many cities may view tailoring services towards specific members of the LGBTQ+ community to be cost prohibitive or exclusive of others, each suggestion is flexible to varying city resources and intended to bridge already existing gaps in city services. It is important to remember that your city has many resources to offer and oftentimes already provides essential services that can center vulnerable populations at no additional cost. Consider how obstacles really impact your city's ability to provide services, be open to asking tough questions, and lean on existing resources.

Utilize the chart on the next page to consider common municipal challenges to providing equitable services and brainstorm solutions. We have provided some examples in the first few rows to help get you started:



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Common Challenges	Considerations	Existing Resources	Solutions
Lack of community organizations	How can the city meet these unmet needs? How can the city help foster development of local community organizations?	Public libraries, parks and recreation department, city-managed senior center, Human Rights Commission	Hold LGBTQ-inclusive storytimes at the local library City Human Rights Commission can deliver city grants to individuals seeking to start a LGBTQ+ community org
Limited resources	Can the budget be restructured or reallocated to better fit priorities? Is there a way to provide support without funding?	Staff time, donated city space, waived city fees, business partnerships, grant applications, community fundraisers	Allow a LGBTQ+ organization to use city space for a job fair and have HR participate Hold a city-coordinated community resource drive to provide professional clothing for those in need, including LGBTQ+ folks
Lack of expertise	Who has expertise and where can we learn more?	Human Rights Campaign holds webinars and has lots of resources, LGBTQ+ community members or groups, LGBTQ+ employee resource groups, other cities' LGBTQ+ Liaisons	Attend monthly MEI webinars and connect with other cities' LGBTQ+ Liaisons
Lack of incentive and support from leadership	Who can best convey the imperative of working on these issues to leadership?	Grassroots support, MEI and other assessments of inclusivity	Leverage the MEI to make the business case for inclusion and a metric for success

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LGBTQ+ Youth

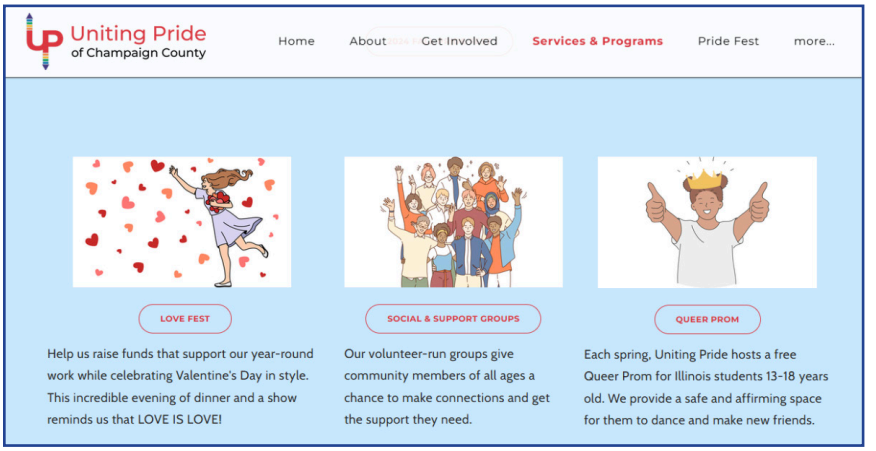
As mentioned previously, LGBTQ+ youth and particularly trans/non-binary youth have been forced into the spotlight due to political rhetoric and state legislative assaults on their rights. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ youth often face higher rates of bullying, harassment and rejection after coming out. In a 2023 Trevor Project poll, 71 percent of LGBTQ+ youth reported that debates and laws that restrict the rights of LGBTQ+ young people had a negative impact on them. As a result of these harmful policies, three in ten LGBTQ+ youth reported being cyberbullied and 29 percent of sampled trans and/or non-binary youth reported that they did not feel safe going to the doctor or hospital. Municipalities can do more to better support the needs of LGBTQ+ youth in many ways that need not be cost or resource intensive.

Examples:

- Supporting an LGBTQ+ Community Center that offers services for LGBTQ+ Youth (support can be financial or providing city-owned space)
- Hosting an LGBTQ+ sporting event through the Parks and Recreation Department
- Teen reading program on LGBTQ+ books at the public library
- Connecting LGBTQ+ youth to technology services
- Academic scholarships for LGBTQ+ youth
- Subsidizing or providing transportation to LGBTQ+ youth services
- LGBTQ-inclusive sexual health and education programs

Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Practice

- 46% (30) of surveyed cities have cultivated partnerships within the community to develop opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth to become interns or fellows within city hall (*Building an Inclusive City: How Mayors are Supporting and Involving LGBTQ+ Residents)*
- City of Champaign funds The UP Center — Uniting Pride of Champaign County to provide services to LGBTQ+ youth that includes a Queer Prom, Gender-Affirming Items, etc.



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LGBTQ+ Older Adults

Over 3 million Americans over the age of 50 identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+). By 2030, studies project the population to reach 7 million. While LGBTQ+ older people confront the same issues everyone else does when choosing aging services — where to live, how to afford rising costs of housing and healthcare, and how to stay connected to loved ones — the reality of life for LGBTQ+ people can be drastically different from their non-LGBTQ+ peers. Stigmatization, lack of identity-affirming treatment and experiences of discrimination and violence can lead to avoiding necessary services, chronic stress and increased social isolation among LGBTQ+ older people. Furthermore, approximately 20 percent of LGBTQ+ elders are people of color who, as a group, face increased health disparities, higher levels of stigma and have experienced more LGBTQ-related discrimination than their white counterparts, leaving them more at risk of not seeking or receiving the services they need. Additionally, LGBTQ+ older people are more likely to be single and live alone and less likely to have children and other support systems. Though this community faces many unique challenges, they are also resilient and — with the support of city laws, policies, and services — will continue to thrive and make valuable contributions to their communities.

Examples:

- An LGBTQ+ support group at a senior center
- City-sponsored programming for LGBTQ+ older adults: field trips, summer picnic, potluck or ice cream social, game night and/or arts and crafts, movie night, yoga or walking club
- Incorporate targeted resources and programming into existing city services such as housing assistance for LGBTQ+ older adults

Supporting LGBTQ+ Older Adults in Practice

- Iowa City Senior Center sponsors Queer Elders

LGBTQ seniors find connection and community with the Queer Elders of Iowa City

Emily Hawk, The Gazette
May. 26, 2024 5:00 am, Updated: Jun. 4, 2024 4:29 pm

Transgender Community

More than 2 million transgender people live in the United States, and transgender and non-binary people live in every community across the country. However, despite a recent increase in visibility and understanding of transgender people, cities and counties are playing catch-up on providing culturally competent services to the transgender and non-binary folks in their community. There's real urgency to get this right: there's an epidemic of deadly violence against transgender people, specifically transgender women of color. Since 2013, the Human Rights Campaign has tracked more than 370 cases of anti-transgender and non-binary fatal

violence. This violence disproportionately impacts transgender women of color — particularly Black and Brown transgender women — who comprise more than half of all victims of fatal violence in 2024.

Transgender and non-binary people navigate through a society that is built upon deeply embedded cultural norms about how gender should be experienced and expressed. When perpetuated by a lack of family acceptance, a hostile political climate, and other factors of cultural marginalization and invisibility, this bias too often excludes transgender and non-binary people from resources which impede the ability of transgender and non-binary people to succeed and thrive. This can look like discrimination in education, employment, health care, policing and incarceration, and social services, among other things. This is also exacerbated by barriers to accurate legal identification and compounded by intersecting marginalized identities.

Municipalities can play a pivotal role in offering services to help transgender and non-binary individuals thrive, including taking measures to eliminate violence and ensuring that all municipal services also serve the unique needs of transgender and non-binary individuals is critical to help to eliminate discrimination, stigma, and systemic inequality.

Examples:



- Employment support services
- Job fairs, skill-building programs, mentorships and networking programs, and cultural competency training for employers
- Hosting a name and gender marker update clinic in a city-owned building or in partnership with the city attorney's office
- Post-incarceration program for transgender people
- Hosting educational and awareness events and forums to reduce anti-transgender violence
- Providing therapeutic and mental health services for survivors of violence
- Assisting in short- or long-term living programs
- Safe houses and rent subsidies
- Create a trans and non-binary anti-violence prevention task force

People Living with HIV or AIDS

HIV, which stands for human immunodeficiency virus, is a virus spread through certain bodily fluids that attacks the body's immune system. If left untreated, HIV can make it difficult for the body to fight off infections and diseases and can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Thanks to modern medical advancements, people living with HIV who are on treatment can live long, healthy lives and pose no risk of sexual transmission to others. The epidemic of HIV/AIDS has disproportionately impacted the LGBTQ+ community and people of color and has been exacerbated by implicit bias that leads to unequal access and unequal allocation



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of resources in comprehensive sex education, testing, and services that disproportionately impact Black LGBTQ+ communities.

PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, is a safe and effective way to prevent the transmission of HIV. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the use of two medicines, emtricitabine and tenofovir (TDF/FTC, brand name Truvada), to prevent HIV in 2012. The CDC notes that "PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99% when taken daily." Despite years of proven efficacy, at-risk individuals continue to face unnecessary barriers to PrEP access, including a lack of education and awareness on the part of individuals who would benefit from PrEP as well as health care providers, a lack of health care coverage, and prohibitive associated costs.

Although knowledge of PrEP among primary care providers continues to increase, there is still much room for improvement. Infectious disease specialist practices, local health department specialty clinics, and community health centers with a history of providing HIV care have taken the lead in prescribing PrEP to at-risk individuals. However, to achieve a population-level impact, more primary care providers need to be aware of PrEP and prescribe it to individuals at risk of acquiring HIV. A dearth of PrEP-competent providers continues to be a significant challenge in PrEP candidates accessing the medication, particularly in Southern states and rural areas across the country.

Cities and counties also face gaps in public health funding for PrEP medication and related costs. Currently, statutory language and interpretive guidance require funds granted under the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) to be used only for the care and treatment of people diagnosed with HIV, precluding the use of RWHAP funds for PrEP medication and PrEPrelated medical services like physician visits and laboratory costs. Importantly, RWHAP programs across the country have been able to weave together multiple sources of funding and clinical expertise across HIV prevention and care programs to provide the same level of care for PrEP and RWHAP patients. Cities and counties have also leveraged RWHAP activities such as outreach, risk reduction counseling, targeted testing, and linkage to care to identify PrEP candidates and refer them to a PrEP program.

Examples:

- Hosting an HIV and STI testing clinic in a city-owned building
- PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) assistance and educational programs
- Subsidizing housing for people living with HIV or AIDS (HOPWA Competitive Program Only)
- Syringe Exchange Program
- City-Sponsored HIV+ Support Group

Supporting People Living with HIV and AIDS in Practice

More and more cities across the country are developing social marketing and educational campaigns to promote PrEP. Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City stand out with campaigns that elevate individuals within their communities and counteract stereotypes that stigmatize people impacted by HIV. These four health departments made a concerted effort to understand the underlying myths about PrEP. As part of their processes, each city researched their residents' attitudes, beliefs, and motivating factors related to PrEP use and

crafted messages that avoid using fear and guilt while celebrating their city's diversity.

LGBTQ+ People Experiencing Homelessness

LGBTQ+ people — particularly youth — are disproportionately impacted by homelessness. Previous research suggests that LGBTQ+ youth and adults could comprise a significant share, roughly 20% to 40%, of the homeless population. In 2020, the Williams Institute reported that one in ten (8%) transgender adults and 3% of cisgender and genderqueer LGBQ+ individuals had recently experienced homelessness, compared to 1.4% of non-LGBTQ+ peers. LGBTQ+ youth are also disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness and housing insecurity than their cisgender and straight peers. One report from True Colors United suggests that LGBTQ+ youth are 120% more likely to be homeless than non-LGBTQ+ youth.

One major factor underlying homelessness and housing insecurity among LGBTQ+ youth is family and parental rejection. In some instances, youth may be kicked out of their homes by unsupportive families once they learn of their child's identity. In other instances, LGBTQ+ youth may choose to run away as an act of survival. For example, transgender and gender-expansive youth have reported to leave situations of family rejection as an act of self-preservation and suicide prevention. Parental support, and lack thereof, can also have implications for later life housing instability. For example, in the absence of parental support, youth may lack the financial security and safety net of their families, without which many young LGBTQ+ people may not be able to afford college, or to have a guarantor when signing their first lease.

Examples:

- Subsidizing beds for LGBTQ+ people at a homeless shelter
- Supporting an LGBTQ+ support group for people experiencing homelessness
- Toiletries and food drive for LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness
- Job training and employment fair for LGBTQ+ people
- Find and apply for third-party grants to be used to support LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness

Supporting LGBTQ+ People Experiencing Homelessness in Practice

- The Town of Cary provides safe spaces for youth in crisis with specific targeting towards LGBTQ+ youth

Resources

Cary Fire Stations: National Safe Place



For teens and youths finding themselves in crisis or needing a place to stay, all fire stations in Cary are designated as National Safe Places, serving as spaces for immediate help and resources for youth in need in any crisis. These locations serve to supplement local youth services agencies and shelters and can serve as a starting point for those needing help; just look for the black and yellow "Safe Place" sign at any of Cary's fire stations.

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Personnel

LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Groups

A city can demonstrate the value it places on workplace inclusion by empowering employees of diverse backgrounds to come together through city-facilitated employee resource groups (ERGs). An ERG or employee affinity group is an employer-recognized and supported group of diverse employees who share common identities and/or backgrounds. ERGs can center women, people of color, veterans, parents, people of varied abilities, and LGBTQ+ people, for example, and should be open to all employees in compliance with fully-inclusive nondiscrimination policies.These groups provide a forum for employees of similar diverse backgrounds and their allies to discuss shared concerns about workplace experiences and policies, a platform for them to elevate those concerns, and a space for these employees to facilitate each other's professional development.

ERGs can also plan educational, cultural, and social activities for coworkers or the community to further awareness and appreciation of the various facets of their identity that make them who they are.

ERGs are important because they provide:

- Visibility of and a sense of community among diverse employee populations;
- Space for employees to facilitate each other's personal and professional development in the workplace;
- Forums for employees of similar diverse backgrounds and their allies to discuss shared concerns about workplace experiences and policies as well as forums to elevate those concerns internally; and
- Opportunities for municipal employees to develop and execute plans to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within their workplace and throughout the broader communities they serve.

Furthermore, ERGs demonstrate an employer's commitment to inclusivity, increasing employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. This demonstrated commitment to equality also helps municipalities attract the best and the brightest workers.

City of Chattanooga, TN Testimonial:

"At the ERG's first meeting, a coworker told me that in large part because of the group's formation they finally felt comfortable sharing their gender identity with colleagues."

Sample Mission Statement

"The mission of the [ERG name] is to promote an inclusive workplace for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) municipal employees. It will advise on LGBTQ-related workplace matters, work to increase LGBTQ+ representation and visibility within municipal government, and endeavor to further diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout city government and the community at large."

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Tips for Establishing and Maintaining an Impactful Employee Resource Group

- Identify and recruit one or more colleagues to found the group.
- Find a champion in a senior leadership position who can elevate and advocate for the group's goals.
- Write a mission statement for the ERG (see example above), draft a charter, and give the group an inclusive name.
- Develop and secure a budget for programming and events.
- Develop a communication plan for ERG members (including remote employee members) as well as all city staff and the community at large when relevant.
- Foster a close relationship and lines of communication with the mayor, city manager, human resources department, and other policymakers.

Programming Ideas

- Host periodic reviews of municipal employee policies to identify and recommend areas to further inclusivity.
- Conduct diversity training programs for all city staff.
- Partner with LGBTQ+ community organizations to support particularly vulnerable members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Work with human resources to ensure its recruitment efforts include actively advertising available city positions to the LGBTQ+ community to diversify the city's applicant pool.
- Conduct lunch-and-learn seminars.
- Honor Pride month, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and other significant LGBTQ+ awareness days through social media outreach and/or city-sponsored events.
- Host social events to help foster employee connections and build community.
- Invite LGBTQ+ community leaders and/or LGBTQ+ creatives to speak to the group.
- Screen films that feature LGBTQ+ characters or themes.
- Work collaboratively with other ERGs to achieve common goals and ensure that intersectional issues are addressed internally and throughout the community.
- Establish a mentoring program between current and new employees and/or interns.

TIHB (Transgender-Inclusive Health Benefits)

For too long, many health insurance plans have contained exclusions that explicitly discriminate against transgender individuals. These exclusions classify transgender care as cosmetic or

elective, despite decades of research proving that age-appropriate gender-affirming care is medically necessary and can be life-saving. That's why every major medical association — representing over 1.3 million doctors in the U.S. — supports providing age-appropriate, medically necessary care to transgender people. Major strides were made as a result of the Affordable Care Act, which prevents discrimination on the basis of gender identity in federally covered health plans and activities.

Municipalities also have an important role to play too: municipalities can offer their employees health insurance plans that expressly cover transgender healthcare needs, including gender-affirming surgical procedures, hormone therapy, mental healthcare, and all related medical visits and laboratory services.

Over recent years, the trend has been toward inclusivity with an increasing number of cities offering transgender-inclusive healthcare plans for their employees. The Conference's survey found that 66% (41) of the cities provide transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits. However, cities that have worked hard and utilized city resources to negotiate these inclusive benefits for transgender employees, or the transgender dependents of their employees, are now restricted from providing that coverage in a comprehensive way as a result of discriminatory decisions made by state legislators. The 2024 MEI found that of the 240 municipalities that offered trans-inclusive healthcare benefits, about 35 percent of cities were preempted by statewide bans. While these types of bans are the latest trend, states have a history in seizing back municipal power and obstructing local efforts toward inclusivity.

Sample Trans-Inclusive Health Benefits Language

Treatment to Affirm Gender Identity

Covered: You are covered for management, consultation, counseling, hormones, laboratory services, and surgical services for purposes of affirming your gender identity and/or gender transition (diagnostically this may be referred to as gender dysphoria), including all related medical visits.

To learn more, please visit our 2022 MEI Issue Brief which discusses TIHB more in-depth as well as the Transgender-Inclusive Benefits for Employees and Dependents which includes a case study of San Francisco City and County, providing a detailed look at cost and utilization experience as well as plan evolution from 2001-2006, including official City and County data.

City Contractor NDOs

As previously mentioned, non-discrimination policies and laws benefit everyone. City contractors are sometimes overlooked, but a city law or policy can require all businesses the city contracts with for goods or services to have an employee non-discrimination policy that expressly covers sexual orientation and gender identity.

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Sample Contractor Non-Discrimination Ordinance Language

NONDISCRIMINATION IN CITY CONTRACTS: Any entity that enters into a contract for goods or services with the City of [City Name] or any of its boards, agencies, and departments and any recipient of city funds shall:

- Implement an employment nondiscrimination policy prohibiting discrimination in hiring, discharging, promoting or demoting, matters of compensation, or any other employment-related decision or benefit on account of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, age, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or marital or familial status.
- Not discriminate in the performance of the contract on account of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, age, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or marital or familial status.
- Incorporate the foregoing requirements in all subcontracts related to its contract with the City.

In instances where the city does not have an ordinance or policy, cities can opt to consistently include a contractor non-discrimination provision in all contracts with businesses or give a bidding preference to businesses with a qualifying employee non-discrimination policy. While it is best practice to codify these non-discrimination protections, these alternatives are great ways to bridge gaps.

Domestic Partner Benefits

Domestic partnership laws and policies provided a way for cities, unsatisfied with the lack of relationship recognition laws at the state level, to proudly display their values of inclusion and equality while extending vital benefits and legal protections to same-sex couples and their families. In addition to extending benefits to same-sex couples, many domestic partnership laws and policies also extended benefits to unmarried different-sex couples and their families.

After the Supreme Court's ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which brought about nationwide marriage equality, municipalities that previously implemented employee domestic partner benefits and citywide domestic partnership registries were faced with the question of whether these benefits and protections should continue to be offered. As a matter of inclusion, fairness, equal compensation, and good business, municipalities should retain their domestic partnership laws and policies and expand them (where applicable) to include all couples — same and different-sex — and their families. Expanded policies serve employees and their families in a number of ways, including respecting family diversity, providing benefits continuity and equal compensation, and protecting families from discrimination.

Today's families come in a variety of configurations. Many couples decide not to get married for important personal and practical reasons. Maintaining domestic partner benefits provides validation and essential benefits to unmarried employees and their families. By continuing to offer domestic partner benefits, municipalities demonstrate their respect for the broad diversity of families that exists within their workforces.

Additionally, revoking existing domestic partnership policies in municipal employment would take away vital benefits that countless public employees and their families depend on. Municipalities that move to eliminate these policies, and instead require marriage to receive

partner and family benefits, are putting their employees' family members at risk of being uninsured.

Benefits like health insurance, life insurance, family leave, bereavement leave, relocation assistance, and pension benefits are central to the livelihood and well-being of employees, their partners, and their legal dependents. Employees who choose not to get married are just as deserving of these benefits as those who opt to marry. Denying these families the benefits that their married counterparts enjoy amounts to unequal compensation. Moreover, citywide ordinances that require municipalities and private employers to extend equal benefits to domestic partners and legal dependents of employees should be vigorously defended.

Lastly, while marriage equality is a tremendous step forward, LGBTQ+ employees are still left open to risks and vulnerabilities to which their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts are not subject. Maintaining domestic partnership policies in city employment is an essential tool in safeguarding LGBTQ+ employees and their families from these unique risks.

Requiring that employees obtain marriage licenses in order to qualify for essential benefits can place LGBTQ+ employees and their families at risk of discrimination in states without explicit non-discrimination protections. For example, if an employee is, in effect, "outed" by being required to obtain a public marriage license in a state that doesn't provide explicit non-discrimination protections, it could place that employee and their family at risk of being denied credit, housing and access to public accommodations.

These distinctions in protections are significant and expose LGBTQ+ people to risks when traveling or relocating to states that may be forced to honor their marriage license, but still discriminate against them in core aspects of daily life. City employment policies should not place LGBTQ+ workers and their loved ones in a position of increased vulnerability and uncertainty. Maintaining private employer-based domestic partnership policies can help protect LGBTQ+ employees and their families from the unique risks they still face today.

Sample Domestic Partner Policy

Purpose:

Effective **[Date]**, benefit-eligible city employees can extend all benefits entitled to employee spouses and legal dependents of employee spouses to their same- or different-sex domestic partner and the legal dependents of their domestic partner. These benefits shall include but not be limited to medical, prescription drug, dental, and vision insurance.

Definitions:

A domestic Partner of a city employee shall be defined as an individual who:

- Is at least 18 years of age and mentally competent to consent to a contract;
- Is not legally married or domestically partnered to any person other than the city employee;
- Is not related to the city employee by blood closer than would bar marriage in the State in which the individual resides; and

- Shares a committed relationship and responsibility for a significant measure of financial obligations with the city employee.

Policy:

Attestation of a Domestic Partner

In order for a city employee to designate a domestic partnership and obtain health and other benefits for their domestic partner and their domestic partner's legal dependents, the city employee must complete an Affidavit of Domestic Partnership (Attachment A).

Upon receipt of a properly completed and notarized Affidavit of Domestic Partnership, Human Resources will consider the domestic partnership attested to as of the date of the signature on the affidavit. The attestation of a domestic partnership represents a qualifying life event for the purposes of enrolling in or changing employee benefits.

Termination of Domestic Partnership

If there is a termination of the domestic partnership due to no longer meeting the definition of a domestic partnership or due to death, the city employee shall notify the Human Resources Department in writing within thirty (30) days of the effective date of such change. A Declaration of Termination of Domestic Partnership form (Attachment B) must be completed. The domestic partnership status will be terminated as of the date of the terminating event. Benefits will cease in accordance with applicable insurance contracts and city employee benefits policies. Failure to report the termination of the domestic partnership within thirty (30) days will result in the employee having to wait until open enrollment to make changes to employee benefits.

[Attachment A] - Affidavit of Domestic Partnership

[Attachment B] - Declaration of Termination of Domestic Partnership

Transitioning Policy

Gender-transition policies outline the critical components to successful on-the-job transition experiences for city employees. These policies should, at a minimum:

- Specify the people or roles charged with helping a transitioning employee manage their workplace transition;
- Outline what a transitioning employee can expect from management;
- Communicate management's expectations for staff, transitioning employees and any existing LGBTQ+ employee group in facilitating a successful workplace transition;
- Outline the general procedures for implementing transition-related workplace changes, such as adjusting personnel and administrative records;

- Provide a plan for how a communication strategy for co-workers and clients will be developed;
- Include educational material regarding transgender people, including a glossary of relevant terms; and
- Affirm an employee's right to be treated equally under the company's dress code policies as well as the employee's right to access sex-segregated facilities in accordance with their gender identity.

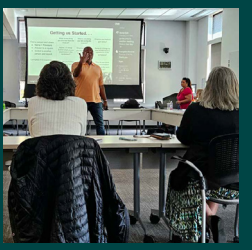
LGBTQ-Inclusive Workplace Training

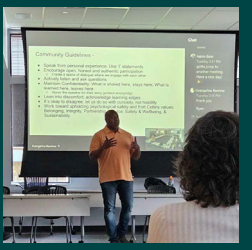
Diversity and inclusion efforts do not end with the diversification of a city's workforce In order to retain employees and foster increased satisfaction and productivity, cities must continually work to create a workplace culture that respects, values, and celebrates differences. This process starts immediately in the new employee onboarding process. Virtually every municipality has an established onboarding process that includes training on its values, policies, and procedures. Issues relating to diversity and inclusion should take a central role in this process, and particular attention must be paid to making sure new employees understand the unique issues facing LGBTQ+ employees and city residents. This includes cultural competency training on LGBTQ+ terminology, disparities, and needs. Moreover, all-staff training should thoroughly cover transgender-specific policies and issues, including employee transition policies.

In developing all-staff LGBTQ-inclusive trainings, human resources departments can enlist the support of community LGBTQ+ organizations, the LGBTQ+ liaison to the city executive, or the city LGBTQ+ employee resource group (discussed above). To maximize effectiveness, these trainings should be conducted at regular intervals and at least annually. This sends a clear message to employees that the city welcomes and values them for who they are, increasing worker satisfaction and thereby retention.

SUCCESS STORY:

FORT COLLINS, COLORADO





The City of Fort Collins PRIDE Employee Resource Group launched an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Customer Service Training for its employees in March 2024. The goal of the training was to provide a fundamental understanding of LGBTQ+ identities and how serving LGBTQ+ populations with competency and compassion aligns with City values, especially psychological safety, wellbeing, and belonging. Twenty sessions were offered in total and included the City Manager Office, City Attorney's Office, and the Police Leadership Team. The training focused on gender identity and pronoun use, as trans/nonbinary staff consistently report that not honoring their pronouns hinders their ability to feel safe and welcomed in the workplace.

A highlight of the training was shared from a trans/nonbinary City employee. During the training, they endured challenging comments from co-workers not understanding the need for using pronouns. They shared their story about coming out as nonbinary and how being misgendered had negatively affected them. They said they were nervous to share in the moment but believed it was important for their co-workers to hear why pronouns matter. A few weeks after the training, a co-worker misgendered them during a conversation. Afterwards, the co-worker came back to their office and apologized. The trans/nonbinary employee was surprised and appreciated that their colleague recognized his mistake, took the time to acknowledge it, and apologized. They excitedly shared this story with PRIDE saying, "I just want you to know, your training worked. Thank you!"

The City of Fort Collins is actively building a compassionate workplace and culture of belonging for *all* employees.

Success Story: *Fort Collins, Colorado* hrc.org/mei

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Terms to Know

Many Americans refrain from talking about sexual orientation and gender identity or expression because it feels taboo, or because they're afraid of saying the wrong thing. This glossary was written to help give people the words and meanings to help make conversations easier and more comfortable. LGBTQ+ people use a variety of terms to identify themselves, not all of which are included in this glossary. Always listen for and respect a person's self identified terminology.

Ally | A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).

Asexual | Often called "ace" for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little or conditional sexual attraction.

Biphobia | The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with people who love and are sexually attracted to more than one gender.

Bisexual | A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.

Gay | A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

Genderqueer | Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender binary | A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

Gender dysphoria | Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

Gender-expansive | A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

Gender expression | External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender-fluid | A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

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Gender identity | One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither — how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender non-comforming | A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.

Homophobia | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

Intersex | Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of differences among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

Lesbian | A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

LGBTQ+ | An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community.

Non-binary | An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

Outing | Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender or gender non-binary identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

Pansexual | Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.

Queer | A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Questioning | A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Same-gender loving | A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

Sex assigned at birth | The sex, male, female or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Sexual orientation | An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

Transgender | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transitioning | A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all or none of these processes.

Transphobia | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

Importance of Pronouns

Pronouns — we all use them as part of everyday conversation. A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (like "I" or "you") or someone or something that is being talked about (like "she," "it," "them," and "this"). Gender pronouns (such as "he/him/his" and "she/her/hers") refer to people that you are talking about. Gender pronouns are the way that we constantly refer to each other's gender identity - except we often don't think a whole lot about them. Usually we interpret or "read" a person's gender based on their outward appearance and expression, and "assign" a pronoun.

However, our reading may not be a correct interpretation of the person's gender identity. Because gender identity is internal — an internal sense of one's own gender — we don't necessarily know a person's correct gender pronoun by looking at them. Additionally, a person may identify as genderfluid or gender non-conforming and may not identify along the binary of either male or female (e.g. "him" or "her"). Some people identify as both masculine and feminine, or neither. A gender non-conforming or non-binary identified person may prefer a gender-neutral pronoun such as "they" (e.g. "I know Sam. They work in the Accounting Department").

Nothing may be more personal than the way in which people refer to us through our name and pronouns. Using a person's chosen name and desired pronouns is a form of mutual respect and basic courtesy. The experience of being misgendered can be hurtful, angering, and even distracting. The experience of accidentally misgendering someone can be embarrassing for both parties, creating tension and leading to communication breakdowns across teams, constituents, and stakeholders. It's important to remember that gender identity is not visible — it's an internal sense of one's own gender. While most people align across their sex assigned at birth, their gender identity, their gender expression, and how everyone else interprets their gender — some people do not. A culture that readily asks or provides pronouns is one committed to reducing the risk of disrespect or embarrassment for both parties.

Here are some examples of opportunities to ask for or offer pronouns:

- Interviewing process: Create a place to declare preferred name and pronouns. Many Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are driven by legal names. Creating an opportunity to disclose preferred names and pronouns is a recommended best practice not only for transgender people, but for anyone who uses a preferred (or "nick") name.

- Onboarding process: Create a place to declare preferred name and pronouns. Use these as the basis of introducing new employees.

- Workplace social networks or platforms, digital directories: Allow employees to self-ID preferred name and pronouns as part of their profiles.

- Correspondence: Include personal pronouns in email signature lines and Zoom/ Teams names.

- Meetings: Make offering personal pronouns part of the introduction process at the start of meetings or events.

    + *Example: "We're going to go around the room to introduce ourselves. Please say your name, the department you work in and, if you want, your personal pronouns." "My name is John Smith. I work in Quality Control. My pronouns are they, them, theirs."*

- Introductions: Role model appropriate pronoun when introducing people to their new workgroup.

    + *Example: "Everyone I am pleased to introduce John Smith who is transferring over from Quality Control. They will be the lead person on the new product development project."*

Cities seeking to be LGBTQ-inclusive need to be aware of the importance of pronouns and explore appropriate solutions for their communities. Whatever approach you take to address pronouns, the bottom line is that everyone deserves to have their self-ascribed name and pronouns respected.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

BRITTNY PHAM is the Senior Manager of State and Municipal Programs at the Human Rights Campaign, where she manages both the Municipal Equality Index (MEI) and the State Equality Index (SEI) each year. Brittny administers the resources for the MEI and works one-on-one with cities and counties across the country to advance LGBTQ+ equality and inclusivity.

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Mayors' Playbook: A Toolkit for LGBTQ+ Municipal Equality is based in part on the HRC Foundation's Municipal Equality Index and its accompanying resources.

To reach the authors with questions, comments, suggestions, or other resources, please email ***mei@hrc.org*** or **visit www.hrc.org/mei.**



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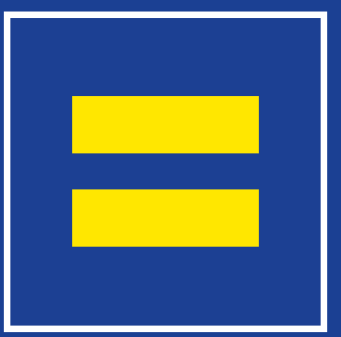
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