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# GIVENS COMMUNITIES: GENDER IN THE WORKPLACE COMMITTEE

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A Guide for Supervisors Supporting Transitioning Team  
Members



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## Introduction to Givens Culture

Givens strives to embody a culture that fosters diversity and inclusion among team members. Our goal is to live by our core values of courage, collaboration, caring, and commitment. Through living these values and the desire to be inclusive and respectful of all individuals - we strive to achieve a warm, and welcoming work environment.

It is each team member's responsibility to foster a positive and collaborative environment among the people who they interact with each day. Relationships with other team members, residents, families, and others are critical to ensure we are meeting expectations and creating the space for our values to adapt and grow.

Givens recognizes the importance of diversity within its board, residents, team members, and others. We strive to cultivate an environment that respects and values differences because it makes our community stronger and healthier.

We believe that each individual affiliated with Givens is responsible for perpetuating a diverse and inclusive culture.

Diversity in the workplace is intentionally accepting those with different life and work experiences, opinions and perspectives, cultures, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, nation origin, age, and disability. We are accepting team members as their authentic selves and showing our gratitude for their presence.

Inclusion cultivates trust and creates an environment where everyone has a sense of purpose and an opportunity to contribute. And an inclusive environment values the unique perspective of each person and embraces this as a means of improving the organization.

## Mental Health & Retention

The World Health Organization notes that every year, over twelve billion working days are lost due to depression and anxiety alone. Not using your team member's chosen name and pronouns can easily lead to a decline in confidence to communicate and overall mental health. This introduces us to our guidelines purpose - the reason we are here today is to provide educational resources, so you feel more confident in supporting your transitioning team members.

Creating a safe space for team members at all levels to communicate openly without discrimination is crucial. Positive mental health at work helps teams remain steady when facing difficult challenges and responsibilities. It helps team members flourish in their roles, manage stress, and boosts their resilience. Ultimately, it allows each individual to reach their highest potential. And when people feel that they have support within a team or a community, they are more likely to stay and grow with that team.

## Key Definitions & Concepts

Next, we will move on to key concepts and definitions you may often see and have the opportunity to use to support your team members.

**AFAB** and **AMAB** – AFAB is pronounced “EY-FAB” and AMAB is pronounced “EY-MAB”. These are acronyms that stand for assigned female / assigned male at birth. This term is preferred rather than “biological male/female”, “male/female bodied”, “natal male/female”, and “born male/female”, which are inaccurate and can be considered offensive. Transgender and non-binary people may use the term AMAB when necessary, but it should be noted that AMAB/AFAB are not gender identities.

**Cisgender** is a term describing people whose gender identity is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. A person who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman is a cisgender woman. A person who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man is a cisgender man.

**Gender Identity** is a person’s internal, deeply felt sense of being a woman, a man, or some other gender. One’s gender identity may be different from the gender identity traditionally associated with the person’s assigned sex at birth. Every individual – including transgender people – knows best what their gender identity is. **And everyone has the right to self-identify their gender.**

**Gender Expression** describes the many outward manifestations of one’s gender identity, such as style of dress, vocal tone, and mannerisms. Gender expression may be socially or culturally relative. It is an important part of your self-identity and is central to your mental health and well-being. Many transgender people hide their

gender expression in public for fear of negative reactions, violence, or discrimination.

**Gender Dysphoria** is the medical diagnosis for someone who experiences distress based on the difference between the gender they are assigned at birth and the gender they know themselves to be.

It is incredibly important to acknowledge, **being transgender is not considered a medical condition**. And not all transgender people have gender dysphoria.

This is where Gender Expression comes in. All major medical organizations in the United States recognize that living according to one's gender identity is an effective, safe and medically necessary treatment for many people who have gender dysphoria.

This can include dressing and grooming in a way that reflects who one knows they are, using a different name or pronoun, and, for some, taking medical steps to physically change their body. Any steps one can take to affirm their gender identity can be effective against gender dysphoria.

We do not have 'gender' listed here because gender is a social construct. A transgender person's gender identity is not determined by the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Transgender**, broadly speaking, is an umbrella term describing a person whose gender identity is different from the gender identity typically associated with that person's assigned sex at birth. A person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies and lives as a woman, is a transgender woman. A person who was assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man is a transgender man.

Some transgender people may also identify as **non-binary**, **genderqueer**, or another gender expansive identity outside of the gender binary.

**“Trans” is a shorthand term for “transgender.” You may hear in casual conversation those introduce themselves as a “trans man” or a “trans woman”.**

**Gender Fluid** is a changing or non-fixed gender identity. A person who identifies as **Gender Fluid** typically is flexible in regard to their gender identity and expression. This identity is a validation that gender is a spectrum, and how you wish to identify can change over time.

And while many transgender people can identify on a binary scale, as either male or female, some do not and may instead refer to themselves as **Non-binary** or **Genderqueer**. This identity means that your gender identity falls outside of the binary. Those who are non-binary often use “they” and “them” pronouns.

**Transition** refers to the process by which a transgender person may bring their gender expression into conformity with their gender identity. This could be through legal and non-legal gender designations on documents and records, and/or physical characteristics. Not all transgender people transition, and not all people who transition go through a transition process that includes medical steps such as hormone therapy (HRT for short) or surgeries.

Transitioning is a very personal process, there are many ways to transition and there is not often a straight timeline. Every team member who transitions is entitled to privacy and respect, regardless of the particulars of how they transition.

**Sexual Orientation** refers to one’s sexual, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to people of the same and/or another gender. A person’s sexual orientation is distinct from their gender identity. Just like cisgender people, transgender people may identify their sexual

orientation as straight/heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or some other sexual orientation.



# Gender Expansive Identities & Pronouns

Now that we have a good grasp on gender identity and concepts, let's dive into pronouns!

Cisgender people rarely think about pronouns because the pronouns people use for them is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transgender people often challenge these norms and the existing understandings around gender. While many transgender people identify on a binary scale, some do not and may instead refer to themselves under a gender expansive identity such as **non-binary, genderqueer, gender fluid**, or other terms.

These identities are considered part of the greater transgender community and are incredibly validating to those who see gender as a spectrum.

Here we have listed out several personal pronouns used for different groups and identities.

We have: "**he/him/his**", "**she/her/hers**", "**they/the/theirs**", and "**ze/zir/zirs**".

In addition, honorifics such as "**Ms.**" or "**Mr.**" may change to the more inclusive "**Mx.**"

**It is important to note, gender does not determine the pronouns that one would use. There is no such thing as "gendered pronouns". You would then be assuming that if someone used, "he/him" pronouns, that they would identify as a man, which may be an incorrect assumption.**

As we have discussed, it is quite common for people who have identify as non-binary to use expansive pronouns such as "*they, them, and theirs*" instead of the pronouns such as "*he/him*" or "*she/her.*"

Some team members may also use two pronouns, including "*they/them*". If someone presents you with multiple pronouns, such as "*he/they*" or "*they/she*", they may wish you to use

both pronouns interchangeably when referring to them. As always, ask first for clarification.

## Gender-Neutral Singular Pronouns (Non-English)

During a discussion with our Gender in the Workplace Committee, we came to the concern of how other non-English speaking countries may respect pronouns beyond gender. As American English has set a standard of expanding their own language and seeing past the constrictions of old grammar rules, other countries have done the same.

As examples, we have listed out the German, Spanish, and Russian. We also have a link attached in our references for further gender-neutral pronoun options for over twenty countries (<https://nonbinary.wiki/wiki/Pronouns>).

In German, we have the translation of "**they/them/their**" is "**dey/dey/deyren**".

For Spanish, we show examples of conjugations for "**el**", which is "**he/him**", "**ella**" which is "**she/her**". And then gender-neutral option "**elle**" and its conjugations which translates to "**they/them**".

For Russian, we have listed the typical personal pronouns used, including the translation for "**they**", which is "**ONO**".

In Russia this is currently gaining much traction, as there is no simple way of expressing gender fluidity. But refusing to be limited by grammar, they are expanding their own language.

# Best Practices for Supervisors

## Be Proactive

Givens Communities is committed to establishing a culture of inclusivity, appreciation of differences, and zero tolerance for discrimination. This begins with supervisors educating themselves and committing to educating their team member on acceptance and respect.

A transitioning team member should see you as an Ally and trust that you will be open minded and listen to their needs and concerns. You will be tasked with supporting the team member and potentially other staff who will need to be educated and may have questions or concerns of their own.

**For those who may struggle with the transition of using gender neutral pronouns, you are not alone, and so multiple accredited establishments have taken action to help.**

The use of "*they/them*" pronouns referring to a single individual was deemed OFFICIALLY and GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT in 2019 when **Merriam-Webster** made '*they*' the word of the year and provided a significant explanation to the growth of the initially plural verb.

The **American Psychological Association** also officially recommended that the singular '*they*' will be preferred in professional writing over "*he* or *she*" when the reference is to a person whose gender is unknown or to a person who prefers '*they*'.

And the **Harvard Business Review** created a visual guide on how to talk about pronouns at work. All of which you can find at the end of our guideline.

## Responding to Transitioning Team Members

When you have either been informed by that team member, or by your HR department, here are some first steps on how you can respond. This can also be referenced through a link at the end of the guideline

([Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace A Toolkit for Employers Version 10 14 2016.pdf \(hrc.org\)](#)).

**Be open minded and listen!** Allow the team member to educate you on how they'd like to be treated. This can include sharing pronouns and boundaries they may have. This is also the time to take responsibility and educate yourself on the transgender community and key concepts.

**Make sure the team member knows they can count on your confidentiality.** Your team member needs to know that they have a support system and a community that upholds privacy and respects them. It is important that open and honest communication be established to build trust for both parties. If you aren't sure how to be supportive, just ask. This brings us to our next step which is...

**Make them aware of HR's ability to assist and support,** and then reach out to HR for any additional support needed. This will be a good time so that if you are unsure of how to be supportive or if you find that other team members are hesitating, you can be given the resources and knowledge you need.

**Remember, we want to foster a supportive workplace, but it is important to remember the boundaries of involvement. Please ensure you are leveraging the resources that HR can provide.**

**And finally - MAKE A PLAN!** You will be tasked with supporting the team member and potentially other staff who will need to be educated and may have questions. With the team member's permission, make a plan with them, and incorporate HR into that discussion on how WE, can support THEM, the team member.

## Making a Plan

It is important to be proactive AND make a clear plan to positively guide the situation throughout the transition. Handle all discussions with respect and consideration.

A few questions that may come up could be:

*How would the team member like to let other leaders, team members, and if needed, residents know?*

*How will you respond to any potential concerns or questions from team members and/or residents?*

*Are there any restroom concerns?*

*Name, Gender Identity, or Pronoun changes?*

*What about time off and leave benefits?*

Not only do the specific steps of transitioning and their timing vary, but people also differ in how public they want to be as they transition. Make sure when you have been made aware of the team member's transition, ask them how you can support them rather than assuming.

## What NOT To Do

Let's go over a few quick resources of what NOT to do when supporting a team member transition in the workplace.

**First off, you cannot tell someone's gender by looking at their appearance, so avoid making assumptions about a person's gender or pronouns.** Until someone has specifically stated their pronoun, use *they/them/their* or ask them directly and in private what pronoun they use. When asking someone what pronoun they use, use direct language like "**What pronouns do you use?**" Avoid using the phrase 'preferred pronouns,' as this implies that transgender people's pronouns are a preference, not a fact.

Remember, some people might be uncomfortable voicing their pronouns, so respect a team member's privacy and journey. You can always share your pronouns first and invite others to share theirs with you.

**Second, do NOT use a team members former name.** A transgender person may decide to no longer use their birth or legal name. Instead, they will choose a name that better aligns with their identity. When someone uses their old name after being asked not to, that is what we call '**deadnaming.**'

A transgender person's chosen name is their real name, whether or not they are able to obtain a court-ordered name change, which can be expensive and involves complex bureaucratic obstacles. Deadnaming a transgender team member gives the impression that you do not respect them and can also be very traumatic and remind them of the period in their lives before they could take steps to affirm who they are.

**Do NOT "out" people without their permission.** While we can encourage a team member to go to HR and make plans for how they would like to begin their transition in the workplace, not only do the specific steps of transitioning and their timing vary, people also differ in how public they want to be as they transition. It is up to you to support the team member how THEY would like to be supported.

**And lastly, never ask anyone about gender affirming surgeries or medical transitioning status.** Not asking someone about their medical history or plans for surgery is common sense at work, regardless of someone's gender identity. This also applies to their sexual orientation.

## Closing Insights

Today we have discussed the fundamental transformation in how society thinks about gender. We have provided educational resources to foster a supportive and inclusive space for all and reminded ourselves of the values that each team member works towards at Givens.

Again, we are not here to ask you to change your perspective or worldview. But in order to support team members of all gender identities and expressions, supervisors need to take the approach that balances flexibility, privacy, respect, and support. You will be tasked with supporting the team member and potentially other staff who will need to be educated and may have questions. And now, you have the tools.



# References

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