



November 2025

Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse

Staff and Volunteers:

A short guide



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Land Affirmation



As Volunteer Alberta continues our ongoing (un)learning journey, we see the increasing importance of reflecting on our ties to each other and the land. Our main office is situated on Treaty 6 Territory, in an area that holds many Indigenous names but is referred to by the Nehiyaw people as amiskwaciwâskahikan (ᐊᒥᐢᑫᐧᒋᐸᐢᑫᐸᐠ) and colonially as Edmonton. Our staff, board, and work extend into Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 Territories, and we affirm the importance of honouring these historic agreements as well as all future treaties. The land we call Alberta is the ancestral territory and present-day home of many Indigenous peoples, including the Nehiyaw (Cree), Dene (Denesulinié, Dene Tha, Tsuut’ina), Iyarhe Nakoda (Nakota Sioux, Stoney), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux, Ojibwe), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Inuit, and Métis. They have cared for and advocated for the lands, waters, and animals for many generations despite historical and ongoing harmful actions against their communities. We are grateful for their stewardship of this land, and as an act of reconciliation and good will, it is our intention to ensure that our organization, along with the entire social impact/non-profit/voluntary sector, can become good partners in supporting the land and communities.

Inspired by Indigenous knowledge systems, we seek to become good organizational ancestors. In doing so we are committed to meaningful reflection and critiquing of our ways of knowing, being, and doing. To help communities thrive and illuminate good ways forward for the sector, we must recognize how colonial systems influence how Albertans perceive and participate in volunteerism and civic engagement. This includes considering the historical and ongoing barriers that exclude Indigenous people from meaningful engagement in our communities. In the spirit of reconciliation, we all have a responsibility to consider how our organizations can contribute to decolonized, inclusive, and equitable volunteer programming and take action to do no more harm. Volunteer Alberta is committed to meeting our responsibilities.

Why This Matters

Hiring and welcoming transgender and gender diverse team members and volunteers is essential to building the rich, healthy communities of belonging we strive for. When we intentionally create spaces that affirm every person's identity, we open the door to a wider, deeper well of lived experience, empathy, and creative problem-solving. These diverse perspectives, particularly from those who navigate the world with resilience and unique insight, make our teams stronger and our volunteer efforts more impactful. By embracing this full spectrum of gender diversity, we better understand the varying needs of the people we serve, ensuring our mission is delivered with greater wisdom and heart.

Moreover, creating an environment where transgender and gender diverse people can truly thrive is an act of nourishment that supports collective well-being. A warm, supportive culture—backed by clear actions and genuine allyship—fosters a deep sense of belonging for everyone. When team members and volunteers feel safe, respected, and fully valued for who they are, their energy isn't spent on self-protection but is instead directed toward our shared purpose. By upholding dignity and supporting this community, we model the kind of inclusive civic engagement that strengthens the fabric of our communities, allowing everyone to contribute their very best.

About This Guide

This guide summarizes best practices for fostering inclusive workplaces and supporting transgender and gender diverse staff and volunteers. The actionable steps and core principles presented here are drawn from leading expertise and common frameworks developed by organizations across Canada.

Important: We recognize there are many wonderful resources available to support this work. This short guide provides quick, introductory steps, as well as Alberta-specific resources, but it is not exhaustive. For comprehensive policy development, we recommend consulting detailed resources such as the one from Egale Canada: <https://egale.ca/awareness/workplace-transition/> and this one from the Ontario Human Rights commission <https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression>

For additional guidance on workplace inclusion, we also direct users to the Province of British Columbia's resource, which served as the primary inspiration for creating this accessible, Alberta-focused guide:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/careers/all-employees/working-with-others/supporting_transgender_and_gender_diverse_employees_in_the_workplace.pdf

Core Principles for Everyone

These principles apply to all staff, managers, and volunteers, ensuring dignity and respect for every person in the workplace.

Use Correct Names and Pronouns: A person's name and pronouns are a core part of their identity, not a "preference". Use the name and pronouns a colleague or volunteer identifies with, and avoid assuming them based on appearance.

Be Proactive with your Learning: Everyone shares the responsibility to learn about gender diversity and appropriate conduct. It is not the role of transgender or gender-diverse individuals to educate others.

Maintain Privacy and Confidentiality: Transgender and gender diverse people have the right to keep their gender identity or transition plans private. Do not disclose or share a person's personal information (such as previous name or transgender status) without their explicit permission and in accordance with privacy law.

Stop Harassment Immediately: Do not tolerate any form of discrimination, bullying, harassment, or transphobic jokes. When disrespectful behaviour occurs, it must be stopped right away.

Actionable Steps for Allies

Action	How to Apply
Respect Boundaries	Avoid intrusive curiosity. Don't ask inappropriate personal questions about a person's medical transition, surgeries, or hormones. Look for answers in available resources before asking the person.
Correct Mistakes Gracefully	If you use the wrong name or pronoun, apologize quickly, correct yourself, and move on. For example: "He was going to—sorry, she was going to the meeting..." Do not dwell on the mistake or make it bigger.
Follow Their Lead	Allow the transitioning person to take the lead on what information, timelines, and topics are appropriate to discuss with others. Trust the individual's self-identification. Understanding is not a prerequisite for respect.
Model Inclusive Language	Use gender-neutral terms when referring to a mixed group. Instead of saying "Hey guys" or "Ladies," try "Hello folks," "everyone," or "team".

Actionable Steps for Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to consult, plan, and provide necessary accommodations.

Area of Support	Managerial/Supervisory Action
Consultation & Planning	Your first step is to meet with the individual privately to determine their wishes regarding confidentiality and desired supports. Ask what name and pronoun to use, and affirm your support.
Support Plan	Collaborate with the individual to develop a support and communication plan that addresses: Transition timelines; Who they want informed (co-workers, clients, etc.); Time off for gender-affirming medical care*; and how harassment or negative reactions will be handled.
Records and Identification	Ensure the employee/volunteer has new organizational identification (e.g., photo badges, business cards). Use their chosen name for non-legal activities like email signatures and internal directories.
Setting the Tone	Introduce yourself using your name and pronouns help build a culture where team members feel confident and safe to share how they identify. Be sure to not pressure people into providing their pronouns - some may wish to not identify in the moment or until they feel safe to do so.

*Medical transition is a deeply personal choice and is not necessary for all transgender individuals. Please avoid making assumptions about a person's medical journey unless they choose to share that information with you.

Alberta Community Resources for 2SLGBTQIA+ Wellbeing

These organizations offer direct support, community programs, education, and advocacy for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other gender and sexual diverse people across Alberta.

Organization	Location Focus	Key Services
Trans Equality Society of Alberta (TESA)	Alberta-wide	Advocacy and education focused specifically on trans Albertans, aiming to be a voice for matters concerning the community.
Skipping Stone Foundation	Calgary, Alberta-wide programs	Comprehensive support for trans and gender diverse youth and their families, including social programs, financial aid for gender-affirming gear, and youth leadership.
The Fyrefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity	Edmonton (U of A)	Community services, research, education, and policy development. Known for Camp Fyrefly, a leadership retreat for queer and trans youth.
OUTReach Southern Alberta	Lethbridge	Provides advocacy, education, and support for and on behalf of the local 2SLGBTQIA+ communities of Lethbridge and surrounding areas.
Wood Buffalo Pride	Fort Mc.Murray and Wood Buffalo, AB	Provides peer support groups, gender-affirming gear, training (Rainbow Spaces), and regional advocacy.

Pride Centre of Edmonton	Edmonton	Provides a non-judgmental community space, resources, counselling referrals, and social programs for the entire 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
Calgary Outlink: Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity	Calgary	Community-based charity offering support, education, outreach, and referrals, including peer support groups and a connection point to the community.
Queer & Trans Health Collective (QTHC)	Edmonton	A grassroots, community-based health organization run by and for 2SLGBTQ+ people, offering a range of health and social services.
pflag Canada (Local Chapters)	Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge & others	Provides peer support, education, and advocacy for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and their loved ones (family, friends, allies).
Centre for Sexuality	Calgary	Comprehensive sexual health and relationship programs, including specific support groups and programs for 2SLGBTQ+ youth and families.
The Rainbow Pages	Edmonton	A resource guide developed by The Family Centre providing a consolidated directory of services and supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and youth-serving communities in Edmonton and area.

A Final Message

Affirmation is more than just inclusion—it is truly life-saving. By offering sincere respect, using the correct name and pronouns, and creating genuinely supportive spaces, we are directly contributing to the well-being, safety, and vitality of transgender and gender diverse people.

Our communities are undeniably richer, more compassionate, and more vibrant because trans people exist, sharing their authentic selves, their unique wisdom, and their dedication to service. Thank you for taking this essential step toward cultivating a community of belonging where every single person can thrive and contribute their very best.

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Made with love by the Volunteer Alberta Team 