



Transgender inclusion at no cost?

By Jessica Pettitt

I use the term trans as an inclusive term for people who don't identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. College campuses, corporations, and even secondary education institutions are beginning to ask for assistance in making their environments and services inclusive for trans community members. Education, training, consulting, are all GREAT ways to foster a supportive environment for trans students, staff, and faculty. I get asked often when doing my work, "So, what can be done quickly and inexpensively?" There isn't one answer that fits every situation, as climate and resources vary greatly. Here are some starting points for you to consider and get the conversation started in your own department, organization, etc.:

- Identify, affiliate with, and publicize the names of counselors, nurses, and doctors who are supportive of trans patients and knowledgeable about trans health concerns.
- Identify and publicize (with permission) the names of individuals on campus who are knowledgeable about trans concerns and can provide support to transitioning or trans identified community members.
- Conduct an audit and post results on a campus website of all single occupancy bathrooms (these often are ADA accessible, family, custodial, lab, etc. bathrooms) and their location across all campus buildings. Allow for edits to be made as others are located. Track how these bathrooms are labeled and note inconsistencies.
- Do something similar to publish all single occupancy showers, changing rooms, etc., (usually in or near locker rooms or medical service areas) across all campus buildings and track how these spaces are labeled for inconsistencies.
- Research and publicize state and campus procedures for officially changing one's name and gender designation within registrar's office, human resources office, clinics, as well as state issued documents.
- Encourage single gendered organizations (fraternity and sorority organizations, sports teams, student organizations, etc.) to develop clear policies and definitions around the organizations' gender definition.
- Create a web based campus resource guide for new and prospective transgender students, staff, and faculty.
- Look into bringing in neighborhood, regional, or national experts to assist you through the process as educators and/or consultants.

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Out of more than 1000 institutions of higher education, less than 300 have non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and expression. Trans inclusion isn't about sticking one's neck out or being so far behind other benchmarked organizations that you are at a loss as to where to begin. Trans students, staff, and faculty are already on your campus or have been. It is up to you to be proactive and foster a more inclusive environment for all community members to have access to services and support to grow and be themselves. Know that every little bit helps, and no advocacy efforts are too much. Know that to make an impact, you don't even have to spend a dime.

To continue the conversation contact Jessica Pettitt at (917) 543-0966 or contactme@iamsocialjustice.com. For more information about Trans Inclusion, Empowerment, and Advocacy, check out Jessica's publications and her training called Facing Trans at www.iamsocialjustice.com.

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