



## Best Practices for Working with LGBTQ Individuals on Campus

### Education

We all strive to be respectful and appropriate in our communications. To do so, we must continually educate ourselves on a broad spectrum of issues and terminology. Below are just a few ways you can enhance your knowledge of LGBTQ topics.

1. Be sure to familiarize yourself with LGBTQIA terminology. LGBTQIA is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. If you are unsure of the meaning of certain terms or would like to learn what words are most inclusive, please refer to this terminology list provided by the Diversity Awareness Office at <http://www.montana.edu/safezone/documents/Terminology.pdf>
2. Attend a Safe Zone Training. MSU's Diversity Awareness Office and Counseling and Psychological Services offer Safe Zone training workshops which provide education on LGBTQ identities and issues. They also offer more advanced workshops on developing skills as an ally and examining personal biases. For more information about the Safe Zone program, visit <http://www.montana.edu/safezone/>.

### Inclusive Language

Increasing the inclusiveness of our language means working to understand the ways that language can unconsciously perpetuate assumptions about gender, sexual orientation, race, class, ability/disability, age, and other identities and experiences.

As important as using the “right” words can be, it is equally important to foster a climate of open, effective communication and demonstrate a willingness to learn. Language is constantly evolving, so you may need advice or continued education to keep your language inclusive. (HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector, Canada)

1. Words and phrases like, “fag,” “dyke,” or “that’s so gay” are harmful to LGBTQIA individuals and those who care about them. Interrupting and addressing this kind of language in your classroom or workplace is important for making people feel safe. Rather than simply telling people not to use those words, try explaining the impacts of their language and illustrating how inappropriate language can reinforce stereotypes toward LGBTQIA individuals.
2. Try including a diversity or inclusion statement in your syllabus to set a respectful, inclusive tone for your class. If you have these guidelines in place from the beginning of the semester, it is easier to intervene during tricky situations. Examples of diversity statements can be found at <http://www.montana.edu/diversity/samplediversitystatements.html>
3. Using gender neutral language can help to avoid assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation. For example, if you use the gender neutral term “partner” in place of “husband” or “wife,” you avoid making assumptions about the gender of someone’s significant other. When it comes to gender neutral

#### Diversity Awareness Office

368 Strand Union  
Bozeman, MT 59717  
[www.montana.edu/diversity](http://www.montana.edu/diversity)

Tel 406-994-5801  
Fax 406-994-6889  
[diversityawareness@montana.edu](mailto:diversityawareness@montana.edu)



language, “they, them, and their” are commonly used as singular, gender neutral pronouns. For example, when referring to your attendance policy on a syllabus, you could write “If a student misses more than 30% of classes, their grade will be negatively impacted.” This shows respect toward all genders and avoids the awkwardness and binary nature of saying “him/her.”

### Tips and Strategies

1. It is important to recognize that we all make mistakes when it comes to language and identity, and that is okay. If you make a mistake, briefly apologize, correct the mistake, and move on. Try to do your own research on being respectful with pronouns and other identity-related language to improve your skills.
2. It is okay to ask about pronouns and chosen names. We cannot know a person’s pronouns or chosen name without asking them. If you’re unsure and need to know someone’s pronouns, politely pull them aside and ask, “What pronouns do you use?” or, “By what name would you like me to refer to you?”
3. An individual will often use pronouns that align with their gender identity. Even if the person is not present, use their correct personal pronouns. This shows respect for the person’s identity and will help you to become more confident using them when the person is present. It helps to practice unfamiliar pronouns so that using them in conversation will grow easier and more natural.
4. Respect the privacy of people with LGBTQIA identities. If an individual shares an aspect of their identity with you, avoid sharing that information with anyone else (“outing” them) without the express consent of that individual. “Outing” takes the decision-making out of the individual’s hands, which can be painful, uncomfortable, and unsafe.
5. Be sure to use care when taking attendance. Instructors often read off the official class roster provided by the Registrar’s Office to take attendance. For students who do not go by their legal name, and particularly for transgender students, this practice can be challenging and very uncomfortable. One suggested method for making your classroom more inclusive is providing students with note cards during the first class session. Ask students to write the name they go by, personal pronouns, and any other information they need you to know to be successful in your class. In order to make it easier for you to identify a student, you can have them write the last four digits of their GID as well. This practice is easy to implement, prevents outing, and is a positive way to normalize all gender identities. It is inclusive for students who, for a variety of reasons, use a name other than their legal name.

*This list of best practices was developed under the guidance of the Diversity Awareness Office in 2016 with assistance from a steering committee made up of students and faculty. This list is meant to guide faculty, staff and students in creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment on campus. If you have questions about this list or related issues, please contact the Diversity Awareness Office at [diversityawareness@montana.edu](mailto:diversityawareness@montana.edu) or (406) 994-5801.*

#### **Diversity Awareness Office**

368 Strand Union  
Bozeman, MT 59717  
[www.montana.edu/diversity](http://www.montana.edu/diversity)

Tel 406-994-5801  
Fax 406-994-6889  
[diversityawareness@montana.edu](mailto:diversityawareness@montana.edu)