

**TYES Frontline Workers' Toolkit**

# **SUPPORTING LGBTQI2S+ YOUTH**

**THROUGHOUT THE JOB  
SEARCH PROCESS**





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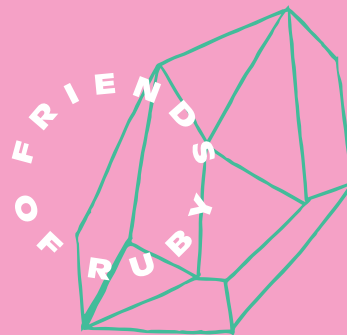
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# FRIENDS OF RUBY



This toolkit was created by **Friends of Ruby (FoR)** in partnership with the **City of Toronto** through the **Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES)**. The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) aims to build resiliency and access to supportive systems for youth most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence and crime (MVP youth). TYES includes 28 recommendations and 110 actions the City of Toronto will take to provide better services and outcomes for vulnerable youth. TYES was adopted unanimously by City Council in February, 2014.

The TYES Creative Report can be found online at: [toronto.ca](http://toronto.ca)

TYES is on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at: [TorontoTYES](#)

**Friends of Ruby** is a registered charity dedicated to the progressive well-being of LGBTQI2S youth (aged 16-29) through mental health services, social services and housing. Its services and programs are run by individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQI2S community, are informed by LGBTQI2S youth and grounded in evidence and research.

The Friends of Ruby Youth Centre (489 Queen St. East) serves over 450 youth per year, is open five days a week and offers

- ◆ Mental health support through crisis appointments, counselling and therapeutic groups.
- ◆ Practical support through case management with education, employment, health, and housing, amongst other areas.
- ◆ A drop-in Space with access to meals, shelter from the cold, TTC tokens, peer support and a variety of different groups where youth can relax and connect with other young people in the community in a positive and inclusive social environment.

**The Friends of Ruby Home** (257 Dundas St. East) is a new transitional house that provides housing, wrap-around support, and mental health services for 33 LGBTQI2S youth. The space was designed, after comprehensive consultation with youth from the LGBTQI2S community, to be a warm and welcoming space that meets the needs of this diverse community and helps each resident on their personal journey of support.

For more information on Friends of Ruby, please visit: [friendsofruby.ca](http://friendsofruby.ca)

Friends of Ruby can be found on Twitter at: [friendsofrubyca](#), Instagram at: [friendsofruby.ca](#) and on Facebook at [friendsofruby.ca](#)

# INTRODUCTION

As a frontline worker you are acutely aware of the challenges youth face when searching for jobs - the fear of being judged, anxiety, frustration and exhaustion. In this toolkit we will discuss in more depth the experiences of LGBTQI2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, inter-sex, two spirit) youth and provide tools and resources to better prepare you to support them.

LGBTQI2S youth face added challenges when searching, securing and maintaining stable employment, including discrimination due to their **gender expression, gender identity** and/or **sexual attraction**. For example, research shows that:

- ◆ 34% of LGBTQI2S people in Canada say they are concerned they will experience discrimination because of their identity when applying for a job .<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ 35% of trans and non-binary employees indicated that they have experienced workplace harassment, compared to 16% of **cisgender** men and 19% of **cisgender** women<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ Thirteen percent of transgender individuals have been fired for being transgender and 15% were fired for reasons they believe were related to their gender identity.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ Individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQI2S community report lower levels of workplace satisfaction, feel they receive less meaningful recognition, are less valued and respected, in comparison to their heterosexual and cisgender peers.<sup>4</sup>

**Cisgender:** used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender Expression:** is how a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behavior and outward appearance such as how someone dresses, wears their hair, if they use makeup, their body languages, and their voice.

**Gender Identity:** refers to an internal sense or awareness that all people have. It can be described as a kind of “man-ness” or “woman-ness” but is not limited to the two and is not binary.

**Sexual Attraction:** refers to a person's physical and/or sexual attraction to others. Sexuality is complex and attraction can manifest very differently for different people. Categories are commonly used to understand our attractions, though are by no means inclusive of the vast variety of expressions that make up human sexuality.

1 Hixson-Vulpe j., Pride at Work Canada, Hiring Across All Spectrums: A Report on Broadening Opportunities for LGBTQ2+ Jobseekers, [https://prideatwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PrideAtWork\\_2018\\_Round\\_FINAL-s.pdf](https://prideatwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PrideAtWork_2018_Round_FINAL-s.pdf)

2 Waite S, Ecker J, Ross LE (2019) A systematic review and thematic synthesis of Canada's LGBTQ2S+ employment, labour market and earnings literature. PLoS ONE 14(10): e0223372. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223372>

3 Waite S, Ecker J, Ross LE (2019) A systematic review and thematic synthesis of Canada's LGBTQ2S+ employment, labour market and earnings literature. PLoS ONE 14(10): e0223372. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223372>

4 Waite S, Ecker J, Ross LE (2019) A systematic review and thematic synthesis of Canada's LGBTQ2S+ employment, labour market and earnings literature. PLoS ONE 14(10): e0223372. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223372>

These experiences are intensified for those who are Black, Indigenous and/or other racialized communities and are already dealing with racial discrimination.

At Friends of Ruby, we have seen first-hand the trauma and mental health consequences that discrimination has on LGBTQI2S youth, including many cases related to the employment process. We firmly believe that frontline workers need to be better prepared to support LGBTQI2S youth by recognizing the specific difficulties they face. We hope this toolkit will support you in your learning journey.

This toolkit is separated into four sections. The first section discusses the unique challenges that LGBTQI2S youth face while searching for a job and in the workplace. The second section highlights tips for frontline workers to better support LGBTQI2S youth when they are looking for employment. The final section provides suggestions for organizations to create a more LGBTQI2S inclusive environment. There are also Appendices which provide additional tools and resources for readers.

This toolkit builds on the six years of experience Friends of Ruby has developed working exclusively with LGBTQI2S youth and was written in consultation with LGBTQI2S youth and professionals.



PHOTO BY COURTNEY COLES ON UNSPLASH





## SECTION 1: EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES FACED BY LGBTQI2S YOUTH

In our experience, LGBTQI2S youth face challenges both before and after finding a job. These difficulties, and the ability to deal with them, vary from youth to youth. As a frontline worker it is important that you are prepared to deal with multiple scenarios and that you also consider the additional complexity brought by intersectionality when working with youth. The list provided here is a starting point.

### CHALLENGES DURING THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

One of the concerns brought up most often by youth about the job application process is the help they need when navigating name changes and pronouns in their applications, resumes and cover letters.

For a youth whose dead name is still found on their legal documentation, it might be a challenge deciding which names to use in an application or resume, and how much explanation to give in a cover letter. They may feel pressured to come out, potentially leading to bias, discrimination or a challenging interaction.

The interview process often brings additional concerns, a youth may not only worry about being misgendered or not asked for their pronouns, but also about what to do if they get misgendered or referred to by the wrong pronoun. They may also experience anxiety about how to dress for an interview, and about how their identity or gender expression will affect their chances of being considered for the job. Youth voice similar concerns about how much to share and how that may affect their employment prospects, for example, how to explain a gap in the resume associated with their transition and/or mental health struggles, or short-term roles associated with negative experiences in the job.

**Pronouns:** are one of the main ways people refer to one another, other than by name. It is a way to acknowledge, affirm, validate, and respect someone's identity. You cannot tell someone's pronouns by just looking at them, and misgendering, intentional or not, is denying someone's personhood.

**Dead name,** birth name or given name all represent the name a person used before they have transitioned. Similar to misgendering by using incorrect pronouns, deadnaming invalidates a person's authentic gender identity.

Although less obvious, LGBTQI2S youth can also face challenges at the time of a job offer such as a fear from advocating for wages and specific health benefits.


## CHALLENGES AT THE WORKPLACE

As youth start a role within a company, they face similar challenges to those from the interview process, but now with a larger audience and longer timeline. Youth might feel anxious about navigating casual conversations with co-workers and the assumptions around pronouns and perceived gender, relationships and the use of the term 'partner'. Even activities that are supposed to motivate such as a workplace family event can be a stressor, as youth will have to weigh the potential consequences of bringing a same-sex partner to the party.

Studies have shown that when faced with feelings of isolation in the workplace, an individual's performance can suffer. Those who feel connected and have close friends at their workplace report having more trust in their colleagues, are more likely to take risks that could lead to innovation, and report feeling less stress and worry throughout the day, which all improve both the mental health of the individual, as well as the productivity of the organization.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the fear youth have around disclosing that they are a member of the LGBTQI2S community is related to past traumas they have experienced in workplaces and throughout their everyday life. However, in some cases, LGBTQI2S youth also have to deal with existing discrimination and **microaggressions** in the workplace. In these cases, a large point of tension is whether youth risk their employment by standing up for themselves when disrespected or discriminated against, or to stay silent, which can have long-term effects on a youth's mental health.

Those that are comfortable being vocal about their sexual orientation or gender identity are not except from facing any challenges, as they might experience having to constantly explain their LGBTQI2S culture and be treated as an 'other' or as the 'diversity expert'.



**microaggressions:** an indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group.

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<sup>5</sup> Mann, A. "Why we need a best friend at work", [www.gallup.com/workplace/236213/why-need-best-friends-work.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/workplace/236213/why-need-best-friends-work.aspx)



These myriads of concerns leave a lot of young people feeling like they must put on a different face at work in order to prevent having these difficult and emotionally exhausting conversations. This might be specially the case when workplaces are not prepared to support specific mental and physical health needs of LGBTQI2S employees, or when they lack strong inclusion practices.

In summary, LGBTQI2S youth face a variety of challenges and areas of concerns when searching for a job and at the workplace. In the following sections we outline how frontline workers can support youth, as well as how organizations can create a more inclusive climate allowing for all employees to feel connected and be productive.

## SECTION 2: SUPPORTING LGBTQI2S YOUTH WITH EMPLOYMENT

As a frontline worker, when you are supporting LGBTQI2S youth with employment, you need to be mindful of both the interaction with you and the interaction with potential and existing employers. That is why this section is separated into three parts. The first part offers suggestions on how to interact with LGBTQI2S youth to create a comfortable and welcoming environment. The second part discusses how to support youth during the job search process, while the third part discusses how to support youth throughout their employment, especially when they encounter uncomfortable and discriminatory situations.

### INTERACTING WITH LGBTQI2S YOUTH

One of the most important things a frontline worker can do to support an LGBTQI2S youth is to be mindful of the way they speak. By providing a service, frontline workers hold the position of power, and without an understanding of the unique challenges LGBTQI2S youth experience, a poorly chosen word, phrase or question can have an exacerbated negative effect on the interaction.

Frontline workers who are not familiar with inclusive language and unaware of their own **unconscious bias** may speak in a way that re-traumatizes or pushes youth away.

**Unconscious Bias:** are social stereotypes or assumptions about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness

It is important to remember that not all LGBTQI2S youth will immediately disclose their gender identity or sexual orientation to you, unless they trust to be in a welcoming space. Disclosing your preferred pronouns in your first interaction can be a good way to highlight that all identities are validated in your organization and opening space for the youth to do the same.

In addition, when working with LGBTQI2S youth, it is important that you:

- ◆ Be aware of the bias you may be bringing when speaking with someone whose identity and situation is different than your own. Make sure these biases are not infringing on your assumptions about the person.
- ◆ Self-censor and ensure that you are speaking in a way that is inclusive and not asking inappropriate questions or making inappropriate comments.
- ◆ Do not ask questions of others that you would not want asked of yourself. This includes invasive questions about personal history and health.
- ◆ Continue to learn and keep yourself informed, your normal is not the only normal – be aware of ‘othering’ people

Remember, it is your job to advocate for youth and to provide a place of understanding and comfort. You can find more further resources on inclusive language and other support in the Appendix B & C.

## SUPPORTING THE JOB PROCESS

There are several ways frontline workers can support LGBTQI2S youth throughout the job process. In this toolkit we focus on providing support with job searching, interviewing, and negotiating a job offer. The tactics and suggestions we highlight below can help you address of the most common issues LGBTQI2S youth face but, as we said before, each case is unique. Appendix D has some of the do's and don'ts laid out in the text in an easy to reference table.

### 1. JOB SEARCHING

Frontline workers can support youth in writing documents (e.g. cover letter, resume, application form) with an awareness of the unique challenges that LGBTQI2S youth face. This includes

having a conversation around pronouns and deadnames and how to incorporate these into the document. You should ask the youth about their level of comfort with disclosing preferred pronouns and names upfront, as well as help youth in find appropriate supports to help alleviate some of these challenges. For example, if a youth is facing a challenge with their legal name on an ID or document, you can support the youth in accessing ID Clinics, like the ones hosted by Friends of Ruby, to help youth go through the process of legally changing their name. It is important that you do not diminish the fear youth may have in navigating legal names and pronouns, and that you do not force youth to use their legal name or incorrect pronouns.

Another critical point to discuss with the youth is how to approach their resume. It is not uncommon for LGBTQI2S youth to have gaps in their job experiences associated with transitioning and/or mental health struggles, or short-term roles associated with negative experiences in the job. In these cases, you can help the youth to create a strategy they are comfortable with when discussing these topics.

You can also proactively connect with potential employers to identify and vet those organizations that are more inclusive and prepared to support LGBTQI2S youth to be successful. This will avoid additional trauma that can result from being at a company with discriminatory policies. Building relationships with employers who are LGBTQI2S-friendly and developing a bank of organizations that can be used when a youth comes looking for opportunities can help smooth the process. We suggest having conversations and networking with Human Resources representatives at these organizations and within the sector to build those relationships.

### Questions to ask when researching an organization:

- 1 How diverse is the company's leadership?
- 2 Is there someone in the organization overseeing diversity, inclusiveness and equity? Is leadership involved?
- 3 What types of practices and trainings do the organization have to support the integration of LGBTQI2S employees?
- 4 Does the organization have benefit practices that are inclusive of LGBTQI2S needs?

PHOTO BY DIMITAR BELCHEV ON UNSPLASH



**Look for organizations that show continued efforts for diversity and inclusion:**

- ◆ Are there statements about diversity and inclusivity on their website?
- ◆ Does the company celebrate diversity and inclusivity and the causes it supports regularly on social media (beyond the occasional post, when timely)?
- ◆ Has the organization published any statement that express discriminatory attitudes?
- ◆ Has the organization been publicly accused of any unfair hiring practices or discriminatory workplace culture?

Finding an employer who checks off these boxes may take some time. Appendix C provides a list of suggested resources to help with your and their search. It may also be beneficial to support youth in getting financial support while they search for a supportive job environment.

## 2. INTERVIEW

Personal contact assessments like interviews, situational exercises, and role plays are commonly stressful, especially for LGBTQI2S youth. These are some of the ways in which you can support LGBTQI2S youth to prepare for the challenges associated with the interviewing process:

**Pronouns and names** – work with the youth to develop a script, or method of introducing themselves using their pronouns and addressing their dead name and chosen name confidently. It is also important to discuss with the youth how to address being misgendered in the interview in a manner that is polite, professional, and informative. These scenarios can be practiced with a mock interview.

**Dress code** – discuss with the youth how to appropriately present themselves for an interview based on the role and organization, while allowing room for individual expression. There is a balance between dressing for an interview in clothing that hides someone's identity and presenting oneself in a professional way allowing for identity and personality to show through. Do not tell youth to dress more "feminine" or "masculine" for an interview, professional clothing is not gendered.

**Process** – each organization has its own interview process varying from panel interviews, 1:1 interviews and tests, or a combination of these. Not knowing what this process will look like can cause increased levels of anxiety and fear in youth. Frontline workers can assist youth in normalizing asking what the interview process will look like beforehand. As well, if possible, keeping a record of the interview process different organizations use, if youth come back and share stories.

**CASE STUDY 1:** Bobbi is a non-binary youth who uses they/them pronouns. During an interview, Bobbi is misgendered as female by the interviewers who keep referring to them as she/her. Bobbi politely corrects them and shares that their pronouns are they/them, and also asks the interviews their pronouns. Right away Bobbi notices a shift in how the interviews are treating them; they seem uncomfortable. The next day Bobbi receives an email stating that they did not get the job. A few days later, Bobbi is talking to their friends about the interview and finds out that this organization has been accused of discriminatory attitudes and conservative views. Bobbi realizes that this is why the interviewers became uncomfortable and why they did not get the job.

- ◆ What are Bobbi's marginalized identities?
- ◆ As a frontline worker, how could you do your job better? Did you research the employer? Did you report your findings to your client? Did you look for LGBTQ friendly jobs?
- ◆ What transphobic behaviours did the interviews display?





### 3. JOB OFFER

When supporting LGBTQI2S youth in the job process it is important to also reflect and address what happens when the youth receive a job offer. As a frontline worker, you can support youth in reviewing and negotiating their offers on the following basis:

**Compensation** – One study shows that gay men had personal incomes that were 12% less than the personal incomes of heterosexual men<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, it is important that you encourage youth to be educated on salary expectations and fair wages for the role they are applying and discuss how to approach a negotiation in a professional way.

**Benefits** – This is the ideal point to review benefits packages to ensure they support the specific needs of LGBTQI2S individuals, for example, recognition of same-sex partners, addressing mental health support, cover specific health needs such as Prep, hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery, as well as consideration for the recovery time for these surgeries.

**Practices** – If these topics have not been approached during the interview, this is another opportunity to check what practices are in place to support the specific needs of LGBTQI2S employees. For example, is staff encouraged to share pronouns? is there a process in place for supporting a transgender staff member who transitions while working at the company? If not, is there development towards building out that policy?



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<sup>6</sup> Waite S, Ecker J, Ross LE (2019) A systematic review and thematic synthesis of Canada's LGBTQ2S+ employment, labour market and earnings literature. PLoS ONE 14(10): e0223372. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223372>

**CASE STUDY 2:** John is a Black transgender youth who migrated from Senegal. He lives in a low-income, single parent household where he has to contribute to the family income. John received a job offer for a full-time position that would provide his family an increased level of financial security. John is worried as he wants to medically transition and is unsure how this new organization would support him on this journey. Would they rescind his offer if he expresses that he is part of the LGBTQI2S community, would they fire him if they found out later that John is transitioning, or are they an inclusive organization that would support his transition through their benefits and policies? He is struggling with how to address this situation as there is a great risk of losing the financial security this job provides. John has 3 days to give a response on whether he is accepting the job or not.

- ◆ What are some of the intersections in John's identity?
- ◆ List the conflicting challenges John is facing.
- ◆ As a frontline worker, how can you best support John in navigating through these conflicting challenges?

## SUPPORTING LGBTQI2S YOUTH AT THE WORK-PLACE AND THROUGHOUT EMPLOYMENT

Youth have also highlighted that they would appreciate having continued support from their frontline worker even after finding and starting employment, as someone who can advocate for them and help them advocate for themselves. This support is especially needed when youth experience uncomfortable situations that may arise when faced with homophobia or transphobia.

The following resources can help support youth in navigating and confronting discrimination in the workplace, and highlights what are employee's legal rights in these situations. These resources are repeated in Appendix C, along with additional resources.

- ◆ Each organization has their own policy, practices and procedures on workplace harassment and workplace violence that should be referred to in these circumstances.
- ◆ **Employment Standards Acts (ESA)** [www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0](http://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0) - Outlines employees' rights and obligations under the Employment Standards Act (ESA). It describes the rules about minimum wage, hours of work limits,

termination of employment, public holidays, pregnancy and parental leave, severance pay, vacation and more.

- ◆ **The Ministry of Labour (MOL)** [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/fs\\_wvh\\_atwork.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/fs_wvh_atwork.php) - Provides information for workers on what to do if being harassed, while outlining employer's duties and what services to get support from.
- ◆ **The Ontario Human Rights Code** - [www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19) This tool supports in understanding the Code, specifically in understanding one's right to freedom from discrimination.
- ◆ **Ontario Human Rights Commission** - [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-summary-fact-sheet](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-summary-fact-sheet) and [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression) - The two facts sheets from the Ontario Human Rights Commission highlight the policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment, and preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression.

On top of suggesting resources, you can support youth in how to address these situations. Frontline workers can help youth develop their communications and conflict resolution skills through mock conversations or by connecting youth with peers who have experienced and responded to similar situations.

**CASE STUDY 3:** Alex has been feeling a lack of control in their life as they have been struggling with expressing their gender identity. Lately Alex has been starting to wear men's clothing and some of their coworkers have noticed. Alex has been harassed and verbally abused by their coworkers as a result. It has gotten to a point where Alex has started to be depressed and anxious at the thought of going to work.

- ◆ What are the various challenges Alex is facing?
- ◆ As a frontline worker, how can you best support Alex in navigating the dress code and gender expression?
- ◆ As a frontline worker, how can you support Alex in dealing with workplace harassment?
- ◆ As a frontline worker, what could you do to address the mental health consequences of this harassment?

**CASE STUDY 4:** Michelle is an intern at a local coffee shop. She works with eight individuals. One of her coworkers, Nadine, who is a Key Holder, during a lunch break said that Laverne Cox looks and behaves like a man. When Michelle tried to educate Nadine on why what she had said was transphobic, Nadine said, “I have been to Pride though?! I can't be transphobic”. Later that day, Michelle's manager informed her of a complaint about her aggressive nature towards Nadine. It was further stated to Michelle that she should be mindful of the culture of the organization and refrain from any further altercations in the future. Michelle is upset and does not know who she can talk to about this situation. She has no clue as to how to navigate micro-aggressions from her coworkers and management as a professional.

- ◆ As a Frontline Worker, how can you support Michelle through this situation?
- ◆ What can Michelle do to educate Nadine and the Coffee shop on transphobia and micro-aggressions?
- ◆ What does the manager mean by the “organization culture” comment?

Tough conversations can lead to organizational change. In the last part of this toolkit we discuss how organizations can create a more LGBTQI2S inclusive climate, and how youth and frontline workers can aid in that.

However, if issues stay unresolved, you can continue to support youth to leave the job or, if not possible, to create coping mechanism until they are able to secure another opportunity. Especially in these cases, it is important to help youth to keep an eye on their mental health.

## SUPPORTING LGBTQI2S MENTAL HEALTH

Frontline workers also need to be aware of and understand the impact that job searching and employment can have on the mental health of LGBTQI2S youth. The fear of being misgendered or discriminated can, at a minimum, increase anxiety and decrease confidence, which in turn can affect their choice

PHOTO BY JAKAYLA TONEY ON UNSPLASH



to apply, their chances to secure a role or their performance in the job. A negative experience can bring back or increase trauma with serious consequences such as self-harm or suicide ideation. Statistics show that 1 in 3 youth who identify as part of the LGBTQI2S community do not have their mental health needs met.<sup>7</sup> These challenges and needs are even higher for those who are also black, indigenous, person of colour, newcomer, or part of other marginalized communities. This implies that frontline workers also need to understand how to empower youth to find resources to care for their mental health.

These 5 ALGEE actions of Basic Mental Health First Aid can help you to support youth who may be experiencing mental health issues or a crisis.<sup>8</sup>

### **ASSESS THE RISK OF SUICIDE AND/OR HARM.**

If you are worried about someone and want to talk to them about it, carefully consider the time and place. Assess for signs of crisis and address the situation accordingly. If you are not prepared to deal with a crisis connect with professional resources, such as Friends of Ruby which has crisis spots for youth.

### **LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGMENT.**

A person experiencing a mental health challenge needs to be able to talk without feeling judged. Listen non-judgmentally and show the person that you care.

### **GIVE REASSURANCE.**

Give the person whatever support you can, whether emotional or practical, and information that can help them understand what they are experiencing.

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<sup>7</sup> Youthline, "We're Here: 2SLGBTQ+ Youth across Ontario Assert Needs and Experiences Summary Report"

<sup>8</sup> Each Mind Matters, "Today is World Mental Health Day, Learn More" [www.eachmindmatters.org/featured-pledges/today-world-mental-health-day-learn/](http://www.eachmindmatters.org/featured-pledges/today-world-mental-health-day-learn/)



## **ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT.**

Encourage the person to speak to their doctor or a mental health professional. Friends of Ruby offers 1:1 counselling specifically for LGBTQI2S youth in-person and through phone, chat, or virtual conference, as well as, supports through therapeutic groups, all by professional who are also members of the LGBTQI2S community.

## **ENCOURAGE OTHER SUPPORTS.**

Encourage the person to use self-help and self-soothing strategies, and to seek support of family, friends, and others.

The most important part is that you are well informed of specific Mental Health resources available for LGBTQI2S youth, such as the services at Friends of Ruby and other community agencies and can help youth identify the best action to address their needs.

# **SECTION 3: ENCOURAGING ORGANIZATIONS TO CREATE AN LGBTQI2S INCLUSIVE CLIMATE**

In Canada, there are already many organizations that are doing their part to be truly welcoming to LGBTQI2S employees, and the first goal will always be to help youth find these opportunities. However, we know that there is still plenty of work to be done.

As a frontline worker you start by attempting to influence those you connect with. Reach out and discuss inclusive employment practices with human resources representatives and recruitment agencies. True inclusion requires continued commitment defined by meaningful and consistent engagement with the LGBTQI2S community and further structural changes.

Robust hiring practices focused on representation at all organizational levels is one of the clearest ways that an organization can show that they foster an inclusive climate.

You can also encourage impactful practices and structural changes, such as, having a committed diversity and inclusion team, leader, committee, forum, and/or Employee Resource Groups (ERG) to provide the space for LGBTQI2S and other marginalized communities' issues in the workplace and a network for these employees to work with their peers to advance the diversity and inclusion projects in the organization. Leadership involvement and support is key for these initiatives to succeed.

Even the best-intentioned allies and LGBTQI2S employees bring their own assumptions into their workplace; therefore, it is important to ensure that the organization and the employees are knowledgeable about LGBTQI2S issues. Consistent trainings, not just on pronoun use, but also on how to remove unconscious bias should be implemented across organizations and included as part of the larger e-learning curriculum.

**Other initiatives that organizations can implement to improve inclusion of LGBTQI2S individuals are:**

- ◆ Ensuring sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are all included in anti-discrimination/harassment policies.
- ◆ Gender neutral language used throughout the organization.
- ◆ Collecting data around gender identity, NOT on sex.
- ◆ Gender neutral washrooms.
- ◆ Benefits packages including coverage for any gender-related surgeries or other LGBTQI2S specific needs.
- ◆ Gender transition guidelines are outlined in policies.
- ◆ Statement on website or job posting citing that an employer is welcoming of applicants who identify as members of the LGBTQI2S community.

It is also imperative that any of these structural or policy changes are informed by relevant LGBTQI2S stakeholders and that these stakeholders are consulted on any changes or educational opportunities.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The following are options that frontline workers use to coach youth on organizational change when they notice that there is room for diversity and inclusion growth in their workplace:

- ◆ Participate in employee engagement surveys.
- ◆ Find someone within the organization with whom you are comfortable expressing concerns, and who can help you to champion these initiatives.
- ◆ Take part or start an Employee Resource Group, or volunteer for committees and/or forums that organize diversity related events and activities.
- ◆ Be a role model. Treat others as you wish to be treated and always be respectful to your coworkers.
- ◆ Find a group of employees with whom you can drive change – any organization will find it difficult to ignore the needs of a group who have united on different diversity elements.<sup>9</sup>

Utilizing some of the suggestions throughout this toolkit, frontline workers can help coach and mentor youth in pioneering some of these initiatives. Working through mock conversations can help build the confidence youth need to start being an active member in their organization.

## CONCLUSION

This toolkit is only a starting point in your learning to better support LGBTQI2S youth. It focuses on the most common challenges and scenarios we encountered at our Youth Services, and we hope it provides you with reflections and tools to use on your day-to-day activities. If you need more support with your learning, or a second set of eyes on a case, please reach out. Friends of Ruby is always available for those supporting the progressive well-being of LGBTQI2S youth. For additional resources, please check out the links and organizations listed in the Appendix C section.

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<sup>9</sup> Pedrelli, R. "10 Ways Employees can Support Diversity and Inclusion", <https://diversityjournal.com/14154-10-ways-employees-can-support-diversity-inclusion/>





# APPENDIX

PHOTO BY JAKAYLA TONEY ON UNSPLASH



## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

**Cis/cisgender:** used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Cis-sexism:** a system of oppression that considers cis people to be superior to trans people. It includes harmful beliefs that it is “normal” to be cis and “abnormal” to be trans. Examples include scrutinizing the genders of trans people more than those of cis people or defining beauty based on how cis people look.

**Dead name, birth name or given name:** all stand for the name that a person used before they have transitioned. Similar to misgendering by using incorrect pronouns, deadnaming invalidates a person’s authentic gender identity.

**Gender Expression:** is how a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behavior and outward appearance such as how someone dresses, wears their hair, if they use makeup, their body languages, and their voice.

**Gender Identity:** refers to an internal sense or awareness that all people have in relation to their gender. It can be described as a kind of “man-ness” or “woman-ness” but is not limited to the two and is not binary.

**Homophobia:** dislike or prejudice against gay people.

**Intersex:** used to describe a person born with reproductive systems, chromosomes and/or hormones that are not easily characterized as “typically” male or female as defined by the medical establishment in society. Typically, intersex people are assigned one sex at birth by their doctors and/or families. Some intersex people identify with their assigned sex, while others do not, and some choose to identify as intersex. Intersex people may or may not identify as non-binary or trans/transgender.

**Microaggression:** an indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group.

**Misgendering:** refer to someone, especially a transgender person, using a word, such as a pronoun or form of address, that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.



**Non-Binary:** used to describe a person who may feel their gender falls somewhere between “man” or “woman”, is both, is neither, or is in flux (i.e. genderqueer, agender, genderfluid).

**Privilege:** unearned power, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities that provide unfair advantage for members of the dominant group(s) in society.

**Pronouns:** are one of the main ways people refer to one another, other than by name. It is a way to acknowledge, affirm, validate, and respect someone’s identity. Common pronouns used by LGBTQI2S individuals include they/them, she/her, he/him, xe, ze. You cannot tell someone’s pronouns by just looking at them, and misgendering, intentional or not, is denying someone’s personhood and is a microaggression.

**Romantic/Emotional Attraction:** refers to the ways that people can experience romantic and emotional attractions which may be separate from or connected to sexual and/or physical attraction. Sexual orientation and romantic orientation are not necessarily distinct identities; they are interrelated.

**Sex Assigned at Birth:** the word assigned is used because doctors will often determine a baby to be either male or female at birth. Doctors assign sex based on characteristics such as chromosomes, hormonal profiles, and genitals. The way these sex characteristics can manifest in individuals’ bodies is diverse and not as definite or binary as the categories of male and female suggest. Therefore, sex is not only assigned by the binary categories of male and female, which are socially constructed.

**Sexual Attraction:** refers to a person’s physical and/or sexual attraction to others. Sexuality is complex and attraction can manifest very differently for different people. Categories are commonly used to understand our attractions, though are by no means inclusive of the vast variety of expressions that make up human sexuality.

**Trans/Transgender:** used to describe a person whose gender identity is different from the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Transmisogyny:** negative attitudes, expressed through cultural hate, individual and state violence, and discrimination directed towards trans women and trans and gender non-conforming people on the feminine end of the gender spectrum.

**Transphobia:** negative attitudes and feelings, aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment, and violence towards trans people or those perceived to be trans. Transphobia is a systematic issue.

**Two-Spirit (or 2-Spirit):** Culturally specific umbrella term used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender, and/or spiritual identity. For some, two-spirit describes a societal and spiritual role in their community: mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies, transcend accepted roles of men and women, and fill a role as an established “middle gender”. This is not the same as trans/transgender, and just because someone is Indigenous and identifies as LGBTQI2S, does not mean they will use the term two-spirit to identify themselves.

**Unconscious Bias:** are social stereotypes or assumptions about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.



## APPENDIX B: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

This appendix is based on the Inclusive Language Training provided to new employees at Friends of Ruby during onboarding. The intention of the training is to instruct individuals on what inclusive language is, the need for inclusive language, and the significance of the words we use and understanding how we can create inclusive spaces.

### GENDER, SEX, AND ATTRACTION:

Using the definitions for gender, sex, and attraction in the glossary, we can understand that gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are fluid and changing. They are also distinct categories that can be related to each other but that don't necessarily have to be. For example, someone's gender identity could be women, but that does not mean they have a feminine gender expression or are attracted to men.

There are two ways that we can look the definitions of gender and attraction and how they manifest into a person. The first way has been through a binary understanding, with two opposing ends of a spectrum. With female/feminine attributes on one end and male/masculine attributes on another, with the understanding that people fall somewhere within those two ends. As you gain a deeper understanding of gender and attraction, you will notice that they really go beyond the binary.

Through exploration, learning and self-discovery you see that gender and sexuality are as vast and diverse as the space itself. Gender identity, expression and sexual and romantic orientations are fluid and ever evolving and changing. Gender is something we have a choice around expressing, considering that this choice may be influenced or limited by, for example, safety. Everyone has a unique story when it comes to exploring assigned sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and romantic orientation, and all of these stories are valid.

Respecting multiple gender expressions means avoiding assumptions about what gender expression says about a person's gender identity – gender identity is internal and not something that you can tell about a person based on their appearance.

## GENDER GRAMMAR:

Language is the most powerful way that we communicate, and the words we use have a strong impact on how others understand us, as well as on their feelings and emotions. Language gives us the power to share how we perceive ourselves, other people and the world around us. It is important to use proper terms and to use them correctly, especially when speaking to or about marginalized folks and identities. Using precise terms can significantly impact and demystify perceptions associated with gender and gender variance.

Here are some examples:

| PROBLEM   | CORRECTION   | REASON  |
|---|--|---|
| "Transgendered"<br>(Adjective)  | Transgender  | One is not "transgendered" by an external influence but is a transgender person, or a trans person. This language can make people feel invalidated. |
| "Intersexed"  | Intersex   | Similar to above, one is not "intersexed" by an external influence but is an intersex person.   |
| "Transgendered" (verb)  | Transition   | One does not "transgender", they transition.  |
| "a transgender"<br>"Transgenderers"                                   | A transgender person, transgender people   | Transgender is not a noun, "Jake is a transgender" is not only grammatically incorrect, but it can also be offensive.                               |
| "sex change" "Sex reassignment surgery" "Gender reassignment surgery" | Gender affirming surgery, genital reconstruction surgery, genital reassignment surgery | Surgery does not change one's gender or sex. <sup>10</sup>  |



<sup>10</sup> Trans Student Educational Resources, "Gender Grammar" <https://transstudent.org/graphics/gendergrammar/>

## PRONOUNS

Other than using our names, pronouns are the main way people refer to us. It is a way to acknowledge, affirm, validate, and respect someone's identity. Using the wrong pronouns is called misgendering, and whether done intentionally or not, is the denial of someone's personhood and a microaggression.

**Here are some tips on using gender specific and gender-neutral pronouns, and how to start a conversation:**

- Listen! Use people's pronouns and respect their name. Do not ask what their "real name" or "birth name" is)
- Introduce yourself with your name and pronouns, ask others what their pronouns are.
- If someone has not shared with you what their pronouns are, use gender-neutral pronouns like they or ze.
- When someone tells you their name and their pronouns, use those pronouns and respect them. If you make a mistake, apologize and correct it immediately.
- Avoid gendering others and avoid using gendered terms to refer to others, i.e. Miss, Mr, Sir Ma'am.
- Use inclusive language and remove binary language from your everyday speech.
  - » folks/everyone vs. ladies and gentlemen/ boys and girls/ 'guys'
  - » All genders vs. men and women
- Practice! If you are having trouble adjusting your vocabulary to be more gender neutral, practice. Ask your friends and others in your life to point out when you make a mistake and hold yourself accountable.

## HOW DO YOU ADDRESS MISGENDERING?

There is no blanket, one size fits all way to handle misgendering, each situation is unique, but here are some useful tips:

- Do not make a big deal when you mess up someone's pronouns. Quickly correct yourself, move on, and do your best to get it right the next time.



- If you notice that someone else is misgendering someone, use your judgement and knowledge of the people involved to decide on how to address the situation. Is this a recurring incident? Is this person likely to correct others themselves? Have they told you that this person can use different pronouns for them? Your choice also depends on what you know of the person's pronouns. When in doubt correct and/or ask privately and respectfully. Other ways to address the misgendering include:
  - » Use the correct pronouns for this person ( assuming you know them) in the conversation.
  - » Some people prefer to correct others themselves – let them!
  - » If the person is present in the conversation, ask them to remind you of their pronouns. This way you can check-in to ensure the pronouns have not changed – maybe they were not misgendered. This does not put any person on the spot and gives the person who was misgendered an opportunity to clarify.
  - » If the person is not present, let the other person know their pronouns.
  - » Follow up with the person who was misgendered when possible/appropriate; ask what they would like you to do in those situations in the future.

## SUPPORTING LGBTQI2S FOLKS

In addition to the pieces above, below are some key pieces to remember to support trans/non-binary/gender expansive and LGBTQI2S folks

- Understand that you cannot tell if someone is trans by just looking at them.
- Unlearn that gender expression = gender identity and that sex = gender
- Remember that trans and gender expansive communities are diverse – there is no singular “trans experience”.
- Be mindful about confidentiality, disclosure, and “outing” them to others.
- Do not ask trans people about their genitals, sex life, surgery status, etc. Respect the words trans people use to describe themselves, their bodies, their experiences, and their identities. Understand that there is no right or wrong way to transition, and this can look different for each person.
- Continue to educate yourself and others; call attention to and challenge transphobia/cissexism when you witness it and have conversations with others.

## APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on Friends of Ruby and how it supports LGBTQI2S youth:

[www.friendsofruby.ca/](http://www.friendsofruby.ca/)

For more support with understanding pronouns: [www.mypronouns.org](http://www.mypronouns.org)

For more information on how to support trans folks: [transstudent.org/about/](http://transstudent.org/about/)

### TO SUPPORT WITH JOB SEARCHING:

#### JOBBOARD.LGBT

[www.jobboard.lgbt](http://www.jobboard.lgbt)

An online employment network where pride is integrated into everyday life. They highlight and work with employers who are dedicated to providing safe and fulfilling experiences to its network of LGBT job seekers.

#### PRIDE AT WORK

[www.prideatwork.ca/about-us](http://www.prideatwork.ca/about-us)

An organization which empowers Canadian employers to celebrate all employees and showcases networking, community and learning events to connect and create inclusive workplaces.

#### CANADA'S LGBT+ CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

[www.cglcc.ca](http://www.cglcc.ca)

Unites and advocates for over 28,000 LGBT+ owned and operated businesses in Canada—membership with them connects users to other businesses and access to webinars, networking and their annual gala and summit.

## CANADA'S TOP 100 BEST EMPLOYERS

[www.canadastop100.com/national/](http://www.canadastop100.com/national/)

The organizations have to go through a lengthy application and vetting process to ensure that they meet a number of different diversity and inclusion benchmarks.

## TO SUPPORT WITH UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE'S RIGHTS:

### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACTS (ESA)

[www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0](http://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0)

Outlines employees' rights and obligations under the Employment Standards Act (ESA). It describes the rules about minimum wage, hours of work limits, termination of employment, public holidays, pregnancy and parental leave, severance pay, vacation and more.

### THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (MOL)

[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/fs\\_wvh\\_atwork.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/fs_wvh_atwork.php)

Provides information for workers on what to do if being harassed, while outlining employer's duties and what services to get support from.

### THE ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

[www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19)

The Human Rights Code supports with interpreting and understanding the freedom from discrimination that is outlined in the code.

### ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

[www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-summary-fact-sheet](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-summary-fact-sheet)

[www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression)

The two facts sheets from the Ontario Human Rights Commission highlight the policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment, and preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression.

## APPENDIX D: DO'S AND DON'TS

| DO'S  | DONT'S  |
|---|---|
| Do ask and use a person's pronouns, and offer your own                        | Don't make assumptions, or speak from a place of bias   |
| Do self-censor and censor others when speaking or acting from a place of bias | Don't ask personal questions that are not relevant to the job search. For examples on topics of personal emotional history and health |
| Do support from a place of compassion, non-judgment and empathy               | Don't 'other' people—your normal is not the only normal   |

### JOB SEARCHING

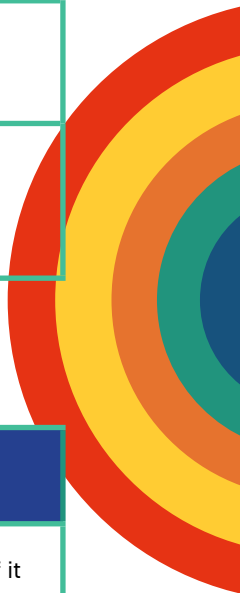
| DO'S   | DONT'S   |
|--|--|
| Do support youth in incorporating their pronouns or chosen names into their applications   | Don't diminish the fear a youth may have about how to navigate their pronouns or chosen name in an application |
| Do research the views of an organization to ensure inclusivity and diversity are practiced | Don't make the youth use their dead name or incorrect pronouns   |
| Do access specific job boards for LGBTQI2S organizations                                   | Don't have youth apply for positions in organizations that present discriminatory attitudes                    |
| Do build a network of LGBTQI2S inclusive organizations                                     |  |

## PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

| DO'S  | DONT'S   |
|---|--|
| Do support youth in using mock interviews to navigate presenting pronouns and chosen names, and how to respond to being misgendered | Don't ask youth to ignore being misgendered in their interview   |
| Do help youth present themselves in a professional way for interviews – clean, well fitted, appropriate clothing                    | Don't tell youth to dress more “feminine” or “masculine” for an interview, professional clothing is not gendered |
| Do support youth in asking about the interview process  |  |
| Do use mock interviews to help youth through the anxiety they may feel  |  |
| Do keep a record of interview processes with different organizations to use to support youth in preparing for an interview          |  |

## NEGOTIATING AN OFFER

| DO'S   | DONT'S  |
|--|---|
| Do support youth in ensuring their compensation is representative  | Don't tell a youth to just take what they are offered if it won't serve their needs |
| Do help youth understand the benefits package and ensure appropriate coverage  |   |
| Do support youth in negotiating their job offer package to better represent their needs  |   |
| Do help youth review organizational practices, if not discussed in the interview, to ensure inclusivity and support of the needs of LGBTQI2S youth |   |





The Frontline Workers' Training Series provides workshops, toolkits and short videos for City and community-based frontline workers on a range of topics designed to increase the capacity of workers to provide impactful services for MVP youth (youth most vulnerable to involvement in violence and crime).

The workshops are coordinated by the City's Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) and delivered in partnership with community agencies.

**Instagram:** [@Youth.Toronto](#) | [@TorontoTYES](#)

**Twitter:** [@YouthToronto](#) | [@TorontoTYES](#)

**Website:** [toronto.ca/youthworkerstraining](https://toronto.ca/youthworkerstraining)

