

## Welcoming and Including Transgender Persons Among Us

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The issues of transgender rights are being address across the nation, not only in the legal cases involving the states of North Carolina and Mississippi. For our own reflection, the following considerations to welcoming transgender persons have been edited from the Unitarian Universalist Association's website (<http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/identity/transgender>) to apply to public institutions and facilities, not only to religious congregations.

### Ways to be More Welcoming and Inclusive:

1. Avoid making assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation.
2. Respect a person's identity and self-label, and respect a person's chosen name and pronouns. Practice offering your own pronouns when you meet new people.
3. Do not assume a trans person wants to speak about trans issues and only trans issues. Engage them in conversation and get to know them as you would anyone. Learn more about transgender identity and gender diversity on your own.
4. Recognize that 'transgender' is not a 'sexual orientation' and educate yourself and others on the distinctions between sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Don't say "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender" if you are only taking about sexuality. Recognize that a person can identify with more than one of those terms.
5. Use terms that encompass all genders rather than only two (e.g., "children" instead of "boys and girls"; "people" instead of "women and men"; "siblings," "kindred," or "brothers and sisters and siblings of all genders" instead of "brothers and sisters").
6. Review your organization's policies and procedures. For example, are gender-exclusive groups inclusive of trans men and women? Do people with non-binary identities have a way to be involved? If you use forms that ask for gender, is that information necessary? If it is, make it an open field if possible, and if not, include the option 'Transgender' as well as a fill-in-the-blank box, and allow people to check more than one box. Look into your organization's policies for youth gatherings, your 'safe space' policies, and more.
7. Talk to people about gender diversity. Provide age-appropriate education around understanding one's gender identity and how gender roles and norms play out in our society.
8. Designate gender neutral bathroom(s) and label all bathrooms in a welcoming way. Make sure your signs throughout your space point the way to all bathroom options.
9. Do continuing education for your organization specifically on transgender issues and gender diversity.
10. Learn about local and federal laws and how to change them if they are not inclusive (e.g., non-discrimination policies around employment, housing, credit, school and college admissions, and public accommodations; name changes; and gender marker changes).