

# BEST PRACTICES

## Big Picture

- Do not make assumptions about an individual's gender
- Treat others as **they** want to be treated
- Consider whether you need to know someone's gender to provide great service
- Assume everyone selects facilities appropriate to their gender

## In Practice

### Greetings

Practice ways to greet and call on people without using a pronoun. (This can be tricky with "sir," "miss," or "ma'am," which many of us were raised to think of as showing the utmost respect. These can be loaded terms for people based on gender identity.) For instance, instead of "ladies" or "guys," try "folks" or "everyone."

- Hello, folks!
- Hi friend!
- Thank you!
- Welcome, everyone!
- Hello, welcome to the library!
- Have a good day!

Also, if you have reason to call on someone or refer to someone you can use non-gendered descriptors. *"The person in the purple shirt needs your assistance."*

### Customer IDs and Accounts

- If you can't identify a customer from their ID photo, avoid calling attention to it. Be discreet and use other identifying info, like a birthday, to verify the account.
- DPL's Integrated Library System, Polaris, does not currently have an option to capture names outside of what's on a customer's ID (but we're exploring this). If that's the case at your library, welcome new card registrants by introducing yourself and asking their name. End with "nice to meet you" and the name the customer gives.
- Polaris defaults to "N/A" for gender and this is not information DPL uses or is required to capture.

### Privacy

- Do not disclose that a customer or coworker is transgender under any circumstances.
- Do not speculate with colleagues about a customer or coworker's gender identity, body, genitalia, or medical history.



## Recovering from Mistakes

If you accidentally call someone by the wrong name or pronouns, simply apologize quickly, move on, and find a way to address the customer properly a few seconds later. Like this:

**Staff:** Hello, sir, may I help with anything?

**Customer:** It's actually not "sir."

**Staff:** Oh, I'm sorry. My name is Karen. What's your name?

**Customer:** My name is Alex.

**Staff:** What can I help you find today, Alex?

## Restrooms

- When giving directions, avoid saying "the women's/men's room is there." Instead, direct folks simply to "restrooms."
- Per the Colorado Anti Discrimination Act, it is illegal in Colorado to discriminate against transgender people who use the restroom that matches their gender identity. People also cannot be asked to "prove" their gender when using a restroom.
- In response to complaints, you might say "people are allowed by Colorado law to use the restroom that matches their gender identity. Is there a behavior taking place that violates library use guidelines?" then follow your library use policies if there is a behavior issue.
- Transgender customers and employees should never be required to use a separate restroom from other people.

## Harassment

- Interrupt transphobic slurs, teasing, or harassment by reminding customers that everyone is welcome at the library. Remember that harassment violates the library use policy, and follow procedures as needed.
- Be visible to and near the targeted person to be available if they feel threatened.
- Approach the targeted person to communicate they are welcome. Use phrases like "can I help you" or "welcome to the library" to indicate they have been seen.
- Redirect attention of people doing the harassing, addressing the behavior if necessary, according to library guidelines.

## Youth

- If a young person discloses they are trans, do not out them to their family or peers. You might be the **only** adult they have trusted to share this with.
- Avoid referring to "girl books" and "boy books." If a customer requests this, ask open-ended questions to clarify what interests their child. If a child does express an interest in reading about characters of a certain gender, try language like "books with girl protagonists" or "books featuring boy characters."
- Maintain personal and professional boundaries. Offer to connect youth with a local or statewide LGBTQIA organizations.

## Welcoming Workplaces

- Use colleagues' names and pronouns correctly. (Practice privately so you're prepared to address them respectfully.)
- Avoid relying on a transgender colleague to educate you about trans issues or to speak for all trans people. Seek out your own learning, starting with the [A to T: Transgender Resources](#) folder.
- For transgender staff transitioning at work, supervisors and HR should work with them to provide support in coming out should they wish to, updating employee records, and educating work groups. Refer to [Valuing Transgender Applicants & Employees](#) to update your practices.
- Keep in mind that trans people often face high levels of verbal or physical harassment and assault. "Outing" a colleague or customer inadvertently by using the wrong name or pronouns is not only disrespectful, it can be a safety hazard.