

# Recommendations for Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Agency

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## Definitions

Gender-inclusive language: while gender neutral language seeks inclusivity by eliminating gendered language (using ‘partner’ instead of ‘husband’ or ‘they’ and ‘survivor’ instead of ‘she’), gender-inclusive language communicates a welcoming environment to an otherwise marginalized group by naming their identities. Example: “People of all genders are survivors of sexual violence.”

## Direct Services

### Recommendations:

- Know your community LGBTQ+ affirming and knowledgeable mental health providers.
- Know your community LGBTQ+ affirming and knowledgeable medical and primary care providers.
- Know your local LGBTQ+ serving agencies.
- Provide outreach to local LGBTQ+ serving agencies.
- Provide training to local LGBTQ+ serving agencies.

### Ideas to explore:

- Crisis and support line advocates introduce themselves to callers along with their pronouns. “Hi, this is Rachel from Sexual Assault Support Center returning your call. I use she and her pronouns.”
- Email signatures to include senders’ pronouns.
- Have a staff member follow all area LGBTQ+ groups and agencies on Facebook and/or Twitter to be kept up-to-date on services and events.

## Prevention Services

### Recommendations:

- Incorporate scenarios and examples that are both gender non-specific and that use gender-inclusive terminology in all prevention programming.
- Include those who don’t identify with either gender within your examples. “Cory has been dating someone for a while who doesn’t respect the fact they don’t want to have sex yet.”

### Ideas to explore:

- Provide outreach for and partner with a local LGBTQ+ youth supporting group to bring consent and healthy sexuality education to their community.



Maine’s sexual assault support centers: Supporting people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

[mecasa.org](http://mecasa.org)



# Support Groups

## Recommendations:

- When advertising or listing gender-specific support groups, include gender inclusive language. For example: “Women’s Healing Group starting September 1st, open to all self-identified women.”
- If you only offer only gender-specific support groups, find out what other agencies or community partners offer knowledgeable and affirming support group services for an LGBTQ+, or more specifically, gender non-conforming survivor. Have that information available with all the other support group information on your website and in your resource manual.
- Include a statement as a part of screening that makes clear that all-identities, orientations, pronouns and names will be honored and respected by the agency, and therefore, group participants. Example: “As you may have read on our website, this group is open to all people who identify as female. This means as a sexual assault support center, if someone says they are female, we believe them, used their preferred pronoun and welcome them into this support group. We require group participants to do the same.”

## Ideas to explore:

- What would it look like for your agency to have a support group that included non-gender conforming survivors? Or an LGBTQ+ support group?
- What training do facilitators need if a group participant’s gender identity is not affirmed by group members?
- What training would support center staff need to facilitate an LGBTQ+ support group?

# Agency materials and space

## Recommendations:

- Include the Safe Space logo on your website, printed materials, office doors, windows, and use it when tabling.
- In addition to gender neutral language, use gender inclusive language on all materials, from print materials to social media outreach.
- Have additional LGBTQ+ specific resources, links and acknowledgment of the community on your website.
- Include gender inclusive language on all internal agency forms. Example: If you need to ask for gender, include: “Transgender” and “Other: \_\_\_\_\_” on your intake form.
- Make gender neutral bathrooms available to clients and community partners. If possible, label a single stall bathroom: “Gender-neutral restroom.”



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