

# Faculty and Staff Guide for Supporting Transgender Students

## **CONTENTS:**

Gender Identity-Related Terminology

Tips for Being an Ally to Transgender People

Campus Gender Inclusive Restrooms

Campus Resources:  
Administrative Departments, Student Organizations & Educational Resources

Campus Card Policies



## Gender Identity-Related Terminology

**Cisgender (or Cis):** A term used by some to describe people who are not transgender. " A more widely understood way to describe people who are not transgender is simply to say *non-transgender people*."

**Cissexism:** Prejudice and discrimination against people who are not cisgender. An example of a cissexist comment would be "Men don't have cervixes or vaginas; women do."

**Cross-dresser:** While anyone may wear clothes associated with a different sex, the term *cross-dresser* is typically used to refer to heterosexual, gay or cisgender men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup, and accessories culturally associated with women. This activity is a form of gender expression, and not done for entertainment purposes. Cross-dressers do not wish to permanently change their sex or live full-time as women. *Replaces the term "transvestite."*

**PLEASE NOTE:** *Transgender women are not cross-dressers or drag queens. Drag queens are men, typically gay men, who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment. Be aware of the differences between transgender women, cross-dressers, and drag queens. Use the term preferred by the individual. Do not use the word "transvestite" at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.*

**Gender:** One's sense of self as masculine or feminine regardless of external genitalia. Gender is often conflated with sex. This is inaccurate because sex refers to bodies and gender refers to personality characteristics.

**Genderqueer:** A term used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for *transgender* or *transsexual* and should only be used if someone self-identifies as genderqueer. The term "gender fluid" may also be used.

**Gender Binary:** The idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

**Gender Identity:** One's self-perceived gender. This can include refusing to label oneself with a gender. Gender identity is also often conflated with sexual orientation, but this is inaccurate. Gender identity does not cause sexual orientation. For example, a masculine woman is not necessarily a lesbian.

**Gender Non-Conforming:** A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. **Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming.** Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional -- that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming. The term is not a synonym for *transgender* or *transsexual* and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming.

**Non-Binary:** An umbrella term used to describe gender experiences, expressions and identities that fall outside of the male/female gender binary.

**Pronouns (Preferred and Auxiliary):** Preferred gender pronouns are those that a person chooses to use for themselves. These include she/her/hers/herself, he/him/his/himself and they/them/their/theirs/themself as well as neopronouns such as ze/hir/hirs/hirself, zie/zir/zirs/zirself and xi/xem/xyr/xyrs/semself. Auxiliary gender pronouns are usually used by people who use neopronouns and serve as a back-up option for people who cannot use the preferred pronouns because their first language isn't English or they have a learning difference.

**Sex:** Refers to a person based on their anatomy (external genitalia, chromosomes, and internal reproductive system). Sex terms are male, female, transsexual, and intersex. Sex is biological, although social views and experiences of sex are cultural.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS):** Refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions, and is only one small part of transition (*see transition* above). Avoid the phrase "sex change operation." Do not refer to someone as being "pre-op" or "post-op." Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries.

**Trans:** Used as shorthand to mean *transgender* or *transsexual* - or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella. Because its meaning is not precise or widely understood, be careful when using it with audiences who may not understand what it means. Avoid unless used in a direct quote or in cases where you can clearly explain the term's meaning in the context of your story.

**Transgender (adj.):** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms – including *transgender*. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.

**Transition:** Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. **Avoid the phrase "sex change."** Transgender and non-binary people may consider transitioning.

**Transgender man/Trans man:** People who were assigned female at birth but identify and live as a man may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten it to trans man. (Note: *trans man*, not "transman.") Some may also use FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male. Some may prefer to simply be called *men*, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

**Transgender woman/Trans woman:** People who were assigned male at birth but identify and live as a woman may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten to trans woman. (Note: *trans woman*, not "transwoman.") Some may also use MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female. Some may prefer to simply be called *women*, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

**Transfeminine:** A term used to describe those who were assigned male at birth but identify as more female than male.

**Transmasculine:** A term used to describe those who were assigned female at birth but identify as more male than female.

**Transsexual (adj.):** An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions (including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries). Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual* is **not** an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer

the word *transgender*. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.

## Tips for being an ally to transgender people

**If someone's gender is ambiguous, resist asking "What are you?" flat out.** Although some people don't mind or even relish it, for many, it's simply intrusive. Instead, try to pick up on the person's identification through context. If you really don't know, and really need to talk about the person in a gendered way, ask "What pronouns do you prefer?" or "How should I refer to you, gender-wise?" (Do this *very politely*, and in private, if you can.) You don't need to know every detail about the person's identity—you only need the information that will allow you to speak to and about them respectfully. Please ask pronouns even if you think you know. Many trans people may look like their gender designated at birth.

**Be aware of what words and phrases are offensive.** Words that you should NEVER use: "tranny", "shemale", "he-she", "shim"...even if your other trans friend told you it was okay. Just don't say it. Don't describe past situations by saying "When [person] was a [gender]..." (ie, "When Mary was a man...").

**Don't make comments about the person's gender presentation that you wouldn't make to someone who was assigned that same gender at birth.** Critiquing a trans woman's makeup in detail, or offering a trans man suggestions on how to walk "like a guy" is as rude as it would be if you were talking to a cis person.

**Don't ask for pre-transition evidence.** If you've met the person after transition, don't ask to see pictures from "before" or ask about their previous name or otherwise quiz them on topics that are likely offensive and/or painful.

**Don't make assumptions about a transgender person's sexual orientation.** Gender identity is different than sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is about who we're attracted to. Gender identity is about our own personal sense of being male or female (or someone outside that binary.) Transgender people can be gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, asexual, pansexual, etc.

**Don't make assumptions about someone's gender identity.** Be careful about referring to someone as "ma'am" or "sir" as you may be incorrect about whether the person self-identifies as female, male or non-binary. Always ask if the person is a stranger or new acquaintance to you.

**If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask.** Be polite and respectful when you ask a person which pronoun they prefer. Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun, apologize quickly and sincerely, then move on. The bigger deal you make out of the situation, the more uncomfortable it is for everyone. (See below for more of an explanation of pronoun.)

**Be careful about confidentiality, disclosure, and "outing."** Some transgender people feel comfortable disclosing their transgender status to others, and some do not. Knowing a transgender person's status is personal information and it is up to them to share it. Do not casually share this information, or "gossip" about a person you know or think is transgender. Not only is this an invasion of privacy, it also can have negative consequences in a world that is very intolerant of gender difference - transgender people can lose jobs, housing, friends, or even their lives upon revelation of their transgender status.

**Avoid backhanded compliments or "helpful" tips.** While you may intend to be supportive, comments like the following can be hurtful or even insulting:

- "I would have never known you were transgender. You look so pretty."
- "You look just like a real woman."

- "He's so attractive; I would have never guessed he was transgender."
- "You're so brave."
- "Have you considered a voice coach?"

**Be patient with a person who is questioning or exploring their gender identity.** A person who is questioning or exploring their gender identity may take some time to find out what identity and/or gender expression is best for them. They might, for example, choose a new name or pronoun, and then decide at a later time to change the name or pronoun again. Do your best to be respectful and use the name and/or pronoun requested.

**Respect the terminology a transgender person uses to describe their identity.** The transgender community uses many different terms to describe their experiences. Respect the term (transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.) a person uses to describe themselves. If a person is not sure of which identity label fits them best, give them the time and space to figure it out for themselves. Don't tell them which term you think they should use. You wouldn't like your identity to be defined by others, so please allow others to define themselves.

**Understand there is no "right" or "wrong" way to transition - and that it is different for every person.** Some transgender people access medical care like hormones and surgery as part of their transition. Some transgender people want their authentic gender identity to be recognized without hormones or surgery. Some transgender people cannot access medical care, hormones, and/or surgery due to lack of financial resources. A transgender identity is not dependent on medical procedures. Just accept that if someone tells you they are transgender - they are.

**Don't ask a transgender person what their "real name" is.** For some transgender people, being associated with their birth name is a tremendous source of anxiety, or it is simply a part of their life they wish to leave behind. Respect the name a transgender person is currently using. If you already know someone's prior name don't share it without the person's explicit permission.

**Don't ask about a transgender person's genitals or surgical status.** It wouldn't be appropriate to ask a non-transgender person about the appearance or status of their genitalia, so it isn't appropriate to ask a transgender person that question either. Likewise, don't ask if a transgender person has had "the surgery" or if they are "pre-op" or "post-op." If a transgender person wants to talk to you about such matters, let them bring it up.

**Don't ask a transgender person how they have sex.** Similar to the questions above about genitalia and surgery - it wouldn't be appropriate to ask a non-transgender person about how they have sex, so the same courtesy should be extended to transgender people.

**Challenge anti-transgender and cissexist remarks or jokes in public spaces - including LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) spaces.** You may hear anti-transgender or cissexist comments from anti-LGBT activists - but you may also hear them from LGB people. Someone may think because they're gay it's ok for them to use certain words or tell jokes about transgender people. It's important to confront the former and educate the latter.

**At meetings, classes and events, set a transgender-inclusive tone.** At a meeting where not everyone is known, consider asking people to introduce themselves with their name and preferred pronouns - for example, "Hi, I'm Nick and I prefer he and him." This sends the message that you are not making assumptions about anyone's gender, and that people are free to self-identify. As the leader, start with yourself and use a serious tone that will hopefully discourage others from dismissing the activity with a joke. Also, in a group setting, identify people by articles of clothing instead of being using gendered

language - for example, the "person in the blue shirt," instead of the "woman in the front." Similarly, "Sir" and "Madam" are best avoided.

**Know your own limits as an ally.** When speaking with a transgender person who may have sought you out for support or guidance, don't be afraid to admit when you don't know something. Volunteer to work with the person to find appropriate resources. It is better to admit you don't know something than to make assumptions or say something that may be incorrect or hurtful.

**Watch your language and use gender neutral language.** NEVER use the word "it" when referring to someone who is transgender, either in their presence or to others when they are not present UNLESS the person expressly uses that language to self-identify. To do so is incredibly insulting and disrespectful. In general, be aware of the gender language you use and the implications of this language. Similarly, it is extremely offensive to refer to transgendered people using pronouns and possessive adjectives that refer to their sex designated at birth (i.e. "he" or "his" for trans women, "she" or "her" to trans men). It is the equivalent of misperceiving or mislabeling anyone's gender. If you are unclear, ask what they prefer or use themselves.

**Do not use quotation marks.** Never put the appropriate pronouns or possessives of transgender people in quotes. Never put their sexual orientations or genitalia in quotes.

### *Final Thoughts....*

Trans people are not freaks. The label of "freakishness" can go either way: people may see it as something repugnant, creepy, or against nature—or they may consider it exotic or especially erotic or radical. But, transness is none of these things. It can't be so easily characterized by that kind of shallow stereotype. It's just "a thing", ie a fact of some people's existence and when you assign it a moral meaning, the actual facts can get lost in the theory. Try to level out your thinking on trans issues, realizing that it's more complex than either an "awful curse" or a "special gift", but just *is*. Some people, individually, will choose to embrace a freak identity. But that has to do with their individual journeys rather than encompassing all of what trans means to everyone else.

# UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN RESOURCES

## Administrative Departments

### **Counseling & Psychological Services**

Sheffield Hall, Ground Level 932-7332

### **Dean of Students Office**

Bartels Hall, Level 4 932-7176

### **Health Services**

Sheffield Hall, Ground Level 932-7079

### **Office of Intercultural Relations**

Bartels Hall, Level 4 932-7427

### **Residential Life Office**

Bixler Hall, 1st Floor 932-7076

## Student Organizations

### **UNH P.R.I.D.E.**

[unhpride@newhaven.edu](mailto:unhpride@newhaven.edu)

We are University of New Haven PRIDE. We are an LGBTQ group on campus looking to hold events and inform students about issues surrounding our community.

### **Mogailize**

[mogailize@newhaven.edu](mailto:mogailize@newhaven.edu)

Our purpose is to create change and promote awareness on campus, and provide a safe space for those on the MOGAI (marginalized orientations, gender identities and intersex) spectrum.

## Educational Resource

### **Safe Zone Training Program**

[www.newhaven.edu/safezone](http://www.newhaven.edu/safezone)

The mission of the University of New Haven Safe Zone Program is to create a safe environment for anyone who is questioning or wishes to celebrate differences in sexuality, sexual identity, and/or gender identity. Through education, outreach, community resources, and identifying allies, we will promote understanding and support to students, faculty, staff and families.

# Campus Card

All students are issued a UNH Campus Card. The card includes the following features: picture ID, 16 digit ISO number, proximity chip, access to online and in-house UNH library services, and optional paid access to dining, vending, and third party vendor services. All students are required to have a current Campus Card and must keep the card with them when on campus to identify themselves as a member of the UNH community. Some events may require ID to be displayed to gain entry. Once issued, the card is valid for four (4) years or until you leave the University. Upon leaving the University the card must be returned.

The UNH ID is for University identification only and cannot be used as a legal identification document.

## Special Requests for a New Campus Card

Students who would like to request a new card due to a change to a Preferred Name and/or a change in appearance should specifically mention this, in writing, that they are obtaining a new ID for this purpose. Interested individuals should contact either the Dean of Students Office (Bartels Student Center 204) or the Office of Intercultural Relations (Bartels Student Center 208) to start the process; they will then be directed to the Campus Card Office (inside the Campus Bookstore) to have their new ID card created. These two offices will maintain a list of campus community members who request new ID cards under this policy.

## What is a Preferred Name?

Some University of New Haven students want to be known by a name which is different from their legal name. Members of our community who wish to be identified by a Preferred Name under this policy can have a new ID printed. Please keep in mind that this option has been developed to specifically respond to the needs of transgender students.

There are certain on-campus offices and situations which require the use of a legal name. They are as follows:

- Financial Aid (including Federal Work Study)
- Student Employment Office (bursary student workers)
- Bursary (including ePay)
- Registrar (for federal documents going to agencies; academic transcripts)
- Health Services (for health insurance)
- Beckerman Recreation Center (for service agreement)
- Campus Police (parking, all “arrest” paperwork, misdemeanor summonses, infraction complaints, and any other paperwork or documentation which must be forwarded to the courts by the Police Department in order to be processed through the legal system)
- Diploma
- I-9 forms
- Bursar

Here is a list of on-campus resources where students are invited to use their Preferred Name:

- Athletics (for non-medical documents)
- Campus Recreation (to sign up and participate in intramurals)
- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Dean of Students Office
- Health Services (to sign in to the office)
- Intercultural Relations
- Residential Life (to sign up for gender-inclusive housing)
- Blackboard Learning Systems