WE ARE ALL GENDER IDENTITIES & SEXUALITIES

The City of Calgary has an inclusive workforce where we celebrate the diversity of all of our employees. Gender, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation are all important aspects of a diverse workforce.

You may be familiar with gender as it relates to male or female. This resource page focuses not on differences between the sexes (men and women) in the workplace, but on differences found in one's gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation. Differences between men and women in the workplace will be explored in a future article.

What does Gender mean?

Depending on the context, the term gender may refer to sex (male or female), gender identity or gender expression. Gender is a broad term that refers to characteristics of femininity and masculinity and defined as the "behaviour, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex".[i] There is a range of gender diversity and sexual orientation within our workforce. Here are a few terms to consider:

Understanding Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is used to describe the direction of attraction for intimate relationships with the other gender (heterosexual), the same gender (homosexual), or two genders (bisexual).

Understanding Gender Identity

Gender identity is someone's sense of place in the socially constructed role of male or female, regardless of physical anatomy.

What is Gender Expression?

Gender expression refers to how an individual manifests a sense of femininity or masculinity through appearance, behaviour, grooming and/or dress. Some definitions of gender expression include:

- Masculine: "having qualities appropriate to or usually associated with a man"[ii]
- Feminine: "characteristic of or appropriate or unique to women"[iii]
- Transgendered: An umbrella term that includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag queens and all whose gender roles are ambiguous. This identification challenges traditional notions of sexuality and gender. Transgendered people may be heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual.
- Transsexual: Refers to those who recognize that their sexual identity conflicts in a fundamental way with the biological sex into which they were born and may have taken measures (i.e. surgery or hormone therapy) to change their physical sexual characteristics.
- Intersex: Defines people who were born with the combination of male and female anatomy. Intersex used to be referred to as "hermaphrodite", however it is more appropriate to use intersex.

Questions in the Workplace

1. Question: Why do I need to know about people's personal lives at work?
   Answer: You do not need to know the details of an employees' or colleagues' personal life. However, feeling able to have an open dialogue with your colleagues about one's weekend or personal life creates an inclusive workplace. For example, most people in heterosexual relationships feel comfortable displaying a photo of their spouse or partner on their desks.

Colleagues in same-sex relationships may not feel as comfortable displaying a picture of their partner for fear of discrimination or ridicule.

2. Question: Aren't people who are gay usually a "white male"?
    Answer: The LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered) community is as diverse as society as a whole. People from all ethnic groups, genders, Aboriginal communities, religions and ages identify as LGBT.

3. Question: What if it's against my religious beliefs and I can't accept the LGBT community?
    Answer: We respect that all individuals in the workplace will have different beliefs, attitudes and religions. Creating an inclusive workplace does not mean changing your beliefs, but instead ensuring that your behaviour is respectful and inclusive.

What is The City of Calgary currently doing?

Organizations and individuals benefit from inclusion. In inclusive workplaces, all employees can spend less effort managing disclosure and mitigating it's impact and focus on their work instead. Employees who do not experience discrimination are more satisfied and committed, which is linked to higher productivity and performance.

The City of Calgary has a diverse workforce that includes many great employees regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Our approach at the City is to foster an inclusive workplace and provide a positive environment that welcomes, supports, respects and values individuals for their differences, perspectives, talents and contributions.

The City of Calgary, as an inclusive organization, aims to:

*   Increase the understanding between all employees regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

In the early 1990's, The City of Calgary was a pioneer in including sexual orientation in its first anti-discrimination policy and in provision of benefits to same sex couples long before this ground became protected under the Alberta Human Rights Act. In addition, the City has developed a Respectful Workplace Policy to demonstrate the commitment to a workplace free of discrimination and harassment of all employees.

Tips for Inclusive Behaviours

Having an awareness and understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity plays a key role in creating an inclusive workplace. Sometimes, we have different biases or perceptions when it comes to gender identity or sexual orientation. So, how do we work on developing inclusive behaviours? Here are a few tips to consider:

Employees and leadership:
*   Treat all employees, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, with respect and understand, practice and be familiar with The City of Calgary's Respectful Workplace Policy.
*   Increase awareness of the impact of employees of different sexual orientations and gender identities through awareness training and education (please refer to some of the website links below).
*   Be aware of including your colleagues in workplace conversations and being open to discussion.
*   Use inclusive language when interacting with your fellow employees and Calgarians accessing our services. For example, when meeting someone for the first time, instead of asking if they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, why not ask them about their partner or spouse?

- Ensure The City's policies and practices contain inclusive language and are free of biases and assumptions.
- Be aware of and understand the Alberta Human Rights Act.
- Report any incidents of sexual harassment or discrimination to your supervisor, manager or Human Resources.

Managers and Supervisors:

- Create a comfortable and inclusive workplace in which all employees feel safe and comfortable in the workplace.
- Play an important role in creating inclusive workplaces by setting the tone for what is accepted and encouraged.
- Enforce zero-tolerance of discrimination or harassment and help connect all employees with organizational programs and policies.

More information?

City of Calgary links:
Employee Family Assistance Program – counseling or online resources available for City employees

Respectful Workplace policy –The City of Calgary's Respectful Workplace policy including appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in the workplace and information for situations of sexual harassment and/or discrimination

Definitions:
Understanding gender – information on gender terminology

Understanding gender and sexual diversity –questions and answers regarding sexual orientation and gender identity

External resources:
Building Pride (Pride at Work Canada) – tips and ideas for LGBT inclusion in the workplace including, employee resource networks

"It Gets Better" - RCMP release a video sharing their stories to help LGBT youth

Information and resources for gender and sexually diverse peoples (PFLAG and Calgary Outlink)

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[i] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gender
[ii] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/masculine
[iii] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminine