

# How to Implement an Inclusive Workplace Pronoun Policy

Everyone deserves to have their whole self respected in their workplace. Challenges to both our physical and behavioral health should be acknowledged.

Given that gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults are more than twice as likely as heterosexual adults to experience a mental health condition, and transgender individuals are nearly four times as likely, it's important for employers to take specific steps to address the behavioral health concerns of the LGBTQ+ community. <sup>1</sup>

## Pronouns Matter

One key action is to implement an inclusive policy for sharing personal pronouns. Such a policy can serve both to contribute to a respectful, welcoming work environment and to raise awareness of the importance of using inclusive language.

**“There is a privilege of appearing in a way that fits both your gender and the pronouns that many people associate with your gender. In other words, if people’s assumptions are correct, never having to name [them] begins to normalize the very process of making assumptions (which for others may be incorrect).” <sup>2</sup>**

Thus, a workplace pronouns policy is a great way to interrupt that process and encourage your employees to communicate respectfully.

## Creating your Pronoun Policy

A pronouns policy can be as simple as encouraging your employees to include their pronouns in their email signatures.

Make it clear that you are not requiring individuals to share their pronouns – because while this is empowering at the community level, forcing someone to identify their pronouns when they are not comfortable doing so can be disrespectful and harmful.

## Remember: Less is More

There's no need to qualify the term “pronouns” with any modifiers. Avoid appending gender, preferred, or anything else. It is also vital for your organization's leadership to model this policy – don't ask your employees to share this information without sharing it yourself. Ideally, as many members of your leadership team that are comfortable would share their pronouns when rolling out your policy.

# Sample Pronoun Policy for Email Signatures

**Subject:** New Optional Pronoun Policy

Dear colleagues,

[ORGANIZATION NAME] is committed to fostering a safe and supportive culture for all employees. To that end, we encourage you to include your personal pronouns in your email signature. Doing so contributes to creating a safe space for your colleagues to share their pronouns and ensures that we can communicate together respectfully.

Please know that this policy is entirely optional; anyone who does not wish to share their pronouns is not required to do so.

Your email signature could look like this [insert your organization's signature template]:

**Jennifer Smith**  
Director of Marketing  
\*She/Her/Hers  
Company Name  
401-123-4566  
www.company.com

\*If you wish to include your pronoun information, please do so here. Examples include he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, and others.

<sup>1</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness, <sup>2</sup> mypronouns.org