

Here are some examples of appropriate signage for gender-inclusive washrooms



# GENDER-INCLUSIVE WASHROOMS IN YOUR WORKPLACE

*A guide for employees and managers*

## What are gender-inclusive washrooms?

Gender-inclusive washrooms are toilet facilities that can be used by someone of any gender. They can be single-user washrooms or multi-stall.

## Why do we need gender-inclusive washrooms?

- Access to washrooms is a basic physical need at the core of human dignity for everyone.
- For trans and gender nonconforming people, using public washrooms can be a source of anxiety and stress. People whose appearance does not conform to what is commonly expected for men or women are frequently subjected to stares, questions, comments, verbal harassment, and physical violence when they try to access washrooms.
- Up to 70% of trans people have experienced some sort of negative reaction when accessing a public bathroom and 57% of trans Ontarians have avoided using public washrooms when they have needed to go for fear of harassment. Avoiding bathroom use can result in health conditions ranging from urinary tract infections to kidney problems.
- Harassment, fear of harassment, and the physical discomfort of not using the toilet when needed, can all disrupt an employee's work.
- Gender-inclusive washrooms do not just benefit trans and gender nonconforming people. They can also make life easier for parents with children of different genders and caregivers of elderly people or people with disabilities whose gender is not the same as their own.
- Several Canadian universities, NGOs, schools, and municipal institutions already offer gender-inclusive washrooms in their buildings.

## What are best practices for instituting gender-inclusive washrooms?

### 1 Educate employees

Develop resources to help employees understand why a single-gender washroom may be converted and how to use gender-inclusive washrooms.

### 3 Make them convenient and accessible

Too often employers will designate the "universal" washroom (a washroom accessible for people with disabilities with a wash basin and one toilet) as the gender-inclusive one. Gender-inclusive washrooms should be accessible to all employees and should not be "hidden away."

While there should be at least one gender-inclusive washroom facility in every workplace, workplaces with more than 200 employees should have an additional one for every 100 employees. These should be available in different areas of the building so they are not a burden trans or gender nonconforming employees whose workspace may be located far from the washrooms.

### 2 Start slow

It is not necessary to convert every washroom to be gender-inclusive initially. Instead, employers should identify a set of washrooms that are convenient and accessible to convert first, or build new washrooms that are gender-inclusive.

### 4 Don't police which washroom employees use

Employees should be able to access and utilize facilities that they are comfortable using and that correspond to their gender identity. For example, requiring a trans or gender nonconforming employee to use the facilities that correspond to the employee's sex assigned at birth, status of medical transition, or to 'prove' their gender identity (by requiring a doctor's letter or identity documents) is not appropriate.\*

It is important to remember that the use of an all-gender washroom is a matter of personal choice and employees should not have to face added harassment when using a gender-specific facility.

\* *Public Service and Procurement Canada's Guide for Supporting Trans Employees*