

FAQ's for LGBTQ+ Job Seekers

Should I out myself in my resume or cover letter?

Outing yourself at any stage of the job search process is a very personal decision; there is not “right” or “wrong” answer. You will need to make a decision that is best for you in this situation based on your own level of comfort and interest in sharing your sexual or gender identity with others as well as the organizational research you have done.

Is it alright to use my preferred name on my resume? On application forms?

A resume is not a legal document, so it is acceptable to use your preferred name on the resume. Some trans and non-trans individuals handle this by listing a first initial, followed by the preferred name, others by identifying the preferred name in quotes, e.g: K. Micah Jones, or : Kelsey “Micah” Jones. If application forms specifically request legal name, this may be used for background checks, and your legal name should be listed. The issue is complex, depending on state and local anti-discrimination policies and it may be helpful to consult with trans-knowledgeable legal resources such as the Transgender Law Project, or GLAD. HRC's current compilation of statewide laws and policies regarding gender identity and anti-discrimination policies may also be useful.

When do I have to use my legal name?

You will need to use your legal name for purposes of background checks, on social security documents and insurance forms. You may use your preferred name on e-mail, phone directory, company identification, etc. Human Resources staff members are bound by confidentiality policies, but there is always some risk of disclosure. If you have taken legal steps to change your name on all documents, you may use your new legal name, and many trans individuals do choose to make this legal name change.

Are some career areas more accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals? Should that guide my career choice?

There are career areas that have a reputation for being more or less accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals, but a quick look at the HRC's Corporate Equality Index illustrates that industries from airlines, to healthcare, to marketing are working to end discrimination based on sexual identity, gender identity, and gender expression. This same holds true for government and other non-profits. Your choice of career area should be based on finding work you love that uses your best skills-that is where you will excel! Successful LGBTQ+ individuals are found in almost all walks of life.

Should I out myself in the interview? How should I present myself if I am transitioning?

In all cases, marketing yourself effectively for the position and professional presentation appropriate to that position are the most important considerations. Dress professionally for the gender you would like to be seen as; this will help guide the interviewers' choice of pronouns. Some choose to dress in a gender neutral manner. You will want to think this through in advance and perhaps talk to your career counselor. A mock interview is a great way to prepare for the interview, whether you wish to out yourself or not. It gives you a chance to prepare for the questions you feel most nervous about, and will help you enter the interview feeling confident and prepared to navigate questions to keep the focus on your experience and skills. This is really what is most important in the interview!

What kinds of research can I do to ascertain climate for LGBTQ+ people in a particular workplace?

There are a number of websites designed specifically to help job seekers find LGBT friendly employers. These include: The HRC Corporate Equality Index, The Gay Financial Network, Tranworkplace.blogspot.com, Transgender Employment, the Transgender Employment Empowerment Initiative, and the Federal Globe. As with all career search however, the best way to conduct research is to review organizational websites, talk to those you know, and get referrals. It is difficult to determine how truly supportive any organization is, but some good indicators to evaluate include: nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, domestic partner policies, diversity education programs, gender neutral bathrooms. State anti-discrimination laws and policies as well as hate crime statistics can also provide good general information about a location.

What considerations are important with regard to health insurance? Can I list my preferred gender on the application process? If not, will that out me?

This is a complex and highly individual question. Due to the gender specific nature of health care, each individual should decide, in consultation with their health care provider, which gender they prefer to use for health care purposes. For example, a female to male individual checking male as gender on health care forms might be denied treatment for ovarian cancer. State and local anti-discrimination laws may also bear on this decision. Privacy regarding the gender marker on insurance coverage is covered by Human Resources confidentiality policies. Trans-savvy doctors and legal counsel can provide helpful guidance.

If I am already employed and planning to transition on the job, how should I navigate this process?

There are a number of excellent resources in place to help employees and Human Resources professionals manage and support a successful transition in the workplace. Transgender Workplace Diversity by Jillian Weiss and the Human Rights Campaign's Workplace Gender Transition Guidelines are useful references for the transitioning employee. Additionally, a number of corporations, including American Airlines, Chevron, and Ernst and Young have guidelines that can serve as a resource. The guiding principle is that the transitioning employee's preferences, rather than one universal set of rules, should guide the process. Human Resources personnel can serve as strong allies and supporters in this process and are often a helpful first point of contact.

What are some good resources about transgender issues in the workplace?

- Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org . Great starting resource for information about transgender issues including employment issues.
- National Center for Transgender Equality: www.transequality.org . National organization devoted to ending discrimination and violence against transgender people through education and advocacy on national issues relevant to trans people.
- Transgender Employment Empowerment Initiative: www.teeisf.org. A collaborative effort of Jewish Vocational Services, the Transgender Law Center and the San Francisco LGBT Community Center to help transgender job seekers find and keep jobs.
- Transgender Law Center: www.transgenderlawcenter.org. Comprehensive resources on transgender law.
- GLAD: www.glad.org. New England's leading legal rights organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status and gender identity and expression.
- Transgender Law and Policy Institute: www.thetaskforce.org. The Transgender Civil Rights project is a leading source for providing legislative, policy and strategy assistance.
- Transgender Workplace Diversity: <http://transworkplace.blogspot.com> . A blog hosted by transgender attorney and consultant Jillian Weiss, providing information for human resource professionals, lawyers, transgender employees and allies on workplace-related issues.
- Out for Work: www.outforwork.org. National career fair and conference for GLBT job seekers, GLBT-friendly employers and workshops featuring education and outreach to addressing the concerns of GLBT college students making the transition from academia to work.
- TG Job Bank: www.tjobbank.com. Job postings from trans-friendly employers organized by industry.