

8 steps to stamp out LGBT discrimination

✘ Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people is nothing new. For years there have been complaints, court cases, and stories in the media that show just how vulnerable the LGBT population is to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

This discrimination affects everything from employment opportunities to housing.

According to [Gallup](#), 4.5% of the adult U.S. population identifies as LGBT or queer. On June 16, 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

This historic ruling means that employers must take action immediately to ensure that employees are safe from discrimination at work. (See "[U.S. Supreme Court bars discrimination against LGBT employees.](#)") Title VII prohibits an employer from discriminating against workers based on protected characteristics for terms and conditions of employment, including hiring, firing, laying off, training, or disciplining.

The number one LGBTQ rights priority

Priority number one - Ensure everyone in your organization understands that you will not tolerate any form of anti-gay discrimination or harassment. Next, you must officially ban discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity in your workplace policies and procedures.

Take these 8 LGBTQ rights steps

Review and revise existing policies

Redefine sex discrimination to include discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and transgender status. Remove language that overtly allows anti-gay discrimination. Revise gender-based dress codes to be inclusive of all employees. Make sure employees know where and how to file discrimination complaints. Provide clear instructions on how to avoid stereotyping.

Communicate the updated policies

Ensure that managers are provided the updated policies and can communicate with employees about them. Updated policies should address any issue of lingering discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Take the time to explain the Supreme Court's ruling and the requirement that all workers are protected from discrimination for color, national origin, race, religion, sex, pregnancy, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status.

Everyone should have a basic understanding of the law, their role in ensuring diversity at work, and unconscious bias.

Unconscious biases are learned stereotypes about certain groups of people that are automatic, unintentional, and ingrained in our beliefs. They can affect our behavior, and if we aren't aware of them, they can cause diversity issues in the workplace. Some ways to overcome unconscious bias are training, exposure to a variety of people, and focusing on people as individuals.

Provide training to ensure that employees understand the company's policies and why discrimination is not acceptable or tolerated.

Inspect workplaces

Thoroughly check all workplaces, including remote facilities, for posters, graffiti, or other materials that contribute to a hostile work environment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Establish gender-neutral bathroom facilities. Give employees their choice of restrooms to use.

Review past complaints

If you previously closed employee complaints based on LGBT or trans status without acting, review those again. If a complaining employee still works for you, consider reopening the claim. Ask if the alleged discrimination or harassment is still occurring; if so, take action.

Review benefits

Ensure that health plans, parental leave, and other coverage do not treat LGBT employees differently from the rest of the employee population. Employers can work with benefit providers to ensure that coverage supports employees regardless of their sexual orientation.

Review hiring processes

While many hiring managers don't think they are actively discriminating, inadvertent and unintentional discrimination can happen.

Unconscious bias can impact hiring the best candidate, inappropriate questions can be asked during interviews, and other Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) rules can be broken that leave the company at risk for a discrimination claim.

Training about unconscious bias can help overcome these challenges. Also, managers can focus on performance-based questions during interviews and avoid items that may focus on protected class areas.

Using standard questions in interviews, taking performance-based notes, and using the same evaluation criteria for all candidates can help eliminate bias in the hiring process. The key here is to train hiring managers and educate them so that they are hiring the best candidate for the job.



Be authentic allies

Diversity and Inclusion allow employees to bring their whole selves to work.

It has been proven time and again that diversity is [good for business](#). Companies representing diverse gender and ethnicity in their staff outperform competitors who don't have diverse teams.

According to [Gartner](#), they have 2.3x higher cash flow per employee and increase sales revenue.

Executives must empower employees and take a hard look at who is seated at the table. Working to eliminate

implicit bias and create environments where people of all races, genders, sexuality, religion, and every other diversity characteristic are free to be their authentic self is the only way to truly allow all employees to thrive.

Additional ways to encourage and support diversity include:

- Ensure that managers are diverse at all levels of the organization.
- Include diversity as part of your business strategy.
- Issue a statement from the CEO or top leaders.
- Encourage a senior executive to sponsor the diversity program.
- Add diversity as a company value and include it in the mission and vision statements.
- Track the promotion rate of diverse employees.
- Tie management incentives to diversity and inclusion support.
- Creating affinity networks or resource groups.
- Use mentoring programs to match employees of all diversity characteristics in mentee relationships.
- Include family-friendly policies and activities that include non-traditional families.
- Creating policies around the use of personal **pronouns**.
- Partner with allies who can educate and inform your policies and processes to protect LGBT and all employees.
- Use diverse images in communications and materials.
- Use inclusive language.
- Consider creating a diversity committee and a diversity officer if you don't already have them in place.
- Encourage diverse perspectives and thinking.
- Celebrate diverse holidays.
- Ensure hiring practices that attract diverse candidates.
- Focus on innovation and creativity.
- Participate in local PRIDE events as a company.
- Go beyond the minimum requirements of compliance with laws to make everyone feel welcome at work.

Continuing Education/Training

While initial training on the subject of LGBT inclusiveness and diversity is essential, it's also critical to maintaining ongoing training for employees. This could include a wide range of media, such as videos, podcasts, or other outreach. By continually engaging your workforce on the importance of diversity, you can ensure that employees can continually grow and be educated on this subject.

It's time to actively practice anti-LGBTQ discrimination

Now is the time to ensure that your workplace is LGBT friendly – and actively practices anti-discrimination.

The time and commitment to improve your workplace for LGBT employees will benefit all employees – and benefit the business. Increased engagement, loyalty, productivity, and happiness can be derived from a more accepting and inclusive workplace. Diversity and Inclusion can no longer be a talking point but must be backed up with real action and protection built into every company's culture.

Note: Title VII covers employers with 15 or more workers. However, 22 states prohibit sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination for employers of all sizes. Find a map with links to state laws at www.hrc.org/state-maps/employment. More than 200 cities and towns have similar laws.