

Work & Inclusion

Including LGBTQ2SIA+ members in the life of our union



We know that people who are visibly gender-nonconforming or transgender are likely to be harassed at work. LGBTQ2SIA+ people are less likely to apply for high-paying jobs in mining and manufacturing because of the fear of a hostile workplace, everything from eye-rolling and social exclusion to outright harassment. Work stress and poor mental health result from discrimination and from having to conceal their true selves at work.

Even those in unionized workplaces have a hard time. Recent academic research (usw.to/42B) shows that less than half of unionized LGBTQ2SIA+ workers felt supported by their unions. They also experience higher rates of poor mental health (anxiety and depression due to stigma, harassment and isolation). Workplaces can either compound the problem or alleviate it.

One thing that can make a difference is having supportive staff and local union leaders who know how to be good allies.

LGBTQ2SIA+=
lesbian • gay
bisexual • trans
queer • two-spirited
intersex • asexual

Here are some actions staff reps and local union leaders can take to increase safety and be allies:

- ✔ **Be familiar** with the resources on our union's website: usw.ca/humanrights and on your district web page. Share the resources with others.
- ✔ **Say things** to make it clear that LGBTQ2SIA+ members are welcome in the local union.
- ✔ **Speak out** against all forms of harassment and discrimination. Listen when members come with concerns about how they're being treated by co-workers or managers.
- ✔ **Bargain** good collective agreement language, such as access to gender-neutral washrooms and other hygiene facilities, dress codes that allow for a range of expression, leave and benefits coverage for members transitioning gender, and leaves that allow LGBTQ2SIA+ to seek care for mental and physical health issues related to facing harassment and discrimination.
- ✔ **Enforce** USW's anti-harassment and anti-violence policy. Read out the policy summary or Yellow Sheet at the start of every union event.
- ✔ **Ensure** the employers accommodate mental health and medical leaves, enforce and improve anti-discrimination policies, hold diversity/awareness trainings, and intervene when customers or co-workers harass. Follow up to make sure they're doing what they say they will do.
- ✔ **Ask** for LGBTQ2SIA+-specific education and training for your local union.
- ✔ **Support** local union Human Rights and Pride Committees; sponsor social events that bring LGBTQ2SIA+ members together.
- ✔ **Take part** in LGBTQ2SIA+ events in the community, both as an individual and as a USW representative.
- ✔ **Educate** the membership about respecting pronouns and chosen names.
- ✔ **Check yourself** for unconscious bias. Do you avoid communicating with LGBTQ2SIA+ members? Do you listen less carefully to their concerns and grievances? Do you let slide inappropriate comments and behaviour at union activities or do you challenge it?



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