

THIS DOCUMENT WAS DEVELOPED BY HOPE JUBENVILL -
LGBTQ+ PROJECT LEAD WITH THE EFCL

The Importance of Preferred Names and Preferred Pronouns

What are Preferred Names and Pronouns?

Simply put someone's preferred pronouns are pronouns they have chosen for themselves. Examples of preferred pronouns would be he/him, she/her, and they/them. A reason why someone may have preferred pronouns is that their gender identity may not align with their assigned gender identity.

Preferred names are similar, with a preferred name being a name a person has chosen themselves to be referred to as. A person's preferred name and/or pronouns may not be the same as their legal ones and that is totally ok. They should be referred to as what they prefer.

Why is it Important to Use Them?

It's about respect for someone's gender identity, through the use of them or by asking for them. By not using them, it makes an individual feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric text

It's a matter of oppression as it is a privilege to not worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based what gender they think you are. By having this privilege and still failing to respect someone's gender identity through the use of their preferences, this becomes oppressive.

It's a matter of health as by not using them, it can lead to an increased risk of mental illness/poor mental health and social isolation. By not using someone's preferred pronouns or name this can unequivocally damage interpersonal relationships and the trust that exists between people.

What If You Don't Know What They Prefer or If You Mess Up?

If you don't know someone's pronouns, the best course of action is to simply ask them or refer to them with gender neutral pronouns. If you slip up that's ok, it happens.

The correct course of action is to apologize quickly, sincerely, privately and then to move on. There is no need for a large very public apology and often times doing this creates discomfort for the person. The important part is the commitment to trying to improve and actually improving