

Safe and Inclusive Physical Spaces*

* Used and modified with permission by AHS Human Resources from the *Guide To Creating Safe and Welcoming Places for Sexual & Gender Diverse (LGBTQ*) People* (2016)

The physical environment says much about whether the space is welcoming and inclusive. Scan the environment from the perspective of a new patient/client, family or staff. Some things to consider include:

- Are “AHS Respect in the Workplace” posters displayed prominently in a place that is visible to staff, patients and families?
- Are AHS Patient Concerns / Feedback posters prominently displayed in a place that is visible to staff, patients and families?
- Do cafeterias, lunchrooms, waiting rooms, hallways, washrooms, administrative spaces and clinical spaces reflect sexual and gender diversity? What images are displayed in brochures?
- Do the magazines you have in breakrooms or waiting areas reflect the diversity of the staff, volunteers, patients and families who are part of our health care environment?
- If your environment is an inclusive space, consider displaying welcoming symbols (i.e. rainbow stickers) in places visible to patients, families and staff.

Washrooms & Change Rooms

Washrooms and change rooms are a place of significant anxiety, harassment and violence for many people who identify as transgender, gender diverse or others who do not “fit” what society says a man or woman should like. Everyone deserves equal access to such facilities without fear of violence or harassment. Being able to use a washroom or change room that corresponds with one’s gender identity is a right protected under Alberta’s Human Rights Act.

Inclusive (Universal, All gender, Gender Neutral) Washrooms

Not everyone will feel safe or comfortable in segregated facilities. Wherever possible, single stall, private washrooms can be identified as “inclusive” by using a sign similar to:

*Note: This sign is pending approval by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Health Care Wayfinding Standards Committee as the standard for inclusive washroom signs in health centres in Canada.



Inclusive washrooms should be available for use:

- by anyone who may not feel comfortable nor safe using washrooms segregated by gender
- by families of mixed gender (e.g., fathers and their daughters, mothers and their sons)
- by people with caregivers or personal attendants who are a different gender

Where did the “stick man and triangle woman” icons go?

- Not all people identify entirely as one gender or the other. Some people identify as both, some identify as neither.
- The focus of the sign should be what services are provided in a washroom / change room, not the identity of the person using it.

Whether an “inclusive” washroom has been identified or not, it is still the protected legal right of a person to use a segregated facility that corresponds with their gender identity.