

Pronouns, 2SLGBTQQIA+ & Health Care Leading Practice Guide



Shared health
Soins communs
Manitoba

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Our Shared Responsibility

For many, access to health care has historically been and – in many ways still is- marked with systemic and discriminatory obstacles.

Reports of Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, heterosexism and ableism are unfortunately, not uncommon. These issues and experiences can make it more difficult for patients to build relationships based on trust and confidence with health care providers, and for health care workers to build similar relations with coworkers and patients. We are committed to working toward an environment that disrupts hateful and harmful behaviours and creates a more inclusive reality.

Respect for every individual, accountability, value and continuous improvement and learning are four pillars guiding Manitoba's [Quality and Learning Framework](#). This foundation informs our organization's approach to a coordinated, client-centered and provincial commitment to culturally safe care.

A deep and ongoing commitment to this framework and its principles are key to creating a health care environment that is free of judgement, equally safe and inclusive. When our colleagues, patients and community feel safe and respected it improves quality of care, experience, and, ultimately, patient outcome.

What does 2SLGBTQQIA+ stand for?

As Shared Health continues to grow and evolve, so does our need to remain reflective of the communities we serve including the language and acronyms we use to describe our patient populations and members of our workforce. We remain committed to improving our health care system, by learning and adapting in new ways to provide an environment that is free of judgement, equally safe and inclusive.

Ensuring our language is consistent with how patient communities identify themselves is an important part of this. That's why we update and review our resources and materials regularly to better reflect and align with our 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. The acronym **2SLGBTQQIA+** represents those who are two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and all other sexual orientations and genders.

We know that language is fluid and is continuously redefined over time. These terms and acronyms may be used differently by individuals in various ways depending on how they identify and the context. People will also have different understandings of their identity and it is up to individuals to decide what their identity means to them. If you are unsure of how someone identifies, asking which pronouns they use is respectful and good practice.

2SLGBTQQIA+ is an acronym for variety of individuals who are sexual and/or gender minorities.

Two-Spirit (2S)	A term to describe Indigenous people who are sexual and/or gender minorities. The term is inclusive of those who 'walk between two genders' or 'carry two spirits' and in the culture is often thought of as a gift. The term Two-Spirit was established in 1990, at a conference in Manitoba and is an English term to describe an identity that existed prior to colonization. Note: not all Indigenous people feel comfortable with identifying as two-spirit.
Lesbian	A person who is primarily attracted to people of their same gender. Typically, a woman who is attracted to other women.
Gay	A person who is primarily attracted to people of their same gender. This term may be used by other sexual and gender minorities.
Bisexual	A person who is attracted to more than one gender. Commonly referred to as bi.
Transgender	An umbrella term to describe people whose assigned sex at birth does not match the gender they know themselves to be.
Queer	An umbrella term for those who identify with different kinds of sexual orientations as well as another term for the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. Once used in a derogatory way, it is being reclaimed by some to reject definitions of identities that do not fit their experience. Note: not all sexual and gender minority people feel comfortable with using queer.
Questioning	Someone who may be unsure and or exploring their sexuality or gender identity.

Intersex	Intersex people have innate sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies, and that create risks or experiences of stigma, discrimination and harm. Source: Intersex Human Rights Australia
Asexual	A person of any gender or sexual orientation who experiences little, or no, sexual attraction to others. They may still experience other forms of attraction.
Plus (+)	The plus sign includes those who don't see themselves in the umbrella acronym and identify with another term such as pansexual or gender-free.

Please note, there are many more identities. This is not an exhaustive list.

While it is useful to have a sense of these words and their current definitions, we know that language shifts, is redefined and refined over-time. Further, people will have different understandings of their identity and it is up to individuals to decide what their identity means to them. For more information about 2SLGBTQQIA+ language and definitions: [The 2SLGBTQ+ Language Card](#)

Sex, Gender, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation

Many people confuse and misuse the words gender and sex. These terms have different meanings and should not be used interchangeably. **Everyone has a sex, a gender, gender identity, and a sexual orientation.** When providing care, it is important to understand these differences and use appropriate terms to ensure a safe and welcoming environment.

Sex, Gender, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation	
<p>Sex: This is our body and biology. At birth we are all <u>assigned</u> a sex based on genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, organs etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female • Intersex – people who have innate sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies.
<p>Gender: Socially constructed characteristics of stereotypes within society.</p>	<p>Behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, etc. These social constructs vary between cultures and may change over time.</p>
<p>Gender Identity: Our innate sense of self. It is us knowing who we are, whether that's being a woman, transgender, man, or something else.</p>	<p>Woman, Man, Trans, Two-Spirit, Non-Binary*, Queer, Genderqueer*, Cisgender, etc.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation: This is our attractions and desires to other people. These can be physical, sexual, romantic, and emotional.</p>	<p>Lesbian, Gay, Queer, Two-Spirit, Straight, etc.</p>

*Non-Binary or genderqueer is an umbrella term for gender identities that are neither male nor female—identities that are outside the gender binary.

Pronouns and their appropriate use

Pronouns are used every day, in both speech and writing, to take the place of people's names. We frequently use them without thinking about it. Often, when speaking of someone in the third person, pronouns imply a gender.

Such “gender pronouns” may not be accurate as some people are non-binary or genderqueer, and their pronouns are not necessarily meant to express any gender. **Using someone's correct pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their identity.** Mistaking or assuming peoples' pronouns, without asking first, can send a harmful message.

Asking which pronouns people use is good practice. When asking, it's important to be respectful and not draw attention to the question in front of others. For example, asking “can you tell me what pronouns you use?” is a great option. Should someone take offense to the question, let them know this is something you ask to help them feel comfortable. If you do use the wrong pronouns, apologize quickly, use the correct pronouns, and move on.

Pronouns are consistent with how someone <u>identifies</u>	
For people who identify as a man, whether that's a transgender man, cisgender* man, or FTM (female to male)	Use He/Him/His
For people who identify as a woman, whether that's a transgender woman, cisgender* woman, MTF (male to female)	Use She/Her/Hers
For people who do not identify as a woman or man, they will likely use a gender-neutral pronoun	e.g. They/Them, Xe, Ze/Zir, Hir

*cisgender – denoting or relating to a person whose sense of identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex. For more information please reference: [The 2SLGBTQ+ Language Card](#)

Why are pronouns important?

Similar to using a person's name, pronouns address others in a way that affirms their identity. Using pronouns in the place of someone's name is supportive way to validate their gender identity and acts as **a sign of respect**.

Asking and identifying which pronouns people use is respectful and supports quality, patient-centered health services. Self-identifying your pronouns and including them in emails and other written correspondences helps normalize the use of pronouns for everyone.

Leading Practices for Care Providers

In health care, sexual and gender minorities can experience a variety of disparities due to experiences with oppression and homo/transphobia.

This discrimination can cause sexual and gender minorities to experience increased stress and anxiety when accessing health care and often results in decreased health seeking behaviours and increased risk for disease.

By incorporating greater understanding and more inclusive language into our day-to-day practices we can create a more welcoming environment for care.

The collection of sex/gender identity information is an important component of client information gathering, establishing necessary medical information for the delivery of safe, appropriate care or the interpretation of results.

When approaching a client to gather their personal health information, the request for their sex/gender identity may involve a sensitive conversation. It is often helpful to explain why you are asking specific questions. Clarify that this information is important for the care or service you will be providing. Clients may also identify an alternative name and correct pronouns. Use their correct pronouns and name throughout the appointment. If you accidentally make a mistake, simply acknowledge it, adjust your references going forward and move on.

Ensuring you are comfortable navigating these sensitive discussions with your clients respectfully will allow you to maintain a safe and inclusive environment while gathering information that is necessary for care.

Script Support

Please refer to the following scripts for support in these conversations. Note that the language highlighted below has been determined as the most appropriate and respectful phrasing and should not be altered.

Begin with an explanation of the information you require, followed by the ask for information.

Explain - “The care/service you will receive today requires me to confirm some personal health information, including your sex and gender identity so that we can ensure you are provided with safe, appropriate care. While this information may not be the terminology you use to identify yourself, it is important that I ask so that we can provide you with safe and appropriate care.”

Ask - “What was the sex you were assigned at birth?” (Record)

For diagnostic imaging where confirmation of reproductive organs may be necessary, please use the following:

Explain - “The care you will receive today requires me to confirm some personal health information, including your sex and gender identity so that we can ensure you are provided with safe, appropriate care. This may include disclosure of your reproductive organs.”

Ask – “Can you tell me what reproductive organs you have?”

In all circumstances, your clients may offer – or you may ask – their correct name and pronouns. To ask for a client’s correct pronoun, ask - “What are your pronouns?”.

As care providers we have a responsibility to provide all individuals we serve with compassionate, equitable and professional care. The following is a brief overview for leading practices. By using appropriate language in our day-to-day practices, we can empower our clients and create welcoming spaces for all.

Leading Practices for Care Providers

Language	<p>Mirror language: Use the words people use for themselves to describe their identity and their experiences</p> <p>Respect pronouns: The use of correct pronouns creates a respectful and trusting environment.</p> <p>Use inclusive language: Avoid gendered language i.e. use folks instead of guys/ladies, partner instead of husband/wife</p> <p>Be aware that people might experience discomfort when talking about bodies/body parts i.e. not everyone is okay with using the word breast to describe the chest area: ask people what words they use to describe their body.</p>
Empowering	<p>Let clients decide what is best for them. Not all clients will be able to self-advocate or feel comfortable with discussing their sexual and gender identities. Give them the opportunity to decide what information they would like to share.</p> <p>Negotiate disclosure: ensure client approves of sharing personal information with others before disclosing.</p>
Creating welcoming spaces	<p>Become an ally. Creating welcoming spaces is an intentional act.</p> <p>Avoid assumptions. Gender expression does not always equate to their identity. Acknowledge mistakes.</p> <p>Call out oppressive/offensive behavior/comments.</p> <p>Visit sharedhealth.mb.ca/community for more information.</p>

Pronoun use in email signatures

Including your pronouns in email and other written correspondences helps normalize the use of pronouns for everyone. We encourage staff to add their pronouns to their email signature. This simple act allows you to best represent yourself, avoiding assumptions and demonstrates allyship.

Here is an example of how you can format your email signature:

Jane Doe

**Title | Insert specific department if required | Corporate Services
Shared Health**

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers (Why do I share my pronouns? Read why [here.](#))

123 Anywhere Street, Winnipeg MB XXX XXX

Email: JDoe@email.ca | Phone: 204-926-8005

Web: www.sharedhealthmb.ca

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Planned absence: December 22 through January 4

Resources

Below are some incredible (local) community organizations dedicated to empowering our 2SLGBTQQA+ community and educating others on how to better support as allies.

- [Rainbow Resource Centre](#)
- [Klinik Community Health](#)
- [Sexuality Education Resource Centre](#)
- [SERC 2STLGBQ+ Program \(Serving the Brandon and the PMH Region\)](#)
- [Nine Circles](#)
- [Sunshine House](#)
- [Teen Talk](#)

Manitoba's health system is undergoing a transformation and we are on this journey together. Our vision is to create a safe and supportive work environment and safe and equal health care for all Manitobans.

References

This document was created with help from The University of Manitoba Faculty of Health Sciences *My Personal Pronouns – RFHS Resource Guide* and the Alberta Health Services Best Practice Guide: People’s Pronouns, <https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/>