



J-FLAG

EMPLOYERS' SAFE SPACE HANDBOOK

A happy employee means a profitable
and sustainable workplace





Credits



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Message from our Director of Strategy and Impact

Gainful employment is oftentimes the singular means by which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people are able to earn a living, acquire housing and create their own safe spaces within a society that has homophobia as a dominant value. Discrimination and intolerance in the workspace continue to be a significant challenge for many members of the LGBT community in Jamaica. While our research and engagement with members of the community has shown that there are emerging safe and inclusive work spaces, this is not a universal truth.

Research has demonstrated that intolerance in the workspace has a significant impact on productivity and can lead to high turnover rates as LGBTQ+ Jamaicans search for workspaces where they can thrive. An employee that feels valued and respected is more likely to work assiduously to achieve the goals of their organization. Intolerance in the workplace may have an immediate negative effect on the individual but has a long term effect on companies who will have to expend more resources on training as LGBT employees leave for safer workspaces.

Discrimination and intolerance create a barrier for LGBTQ+ persons to be able to live their best lives and stifles their contribution. It frustrates their human right to work and to just and favorable conditions of work. It negatively impacts productivity and, in the end, harms an organization. This guide is meant to help you remove that barrier so that your company can retain the best and brightest and, in the long run, achieve success.

Glenroy Murray,
Director of Strategy and Impact



What is a Safe Space?



This is a physical space where members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer community (LGBTQ+) are empowered, affirmed and feel safe to be their true selves. In this space, support and understanding are key acts of tolerance. Discrimination of any kind is strongly discouraged.

Why are Safe Spaces necessary in the Jamaican Workplace?

As noted in a series of focus groups held in August 2019 with thirty-four (34) LGBTQ+ Jamaicans, many LGBTQ+ persons found their work environments to be unwelcoming and even hostile. In addition, a 2019 Needs Assessment conducted with 301 LGBT persons revealed that one-in-three have had negative experiences due to their LGBTQ+ identity. LGBTQ+ employees whose emotional and physical safety is at risk can experience fear and anxiety, isolation and invisibility, fear of disclosure, and high levels of stress.

In turn, these experiences can interfere with high levels of professional achievement and personal development. Inhospitable workplace settings may also contribute to attrition and high turnover rates among promising employees who fear an oppressive environment. In fact, several studies have identified a demonstrable link between tolerance and inclusion in the workplace and high overall performance

by companies, as noted in the Caribbean Policy Research Institute's 2019 study. Unfortunately, as a result of the low levels on employment in Jamaica, most LGBTQ+ employees experience unfair treatment and sometimes physical and sexual abuse from other employees and employers in silence in an effort to maintain employment.

We all learn discriminatory, homophobic, and transphobic beliefs. We did not ask to be taught them. While we now have the opportunity to take responsibility for them, it is not our fault that we learned them. By educating ourselves and others, we move towards ending homophobia and creating a celebratory and diverse community.

You can be the change and the exception!



Your Role and Responsibilities in Safe Spaces

As an employer, these are some easy things you can do to create a safe space:

- 1 Provide support, information and referral to individuals who may approach you.
- 2 Respect your employee's need for privacy and confidentiality.
- 3 Prominently display a Safe Space decal or sign in in your workplace. This can be something as simple as a rainbow or equal sign sticker in shared spaces such as bathrooms or lunchrooms.
- 4 Create an environment and welcome individuals to talk with you openly about being LGBTQ+.
- 5 Empower human resource personnel with the appropriate trainings and materials to build their capacity to have and discuss sensitive issues.
- 6 Listen attentively, participate in the conversation, and respect their values and decisions.
- 7 Encourage employees to ask and respect pronouns when they are stated to you.
- 8 Actively address concerns of inappropriate materials, language, jokes and incidents that negatively impact LGBTQ+ employees.
- 9 Encourage those who have experienced or witnessed acts of bias, intolerance and discrimination, in the workplace to report those experiences so they can be addressed.
- 10 Only use language and references in conversation that are inclusive and appropriate and not potentially offensive to LGBTQ+ individuals.



How Can Employers Challenge Negative Thinking and Actions regarding LGBTQ Jamaicans?

Awareness

It is important to understand that the Jamaica labour force is very much diverse, which means, the chances of you hiring someone who is of a different sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, socio-economic background, disabled or otherwise, are high. It is, therefore, paramount that you become aware of the your real or perceived biases and other harmful behaviours when hiring. It will be necessary for you to become aware of LGBTQ+ related issues, such as language, so you are able to relate to, and create a more inclusive workplace.

Strategies to do this include:

- ❖ Conversations with LGBTQ+ community members.
- ❖ Attending awareness-building workshops.
- ❖ Reading about LGBTQ+ culture.
- ❖ Self-examination and reflection

Capacity Building

Nobody has a PhD in LGBTQ+ language and culture, this is something you continue to learn over time. As an employer,

it is critical that you begin to acquire knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity, and what the experiences for LGBTQ+ Jamaicans are. Here is a quick summary based on past surveys and engagements.

You can better support your LGBTQ+ employees by...

- ❖ Learning about laws, policies, and practices, and how they affect LGBTQ+ Jamaicans.
- ❖ Educating yourself about LGBTQ+ lived experiences.
- ❖ Reaching out to LGBTQ+ organizations for help and other information.
- ❖ All this can be done by simply arranging lunch and learn sessions or workshops with JFLAG or other individuals who are specialists in the field.

Action

Action is, without a doubt, the only way we can affect change in society as a whole. If you keep your awareness and knowledge to yourself, you are in danger of becoming counteractive to all of the work you have done towards safer workspaces. Simple gestures like remembering an employee's pronouns shows that you care and value them as a person and a contributor to your company.



Laws and Policies

There are currently no laws which explicitly outlaw sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in the private sector. Section 12 of the Labour Relations and Industrial Disputes Act allows for employees who are unjustifiably dismissed to bring a case before the Industrial Disputes Tribunal. This may potentially address sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination but that is not enough to address all the ways LGBTQ+ experience intolerance and discrimination in the workplace.

As no government policy requires the private sector to implement workplace inclusion policies, it is left up to employers to do the necessary work to create a safe space for their employees. This includes creating a system of reporting cases of discrimination, harassment and abuse, as well as redress that can be tailored according to the situation.

Strategies for enabling a more inclusive working environment

- ❖ Respect your employee's privacy, especially if they disclose their gender/sexual identity.
- ❖ Use employee's stated gender pronouns. You can't always know someone's pronouns based on looking at them. Asking what pronouns they use demonstrates a level of respect for their gender identity more generally.
- ❖ Include a workplace inclusion policy and explicitly mention sexual orientation and gender identity.
- ❖ Enforce your workplace inclusion policy.
- ❖ Include material and topics related to LGBTQ+ individuals in your trainings and meetings.
- ❖ Confront, and don't passively condone, biased phrases, or homophobic and intolerant slurs.



Why is it Important to **Respect** your Employee's Pronouns?

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (like I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (like he and hers) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

What are some commonly used gender pronouns?

She/her/hers and he/him/his are the most commonly used gender pronouns.

There are also many gender-neutral pronouns in use.

Here is one you are likely to hear: They/them/theirs (Jack ate their food because they were hungry.) This is a common gender-neutral pronoun, and can be used in the singular.

Why is it important to respect people's pronouns?

- ❖ You can't always know what pronouns someone uses by looking at them.
- ❖ Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity.
- ❖ When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric (or, often, all of the above).

How do I ask someone what their pronouns are?

Try asking: "What are your pronouns?" or "Which pronouns do you use?" or "Can you remind me of your pronouns?"

It can feel awkward at first, but it is not half as awkward as getting it wrong or making a hurtful assumption. If you are asking as part of an introduction exercise and you want to quickly explain what a gender pronoun is, you can try something like this: "Tell us your name, where you come from, and the pronouns that you use. That means the pronoun you like to be referred to with."

Next time you have a staff meeting or an interview, try it!

What if I make a mistake?

It's okay! Everyone slips up from time to time. The best thing to do if you use the wrong pronoun for someone is to say something right away, like "Sorry, I meant she." If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize in private and move on.



Resources



We are happy that you are interested in learning more about the different organizations that provide support to LGBT Jamaicans and how you can build your capacity and that of your staff to better support the community.

The contact information provided below are that of our partners who are LGBT friendly.

Partner	Contact Person	Contact Number	Email Address	Services
ASHE Company (The) 8 Cargill Ave, Kgn. 10	Mr. Conroy Wilson, Executive Director Mr. Rudolph Tomlinson, Project Coordinator	876-960-2985 876-467-1756	ashe@theashecompany.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV & Syphilis Testing • HIV & STI Counselling • Empowerment Sessions • EDU-TAINMENT • HIV Workshops • Psychologist
Bethel Baptist Church (Clinic) Drop-In Center 6 Hope Rd, Kgn 10	Mr. Simms / Mrs. Shakes (Administrator) Ms. Gallimore	876-926-8272 876-929-6979 876-960-5658		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Health Services • Counselling Services • Feeding Programme – Homeless and Displaced persons.
Centred Jamaica	Jessica Thompson, Co-Founder	876-281-8601	info@centredja.com	Counselling services
C.H.A.R.E.S, UWI	Ms. Racquel Brown	876-977-6921 876-549-5522	charesuwi@gmail.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV & Syphilis Testing • Counseling • HIV-related services

Partners	Contact Person	Contact Number	Email Address	Services
Equality Youth Jamaica	Ms Raihn McNish EYJ Helpline	876-856-3624 Call/Text/ WhatsApp: 876-399-HELP (4357)	raihn@equalityjamaica.org	Counselling & Support for LGBT Youth up to age 26
Half Way Tree Police Station	Inspector Roberts	876-926-7133 876-286-0704		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law Enforcement
Jamaica Aids Support for Life (JASL) 3 Hendon Drive	Ms. Kandasi Levermore Executive Director Ms. Nichole Morris Chapter Manager - KGN 876-551-1060 Ms. Ava Neil Chapter Manager - Ocho Rios 876-551-1067 Ms. Jill Yearwood Chapter Manager - St James	876-926-7133 876-376-2083 876-390-4298 876-495-2017	infojasl2010@gmail.com nmorrisjasl@gmail.com aneiljasl@gmail.com jyearwood@jasforlife.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV Education, Treatment, Prevention & Care • HIV & Syphilis Testing • Medical Services • Psychologist • Sexuality • Therapeutic Candles – Life's Work • Advocacy
JFLAG	Glenroy Murray Karen Lloyd Shadeana Mascull	876-667-6202 876-831-0281 876-875-2328	glenroy@equalityjamaica.org karen@equalityjamaica.org shadeana@equalityjamaica.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling & Support for LGBT Jamaicans • Advocacy for LGBT Jamaicans • Connection to services for LGBT people • Capacity building sessions
Open Arms Drop-In Center 16 1/2 Windward Rd Kingston 2	Mrs. Yvonne Grant (Administrator)	876-938-1757 876-784-8567 876-806-3070 876-371-0872		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Skills Training (while rehabilitated) • Shelter



Partner	Contact Person	Contact Number	Email Address	Services
TransWave Jamaica	Renaë Green	876-370-0937	renae@transwaveja.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trans specific issues, advocacy and well-being• Empowerment sessions• Capacity building sessions
WE-Change Jamaica	Shawna Stewart, Director of Training and Programmes Paige Andrews, Associate Director	876-563-7373	wechangeja@gmail.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counselling & Support for LBT Women• Support group for LBT women

Appendices



Agender:

An agender person ('a-' meaning "without"), also called genderless, gender-free, non-gendered, or ungendered, is someone who identifies as having no gender or being without a gender identity. Agender people have no specific set of pronouns; the singular they is often used, but it is not the default.

Androgyny:

Displaying physical and social characteristics identified in this culture as both female and male to the degree that the persons' outward appearance and mannerisms make it difficult to determine an androgynous person's biological sex.

Aromantic:

A person who identifies with not experiencing romantic love or attraction, although this doesn't preclude them from feeling other forms of love or attraction.

Asexual:

A person who is not sexually attracted to others and does not have a desire to engage in sexual activity with a partner. It is a sexual orientation and differs from celibacy, which is a choice to abstain from sex. Some asexual people have a desire to form intimate but nonsexual romantic relationships, and will date and seek long-term partnerships.

Assigned Sex:

Sex recorded at birth by a doctor, on the basis of socially defined external genitalia

Biological Sex:

The dichotomous distinction between female and male, based on physiological characteristics, especially chromosomes and external genitalia. See "Intersex" for more details.

Bisexual/Bi:

A person who has sexual and emotional relationships with or feelings towards persons of both the same and different genders, although not necessarily at the same time.

Butch/Femme:

A lesbian or gay woman, who prefers traditionally masculine (butch) or feminine (femme) dress, style, expression, or identity. These terms should be used with care as they can still be taken offensively, primarily because they are still often used offensively.

Cisgender:

A person whose gender identity is the same as their assigned sex at birth. It is not a slur.

Closeted/In the Closet:

The confining state of being secretive about one's true gender or sexual identity. A person may feel compelled to be closeted in order to keep a job,

housing situation, family, friends, or for their safety. Many LGBTQ+ individuals are "out" in some situations and "closeted" in others.

Come Out (Of the Closet)

Also "coming out of the closet" or "being out," refers to the process through which a person acknowledges, accepts, and learns to appreciate their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Sharing this information with others is not a single event but instead a life-long process.

Crossdressing:

Wearing clothing not usually associated with one's assigned gender. People may cross dress for a variety of reasons, including personal expression, sexual gratification, entertainment, or expressing one's gender identity.

Down Low ("DL"):

A term ("on the down low") used to refer men who are in relationships with women, but who engage in sex/sexual activities with men. Typically, these men do not identify themselves as gay or bisexual. The term originated in the African-American community but the behaviour is not unique to any race, ethnicity, or culture.

Drag:

(also Drag King, Drag Queen, Female/Male Impersonator) - Wearing the clothing of another gender, often with exaggerated cultural/stereotypical gender characteristics. Individuals may

identify as Drag Kings (female in drag) or Drag Queens (male in drag). Drag often refers to dressing for functional purposes such as entertainment/performance or social gatherings. Drag holds a significant place in LGBTQ+ history and community.

Dyke:

Once known as a derogatory term for lesbian, dyke was reclaimed by lesbians in the 1970s. Today, many lesbians refer to themselves as dykes and proudly use the word.

Effeminate:

Used to identify a person (usually male) who expresses and/or presents culturally/stereotypically feminine characteristics. This is often viewed as a culturally negative term.

Faggot/Battyman/Battyboi:

A derogatory word frequently used to denote a gay man.

Family:

A term widely used by LGBTQ+ persons to identify other LGBTQ+ people.

Family of Orientation (Choice)/House:

Persons forming an individual's social, emotional, and practical support network and often fulfilling the functions of blood relations. Many LGBTQ+ people are rejected when their families learn of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or they may remain "closeted" to their biological relatives. In such cases, it is their partner/significant other and close friends who will be called on in time of illness or personal crisis. The biological family, or the family in which one was raised, may or may not be part of a LGBTQ+ person's support system.

Femme:

A person who identifies with being a woman, and embraces the female gender. Can be used to identify a person who expresses and/or presents culturally/stereotypically feminine characteristics.

Gay:

A socio-political term used to describe homosexual men, though the term can be used to refer to both male and female homosexuals and the homosexual community at large. Note that many homosexual women prefer to call themselves Lesbian.

Gender:

A term used to describe the social status of people as men, women, boys, girls, or variously transgender, including characteristics of masculinity and femininity that are learned or chosen. A person's assigned sex does not always match their gender (see Transgender), and many people display traits of more than one gender. Gender is different from sexuality.

Gender Dysphoria:

An intense, continuous discomfort resulting from an individual's belief in the inappropriateness of their assigned gender at birth and resulting gender role expectations. Also, a clinical psychological diagnosis which is often required to receive hormones and surgery. Many people in transgender communities are offended by this requirement.

Gender Expression:

The external presentation or appearance of a person's gender (e.g. dress, mannerisms, hair style, speech, etc.). One's gender expression may differ from one's gender identity.

Genderfluid:

A person who is genderfluid prefers to remain flexible about their gender identity rather than committing to a single gender. They may fluctuate between genders or express multiple genders at the same time. Demi-gendered persons often also use this term.

Gender Identity:

How an individual views themselves in terms of characteristics traditionally identified in this culture as man or woman. A person may identify as man or woman, possessing characteristics of both, or as something outside the man/woman binary.

Heterosexuality:

A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a different sex.

Homophobia:

Fear or hatred of those assumed to be LGBTQ+ and anything connected to their culture. It is a fear of homosexuality, either in other people or within themselves. This term represents a most extreme set of negative attitudes and beliefs and can include microaggressions, overt threats or expressions of hostility/ violence. It occurs on personal, institutional, and societal levels.

Homosexual:

A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex. This "clinical" term originated in the 1800s and is not often used within the gay and lesbian community.

Internalized Homophobia:

The fear and self-hate of one's own sexual orientation or identity in individuals who have learned negative ideas about

homosexuality throughout childhood. One form of internalized oppression is the acceptance of the myths and stereotypes applied to the oppressed group. It can result in depression, alienation, anxiety, and, in extreme cases, suicide.

Intersex:

A person born with "sex chromosomes", external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not considered medically standard for either male or female. The gender identity and sexual orientation of these people may vary. The older term "hermaphrodite" is considered by many to be offensive. Although intersexuality is relatively common, intersexed infants often have their sex chosen for them shortly after birth. This is sometimes referred to as 'assigned sex.'

Lesbian:

Preferred term for a female homosexual. A common and generally acceptable word for female homosexuals only; a name taken from the island of Lesbos where Sappho, the great women-loving poet of 600 BC lived. Many women who love women adopt this name with pride.

MSM:

Male-identified individuals who have sex with other male-identified individuals. Tends to be used in communities or cultures where terms like "gay" or "bisexual" have negative cultural connotations. This term is often used when discussing sexual behaviour and sexual health. It is inclusive of all men who participate in this behaviour, regardless of how they identify their sexual orientation. The acronym MSM is conventionally used in professional literature.

Non-binary:

Individuals who identify with a gender that is neither male or nor female. This term may be used by agender people, genderfluid people, and others who do not adhere to society's gender binary.

Outing:

Publicly revealing the sexual orientation/ gender identity of an individual who has chosen to keep that orientation private. Outing is a violation of one's privacy and is wrong.

Pansexual:

A person who experiences sexual attraction, romantic love, or emotional attraction toward people regardless of their sex or gender identity. Pansexual people may refer to themselves as gender-blind, asserting that gender and sex are insignificant or irrelevant in determining whether they will be sexually attracted to others.

Sexuality:

Sexuality is distinct from gender identity and sex. It refers to the labels we assign to sexual attractions, desires, and practices: homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, etc.

Sexual Identity:

Sexual identity is identifying, claiming, and owning a part of the self, associated with one's gender identity, sexual orientation, or sexuality. Sexual identity may mean identifying as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

Sexual Minority:

A group whose sexual identity, orientation or practices differ from the majority of the surrounding society.

Sexual Orientation:

A person's emotional, physical, and sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction with other individuals. There is ongoing debate among medical and psychological experts as to whether sexual orientation has a biological basis (nature) or is the result of environmental factors and individual choice (nurture).

Transitioning:

The process of a transgender individual publicly changing their gender presentation in society. Transitioning often includes changes in name, clothing, and appearance, and may include anatomical changes.

Transgender:

A person who identifies differently from how they were assigned at birth.

Gender is more accurately viewed as social construct. This is a broad term that encompasses people whose gender identity does not match up with the gender they were assigned at birth, including intersex people, agender people, genderqueer people, non-binary people, and those who defy what society tells them is appropriate for their gender. The sexual orientation of transgender persons varies, just as it varies across society.

Transphobia:

Hatred and/or discrimination against people who break or blur gender roles and sex characteristics. Like biphobia, it is prevalent in both straight and gay/lesbian communities.



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