
PROMISING PRACTICES FOR ALL GENDER RESTROOMS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

This resource page was developed by the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center staff team at Michigan State University and is intended to provide information for LGBTQIA2S+ inclusive practices to campus partners. These recommendations are based in current and emerging better practices in the field of LGBTQIA2S+ inclusion.

TERMINOLOGY

- The best term for restrooms that are inclusive of all genders is “**All Gender Restroom.**”
 - The term all gender restroom communicates that people of all genders are welcome in this restroom. This may include:
 - People of all genders seeking additional privacy (single-user restrooms)
 - People who are comfortable using the restroom with people of all genders.
 - Parents with small children of a different gender
 - Transgender and nonbinary individuals
 - Explicitly calling these restrooms **all gender restrooms** signals university commitment to and support for transgender and nonbinary community members.
- *All gender restrooms* at MSU are labeled as “Restroom.” This practice is perfectly acceptable.
 - However, in discussions about *all gender restrooms*, it may be confusing to call them restrooms, because restroom is a general term. To specify, we recommend using the term: *all gender restroom*.
- **Gender inclusive restroom** is another term that is often used synonymously with **all gender restroom**. It is our recommendation that **all gender restroom** be used.
- We do not recommend using the terms **gender neutral – “neutrality” implying sides in a binary conflict** -- or **unisex – as the term relates to sex rather than gender** .
- **Single-use** or **single-user** restrooms are those intended for a single person to use. They are usually comprised of a single locking door, a sink, and a toilet.
- **Multi-use** or **multi-user** restrooms are restrooms that are intended for multiple users. They usually have an external door that remains unlocked and urinals, multiple sinks, and multiple stalls.
 - Campuses and universities have created both **single-user and multi-user all gender restrooms**. Single-user all gender restrooms are more common.
- **Gender-specific restrooms** are restroom facilities that are designated as “Women’s” or “Men’s.”

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build, clearly identify, and/or designate *at least one* all gender restroom in every academic and administrative building on campus.
 - Buildings with only gender-specific restrooms are adhering to a gender binary which is exclusive of many users.
 - Buildings with high student traffic should be prioritized when considering new construction of all gender restrooms.
 - However, all gender restrooms should not only be located in student-facing buildings, because transgender and nonbinary faculty and staff also need access to accessible restrooms.
- When this is not possible, ensure that there are all gender restrooms within a reasonable distance of each academic and administrative building.
 - Transgender and nonbinary students may need to use the restroom during a class. Ensuring they can safely travel to the restroom and back and miss the minimum amount of learning time is very important.
- As the law permits, transition all single-user gender-specific restrooms to all gender restrooms.
- Ensure that all gender restrooms are located in a variety of spaces in buildings and not only located in hidden or hard to find spaces, like basements.

RESTROOM SIGNAGE

- All gender restrooms should include:
 - A sign that clearly reads “Restroom” or “All Gender Restroom” with braille.
 - Images of items that may be found in the restroom, including:
 - A toilet
 - Hands washing under a faucet
 - A urinal
 - A changing table
 - An inclusive accessibility symbol.
 - Directions to the closest gender-specific restrooms.
- All gender restroom signage should not include:
 - stick-figure male and female symbols.
 - the half male/half female stick-figure, which communicates the offensive idea that transgender and nonbinary people are half-man, half-woman.
 - mythical creatures, historical figures, silly symbols, or other symbols of non-human beings (e.g. Vikings, mermaids, or aliens) which communicate the offensive idea that trans identities are not real.
- For events being held in buildings without all gender restrooms, temporary signage may be created to indicate all gender use of existing restrooms. The GSCC can provide PDFs of temporary signage, please email: gsc@msu.edu.

NAVIGATION

- All campuses should provide an online map for campus all gender restrooms. We use the map provided and maintained by the Office of Planning and Budget, located at <https://opb.msu.edu/functions/facilities/single-occupancy-restrooms/index.html>
- Include signs on gender-specific restrooms and near main entrances that direct people to the nearest all gender restroom.
 - This makes it possible for people to locate these restrooms without having to ask anyone. Asking for all gender restroom locations can be tantamount to “outing” oneself, which may cause real safety concerns for transgender and nonbinary people.
- Include all gender restrooms locations on the building map.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- When possible, create and enforce a policy requiring at least one all gender restroom in newly constructed or significantly renovated buildings. At MSU, IPF includes this practice in new construction and major renovations.
- Have an inclusive, written campus or departmental policy that states “individuals should use the bathrooms that best align with their sex or their gender identity, depending on which option feels safer.”
- Have an easily accessible web page as a part of the campus facilities site that explains all policies related to gender identity and provides contact information for a staff person who can serve as the point person.

RESOURCES

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Campus Pride Transgender Policy Clearinghouse. "Colleges and Universities that Provide Gender-Inclusive Housing." www.campuspride.org/tpc-gih/

Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals. "Suggested Best Practices for Supporting Trans Students". June 10, 2014, on Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals website, <https://lgbtcampus.memberclicks.net/assets/trans%20student%20inclusion%20.pdf>

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Rankin, Sue, et al. *2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender People*. Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride.

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