

Transgender and Nonbinary Inclusion in Leather Communities

Presenter

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Session Overview

Participants will learn practical strategies for creating inclusive leather and kink spaces that genuinely welcome trans and nonbinary community members: respectful language around bodies and presentation, systemic policy changes, and effective incident response protocols that move beyond tokenism. Through real-world scenarios and case studies from leather organizations, attendees will gain concrete tools for updating registration systems, training staff and judges, implementing community-wide standards, and addressing harassment through transformative justice principles. The session aims to transform leather and kink spaces from places where trans people must negotiate for basic respect to communities where dignity is the default for everyone.

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Answering Your Questions

Q: What do you think specifically LA needs to improve on in order to be more trans inclusive? Which organizations are doing it well and can set an example? How can LALC be more accountable and implement what is talked about today in order to be working through their issues of lack of trans inclusion/their history of transphobia?

A: Going to break this long answer into sections. **What LA overall specifically needs to improve:**

The fundamental principle here is that trans-led organizations consistently set the standard for inclusion - they should be the model everyone looks to. Currently, LA and particularly West Hollywood have significant problems with trans and nonbinary inclusion. Many communities exclude bodies that don't fit narrow beauty standards, which disproportionately impacts trans folks. While some organizations offer services to trans people, it often feels like necessity rather than genuine inclusion - especially when trans and nonbinary voices aren't part of decision-making and reports of discrimination are routinely ignored. This pattern erodes trust, especially when the efforts are only made for a brief period of time and then it's back to business as usual.

One of the most disturbing issues is the long-standing problem of people, particularly when intoxicated, groping trans and nonbinary bodies to "determine their real gender." This is sexual assault, not curiosity. While it has led to consequences in some cases (including sponsor representatives losing their positions), the fact that this behavior continues indicates a systemic failure in both prevention and accountability.

LA leather and kink spaces desperately need community-wide standards and accountability frameworks. Currently, when every bar, event, and organization has different policies, trans people must negotiate for basic respect every time they enter a new space. **This kind of exhaustion is what keeps over half of trans folks from even showing up to public venues.** The solution requires all leather bars, social groups, contests, and dungeon spaces to align on baseline policies including:

1. Anti-discrimination statements that explicitly name gender identity and expression
2. Clear bathroom policies allowing people to use facilities matching their identity

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3. Reporting mechanisms with 24-48 hour response times
4. Consistent training for all staff and volunteers on de-escalation and intervention
5. Real consequences for violations, with transparency about enforcement

Organizations doing it well: Trans-led organizations are setting the actual standards - visiting these spaces and observing their practices shows a stark difference from organizations that merely tolerate trans presence. New England Leather provides a concrete example of structural change: in 2024, they made their contest fully non-gender specific, allowing winners to choose whether to compete at IML or IMBL based on their identity rather than assumptions about their bodies or presentation. This model demonstrates that tradition and inclusion aren't mutually exclusive.

When seeking to learn from trans-led organizations or trans consultants, it's crucial to compensate them for their expertise. Pay their fees or donate generously to their organizations rather than expecting free emotional labor from communities already experiencing harm.

How LALC can be accountable: Here's what I'd tell any group regarding any missteps: Accountability isn't achieved through vague apologies or quick fixes. Based on transformative justice principles that emerged from communities most impacted by state violence, real accountability requires specific elements:

Immediate acknowledgment and responsibility: Specifically name past transphobic incidents and their impacts, not hide behind language like "if anyone was hurt." It's up to those harmed to determine if something was transphobic or not, not those who caused any harm. This includes taking full ownership without deflecting to intent or external factors and sharing what's being done and when.

Material and structural changes: Words without action compound harm rather than repair it.

Necessary changes may include:

- Updating all registration systems to respect chosen names and pronouns
- Installing all-gender bathroom options
- Creating anonymous reporting systems (online form, dedicated email address, text line)
- Implementing mandatory training on trans inclusion (minimum 2 hours) covering unconscious bias, pronoun usage, and intervention protocols

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- Developing clear response flowcharts so the board, staff, volunteers know exactly what to do when incidents occur

Long-term transformation: Real accountability takes months or years, not days or weeks. Successful accountability processes like those used by organizations addressing serious harm have taken 15 months or remained active for 7+ years. This requires:

- Regular check-ins with affected community members
- Transparency about progress and setbacks
- Community oversight of change processes
- Addressing root causes - examining what organizational culture, power dynamics, or structural conditions enabled transphobia
- Prevention strategies to ensure harm doesn't recur

Centering those harmed: Most critically, trans and nonbinary community members who have been harmed must define what accountability looks like - not the organization. Their needs and demands should drive the entire process. The organization's comfort level is irrelevant compared to the healing and safety of those affected. However, the organization must be willing to list solutions they've come up with so not all of the work is falling on those harmed. **LALC's decision to hire me (Charlie Ocean [they/them], who authored this response and delivered the training) is definitely part of the actions they're taking toward accountability and part of what they were asked to do. I'll let them speak to their other on-going actions and commitments.**

Accountability is sacred work of healing and the right relationship. It requires vulnerability, courage, time, community support, and willingness to transform both individual behaviors and the conditions that enabled harm. True accountability fundamentally transforms not just individuals but entire communities, building capacity for addressing future harm while preventing its occurrence through changed conditions and strengthened relationships. This means committing to a multi-year process of structural change, not just issuing statements or making cosmetic adjustments. The actions should reflect that any organization is genuinely committed to the safety and dignity of trans and nonbinary community members. Anything less than full transformation isn't accountability; it's just performance that perpetuates harm.

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Q: More information about usage of they/them

A: I included several language resources further below, including on they/them.

Q: How do organizations which traditionally bring men OR women together welcome trans folks without becoming coed?

A: You maintain men's and women's spaces while being explicitly trans-inclusive in each. Don't use language like "biological or real men/women." When someone tells you they belong in your gendered space, believe them.

The crucial point is that trans inclusion doesn't eliminate gendered spaces - it just means recognizing trans men as men and trans women as women within those existing structures. You're not becoming coed; you're being accurate about who belongs in your gendered space.

If members express discomfort, address it through education about what inclusion actually means rather than excluding trans people. Your men's or women's space stays exactly that - you're just ensuring all men or all women can participate.

If you want to signal more explicitly that you're trans-inclusive without being performative, that's when having things like your anti-discrimination policy in place will be helpful. If it includes gender, gender identity, and gender expression, those are the "signals" that trans folks look for on websites, etc.

Partner authentically with trans organizations or groups. Speak out against the [1,000+ anti-trans and nonbinary bills being proposed](#). Normalize sharing pronouns on social media and websites, in newsletters, on event flyers.

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Q: Ways that I can help educate without holding an authority role in an organization?

A: You definitely don't need a formal role to create change. 😊 Here are practical ways to help educate and advocate in ways that are more likely to be well-received:

Model inclusive behavior consistently. Use people's correct names and pronouns, correct yourself when you make mistakes (just say "sorry, I meant [correct pronoun]" and keep going), and gently correct others when they slip up. When someone uses "ladies and gentlemen," you can casually say "or just 'everyone' works too!"

Be the person who asks the right questions. At events or meetings, ask "Do we have pronoun pins available?" or "Are our bathrooms clearly marked as all-gender?" or "Does our registration form have a pronoun field?" Sometimes just asking makes organizers realize what's missing.

Share resources strategically. When relevant conversations come up, mention specific examples: "New England Leather made their contest non-gender specific and it's working great" or "I went to this training that suggested 24-hour response times for incident reports." Drop information naturally rather than lecturing.

Support and amplify trans and nonbinary voices. When trans and nonbinary community members speak up, back them up. A simple "I agree with what they just said" or "That's a really important point" helps shift dynamics, especially if you have social capital in the space.

Offer to help with simple tasks. Volunteer to update the registration form, make pronoun pins for the next event, or put up all-gender bathroom signs. Say "I can handle that" when these needs are identified.

Practice intervening. When you witness problematic behavior, you don't need authority to say "That's not okay" or redirect someone who's being inappropriate. Move the person causing harm away from the person being targeted. State clear boundaries: "We don't ask people about their bodies here."

Remember: Change often happens through consistent small actions by community members, not just top-down policies. Your voice matters, especially when you use it to make spaces safer for everyone.

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Resources

1. Transgender Law Center: <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/>
2. Advocates for Trans Equality: <https://transequality.org/>
3. Sylvia Rivera Law Project: <https://srlp.org/>
4. Trans Lifeline: <https://translifeline.org/> (crisis support)
5. FORGE: <https://forge-forward.org/> (trans anti-violence)
6. National Coalition for Sexual Freedom: <https://ncsfreedom.org/>
7. Leather Leadership Conference: <https://leatherleadership.org/>
8. The Leather Archives & Museum: <https://leatherarchives.org/>
9. Transform Harm: <https://transformharm.org/> (comprehensive resource hub)
10. Creative Interventions: <https://www.creative-interventions.org/> (toolkit)
11. Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective: <https://batjc.wordpress.com/> (pod mapping)

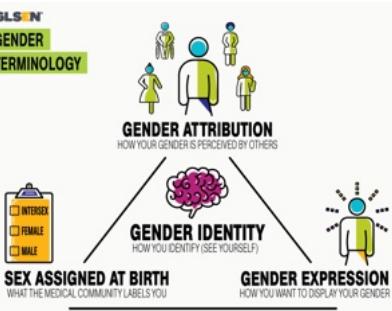
Language Resources

1. [National Council of Teachers of English | Statement on Gender and Language](#)
2. [Gender Specialist | Gender Neutral Family Terms & Titles](#)
3. [Nonbinary Wiki | Gender neutral language in English](#)
4. [PFLAG National | LGBTQ+ Glossary](#)
5. [GLAAD | Glossary of Terms](#) (includes words + phrases to avoid and any replacements)
6. [Gender Specialist | Demystifying They/Them Pronouns: How To Use The Singular They](#)
7. [Kimberlé Crenshaw: What is Intersectionality? | YouTube](#)
8. [The urgency of intersectionality | Kimberlé Crenshaw | TED | YouTube](#) *Content warning: Discussion of police violence against Black women, including brief mentions of fatal encounters.

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Visual Resources

- [Wheel of Privilege/Power](#) has several iterations floating around the internet
- [Gender and sexuality galaxies](#) by Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

 <p>An identity that does not specifically fall under any one umbrella. An umbrella, under which (often many) specific/connected identities reside.</p> <p>download</p>	 <p>download</p>	 <p>download</p>
<p>When greeting others, be mindful of language.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Thanks, friends. Have a great night." "Good morning, folks!" "Hi, everyone!" "And for you?" "Can I get you all something?" <p>Why? Shifting to gender-inclusive language respects and acknowledges the gender identities of all people and removes assumption.</p> <p>Based on Toni Lutjens' "Hello there" cards. Learn more at gsmunity.ca</p> <p>Download</p> <p>(click Education on the left)</p>	<p>Pronoun & Name Mistake Flowchart V1.1</p> <p>Created by Charlie Ocean, MSW (they/them)</p> <p>GENDER SEXUALITY INFO</p> <p>For more resources, check out GSA.Gay</p> <p>download</p>	

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Select Slides (zoom in to better read slide text)

<h4>THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% of trans people avoid public venues due to safety concerns • Trans people experience violence at 4x the rate of cis people • 82% face discrimination in public spaces • Leather community incidents: 2023-today <p>In 2023 and 2024, we've had significant incidents in leather spaces. The entire International Mr. Bootblack staff resigned over treatment issues. ONYX Midwest permanently severed ties with a Chicago leather bar, explicitly naming that trans and nonbinary people never felt safe there. Seattle leather bars got raided and cited for "lewd conduct"—and yes, that connects to how we police bodies and presentation.</p> <p>Stats source: https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/</p>	<h4>WHAT INCLUSION ACTUALLY MEANS</h4> <p>Inclusion is NOT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Tolerating people ✗ Being "nice" when they're around ✗ One trans person on staff = problem solved <p>Inclusion IS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proactive safety and welcome ✓ Changing systems, not just attitudes ✓ Dignity as default, not special accommodation 																														
<h4>NAMES AND PRONOUNS IN SPACES</h4> <p>Names:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use the name someone introduces themselves with ✗ Don't ask "What's your real name?" ✓ Scene names, leather names, legal names—all valid <p>Pronouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ask: "What pronouns should I use for you?" ✓ Examples: he/him, she/her, they/them, ze/hir, or name only ✓ Practice makes it easier (it's like learning names) <p>"What pronouns do you use?" is the same energy as "What do you like to drink?" It's just information you need to interact with someone respectfully.</p>	<h4>SOME DIFFERENT PRONOUNS</h4> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>he/him</th> <th>IELLE/IELLES</th> <th>fae/faer</th> <th>ELLA</th> <th>they/them</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>any pronouns</td> <td>ze/hir</td> <td>ask</td> <td>ey/em</td> <td>IEL/IELS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ve/ver</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>it/its</td> <td>zie/zimz</td> <td>ÉL</td> <td>all pronouns</td> <td>ne/nem</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>ELLE</td> <td>xe/xem</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>per/pers</td> <td>name only</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>she/her</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Short list of pronouns; Spanish and French pronouns are bolded.</p>	he/him	IELLE/IELLES	fae/faer	ELLA	they/them	any pronouns	ze/hir	ask	ey/em	IEL/IELS	ve/ver					it/its	zie/zimz	ÉL	all pronouns	ne/nem			ELLE	xe/xem		per/pers	name only			she/her
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<h4>BODY TALK AND PRESENTATION LANGUAGE</h4> <p>Things to AVOID:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ "Are you pre-op or post-op?" ✗ "You look so masculine/feminine!" ✗ "I never would have known" ✗ Commenting on chest, genitals, voice <p>Things to DO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliment leather, skills, presence ✓ "You look great in that harness!" ✓ "I love your energy!" ✓ Let people bring up their own bodies if they want 	<h4>BATHROOM NAVIGATION</h4> <p>Best Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-gender option alongside traditional spaces (not instead of) • Clear signage: "All genders welcome" • Privacy options: Individual stalls/changing rooms available • Staff training: "Use the space that matches your identity"* • Backup plan: Single-occupancy option for anyone wanting privacy 																														

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<h3>PHOTOGRAPHY & CONSENT IN KINK CONTEXTS</h3> <p>Why this matters more for trans and nonbinary folks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photos can out someone at work, to family, in unsafe situations Face recognition technology = extra risk Trans people already face 82% discrimination rate <p>Consent Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green wristband = Photos okay Yellow wristband = Ask first Red wristband = No photos OR: Designated photo zones only  <p>Can be great for photos OR also touching, depending on the event and context. Have a sign so everyone can learn what they mean.</p>	<h3>REGISTRATION SYSTEMS THAT WORK</h3> <p>Registration form fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ "Legal name" → <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Name you'd like us to use" ✗ "Sex: M/F" → <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Gender: [Allow them to enter this themselves]" ✗ Required pronoun field → <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Optional pronouns with examples ✗ "Preferred name" → <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Just "Name" <p>Why this matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Legal name" forces outing; probably not necessary Binary gender options exclude non-binary folks Required pronoun fields pressure people not ready to share "Preferred" implies it's optional to respect <p>If your software limits your ability to allow for an open-ended gender question, advocate for the community by submitting a service ticket or email. These are tiny changes to your registration form that make a massive difference in whether folks feel welcome before they even show up. If you MUST collect the legal name too, make it explicitly clear why and what it's used for, like payment.</p>												
<h3>CREATING CONSISTENT POLICIES</h3> <p>Why consistency matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trans folks shouldn't have to negotiate basic respect at every event Mixed messages = "You're welcome... sometimes" Community-wide standards benefit everyone <p>Coalition approach: → Leather bars, social groups, contests align on baseline policies → Everyone implements anti-discrimination statements → Shared training resources → Collective accountability when incidents happen</p> <p>"Here's our anti-discrimination statement, here's our bathroom policy, here's how we handle harassment" — people know what to expect. They can trust that leather spaces in your city are actually safe. It creates a safer ecosystem and that way no one organization or establishment is alone in this. It also allows you to pool your collective resources strategically because you're literally setting the standard. And it means when an incident happens, you're not figuring it out from scratch. You have shared training, shared resources, shared accountability processes. You're ready.</p>	<h3>WELCOMING LANGUAGE</h3> <p>Language shifts:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>✗ "Ladies and gentlemen"</td> <td>✗ "Both genders"</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Folks," "Everyone," "Leather community," "Distinguished guests"</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "All genders" or "people of all genders"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✗ "Guys and gals"</td> <td>✗ "Opposite sex"</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Y'all," "Friends," "People"</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Different gender" or "another gender"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✗ "He or she"</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "They" (singular) or "the person"</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>This applies to: MC scripts · Event announcements · Social media posts · Printed materials</p>	✗ "Ladies and gentlemen"	✗ "Both genders"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Folks," "Everyone," "Leather community," "Distinguished guests"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "All genders" or "people of all genders"	✗ "Guys and gals"	✗ "Opposite sex"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Y'all," "Friends," "People"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Different gender" or "another gender"	✗ "He or she"		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "They" (singular) or "the person"	
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<h3>CONTEST ELIGIBILITY LANGUAGE</h3> <p>Traditional language (problematic):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ "Contestants must present as male" ✗ "Open to genetic males only" ✗ "Must identify as a man" <p>Inclusive language (proven to work):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ "Open to contestants of all gender identities" ✓ "Winners identifying as male compete at IML; winners identifying as female compete at IMsL; winners identifying otherwise may choose their preferred path" <p>New England Leather 2024: Went fully non-gender-specific. Winners choose IML or IMsL based on identity.</p> <p>SOURCES: https://neleather.org/ https://www.internationalmrleather.com/</p>	<h3>MC SCRIPTS</h3> <p>Script Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening → "Welcome, leather community" (not "Ladies and gentlemen") • Introductions → "[Name] who uses [pronouns]" • Scoring → Announce by contestant number or name, avoid gendered language • Winner → Use their correct pronouns in all announcements <p>"Next up is Jordan Lee, who uses he/they pronouns."</p> <p>When you're announcing scores or winners, use their correct pronouns. Every single time. And if you mess up, correct yourself immediately—"Sorry, I meant they"—and keep going.</p>
<h3>JUDGE TRAINING</h3> <p>Judge Training Essentials (2-hour minimum):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconscious bias workshop • Pronoun usage practice • Scoring criteria: "Leather presence" not "masculine/feminine presentation" • What to do if you mess up (correct quickly, move on) • Handling questions about bodies, presentation, surgery status (don't ask) <p>Talk about scoring criteria. If your rubric says "masculine presentation," you need to change that to something like "leather presence" or "command of the stage." Because not everyone's going for masculine, and masculine presentation shouldn't be the standard for a good contestant. Teach judges what to do when they mess up. Spoiler: correct yourself quickly and move on. Don't spiral into apologies. Trained judges make better decisions and create safer spaces for contestants. It's worth the time.</p>	<h3>BACKSTAGE PROTOCOLS</h3> <p>Changing area options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple spaces available (not just men's/women's) • Individual changing rooms/privacy stalls • Clear signage: "All genders welcome" • Contestants choose the space that works for them • Support person allowed if contestant requests <p>Staff training: "Use the space that feels right to you" (not "use the space that matches your assigned sex")</p> <p>Buddy system: Contestants can designate a support person to help them navigate backstage if needed</p> <p>Let contestants choose. Your staff shouldn't be directing people: "You look like a man, you go in the men's room." No. Contestants use the space that feels right to them.</p>

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<h3>TITLEHOLDER TRANSITIONS AND DOCUMENTATION</h3> <p>When a titleholder transitions during their reign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update all materials immediately (website, social media, sashes) ✓ Use new name and pronouns in all contexts ✓ Don't make a public announcement unless they want you to ✓ Brief staff and community on changes ✓ Historical records: use current name/pronouns <p>Sash printing: Use chosen name consistently; Add pronouns if space permits and titleholder wants them</p> <p>Media kit: Correct pronouns in all bios; Prepared responses for interview questions; Process for updates if name/pronouns change</p> <p>Don't make a public announcement about the transition unless the titleholder wants you to. It's their information to share, not yours. You can quietly update materials and brief your staff and board, but let the titleholder decide if and how they want to tell the community. If they do want to make an announcement, support them in doing that. Offer to help draft a statement, post it on official channels, handle any weird comments or questions that come up.</p>	<h3>SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES</h3> <p>International Mr. Leather:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2010: Ramón S. (Rami) Piñón Jr. - First trans man to win IML • 2019: Jack Thompson - Trans man, advocated for trans youth <p>New England Leather (2024-2025):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-gender-specific contest model • Winners choose IML or IMsL path • No policy drama, just clear inclusive language <p>The contest didn't lose legitimacy. It just got more honest about who was already competing and winning.</p>
<h3>SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES</h3> <p>Folsom Street Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit LGBTQ2I+ centering in mission • All-gender bathrooms at major events • Strong anti-harassment policies enforced <p>Leather Solidarity Collective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero-tolerance discrimination policy • Trans-led organizing • Focus on structural change <p>This isn't a pipe dream. It's happening. These organizations are proving it works. You can learn from them and adapt their approaches to your context.</p>	<h3>COMMON MISTAKES AND QUICK CORRECTIONS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistake: Using wrong pronouns • Correction: "Sorry, I meant [correct pronoun]" and continue • Mistake: Using old or previous name (deadnaming) • Correction: "Apologies, I meant [current name]" and continue • Mistake: Making assumptions about someone's body/identity • Correction: "I apologize, I shouldn't have assumed"
<h3>COMMON MISTAKES AND QUICK CORRECTIONS</h3> <p>What NOT to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Over-apologize ("I'm so sorry, I'm terrible at this, can you forgive me?") ✗ Make excuses ("It's just so hard for me") ✗ Ask them to educate you in the moment ✗ Pretend it didn't happen <p>The formula: Acknowledge → Correct → Move forward</p> <p>That's it. The formula is simple, brief, respectful.</p>	<h3>REPORTING MECHANISMS THAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY USE</h3> <p>Why reporting often doesn't work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one method (talking to manager in person) • No follow-up or feedback • Fear of retaliation or being labeled "difficult" • Reports disappear into void <p>They think "Why bother? Nothing's going to change."</p>

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<h3>REPORTING MECHANISMS THAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY USE</h3> <p>Multiple reporting channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Talk to any staff member • <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anonymous online form • <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dedicated text line • <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email to specific address • <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical suggestion box <p>Response standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24-hour acknowledgment ("We received your report") • Timeline for follow-up (within one week) • What will happen ("We'll investigate and respond") • Confidentiality statement <p>The more options you give people, the more likely they are to actually report (which is what we want).</p>	<h3>DE-ESCALATION PROTOCOLS FOR IDENTITY-BASED HARASSMENT</h3> <p>De-escalation script for staff:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interrupt the behavior: "Hey, that's not okay in this space" 2. Separate if needed: Move harasser away from target 3. Clear boundary: "We don't ask people about their bodies/transitions/identities here" 4. Consequence: "If this continues, you'll need to leave" 5. Follow through: If it continues → removal → ban <p>State the consequence: "If this continues, you'll need to leave." They need to know there's a real consequence for ignoring the boundary. And then follow through. If they keep doing it, they're out. That night, and potentially permanently. You can't set boundaries and then not enforce them—that teaches people your boundaries don't matter.</p>
<h3>DE-ESCALATION PROTOCOLS FOR IDENTITY-BASED HARASSMENT</h3> <p>Training staff to recognize:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invasive questions about bodies, surgery, hormones 2. Deliberate misgendering after correction 3. "Just curious" harassment disguised as education 4. Following someone to bathroom/changing area 5. Taking photos without consent <p>Your staff needs to recognize these patterns and shut them down immediately. That's how you keep your space safer.</p>	<h3>ACCOUNTABILITY WITHOUT EXILE</h3> <p>Traditional response: Person causes harm → Banned forever → Problem "solved"</p> <p>Sometimes that's necessary—if someone's a repeated predator, if they refuse accountability, if they're an ongoing threat, yes, they need to be removed permanently. But not every situation is like that. Sometimes someone makes a genuine mistake, or they have problematic behavior that could actually change if they were willing to do the work.</p>
<h3>ACCOUNTABILITY WITHOUT EXILE</h3> <p>Transformative justice principles for leather spaces:</p> <p>Transformative approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stop ongoing harm (removal if needed for immediate safety) 2. Support person who was harmed (resources, check-ins, safety planning) 3. Accountability for person who caused harm (understand impact, make amends, change behavior) 4. Address conditions that enabled harm (policies, culture, training gaps) 	<h3>ACCOUNTABILITY WITHOUT EXILE</h3> <p>Transformative justice principles for leather spaces:</p> <p>Not appropriate for: Repeated predatory behavior, refusal to engage in accountability, ongoing threat to safety</p> <p>Could work for: First-time mistakes, willingness to learn, genuine remorse, commitment to change</p>

Transgender and Nonbinary Inclusion in Leather Communities

<h3>COALITION-WIDE RESPONSE FRAMEWORKS</h3> <p>When incidents happen across leather community:</p> <p>Coordinated response includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information sharing (with consent of those affected) 2. Consistent messaging across organizations 3. Shared accountability processes 4. Resource pooling (legal support, crisis counseling, safety planning) 5. Pattern identification (is this person causing harm at multiple venues?) 	<h3>COALITION-WIDE RESPONSE FRAMEWORKS</h3> <p>When incidents happen across leather community:</p> <p>Example structure: Leather bars + social groups + contests + dungeon spaces = united standards</p> <p>Why this matters: Someone banned from one bar can't just move to another space and continue harmful behavior</p> <p>You create actual accountability across the community, not just within one venue.</p>
<h3>WHAT GENUINE ACCOUNTABILITY LOOKS LIKE</h3> <p>Accountability requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Specific acknowledgment of what happened ✓ Understanding impact on those harmed ✓ Genuine remorse (not "sorry you felt that way") ✓ Concrete actions to repair harm ✓ Behavior change with support systems ✓ Time - sustained change over months/years 	<h3>WHAT GENUINE ACCOUNTABILITY LOOKS LIKE</h3> <p>What it's NOT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ A single apology and moving on ✗ Asking the harmed person to forgive you ✗ Promising to "do better" without specifics ✗ Blaming circumstances or other people ✗ Performing remorse for social media <p>Accountability is uncomfortable. It takes work. It requires vulnerability and sustained effort. If someone's not willing to do that, they're not actually accountable—they just want the consequences to go away.</p>
<h3>SUPPORTING AFFECTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS</h3> <p>Immediate support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe them • Ensure physical safety • Offer to document what happened • Connect to resources (crisis line, legal support, counseling) • Ask what they need <p>Ask what they need. Not "Here's what we're going to do" but "What would be helpful for you right now? What would make you feel safer or more supported?"</p>	<h3>SUPPORTING AFFECTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS</h3> <p>Ongoing support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular check-ins (with consent) • Respect their decisions about process • Don't pressure them to forgive or engage • Keep them informed about any actions taken • Honor their boundaries about confidentiality <p>Community care: Address impact on witnesses and others who feel unsafe</p> <p>Remember: incidents affect more than just the person directly targeted. Witnesses might be traumatized. Other trans folks in your community might feel unsafe even if they weren't there. Community care means checking in with everyone impacted, not just the primary survivor.</p>

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<p>PREVENTING FUTURE HARM THROUGH STRUCTURAL CHANGE</p> <p>After an incident, ask:</p> <p>Policy gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did existing policies cover this situation? • Were policies clearly communicated? • Were they enforced? <p>Training needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do staff know how to intervene? • Do community members know how to report? • Does leadership understand the stakes? 	<p>PREVENTING FUTURE HARM THROUGH STRUCTURAL CHANGE</p> <p>After an incident, ask:</p> <p>Culture shifts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What normalized this behavior? • How do bystanders respond? • What messages are we sending? <p>Systemic factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has power to cause harm? • Who feels safe speaking up? • What structural barriers exist? <p>The goal is: use each incident as information about your systems. Don't just deal with the individual person who caused harm. Fix the conditions that allowed them to cause harm in the first place. Prevention is way better than response. And prevention requires structural change, not just asking individuals to be nicer.</p>
<p>START THIS WEEK</p> <p>Immediate changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update registration forms (name, gender, pronouns) ✓ Add pronoun pins/stickers to events ✓ Post anti-discrimination policy visibly ✓ Create reporting email address (free) ✓ Update social media bios with inclusive language (free) ✓ Add "all genders welcome" signs to bathrooms ✓ Review MC scripts and remove gendered language (free) <p>Time investment: 2-4 hours to implement all of these</p> <p>Example: safety@yourorganization.com. Put it on your website and in your materials. Instead of "for men in leather," say "for the leather community" or "LGBTQ+ leather organization."</p>	<p>BUILD OVER TIME - INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAINING</p> <p>3-6 month investments:</p> <p>Physical space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert one restroom to all-gender • Add privacy partitions to changing areas • Install better lighting in parking areas for safety <p>Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-hour staff training on LGBTQ+ inclusion • Bystander intervention workshop • De-escalation training <p>This stuff takes 3-6 months to fully implement, but it creates the infrastructure that makes inclusion sustainable rather than just dependent on individual people's good intentions.</p>

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<p>BUILD OVER TIME - INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAINING 3-6 month investments:</p> <p>Systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anonymous reporting form with tracking system • Incident documentation templates • Response protocol flowcharts 	<p>MEASURING SUCCESS - WHAT ACTUALLY CHANGES Success metrics:</p> <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are trans/nonbinary people attending your events? • Are they returning? • Are they bringing friends? <p>Incidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced number of reported transphobic incidents • Faster response time to incidents • Higher reporting rate (means people trust the system) <p>Incidents: you might actually see an increase in reported incidents at first, and that's not a bad sign. It means people trust your reporting system enough to use it. Over time, you should see the number of incidents decrease. And you should see faster response times—you're getting better at handling things when they happen.</p>
<p>MEASURING SUCCESS - WHAT ACTUALLY CHANGES Success metrics:</p> <p>Feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular surveys or feedback sessions • Exit interviews when people stop attending • Testimonials from trans community members <p>Culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do bystanders speak up when they see problems? • Do staff intervene consistently? • Is inclusive language becoming automatic? 	<p>ONE THING YOU'LL DO AFTER TODAY</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update our registration form to include pronoun field • Schedule 1-hour staff meeting to review anti-discrimination policy • Order pronoun pins for our next event • Draft "all genders welcome" bathroom signs • Email three other leather organizations to discuss coalition work • Add reporting email address to our website • Review our MC script and remove gendered language <p>Make it specific. Make it achievable. Make it happen.</p>