



SAFE SPACES GUIDANCE

Creating Safe Spaces

Welcoming migrants to share their diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) with us is critical to **providing effective assistance**. It may also be critical to ensuring migrants are provided with the most appropriate referral pathways. Many people are scared to inform us they are LGBTIQ+ because they fear discrimination, breaches of confidentiality or being barred from benefits.

Sometimes, an office may have a **reputation** for being unwelcoming due to the experience of one or more migrants or because of the cultural biases and personal opinions of our staff. It can take a great deal of **outreach and visible effort** to overcome these beliefs. Most critical to gaining trust is ensuring confidentiality. LGBTIQ+ migrants must feel certain we will not share private information with family members or the community.

What can we do as staff to make persons of concern feel more welcomed?

- Be knowledgeable about issues related to LGBTIQ+ people.
- Ask the person who has come to you for assistance which pronouns they prefer to use and refrain from judging their choice.
- During your introduction, mention that individuals are free to speak to you about anything.
- Ensure meetings are not rushed or interrupted. Give the person your full attention and ensure you acknowledge their questions and concerns in a positive and supportive manner.
- Refer to a script at the beginning of meetings so you do not miss any critical points.

What can we do as an organization to make our office a safer space?

- Display informative and welcoming signage and provide handouts.
- Post information on your organization's website.
- Create and distribute resource guides in the office, by email or other secure communication channels.
- Post information bulletins on notice boards in waiting areas.
- Use respectful terminology in the relevant languages spoken by LGBTIQ+ migrants.
- Mention your organization's stance on human rights during meeting introductions.
- Provide a confidential and anonymous hotline phone number or other safe communication channel for LGBTIQ+ migrants.
- Where appropriate and relevant, post items that identify the space as friendly, such as rainbow flags, pink triangles, other symbols or safe space signs. Keep in mind that many persons of concern will not recognize rainbow flags, pink triangles or other typically Western symbols of LGBTIQ+ support, so you may need to post text signs and ensure you are reading them or playing a video or audio recording of them for individuals who do not read.
- Wear Safe Space buttons with your name tag to let people of concern know that they can speak with you in confidence about their SOGIESC.
- Offer staff members of another gender when appropriate and when requested by the applicant.
- Ask LGBTIQ+ migrants to provide input on the services and support they would find most useful and ensure your organization has a grievance process for reporting abuse or discrimination and for onboarding beneficiary feedback.
- Engage civil society organizations and NGOs in referring LGBTIQ+ migrants to IOM and consulting on programmes.

What can we do as an organization to help staff provide better care for persons of concern?

- Provide trainings to all personnel.
- Have a point-person in the office who can answer questions for staff.
- Introduce signage, handouts and videos in a wide range of areas – not just where persons of concern are interviewed.
- Ensure the organization has a policy of inclusion for staff members.
- Share information about projects or trainings with the organization as a whole.

Safe Space Materials

Visit the IOM Intranet Diversity and Inclusion in IOM Programming page under “About IOM” to download our full range of visual materials, including buttons, stickers and posters. You may also wish to post safe space signs (example below), or to read safe space messaging to migrants when they come to the office. In the IOM Nepal context, a [video](#) was created to play in the waiting area and convey the information.



This is a safe space. IOM is here to help you. We believe in equal rights for all.

If you are persecuted for your beliefs, religion, gender or sexual orientation, you can tell us. Feel free to talk to your IOM caseworker or ask for a supervisor (female or male) at any time. Anything you tell an IOM staff member is strictly confidential.

यो एउटा सुरक्षित स्थान हो । आई.ओ.एम. यहाँ तपाईंहरूको सहयोगको लागि छ । हामी सबैका समान अधिकारमा विश्वास गर्दछौं । यदि तपाईं आफ्नो आस्था, धर्म, लिंग तथा लैङ्गिक प्रवृत्तिको आधारमा उत्पिडीत हुनुभएको छ भने हामीलाई बताउन सक्नुहुनेछ । कुनै पनि समयमा तपाईंको आई.ओ.एम.मा अन्तरवार्ता लिने व्यक्ति वा सुपरिवेक्षक (महिला वा पुरुष) सँग निर्धक्क भएर कुरा गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ । तपाईंले आई.ओ.एम.को कर्मचारीलाई बताएको जुनसुकै कुराहरू पूर्ण रूपमा गोप्य राखिनेछ ।

SAFE SPACES GUIDANCE

Creating Inclusive Workplaces – for Supervisors

Maintaining a Harassment-Free Workplace

Harassment in a workplace is never acceptable, including on the basis of SOGIESC. If harassment occurs in your workplace, it should immediately be reported to a supervisor or through We Are All In.

In many offices, jokes about LGBTIQ+ people unfortunately remain common. Joking about sex characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression is **against office policy** and constitutes **bullying**. It devalues and humiliates colleagues and persons of concern and undermines an organization's commitment to safeguarding human rights. It is especially problematic when a supervisor tells discriminatory jokes, as it creates an atmosphere in which staff members feel they are free to do the same. If you hear jokes being made about LGBTIQ+ people, you may wish to speak to the person(s) involved or **report** it to a supervisor or HR. You should not participate in the joke or give it a warm reception.

Assisting Staff in Working Professionally with LGBTIQ+ Colleagues and Persons of Concern

For some staff members, interviewing or working with LGBTIQ+ persons of concern or colleagues will be a genuine **challenge**. There are a variety of steps you can take to help them gain more confidence in their ability to assist all people with whom we work and to serve professionally alongside LGBTIQ+ colleagues.

One idea is to set up a **mentorship program** that allows more experienced staff members to share their wisdom with less experienced staff members in this area. Another is to offer additional **trainings** outside the scope of this training program, such as LGBTIQ+ sensitization in the workplace or counselling skills. You can also have staff members meet with local LGBTIQ+ support and **advocacy organizations** to listen to feedback on the work you're doing. Speaking with **LGBTIQ+ community members** may help them understand the issues displaced LGBTIQ+ people face, and it will help you understand the overall context in which LGBTIQ+ find themselves in the asylum country.

HR should make sure they're taking diversity and inclusion into account when **hiring** and that you are communicating the organization's stance on diversity and inclusion. Overall, if a staff member is committed to improving their work and attitude towards LGBTIQ+ colleagues, commit yourself to helping them as long as it takes them to do so.

If a staff member **requests to opt out** of assisting an LGBTIQ+ migrant, or if they would like to opt out of working on a team with an LGBTIQ+ colleague, thank them for sharing the request with you. Then, explain that in this organization, all staff members are expected to work with people from diverse backgrounds. Ask what it is that makes them feel uncomfortable and listen without judgment. Ask what you can do together to address the discomfort and help them move beyond it so they can perform their job with professionalism. This may require training or mentorship. However, make it clear that the policy is staff members are not allowed to opt out due to prejudice.

Some colleagues may **feel uncomfortable** acknowledging and confronting their own biases. This can be a new and uncomfortable topic for them, especially if they have not had training. They may not know how to discuss it without using strong or inappropriate language. It may be helpful to **acknowledge** the staff member's discomfort and reference ways they might address it. You can say, "I see this topic makes you uncomfortable. I know it's difficult to discuss. We're taking steps in this office to treat everyone equally. LGBTIQ+ training really helped me understand the issues LGBTIQ+ people face and why it's our duty to work with and serve them. You might feel better if you attend a training session."

If the staff member has already **had training**, you might reference some of the core concepts related to the human rights and dignity of LGBTIQ+ people that they learned in the training. You may also remind them that, in your office, you are tasked to treat all people with respect, regardless of who they are.

It may be inappropriate for a staff member to **interact** with persons of concern until their biases are addressed and they are able to approach LGBTIQ+ people in a professional way. Remember that anyone can share sensitive information at any time, and staff members may not know in advance they are serving an LGBTIQ+ case. You should temporarily have other staff members assist the relevant persons of concern in order to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect. If you supervise staff, work with them to regularly assess their work with LGBTIQ+ people of concern and obtain feedback from multiple sources.