

All-Gender Washrooms at Work

Implementation tips and issues to consider



What are all-gender washrooms?

All-gender washrooms are exactly what they sound like: washrooms for people of all genders.

Why do we need all-gender washrooms?

- **Gender is a protected grounds for discrimination** under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act, meaning that it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of gender identity or expression.
- **Access to washrooms is a basic human need** and human right, and avoiding use of washrooms can result in chronic health problems.
- **Transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people frequently experience anxiety and stress** when forced to use public binary-gendered washrooms, as it is common for them to experience harassment (either silent or verbal) and even physical violence.
- **All-gender washrooms don't just benefit trans and gender-variant people**, they also benefit families – such as single-parent families with children of different genders, or families with caregivers of people with disabilities or older adults.

Best practices for signage

1. Avoid silly signs:

They can be confusing, and they can make trans and gender-variant people feel less included by reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

For example: The first sign still portrays a clear gender binary and also dehumanizes people with disabilities; the second sign dehumanizes people with non-binary genders.



2. Use iconography that describes facilities, not gender:

It is better for both inclusion *and* clarity if you use iconography that makes clear what facilities can be found in a given washroom.



For example: Using a toilet icon is very clear and unambiguous. If designating multi-occupant washrooms as all-gender, you can also include icons depicting other included facilities, like change tables or urinals. This will allow people to select a washroom according to their needs.

3. If providing a mix of washrooms, provide signage explaining where to find all-gender washrooms:

It's not good enough to provide a single all-gender washroom if no one can find it. If not all of your washrooms will be all-gender, then be sure to include appropriately visible signage helping people locate your all-gender washrooms.

For example: One good way to do this is to add a sign below your existing washroom signage explaining where all-gender washrooms can be found.





Other best practices for implementation

Train and educate your employees about the change:

The goal of implementing all-gender washrooms is to promote safety and inclusion for trans and gender-variant people; implementing all-gender washrooms without first advising employees of the impending change or educating them about why it's important can be counter-productive to that goal. Make employees part of the conversation.

For larger workplaces: consider a phased approach

If your space is large, or you have more than one facility, consider phased implementation. Start by identifying washrooms that are accessible and easy to convert, and convert those first. Then evaluate to see what further changes you might need to implement going forward.

Make your all-gender washrooms both convenient and accessible

All-gender washrooms should be in high-traffic, easy-to-access areas. They should never be in areas that are hidden, hard-to-find, or that not everyone is able to access. Similarly, in order to be truly inclusive of people of all genders, your all-gender washroom must be accessible to people with disabilities.

Lastly, workplaces that are large or that have large numbers of employees need more than just one all-gender washroom. There should be multiple all-gender washrooms scattered throughout your facility so that they are not adding extra stress to trans or gender-variant people whose workspaces are located far from those washrooms.

SPECTRUM offers a variety of workshops in 2SLGBTQ+ cultural competency that help organizations along the path towards becoming more welcoming and inclusive to 2SLGBTQ+ employees, clients, and other partners or stakeholders.

Interested? Get in touch: info@ourspectrum.com