



Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

LGBTQIA+ Inclusion: General Recommendations and Best Practices for All State Agencies

Background: These recommendations and best practices were developed by the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs and adopted unanimously at the November 13, 2023 meeting within a larger document along with the [2024 Policy Priorities](#).

1. Inclusive Policies:

- **Non-Discrimination Policy:** Ensure that all staff and members of the public are aware of the [State of Maryland's non-discrimination laws](#) which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or genetic information.
- **Review and Update Policies:** Review and update internal and external policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Include LGBTQIA+ staff and/or consultants, and members of the public where appropriate in every level of the review process.
- **Restrooms and Facilities:** Ensure access and appropriate signage for gender-inclusive restrooms and facilities in State-owned buildings. Individuals have the right and should be encouraged to use restrooms and facilities that align with their gender identity.
- **Gender Inclusive Language:** Ensure gender inclusive language is used throughout all internal and external communications, guides, resources, etc.
- **Inclusive Insurance:** Ensure inclusive coverage for medical and mental health care, including transition related care.

2. Training and Professional Development:

- **Mandatory Training:** Require at least six hours of mandatory training for new and existing State employees annually in LGBTQIA+ cultural humility and competency. The training should be provided by people with lived experience.
- **Guest Speakers:** Invite and provide transit and compensation for LGBTQIA+ activists and thought leaders to speak at State-sponsored events.

3. Programming and Events:

- **Recognition:** Officially recognize and celebrate important LGBTQIA+ dates like Pride Month, Transgender Day of Remembrance, etc. Reference the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ calendar of events and days of significance.
- **Inclusive Events:** Ensure State-sponsored events are inclusive, using gender-neutral language, encouraging pronoun usage on name badges, and providing spaces that are affirming to all attendees.
- **LGBTQIA+ Forum or Summit:** Host or support Statewide LGBTQIA+ forums or summits designed to educate staff and the public on challenges and opportunities to support LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.
- **Support Groups:** Foster the creation and sustenance of LGBTQIA+ support groups or ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) Statewide and within State agencies to attract and retain LGBTQIA+ staff.
 - Model: <https://lgbtq.wa.gov/rain>
 - RAIN Charter: https://lgbtq.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/RAIN_Charter_2020.pdf

4. Community Engagement:

- **Outreach:** Create regularly scheduled outreach programs to address concerns specific to LGBTQIA+ communities, especially historically excluded groups such as transgender, nonbinary, people of color, and disabled LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Set up mechanisms to solicit feedback from LGBTQIA+ communities about State policies, programs, and services. Use the feedback to improve and expand accessibility and LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in State government.
- **Collaboration:** Partner with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, local LGBTQIA+ organizations and community groups to ensure policies and programs are informed by the needs of our communities.

5. External LGBTQIA+ Resources:

- **LGBTQIA+ Access Plan:** Each State agency should create an access plan in order to provide affirming and accessible resources and service to LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. State agencies should solicit feedback from LGBTQIA+ community members through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one meetings with citizens to understand where barriers exist and how to overcome them. Include the Department of Disabilities in the assessment and creation of resources for LGBTQIA+ people with disabilities.
- **LGBTQIA+ Webpage and Resource Directory:** Each State agency should compile and maintain a public directory of LGBTQIA+ resources available related to agency services and functions. These resources could be offered by Federal, State, and/or local government agencies or nonprofit partners. All LGBTQIA+ inclusive resources and affirming staff should be easily accessible by the public via State agency websites.
- **Support Services:** Invest in and partner with external organizations that provide LGBTQIA+ inclusive and affirming services related to agency services and functions.

- **Education:** Provide resources for LGBTQIA+ individuals to learn and understand how each agency can support their needs whether it be housing, health care, employment, education, etc. Additionally, provide education to the general public on the importance of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in an effort to end discriminatory practices in the State.
- **Sanctuary Support:** Ensure agencies are providing support and are prepared for the influx of LGBTQIA+ individuals and families moving to Maryland from less affirming States.

6. Staffing:

- **Dedicated Staffing:** Each State agency should have funded and resourced positions to support LGBTQIA+ individuals to access services provided by the State. This would include positions such as LGBTQIA+ Director of Inclusion, Outreach Manager/Coordinator, Training and Development Specialist, Community Liaison Officer, etc.
- **Diverse Hiring:** Ensure that State agencies are recruiting and retaining staff with lived experiences that are representative of diverse LGBTQIA+ communities.

7. Funding:

- **Budget Allocation:** Each agency should allocate or advocate for a specified budget for LGBTQIA+ initiatives. This funding will cover staff salaries, training programs, community outreach, events, and other resources.
- **LGBTQIA+ Fund and Grants:** Establish a Statewide grant program that supports local LGBTQIA+ organizations, events, or initiatives. These grants can help grassroots movements and provide resources to marginalized LGBTQIA+ groups that don't have access to larger funding sources.

8. Data Collection:

- **LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Data Collection:** Include questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual characteristics (SOGISC) in State surveys to better understand the challenges and needs of LGBTQIA+ communities.

To ensure these recommendations lead to concrete changes:

- **Implementation Plan:** Develop a strategy for implementation of these recommendations and best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- **Implementation Teams:** Assign dedicated teams or individuals in each agency who will be responsible for the implementation of these recommendations.
- **Annual Review:** Ensure each agency reviews their LGBTQIA+ inclusivity practices annually, addressing any gaps or areas of needed improvement.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** State agencies should be required to share their plans, progress, and challenges in order to provide the highest level of service for all Marylanders.