

Resources for LGBTQI+ Job Seekers

As a student or alum who identifies as LGBTQI+, you may have some questions about your job search that your straight and cisgender peers might not. This page offers resources to help answer some of these questions. You can also schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor to seek support throughout your career exploration and job search process.

Coming Out In The Job Search

One question LGBTQI+ job seekers may have is whether or not to come out during your job search. Coming out during your job search is a personal decision and there is no right or wrong in how to approach it. These questions can come up when deciding how to best highlight and talk about work and leadership experiences. They can also be a component of evaluating whether an organization's work environment is what you are seeking. Some key things you might consider when making this decision are the extent to which you are comfortable sharing your sexual orientation or gender identity with others, and an assessment of whether or not a particular work environment is an LGBTQI+ safe space. Coming out can be done at various points throughout your job search and it can be done as discreetly or explicitly as you feel comfortable with, or not done at all. Your comfort and safety are the top priority.

Coming Out or Indicating Allyship in Resumes and Cover Letters

As with any other stage of your job search, revealing your sexual orientation, gender identity, or allyship on a resume or cover letter is entirely up to you and your level of comfort. These decisions will come into play when determining how to market yourself and your experiences. One way you can come out on a resume or cover letter, or indicate allyship, is by listing any experience or affiliations you may have with LGBTQI+ professional or community organizations.

Here are some examples of how you can market an experience on your resume based on your level of comfortability:

Including LGBTQI+ community involvement on your resume:

LGBTQIA+ Youth Ambassador

Oct. 2019 - August 2020

New Alternatives for LGBTQ+ Homeless Youth

New York, NY

- Advocated for LGBTQI+ homeless youth by serving as team representative at community board meetings and speaking with council members.

Minimizing visibility of LGBTQI+ community involvement on your resume:

New Alternatives

New York, NY

Youth Ambassador

Oct. 2019-August 2020

- Served as team representative at community board meetings and spoke with council members to advocate for rights of homeless youth.

In the first example, the position title is placed first to highlight the community this individual worked for, and the LGBTQI+ population is specified in the bullet point. In the second example, the job candidate has chosen to remain more low-profile about their LGBTQI+ identity by placing the organization name first and without the subtitle, generalizing their title to “youth ambassador,” and not specifying the population they advocated for.

You may also have questions about using a preferred name on a resume or cover letter, if you have one. You can do so by using the first initial of your legal name followed by your preferred name (e.g. A. Jason Williams) or including your full first name followed by your preferred name in quotes (e.g. Adrienne “Jason” Williams). (See additional guidelines for using a preferred name below).

Coming Out During the Interview

Similar to cover letters and resumes, if you would like to come out during your interview, you can do so more explicitly, such as talking about your career experiences and interests and their connection to your lived experiences and identity. You may also decide to take an indirect approach such as asking about the organization’s non-discrimination policies, or health insurance packages. Another great question to ask your interviewer is what their workplace diversity and inclusion practices are. This lets the interviewer know what is important to you without you having to explicitly state it. Additionally, finding out whether or not the company offers diversity or inclusion training for its employees can help you assess or organization’s values and whether or not this is a work environment you would feel comfortable in. You may also mention when asked a question such as “Why are you seeking a job at our organization?” that you are attracted to their commitment to LGBTQI+ inclusion practices if you’ve researched the organization and such practices were evident.

For transgender or non-binary individuals, the question of whether to dress according to cisgender norms during an interview can be especially challenging and will again depend on your level of comfort as well as your assessment of the environment. If the environment appears LGBTQI+ inclusive (see below for tips on evaluating work environments), you may choose to dress professionally for the gender you are or in gender neutral attire, whatever makes you feel the most comfortable and confident. Testing out different style choices during mock interviews is a great way to get yourself feeling more comfortable in time for your interview.

Revealing your LGBTQI+ identity in an interview can work to your benefit when applying to companies that are actively seeking to expand diversity within their workforce. Coming out during the interview process makes it easier for these companies to achieve their goal by highlighting the unique perspective that you can add to their team.

What to Do if they Ask for Your Gender or Sexual Orientation?

It is illegal in New York to ask for someone's sexual orientation or gender in an interview. If you are asked this in an interview, you may respond if you are comfortable doing so. If you choose not to answer a question like this, you can respond by saying something along the lines of "I do not believe my sexual orientation or gender is relevant to my ability to successfully carry out this job." Identity-based questions may be asked in *voluntary*, anonymous demographics surveys as part of online applications which employers use to track how they are doing in attracting diverse candidates. Completion of these questions is voluntary, can not be tracked back to a specific applicant name, and whether or not you choose to complete them legally should not impact your application.

Using Your Preferred Name

While legal names have to be used for background checks and legal documents, it is perfectly ok to use your preferred name in an interview and on all non-legal documents, such as cover letters and resumes. Once again, your decision to do so will depend on your level of comfort with using your preferred versus legal name, and where you are in your coming out or transitioning process.

When making this decision you should consider whether you would like to be out at work or not. If using a preferred name, you should be consistent throughout your job search process by using it on your resumes, cover letters, and during the interview process so that employers know how you would like to be addressed. Understandably, this may lead to concerns about safety and discrimination. In this case, there is nothing wrong with using your legal name in your job search and coming out after being hired if you choose to do so. Again, it all depends on your personal level of comfort and what role you would like your LGBTQI+ identity to play in your job search and career. It is also perfectly ok not to be out at work if you do not want to be.

Assessing if a Work Environment is LGBTQI+ Safe

An important question you should ask yourself is “will I be ok working in an environment where it is not safe to be out?” If the answer is no, there are some steps you can take to assess the work culture of places you are applying to. Doing this may be difficult to fully achieve before actually starting a role. However, there are some questions you can ask both yourself and the employer throughout the hiring process. For example, are they an Equal Opportunity Employer? An EOE statement can typically be found on the job posting itself or the organization’s website. You can also try internet searches using key words along with the employer’s name (click [here](#) for examples of where organization’s EOE statements can typically be found). Keep in mind that anti-discrimination laws [vary by state](#). Other questions you might ask are what is the availability of gender-neutral restrooms around the office? What kind of sensitivity training regarding the LGBTQI+ community is offered to employees? Does the company have LGBTQI+ networks or affinity groups? The answers to these questions will help you gauge how the organization makes an effort to form an inclusive work environment. Additionally, when discussing benefits packages with human resources, you can inquire about what type of healthcare coverage is offered to transgender individuals, spouses in same sex couples, or domestic partners. More inclusive companies will likely offer more comprehensive benefits packages. Another great way to assess a work environment before starting is to network with people who have experience at the organization to find out more about its work culture through an inside perspective.

Additional Resources

CUNY Resources

CUNY is committed to supporting its LGBTQI+ student, staff, and faculty population. CUNY Central’s online [LGBTQI+ Hub](#) is updated and maintained by the CUNY LGBTQI+ Council, and

contains resources on CUNY's inclusion policies, Safe Zone training available to students and staff, FAQ's, events, and more!

External Resources

Apart from the resources available at CUNY there are a number of external resources and opportunities to help LGBTQI+ job seekers navigate their job search and career development process. Below is a list of selected resources.

[The NYC Department of Health Unity Project Workforce](#) has developed a comprehensive guide to workplace inclusivity for those who identify as LGBTQI+. The manual includes information on employer obligations under the law in regards to their LGBTQI+ employees, tips on how to ensure a potential place of employment offers an LGBTQI+ safe space.

[The Human Rights Campaign \(HRC\)](#) has a wealth of resources available for LGBTQI+ professionals and students. Click [here](#) for a comprehensive list of LGBTQI+ Professional and Student Associations that exist, broken down by industry, and links to each association's website. They have also reviewed state laws and policies that affect members of the LGBTQI+ community and their families which can be viewed [here](#), and have also developed a [list](#) of scholarships, fellowships and grants available to LGBTQI+ and allied students. Additionally, HRC has developed a corporate equality index which serves as the national benchmarking tool used to measure equality relating to treatment of LGBTQI+ employees. Click [here](#) to view how your organization or an organization you may be applying to has scored.

[The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) lays out your rights as an LGBTQI+ employee and how to handle cases of workplace discrimination.

[The National LGBTQ Task Force](#) is the nation's oldest LGBTQI+ advocacy group. They train and mobilize millions of activists across the U.S. to create a more equal society. Visit their page to stay up to date on LGBTQI+ advocacy related news and to learn how to get involved.

[The Transgender Law Center \(TLC\)](#) contains a robust collection of resources and publications to help you navigate legal questions you may have as a transgender student seeking employment.

[The CLAGS Fellowship Award](#) is given annually to a graduate student, academic, or an independent scholar for work on a dissertation, a first book manuscript, or a second book manuscript. The CLAGS Fellowship is open to intellectuals contributing to the field of LGBTQI+ studies. For more information on how to apply, visit their website or email clagsfellowships@gmail.com with any questions or concerns.

[Lambda Legal](#) has laid out your rights in the workplace as an LGBTQI+ employee or employee living with HIV, and why to do if you face discrimination.

[The Gay Center](#) provides career development programs designated to serve the unique needs of LGBTQI+ job seekers. They provide support with job searching, job transitioning, and job training.

[Out and Equal](#) is a California based organization dedicated to challenging companies and transforming workplaces to create a more inclusive and equal environment. Visit their website to see which organizations they work with, and to stay up to date on events, and fellowship/employment opportunities.

Meet with a Career Coach

Want to discuss your search in person with a career coach? Schedule a 1:1 Career Coaching appointment with the Office of Career Services to discuss your options. Click [here](#) to book an appointment.