

# USING PRONOUNS AT SOURCES OF STRENGTH

At Sources of Strength, we are working to empower a well world. We know that there are systems (institutional and social) in our communities that restrict some people's access to mental and physical health. One way that we embrace and empower health and wellness in our trainings is through the use of names and pronouns. Names and pronouns, when misused can cause harm, but names and pronouns, when used correctly, are extraordinarily powerful for building relationships.

- Research by the Journal of Adolescent Health found when people are invited to use their pronouns and present themselves authentically, Transgender youth experience a 29% decrease in suicidal thoughts and a 56% decrease in suicidal behavior. <sup>1</sup>
- In accordance with Title IX and the guidance provided by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), OCR advises school counselors to address students by their chosen name and accurate pronouns and alter their unofficial educational records to reflect the chosen name and accurate pronouns. <sup>2</sup>
- The simple act of family and friends utilizing a young transgender or gender-expansive person's accurate name and gender pronouns can have a significant impact on their mental wellbeing. Russell, Pollitt, Li and Grossman (2018) study of transgender and gender-expansive youths who were referenced using their appropriate name and pronouns at home, school, work, and with friends found that these individuals risk of depression and suicidality was dramatically lower than peers who were not referenced by their proper name and pronouns. Specifically, participants whose appropriate names and pronouns were used in all 4 environments (home, school, work, and with friends) exhibited a 65% reduction in suicide attempts, a 34% decrease in suicidal ideation, and 71% fewer symptoms of depression than transgender peers whose name and pronouns were not <sup>3</sup>acknowledged (Russell et al., 2018).

In trainings, Sources will invite people to introduce themselves, stating their names, their pronouns if they'd like, and either their grade in school, or their role in the school/community. For example, I would share, "My name is Janell, and my pronouns are she, her, hers. I am a National Trainer and Instructional Coach with Sources of Strength." Please model the behavior you'd like to see. We also invite all of our trainers to use people's names, and work to remove gendered language from their vocabulary (i.e. friends, y'all, folks, sophomores, instead of guys and girls).

You can be an Agent of Change. Asking an individual what their pronouns are, and consistently using them correctly, is a way to show your respect, to honor and acknowledge the person in front of you. It sets a tone for allyship, for safety, and for ensuring that our Sources Teams create spaces for everyone to experience belonging. Thank you for helping others know that they belong. The use of pronouns in our work isn't a preference, it's a protocol and a priority... and it's life-saving prevention.

If you would like to learn more about this subject, we invite you to utilize [this Trevor Project Resource](#). And [this website](#), and watch [this](#) and [this](#) and [this](#) video to hear folks from the LGBTQ community explain what using pronouns means to them. If you have any questions, please feel free to connect with our Director of Training, Dan Adams at 720.557.5506 or [dan@sourcesofstrength.org](mailto:dan@sourcesofstrength.org).

<sup>1</sup> Pollitt, Amanda & Ioverno, Salvatore & Russell, Stephen & Li, Gu & Grossman, Arnold. (2019). Predictors and Mental Health Benefits of Chosen Name Use Among Transgender Youth. Youth & Society. 0044118X1985589. 10.1177/0044118X19855898.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS\\_Transgender.pdf](https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_Transgender.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Russell, S., Pollitt, A., Li, G. & Grossman, A. (2018). Chosen name use is linked to reduced depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior among transgender youth, Journal of Adolescent Health. - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6165713/> or [http://www.suarakita.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Journal-of-Adolescent-Health-Volume-issue-2018-doi-10.1016\\_j.jadohealth.2018.02.003-Russell-Stephen-T.-Pollitt-Amanda-M.-Li-Gu-Grossman-Arnold-Chosen-Name-Use-Is-Linked-to-Reduced-Depress.pdf](http://www.suarakita.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Journal-of-Adolescent-Health-Volume-issue-2018-doi-10.1016_j.jadohealth.2018.02.003-Russell-Stephen-T.-Pollitt-Amanda-M.-Li-Gu-Grossman-Arnold-Chosen-Name-Use-Is-Linked-to-Reduced-Depress.pdf)