

The Pronoun Project

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St. Lawrence Health

**ST LAWRENCE
HEALTH**

An Affiliate of
Rochester Regional Health

Introduction (1 of 2)

St. Lawrence Health serves St. Lawrence County and neighboring rural counties.

Members include:

- Canton-Potsdam Hospital - Level III Trauma Center
- Gouverneur Hospital - Critical Access Hospital (2013)
- Massena Hospital (2019)
- Affiliated clinics

Affiliated with Rochester Regional Health since 2021



Introduction (2 of 2)

St. Lawrence County

- Population 108,000
- Largest NY county – larger than Delaware
- Borders Canada, north and east of the Adirondacks
- 13 villages and 1 city (pop. 10,000)
- 2nd highest poverty rate in NY (18.9%)
- 4 colleges within 10 miles in Potsdam and Canton
 - St. Lawrence University
 - Clarkson University
 - SUNY Potsdam
 - SUNY Canton
- Total of 12,000 students from across the world



Where we started

- The Pronoun Project is supported by our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (est. 2020) in collaboration with our affiliated health system, Rochester Regional Health (RRH).
- Our DEI Committee had discussed use of pronouns over the past year, but nothing had been initiated.
- We determined that our affiliated health system, Rochester Regional Health offers pronoun badge backers to all staff members.



Problem statement

Anecdotal comments about pronoun use from staff and patients has brought the importance of pronouns and education to the forefront:

- The Hiring Committee ran into a few cases of incorrect pronoun use.
 - We modified their script to include pronouns. “Hello, my name is ____ and I use the pronouns she/her. Would you like to share your pronouns?”
- Transgender patient who is frustrated by having to fully educate a new provider regarding their gender identity, pronouns, etc.
 - The DEI Committee recommended that our Patient Advisory Committee include more representation from diverse perspectives.
- Pediatrician who notices a patient’s discomfort and asks for preferred name and gender to change in their EMR.

The SLH DEI Committee is working closely with our Outpatient Mental Health Department to get an endorsement for LGBTQ Affirming Care. Sharing pronouns shows our support for this program, our patients, and our colleagues.

What we did this year

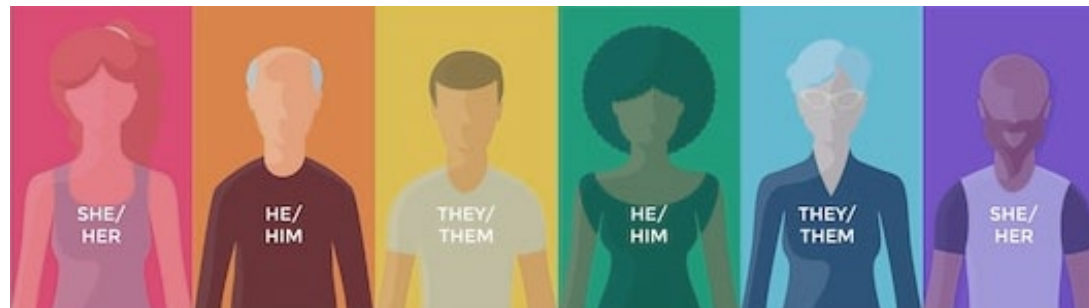
- Reinvigorated and strengthened our DEI Committee with the addition of new members, including our new Vice President of HR who has a history of championing DEI.
- Made stronger connections with the DEI Office at Rochester Regional Health.
- Developed a partnership with our Outpatient Mental Health Services Department, which is applying for a LGBTQ affirming care endorsement.
- Discussed with DEI Committee:
 - Need for staff education and training before offering badge backers.
 - DEI Committee will share brief videos and print materials and choose one of each to offer to staff.
 - Starting with adding pronouns to email signatures – official approval needed?
 - RRH had tables with DEI Office members available to discuss pronoun use and offer badge backers for LGBT Pride Month (June) and led a “Post Your Pronouns” campaign. The SLH DEI Committee is interested in doing this.
 - DEI Committee wrote a budget proposal for funding \$2 badge backers, which HR is bringing forward.

Lessons learned

- Communication within a health system is often a challenge:
 - Some DEI initiatives have been launched at SLH without the knowledge of the DEI Committee.
 - Many staff members do not know we have a DEI Committee.
- Communication with affiliated health systems is also a challenge.
 - Making connections is key.
- It is extremely helpful to have champions in administration to effectively advance a project.
- There is much interest in participating in DEI work throughout our health system, but it has to be widely advertised.
- DEI work requires quite a time commitment, which is a challenge when it is not part of a paid position. An interesting, talented, and dedicated volunteer team helps with this.

SLH DEI Committee future work

- Our newly rejuvenated DEI committee will continue to meet monthly.
- Need budget approval to purchase badge backers, less expensive pins, or begin printing pronouns directly on badges.
- Provide pronoun use education and badge backers for interested staff in early 2023:
 - DEIB Committee members will set up tables to offer badge backers and education for the staff.
 - Badge backers will also be available at our badge office.
- Ramp up our “We Ask Because We Care” campaign in 2023. Share the training materials/videos with all staff. Make sure this integrates into EPIC.
- Start Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to focus on specific demographic groups and help inform decision making.





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Questions?

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