

Professional Attire & Gender Identity

Career Wardrobe began 23 years ago, and was started in the era of welfare-to-work programs, which primarily targeted female caretakers of young children. We were an organization by and for women for many years, but have prided ourselves on evolving to serve the needs our clients presented to us. When our clients said that their brothers and partners and friends could use a similar service that outfitted them with clothing and confidence, we knew there was an opportunity there for us to continue serving women while also opening our doors to male clients. After a few years of working with male clients at no cost, we started surveying them to see if they would shop at the Wardrobe Resale if the opportunity presented itself. Their response was an overwhelming YES as they struggled to find high-quality work attire at a reasonable cost, and starting this month, Career Wardrobe has been reselling menswear in order to meet our client's needs.

Having menswear attire on our sales floor means that we also have the ability to allow our clients to select the clothing that best affirms their identity: some clients may prefer pants from the menswear department and top from our womenswear inventory, or vice versa. Engaging our staff in trainings around appropriate language around pronouns, gender identity, and expression for clients and shoppers has been an opportunity for learning how we can ensure that all job seekers feel accepted and welcome at Career Wardrobe. This education is crucial as we partner with agencies who serve LGBTQ+ clients and ensuring that we dress their participants with the high-quality service that all of our clients receive, and an enhanced understanding of the challenges they may face in choosing interview clothing.

We believe that professional attire can and should affirm someone's gender identity and expression, and that our role is to help our clients find the most professional expression of themselves so that they can nail their job interview and begin improving their economic circumstances.

Interested in learning more about our services? Email program@careerwardrobe.org