

## Gender Support Plans

*A gender support plan is a document that allows for clear understanding between the student, appropriate staff, and caregivers about how a student's gender related needs will be best met at school.*

The gender support plan team must include the student as well as individuals taking responsibility for the student's experience at school. This can include parents/caregivers, administrators, counselors, teachers, mental health providers, and representatives from supporting organizations. It is crucial that team members be committed to the physical and emotional well-being of the student. The team should anticipate possible scenarios the student might encounter, and what might happen if things don't go according to plan. The goal is to maximize conditions for success. There is no "one size fits all" plan for all students, but a GSP should include issues such as:

- How public or private will be the student's gender assigned at birth be?
- Who is the "go to" adult the student can approach if they are feeling unsafe at school. Is there a back-up if that person is not available?
- What is the plan for use of facilities such as bathrooms and/or changing rooms? Will these expectations remain the same during class trips and/or afterschool activities?
- If the school has a dress code, what will be the expectations for this student?
- Are there specific social dynamics with other students, staff members, or families that need to be accounted for at school?
- Does this student have siblings at the same school? What support will they need?

## ASCA Guidelines

Core Curriculum: Ensure school's core counseling curriculum is inclusive of LGBT history and community.

Student Planning: Provide a safe space and address individual student's needs.

Responsive Services: Provide opportunity for need-focused individual and group counseling. Be familiar with outside LGBT appropriate resources. Respond to crises in a culturally sensitive manner.

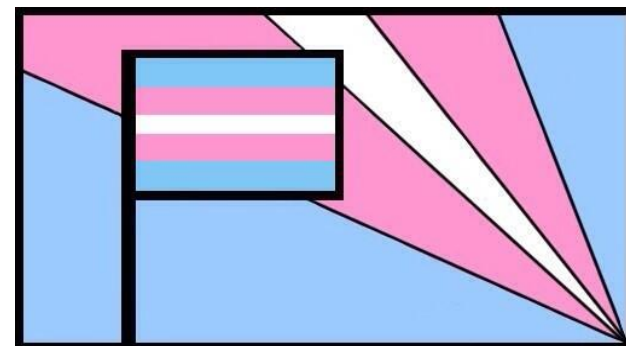
Stakeholders: Student, Parent/Guardian, Counselor, School Administrators, School Psychologist, LGBT appropriate outside resources

Being a Supportive Counselor:

- o Be a visible ally
  - Make your space and yourself visible as a safe space, and let your actions speak for you
- o Support students who come out to you
  - Offer support but don't assume a student needs help, be a role model of acceptance, appreciate the student's courage, listen, assure and respect confidentiality, ask questions that demonstrate understanding, acceptance, and compassion, remember the student has not changed, challenge traditional norms, and be prepared to give a referral
- o Respond to anti-LGBT language and behaviors
  - Address name-calling, bullying, or harassment immediately, name the behavior, use the teachable moment, support the targeted student, and hold students accountable
- o Support student clubs, such as a Gay- Straight Alliance

From: <http://www.glsen.org/>

## Supporting Transgender Youth at School



*Transgender people are people whose gender identity is not aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth and/or whose gender doesn't conform with traditional or societal gender norms.*

**\*75% of transgender students feel unsafe at school.**

**-transequality.org**

## Names & Preferred Pronouns

If possible, the highest level of privacy can be provided to students by changing their name in the school's student information system. If this is not a possibility, the school must attempt to anticipate situations where the student's name given at birth could be used. This may include class lists, bus passes, and lunch cards.

Laws surrounding permanent pupil records and state data systems may require that a hard copy of the student's birth certificate be kept on file, either at the school or district office. Keeping these identifying materials locked can allow schools to follow guidelines around records and data reporting while still maintaining a student's privacy. It is important to weigh whether following bureaucratic guidelines in the same way for all students is worth the violation of a student's privacy and the potential ramifications that come with a possible breach of information. While you may have to explain the mismatch of names and gender to an auditor at some point, the value of maintaining a student's privacy is worth the effort.

**Use of facilities....** *Students should be allowed to use facilities, such as bathrooms, that are either consistent with gender identity or are private. Ideally, these choices would be made by the student. There are times when a school is unwilling or unable to meet a student's request. If this happens, the gender support team needs to strategize how to allow for appropriate student access. It may be necessary to advocate for students at both building and district levels.*

## Vocabulary

**sex** - used to describe biological factors such as chromosomes, genitals, and hormone levels that are used to categorize people as male or female

**gender** - refers to a wide range of social/cultural meanings that are ascribed to biological sex

**gender roles** - specific sets of expectations for gender expression, which characterize what men and women are "supposed to" be in a particular society

**gender expression** - refers to behaviors, such as attire, demeanor, and language, through which we intentionally or unintentionally communicate gender

**gender identity** - refers to a person's internal self-concept with regard to gender categories like man and woman

**cisgender** - people whose gender identity and expression conform with relative ease to societal expectations

## RESOURCES

### Health

[ingersollgendercenter.org](http://ingersollgendercenter.org)

[www.lifelong.org/heyo](http://www.lifelong.org/heyo)

[www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics-programs/gender-clinic/](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics-programs/gender-clinic/)

### Community Resources

[transequality.org](http://transequality.org)

[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

[www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)

### Education

[www.glsen.org/students/tsr](http://www.glsen.org/students/tsr)

[www.genderdiversity.org](http://www.genderdiversity.org)

### Legal Issues

[www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/article/trans-supporting-students](http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/article/trans-supporting-students)

### Local to Seattle

[www.lamberthouse.org](http://www.lamberthouse.org)

[www.youthcare.org/40percent](http://www.youthcare.org/40percent)

## Privacy Vs. Disclosure

The school counselor needs to help each student understand and weigh their various options surrounding informational privacy. It is crucial to remember that it's the student's right to determine what level of privacy they wish to assert. The amount of privacy a student desires to maintain at school will determine specific issues associated with development and implementation of a gender support plan.

It might be that only one person in the system will be aware, or multiple adults working with the school may be made aware of the student's gender status. Some students may choose to disclose information to a larger group which includes their peers.

*It is important that students be allowed to choose the level of disclosure they are comfortable with, and that privacy be maintained.*

## What if parents don't support a child's gender?

School is responsible for supporting the student's needs. It is important to assess the level of parental support, and the student's need for privacy if caregivers are not supportive. It may be that staff will use a student's preferred name at school, while using their name assigned at birth when communicating with parents/guardians.