



# Student Support Plan

## SECTION ONE: Systemic Readiness

Considerations for both schools and for students are best addressed before you have a request for student support. Schools that postpone taking proactive measures often find themselves managing more anxiousness, confusion, and stress in the long run. Waiting for a gender-diverse student to request support before having a plan in place does a disservice to all. A prepared staff and leadership team is a relief for all students and families. In much the same way that advance preparation occurs for students with IEPs/504 plans, or students who are multilingual learners, we must also be proactive in our preparations for gender-diverse learners.

There are different facets to consider when addressing a gender-diverse student's needs. Some can be anticipated. Others you will discover as you encounter each student's unique circumstances. While a generalized approach to a student's needs can provide a foundation, it is important to understand that one approach does not fit all. Adjustments can and should be made along the way.

There are several focal points to consider: one is to address the specific needs of the student, the second is the degree to which the parent/caregiver of the student is involved, and lastly, the readiness of the school faculty, staff and administration to successfully include all gender diverse students within the school community. Working collaboratively with the student (and any student-designated adult(s)) to move through their established plan will ensure the highest likelihood of success for the student.

Unlike the student and/or parent – who are likely crafting a support plan for the first time – schools will have the benefit of advance preparation and experience to confidently support any gender-diverse child that comes to their attention. This support plan document will assist in that preparation and the achievement of optimal outcomes for all.

## Gender-Inclusive Schools Policy and Procedures

Having a district policy for schools is an important component of the successful inclusion of trans and other gender diverse students. If a gender inclusion policy is not yet in place, work to create one. There are many time-tested and successfully implemented policies and procedures across the U.S. to emulate. Regardless of whether a gender-specific district policy currently exists, the foundational elements are already established within school districts across the U.S. Public schools have an obligation to address instances of bias and discrimination in any district educational program or activity offered, and are required to comply with federal laws concerning harassment, intimidation, bullying and other forms of discrimination based on sex.

Increased clarity for everyone is needed to achieve successful gender inclusion in school environments and to keep students safe and free from discrimination. Clear articulation of gender-inclusive policy, procedures, and related expectations are the key elements necessary to accomplish this.

### Addressing the needs of gender-diverse students should include but is not limited to the following:

- Consistent use of names and pronouns
- Updates to student records, class rosters, diplomas, school pictures, computer logins, yearbooks, etc. to include student's name and gender
- Maintaining a student's right to privacy regarding confidential health and education information
- Restroom and locker room accessibility
- Equitable participation in sports, dress codes, and other gender-separated activities that are most closely aligned with the student's stated gender identity



## Advance Preparation: Checklist for School Administrators

- o Do you have a gender-inclusive policy and an outline of procedures which articulate the expectations and applicability of that policy?
- o Do you have an identified administrator(s) who will be available to support, educate or guide teachers, staff, or parents should questions arise regarding policy, procedures, and implementation?

### Students

- o Are student rights with respect to name, gender marker, and others changes readily accessible to students in online and written formats?
- o Do students know where to gain further information about gender support plans? How is this communicated? (For ex. website, school counselors, student handbook, etc.)
- o Do faculty and staff know where to readily access this information and how to guide students to this information as well?

### Faculty and Staff

- o Do faculty and staff know where to gain further information about gender support plans and how to implement them? How is this communicated to them? (Ex. Are P.E. teachers and coaches in possession of resources like the “Gender Diverse Youth Sport Inclusivity Toolkit” and/or other resources)?
- o Are they aware of their responsibility in ensuring student safety when developing any support plan and timeline?
- o Do faculty and staff understand their responsibilities regarding, and how to address, any instances of misgendering, disparaging comments, and misbehavior?
- o Have any professional development opportunities been provided for all staff on the topic of gender-diverse students? How do they gain any needed ongoing support?
- o Is there a dedicated person or team who can develop a school-wide assessment of all areas in need of updates (ex. procedures related to attendance records, standardized tests, athletics, student records, class rosters, ID cards, dress codes, facilities usage, overnight trips guidelines, etc.)? Gather Input from administrative staff, the IT team, athletic directors/coaches, counselors, teachers, parents, and students. What are the subsequent recommendations and anticipated timelines needed for evaluation? Use that assessment to adjust any school-wide practices that are exclusionary for gender diverse students.

## Facilities

- o Do locker rooms and other facilities have designated private changing options available for those students desiring greater privacy for changing into or out of uniforms, P.E. clothes, costumes, etc.?
- o How does the school regularly communicate (student/parent orientations, website, email, etc. ) these facilities options to all students and their families?
- o What practices are in place to ensure that students are able to utilize private changing areas in a timely and efficient manner?

## Parent Community

- o How will parents be made aware of gender-inclusive practices within the school (ex. school handbook, parent orientations, etc.)?
- o Have you been able to provide educational opportunities for the school's parent community so that they may deepen their learning and have questions addressed?
- o Do you have a dedicated person or persons identified to address any parent/caregiver questions or concerns?

# SECTION TWO: Getting Started

## Student Considerations

- o What is the ideal timeline for the student's implementation of the support plan and what factors need consideration? If needed, negotiate a timeline with the student to provide the most optimal outcome for the student. Student's health, safety, and experience are paramount. (ex. would the student benefit by waiting for two weeks in order to better prepare staff, is the student in distress and needs immediate action, are there timing considerations due to holidays, home life, etc.).
- o Would disclosure to a parent or caregiver place a student in a place of emotional or physical danger? If so, how can the school ensure that there is no inadvertent disclosure?
- o Who is the person or persons tasked with drafting the support plan in collaboration with the student (ex. counselor, parent, principal, etc.)?
- o If parent/caregiver involvement is part of the support plan, does the caregiver understand that they have an open invitation to further discuss questions to allay any outstanding concerns to better optimize the outcomes for their child? Do they know who their school point of contact is regarding any questions/concerns or needs for further collaboration?



## Faculty and Staff Preparations

- o Do teachers and other staff feel adequately prepared for students' gender disclosure? If not, what are steps that can be taken to improve this?
- o Do teachers feel confident to address questions and inquiries from other students including the gender-diverse student?
- o Do teachers know how to respond and/or intervene appropriately if any inappropriate behavior occurs (ex. teasing, deliberate misgendering, etc.)?
- o Do teachers and staff understand their responsibility to correctly refer to, and engage with, a gender diverse student in a respectful, timely manner (ex. name, pronoun, etc.)?
- o Do they understand their responsibility to intervene and address instances of student misuse of name and/or pronouns?
- o Is there a debrief/check-in scheduled for teachers to share successes, strategies, and challenges with each other?
- o Do the faculty or staff understand that they may seek additional support if needed. (ex. a teacher who has a trans student in their classroom may initially need more support than one who doesn't).
- o Do they understand the need to respect the student's right to privacy, to the degree that is applicable, by not disclosing personal identifying information or other details that may jeopardize that right?
- o Do they also recognize that a student's right to privacy is federally protected and that others do not have a "right to know" a student's gender status if that student does not wish to have it disclosed?
- o Do faculty and staff understand that they do not have the right or obligation to disclose the student's gender identity to a parent or caregiver?
- o Do teachers/staff know their point of contact should they have additional questions or need to deepen their understanding with a more knowledgeable staff member?

## SECTION THREE: Creating the Support Plan

Generating a Gender Diversity Support Plan is a process designed to be student-centric. The questions and considerations are reasonably comprehensive but may not cover every student's needs or circumstances. Nor is the plan a static one. A caregiver may not be involved at first but may be more ready to engage once they deepen their own understanding or find additional support. Initially, a child may not wish to disclose anything about their gender identity to anyone other than the educator helping to create the plan. Some children may need adult guidance on how or when information – like a name and pronoun change – is disclosed to peers or teachers. It is crucial to understand that a student will likely not be aware of all the areas in need of attention so the support plan process is meant to increase their understanding of their rights including how to access ongoing support. Lastly, a student should not be held responsible or expected to compromise their needs, because of unpreparedness on the part of the school.

### 1. Assessment

#### Gathering Basic Information

- o Is the student requesting a new name?
- o Is the student requesting a new pronoun?
- o Is this a new, incoming student? Y/N
- o Grade level of the student?
- o Does the student understand that they can request a new student ID card, computer login, etc. to address any name/photo/pronoun changes?

### 2. Discovery

#### Parent/Caregiver

- o Are the parent(s)/caregivers aware of the student's gender identity/expression requests?
- o If aware, are the parent(s)/caregivers supportive? Distressed? Oppositional? Ambivalent? Other? What additional supports can be provided to the caregiver?
- o Would disclosure to a parent or caregiver place a student in a place of emotional or physical danger? If so, how can the school ensure that there is no inadvertent disclosure?
- o What are the support steps being taken at home? Are there any areas of alignment from home to school that could help with the transition?

## Parent/Caregiver continued

- o What resources can the school provide families? Are these resources readily available for families seeking additional help? (Ex. family support programs like [www.transfamilies.org](http://www.transfamilies.org))
- o Foster care/ward of the state? (Ex. Is the caregiver supportive and will the caregiver be involved?)
- o Language barriers? (Ex. Will a translator be needed? Does the caregiver rely on the child for translation?)
- o Cultural considerations? (Ex. Are there culturally-specific wardrobe expectations?)

## Family and Community

- o Siblings? If so, what support steps need to be in place for the sibling?
- o Divorced/separated/blended families? To what degree will additional caregivers be involved?
- o Is the family involved with any organizations or groups that could be beneficial for the school to know about? Does the caregiver expect additional support from these entities? (Ex. Church community, support group, child's playgroup, adoption group, etc.?)

## Social Transition

- o Has the student already begun social transition? (names, pronouns, clothing, etc.)
- o Does the student have a preferred timeline for social transition steps?
- o Is the student's gender status known to fellow students?
- o Is the student's gender status known to teachers and staff?
- o To what degree does the student want their status known to peers? Teachers and others? This can vary from person to person, or situationally.
- o Is the student open & conversational about their gender history?
- o Is the student engaged in sports, P.E., or other gender-segregated activities?
- o What restroom and locker room is the student currently using?



### 3. Plan Development

#### a. Informing Students of Their Rights

- Is the student aware of their federally-protected right to privacy, including nondisclosure to a parent/caregiver if needed?
- Does the student understand that they have a right to privacy with respect to any school-to-home communications, parent-teacher meetings, or other engagements with parent(s) or caregivers?
- Is the student aware of their right to determine transition-related steps and subsequent timelines?
- Does the student understand that they have the right to have access to the facility that best aligns with their gender identity?
- Is the student aware of how, and with whom, to address when their rights have been dismissed, ignored, delayed, or overlooked, inadvertently or otherwise? Does the student know that they can discuss this with the designated support plan person (ex. sharing if a particular teacher were to deny their rights or take steps that were contrary to the support plan)?

#### b. Optimizing the Student's Pathway

- Does the student understand that others do not have a "right to know" that student's gender status if that student does not wish to have it disclosed or discussed?
- Has the student identified initial steps and associated timelines? How does the student describe their own level of readiness for each step?
- Does the student understand that they can modify/adjust their transition plan as needed? Are they aware of the staff member(s) who will facilitate those changes?
- Does the student know how to request any/all administrative updates?
- Does the student understand that any gender-specific dress code requirements are based on gender identity, not anatomy?
- If a student's gender identity is nonbinary (or another gender-expansive term), does the student understand that dress code parameters will apply to them based on requirements, not gender specificity? (ex. expected skirt length, shirt logo/image restrictions, etc.)
- Does the student understand that they have the right to have access to the facility that best aligns with their gender identity?
- Has the student identified a teacher or other adult point people to whom they can have immediate access for support or to address any unexpected situation that may arise?



## Optimizing the Student's Pathway continued

- o Does the student want direct involvement with teachers regarding the communication of transition-related steps? With students? To what extent does the student wish to be involved? Does the student want any caregiver involvement in these communications?
- o Does the student have an existing level of peer/friend support?
- o Can these students be engaged as part of the support plan? In what ways?
- o Would the student like any additional support from peers, teachers, principal?
- o Is the transition timeline realistic and agreed upon by both student and all involved parties?

### c. Considerations for Support Plan

#### I. Facilities

1. What are the student's needs for optimal access to the bathroom?
2. Is the student aware that, if desired, an alternative restroom (ex. staff restroom) is available to them but not required?
3. What are the student's needs/requests for the locker room?
4. Does the student need any accommodation for facility usage (ex. alternate P.E. changing schedule and/or location, all-gender restroom access, etc.)?
5. Has the student expressed a preference for specific facilities (ex. restrooms, locker room, etc.)? Is their preference a temporary transition step (ex. using an all-gender restroom for an interim period)?

#### II. Activities/Classes

- o What are the student's participation needs/requests for PE and athletics?
- o What are students' needs with respect to gender-specific activities such as drama, dance, choir, and other activities?
- o Are there alternative options available to satisfy P.E. requirements if the student desires a waiver?
- o If an alternate path for a P.E. requirement is requested, is the student aware of self-driven or independent study options? (ex. athletic club membership, martial arts program, walking/running weekly benchmarks, extracurricular programs, etc.)

## Activities/Classes continued

- What are the student's needs regarding participation in the health/sex education curriculum that will optimize students' safety, privacy, comfort, and engagement?
- What are the student's preferences when considering any school trips that include overnight accommodations (ex. pre-selection of friends/ students to share room, private areas changing clothes, using facilities, etc.)?
- Is the student interested in, or will the student benefit from working with a speech therapist?

### d. Adult Caregivers - Collaborative Involvement

1. Does the student have any siblings attending the school? If so, what support steps need to be in place for the sibling?
2. Does the student come from a divorced/separated/blended family and, if so, what relevant factors need to be addressed?
3. Are there cultural considerations that need to be addressed? (Interpreter needed, wardrobe/uniform considerations, etc.).
4. Are there aspects related to faith that need to be addressed? (ex. referral to a faith leader if caregiver is in need of support).
5. Are the student's caregivers supportive of the plan and the student's transition? What are the support steps being taken at home? Are there any areas of alignment from home to school that could help with the transition?
6. Is the family involved with any organizations or groups that could be beneficial for the school to know about?
7. What resources can the school provide families? Are these resources readily available for families seeking additional help?

### e. Additional Considerations

- Does the student understand that the implementation of a support plan does not mean that people will immediately "forget" a former name or pronoun, or that they won't temporarily misstep or have questions? (Ex. often a younger child who is socially transitioning and whose classmates are aware of the child's gender history).

## additional considerations continued

- Students should understand that some discussion does need to occur when seeking name and pronoun changes. Students should have input on how, to what degree, and when this discussion occurs and whether they want to be present for it or not (ex. excused from class for that period or day).
- Discussion should occur if a student deems their parent to be “unsupportive” and to what degree. Some interventions could be helpful and additional resources provided to parents. (ex. potential for being kicked out of home versus a parent who occasionally slips with a name or pronoun).
- If a high degree of privacy is needed with the parent/caregiver, the student should be informed of how to best achieve this and understand that inadvertent disclosure could happen (ex. when a caregiver accesses the student management software system for grades) . Student and counselor/staffer should collaboratively consider how this might change support plan decisions, timing, etc.
- Gender support plans, like other student support plans, should be updated periodically and with a timeline that is transparent (i.e. every six months, once a year, or as needed/requested). Plan factors and timelines can and should evolve to meet the needs of any particular gender-diverse student’s needs and circumstances.

Supporting the journey of gender-diverse youth may feel daunting, which is understandable. The factors in need of consideration for a 10th-grade student, for example, will likely be different than those of a 2nd-grade child. The plan for a student with a gender supportive caregiver in their life may look quite different than for a student whose safety needs are much higher. As greater familiarity with plan considerations and successful implementation occurs, educators will gain greater confidence to manage the intricacies that each student may bring.

## Resources

Parent Support: [TransFamilies.org](https://www.transfamilies.org)

School Training: Gender Diversity

Book: *Trans Children in Today's Schools*

Best Practices for Supporting Gender Diverse Children: Family Acceptance Project

Sports: Gender Diverse Youth Sports Inclusivity Toolkit