



# GUIDELINES FOR THE INCLUSION OF TRANSGENDER MEMBERS

Girl Guides of Canada—Guides du Canada (GGC) recognizes and values the richness of human diversity in its many forms, and therefore strives to ensure environments where girls and women from all walks of life, identities, and lived experiences feel a sense of belonging and can participate fully. As such, persons who live their lives as females are welcome to join GGC.

This document will assist Unit Guiders who are working with girls who identify as transgender. These guidelines will help you welcome and include transgender members in your unit, as well as work with transgender adult members or parents.

In addition to these guidelines, if a girl or her parents/guardians have identified to you that she is transgender it is appropriate to reach out to them for input on accommodations. You may also reach out to the GGC Inclusivity Specialist at [inclusivity@girlguides.ca](mailto:inclusivity@girlguides.ca).

For more information:

- [Inclusivity in Canadian Guiding](#)
- [Guidelines to Achieving Inclusivity in Guiding](#)
- Anti-Discrimination Policy 01-16-01 in the [Governance Manual](#)

# DEFINITIONS

The definitions below are not meant to label members, but rather to assist Guiders in understanding some of the terminology they may come across when working with members who are transgender. It is important that individuals can tell us what words they would like used for them.

## **CISGENDER:**

a person whose gender identity aligns with their biological sex (e.g. a person who is biologically female and identifies as a woman).

## **GENDER EXPRESSION:**

how a person expresses gender, such as what clothes they wear, their hairstyle, activities they participate in, etc.

## **GENDER IDENTITY:**

a person's sense of their gender as being female, male, or a combination of both. Gender identity may or may not align with the person's biological sex.

## **GENDER NONCONFORMING:**

a person who differs from the stereotypical expectations of their gender (e.g. a female dressing in "male" clothes). How this is understood differs in different cultures.

## **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:**

a description of how a person experiences sexual and romantic attraction. Sexual orientations can include asexual (not experiencing sexual attraction), heterosexual (experiencing attraction to another sex), lesbian and gay (experiencing attraction to the same sex), bisexual (experiencing attraction to more than one sex) and more. It's important to remember that all of us have both a sexual orientation *and* a gender identity. Knowing a person's trans status does not give you any information on their sexual orientation.

## **TRANS GIRL:**

a person whose biological sex assigned at birth is male, but whose gender identity is female. She may be transitioning or have already transitioned into being a female.

## **TRANSGENDER:**

a person whose gender identity is different from their biological sex assigned at birth (e.g. someone who is born biologically male and identifies as a female).

## **TRANSITION:**

the process where a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

## **TWO SPIRIT:**

an identity used by First Nations people to acknowledge that many nations have and historically had specific roles for people who we might now identify as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer).



# QUESTIONS



# ANSWERS

## **Question: How do I know if a member is transgender?**

**Answer:** It is not the role of a Guider to judge who is and who is not a boy or girl. Hair length, interest in sports, interest in makeup or jewellery, or indeed any interest (or lack thereof) does not identify who is and who is not a male or female. It is not appropriate to ask a member if they are transitioning. It would be appropriate to listen and believe a person who says they are transitioning.

The only way to know if a member is transgender is if the member tells you they are. Guiders are often held in positions of trust and a member in your unit may feel comfortable to reach out to you. They may have already reached out to their parents, or they may have not. In any case, an individual is to be considered the final authority on their own gender identity. Self-identification is more important than either outward appearance or sex markers on government issued ID.

It's important to remember that transition is a process, not a single moment. For many people, transition is something they do over time, and they may transition in some spaces sooner than others. You may have a member who is identifying as a boy at home, but as a girl at Guides. As long as she is identifying as a girl at Guides, she is welcome.

## **Question: What pronoun do I use when addressing someone who is transgender?**

**Answer:** Regardless of the sex of the individual, use the pronoun that the person considers appropriate for themselves. For example, most trans girls may have been identified as male at birth, but self-identify as female, and would prefer "she" and

"her." It is always respectful to refer to a person using the pronouns they prefer. If you need to ask a child in your unit how they would like to be addressed, you should do so privately.

## **Question: What should I do with the information that a girl is transgender?**

**Answer:** Unless otherwise directed by the girl, information about a girl's status as transgender should be treated as confidential, and only shared with others when there is a compelling need-to-know (i.e. the girl is receiving medical treatment and her trans status would be revealed). That said, some girls may want to share information about being transgender with their unit, and they should be supported to do so in a positive and affirming manner.

## **Question: How do I ensure there is appropriate washroom access for a member in my unit who is transgender?**

**Answer:** Any child in your unit, including those who are trans, may use the washroom that best corresponds to their gender identity. Although units have little control over the washroom access at their meeting space (e.g. community centre, church, etc.), if the child requests a more private washroom, please check to see if your unit's meeting location has a single stall washroom. You can also ensure privacy by having a policy of girls accessing the washroom one at a time.

## **Question: If our unit has a sleepover or camping trip, how do I accommodate the changing and sleeping arrangements for a trans girl?**

**Answer:** Similar to washroom access, if the trans girl in your unit is comfortable using a gender-segregated change room, they may have access to the girl's change room. If the child tells you that they are uncomfortable using a shared change room, provide a non-stigmatizing alternative (i.e. single stall washroom). As a member of your unit, the girl will participate in the same activities as all other members of your unit. This includes sleeping in the same area as the other members of your unit.

**Question: How do I answer questions from other parents or adults about a transgender member?**

**Answer:** In order to protect the privacy of our members, it is important that you do not discuss personal information about the members in your unit. The goal is to create a safe and inviting space for our members and we do not want to break this commitment by speaking about an individual's situation with other parents and adults. However, if they have specific questions related to what it means to be transgender you can refer them to resources found at the end of this document.

**Question: How should I handle specific questions about a trans girl's body?**

**Answer:** As above, information about any girl should be treated as confidential. Remind the person asking questions that bodies are generally considered private, and that in most contexts it is inappropriate to ask about a person's genitals or hormones. It is completely appropriate to let the asker know that many people consider such questions intrusive and offensive. Repeated questions about a person's body should be considered harassment, and is not acceptable, as per our Code of Conduct. If they are looking for information about trans people and transition, they can look for general information and should not be targeting an individual.

**Question: What if the parent of a girl in my unit is concerned about their daughter's physical safety and does not want their daughter using the washroom with a transgender girl?**

**Answer:** This is often raised in conversations about denying trans people access to washrooms and should be recognised as a form of discrimination. Violence in washrooms has almost always been directed towards the trans person. There are no instances of a trans person being found guilty of going into a washroom to cause violence. You can let the parent know that you expect all girls to behave in respectful and appropriate ways in the washroom, that everyone's safety is important to you, that having

a trans member poses no risk to their daughter, and that you will address any concerns about behaviour in the washroom as they arise.

**Question: How do I answer questions from my unit about a transgender member?**

**Answer:** Congratulations on creating a safe environment where girls feel comfortable asking these questions! Some inquiries may be purely innocent, like if a girl notices a difference (i.e. "why does April keep her hair short?") and some may be more targeted (i.e. "I heard that April is transgender. What does this mean?"). When answering these questions it is important that you remain a positive role model to all members of your unit. Remember, girls will look to your own behaviour and reactions as something to imitate.

Your answers will depend on how comfortable the trans girl and her parents/guardians are with sharing information. If the girl wishes information about her to remain private, respect her privacy and do not reveal to other unit members that the child is transgender. Instead, you can simply explain that the girl behaves a certain way because of a personal choice (i.e. "April wears her hair short because she likes it that way. I think it looks great."). For more targeted questions, provide what information you can without revealing anything about the trans child (i.e. "I can tell you what transgender means, but I cannot share personal information about other girls in our unit."). Repeated or invasive questions to or about a transgender person can be a form of harassment. If you feel the questions are harassing, or making the trans girl feel unsafe or unwelcome, intervene and address the behaviour as per the Code of Conduct. If the trans child would like to share any personal information with unit members you may like to research some agencies who can speak to your unit about what it means to be transgender (some examples are below). Additionally, at the end of this document we have included programming from each branch that focuses on inclusivity. If your unit would like to talk about inclusivity as a unit, you can use these aspects of GGC programming to help facilitate conversation.

**Question: If a member in my unit discloses they are transgender what can I do to be supportive?**

**Answer:** Often Guiders are held in positions of trust by the girls in their unit, and there may be times in your Guiding career when a member discloses information to you and looks to you for support. They may have already reached out to their parents, or they may have not. If you are in a position where a member in your unit discloses that they are transgender (e.g. girl transitioning to boy, or boy transitioning to girl) and asks you for help, please refer them to the following resources:

- **Gender Creative Kids** is a Canadian web portal of information and resources for trans youth and adults who support them. Visit: <http://gendercreativekids.ca/>
- **Rainbow Health Ontario** keeps a database of supportive material about gender independence. Some resources are accessible online, others can be ordered. They ship anywhere in Canada. Visit: [http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/?s=gender+independent&post\\_type=product](http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/?s=gender+independent&post_type=product)
- **PFLAG Canada** is Canada's national organization that helps Canadians with issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Visit: <http://www.pflagcanada.ca/en/index.html>.
- **LGBTQ Youth Line** offers peer support and referrals to LGBTQ youth. Visit: <http://www.youthline.ca/>
- **Trans Lifeline** is a non-profit dedicated to the wellbeing of trans people who run a hotline staffed by trans people. Visit <http://www.translifeline.org/> or call (877) 330-6366.

For your own learning, you may want to refer to the following:

- *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*. Brill, Stephanie A. and Pepper, Rachel. (2008) U.S.A. Cleis Press.

- *Families in TRANSition: A Resource Guide For Parents of Trans Youth*. Central Toronto Youth Services (2008) [http://www.ctys.org/sites/default/files/familiesintransitiona\\_resource\\_guide\\_for\\_parents080608.pdf](http://www.ctys.org/sites/default/files/familiesintransitiona_resource_guide_for_parents080608.pdf)

- *Gender Born, Gender Made: Raising Healthy Gender-Nonconforming Children*. Ehrensaft, Diane. (2011). New York: The Experiment.

**Question: What do I do if someone says something derogatory about the transgender member in my unit?**

**Answer:** In *The Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*, 55% of transgender youth reported "being repeatedly teased, threatened, kicked, hit or excluded" at school in the last year. Additionally, 60% of trans youth reported being discriminated against in the last year because of their gender identity.

Your support matters. "One third of 14-19 year old trans youth (33%) had no adult that they could talk to if they were having a serious problem. ... Youth with supportive adults both in and outside the family were about four times more likely to report good or excellent mental health (as opposed to poor/fair), and were over four times less likely to have considered suicide."

Let's ensure that transgender members never feel unsafe or unprotected while a part of GGC. People may make transphobic comments because they do not understand what transgender means, or because they think it is okay to make derogatory comments about transgender people. In either situation, it is important to educate others about why it is not acceptable to make derogatory comments about transgender people.

If other members make derogatory comments, please remind these members of GGC's commitment to inclusivity. Consider sharing the [inclusivity statement](#) and asking your unit what they think that means in their own words. There are also branch-specific activities on GGC's [Code of Conduct](#) found on [Member Zone](#) that can be helpful in this situation.

**Question: What do I do if I suspect that a transgender member in my unit is being abused?**

**Answer:** In *The Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*, 70% of trans youth reported sexual harassment and 36% had been physically threatened or injured in the past year. Additionally, nearly two-thirds of trans youth reported self-harm in the past year and had thoughts of suicide, and more than one in three had attempted suicide. As per Canadian law, if you suspect abuse of **any member** in your unit, you are legally required to report this to your local child protection agency or police. For more information on what to do if you suspect abuse or if a member in your unit discloses abuse to you, please refer to our [Girl Protection and Self-Harm](#) module.

**Question: How can I support a transitioned male member in leaving GGC?**

**Answer:** If a member in your unit discloses that they are thinking about transitioning to a male, you

can refer them to the resources listed above for support. It is important that transitioning members reach out to an expert in gender issues.

As an all-female organization, GGC is no longer the right place for members who have transitioned to male. It is important to note, however, that transition is not a single moment. It is only once the transitioning member has acknowledged to you that they now identify as male that an exit strategy should begin. In most cases the individual will decide to exit the organization on his own and it is not necessary to inform him that he should not be re-registering. It is only in the very unlikely event that the individual expresses that he wishes to remain in Guiding that he may need to be told that as an all-female organization GGC is no longer the right fit for him. If this occurs, consult your Provincial Office to discuss this communication before saying anything to the individual.

## LINKS TO BRANCH PROGRAMMING

If at any point you would like to bring up the concept of inclusivity with your unit, GGC programming has a number of badge activities that may help your unit learn about inclusivity.

| National Challenges                                                                                                             | Sparks                                                                                                 | Brownies                                                                                                   | Guides                                                                                                                                                                | Pathfinders                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Rangers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Girl EmPower Challenge</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Girls United</a></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being Me Keeper</li><li>• The World Around Me Keeper</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key to Me – Who Am I?, Respecting Others, Being a Friend</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discovering You Program Area – Discover What's Important to You #3, #5, #6</li><li>• Design Your Own Interest Badge</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Girl Stuff Program Area – Focus on Friendship Module; Relationships, Values and Choices Module #3, #5</li><li>• Living Well Program Area – Be Glad You're You Module #1, #4</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Connections Program Area - #12, #24</li><li>• Explore Your Creativity Program Area - #7, #13</li><li>• Global Awareness Program Area - #17</li><li>• Health Living Program Area- #10</li></ul> |

*This resource was created in consultation with j wallace of [Juxtapose Consulting](#)*

## RESOURCES CITED

National Centre for Transgender Equality: [http://www.transequality.org/PDFs/Trans\\_ModelPolicy\\_2014.pdf](http://www.transequality.org/PDFs/Trans_ModelPolicy_2014.pdf)

CA Safe Schools: <http://www.casafeschools.org/csscmodepolicy1209.pdf>

Toronto District School Board: [http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Innovation/docs/tdsb%20transgender%20accommodation%20FINAL\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Innovation/docs/tdsb%20transgender%20accommodation%20FINAL_1_.pdf)

The Society for Safe & Caring Schools & Communities: [http://safeandcaring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Transgender-Booklet\\_Web-Booklet.pdf](http://safeandcaring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Transgender-Booklet_Web-Booklet.pdf)

Being Safe, Being me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey: [https://saravyc.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2015/05/SARAVYC\\_Trans-Youth-Health-Report\\_EN\\_Final\\_Web2.pdf](https://saravyc.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2015/05/SARAVYC_Trans-Youth-Health-Report_EN_Final_Web2.pdf)



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