

**EVANSTON/SKOKIE COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT 65
PROCEDURE FOR STUDENT GENDER SUPPORT**

This Procedure sets forth Evanston/Skokie Community Consolidated School District 65 (“District”) Procedure for schools to address the needs and concerns of transgender and gender expansive students to ensure safe, affirming, and healthy school environments where every child can learn. Schools within the District must be proactive in creating a school culture that respects and values all students and fosters understanding of gender identity and expression within the school community. This Procedure is intended to ensure that all students are welcomed, valued, included, and respected; to help schools ensure safe learning environments free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying; and to promote the educational and social integration of transgender and gender expansive students. This Procedure cannot and does not anticipate every situation that may occur; every student is different and that includes transgender and gender expansive students. The support for each student must be assessed and addressed individually based on the student’s specific requests and needs.

This Procedure is supported by District Policies 7:10 “Equal Educational Opportunities,” 7:20 (Harassment of Students Prohibited), 7:160 (Student Appearance), and 7:180 (Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment). This Procedure is also supported by 20 U.S.C. §1681(a), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Illinois Human Rights Act 775 ILCS 5/5-101 et seq., and the Illinois Prevent School Violence Act 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7.

1. Definitions

Understanding the terminology affiliated with gender identity is important to providing a safe and supportive school environment for students. These definitions are provided not for the purpose of labeling students but rather to assist in understanding this Procedure and the District’s legal obligations.

Cisgender: Cisgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Identity: Gender identity is a person’s inner sense of being male or female, a combination of both, or neither, and is not dependent on the sex assigned at birth. All people have a gender identity, not just transgender people.¹

Gender Expression: Gender expression is an individual’s characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine, a combination of both or neither.

¹ It is important to note that some students might not feel comfortable asserting their gender identity in all aspects of their lives so it is not required that a student have a consistent or uniform assertion of gender identity.

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Gender Expansive (also called Gender Nonconforming, Gender Variant, Gender Creative, Gender Fluid, or Non-Binary): Gender expansive is a term that refers to individuals whose gender expression does not follow social expectations or stereotypes based on their sex assigned at birth. It may (or may not) include a change in gender identity.

Non-Binary: An individual who does not identify as exclusively male or female and does not identify as the gender assigned at birth.

Sex Assigned at Birth: Sex assigned at birth is often based solely on external genitalia but also includes internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics. This is typically the sex reflected on one's original birth certificate.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation is a person's emotional and sexual attraction to other people. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity.

Transgender: Transgender is a term that describes individuals whose gender identity is different from what is assumed based on their sex assigned at birth, and/or whose gender expression is different from the way males or females are stereotypically expected to look or behave. This term applies to identity but not necessarily body parts. This is an umbrella term for a variety of gender identities and expressions.

Transition: Transition is a way to describe the process an individual may go through to change their gender expression, bodies and/or identity documents to match their internal gender identity. Transition can be social, emotional, legal and/or medical and is different for every individual. For most transgender students, the experience of transition does not involve medical intervention but rather will be achieved through social transition, a process whereby they begin to live and identify with the gender consistent with their gender identity. There is no medical threshold, mental health diagnosis or treatment requirement that a student must meet in order to have the student's gender identity recognized and respected by the District.

1. Gender Support

a. Establishment of Gender Support Team & School Coordinator

The District's Superintendent shall establish a district-wide Gender Support Team to support transgender and/or gender expansive students. This team shall consist of the following: a Student Services Administrator, the Equity Director, a Health Administrator, a school social worker or psychologist, and other staff to be identified by the Superintendent. The Gender Support Team shall respect the self-determination of each student and shall be guided by the goal of ensuring each student's academic, social, and emotional success. The District Student Gender Support Team shall designate one of its members to serve as a liaison with all District schools.

*District 65 recognizes that identifying as transgender or gender expansive is not associated with having a disability or mental health condition. The Special Services director

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oversees and directly supervises health services, and the social work and psychology department, and therefore will participate on the Gender Support Team to ensure appropriate resources and supports for these departments. Social workers and/or psychologists are most often identified as the school coordinator because of their background and training understanding and supporting youth in their identity development.

Each school shall designate a staff member to serve as the point person within the building (“School Coordinator”) to coordinate support for transgender and gender expansive students and to serve as a point of contact for the student(s), parent(s), legal guardian(s) (referred to as “guardian”), and staff. The School Coordinator will assist the student’s gender support team in coordinating support for any student. The school coordinator will be in contact with the District Liaison from the District’s Gender Support Team as needed. A student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) may identify other District staff or other individuals to serve on that student’s Gender Support Team.

All members of the district-wide Student Gender Support Team and the School Coordinators shall be trained on an annual basis on this Procedure and in the social, mental, and emotional support of transgender and gender expansive students. The content of this training shall be medically accurate and evidence-based.

b. Coordination of Support

Students and parent(s)/guardian(s) may coordinate support for transgender and gender expansive students with the School Coordinator and appropriate staff identified for the student’s Gender Support Team. In order to ensure that the student is supported in school, it is recommended that the school coordinator and other identified personnel, the student, and the parents/guardians (except as excluded pursuant to the standard set forth below) meet and discuss any individualized supports, including, but not limited to confidentiality of gender transition or gender identity, a timeline for the transition to create the conditions supporting a safe and accepting environment at the school, access to restrooms and other gender-segregated facilities, method for affirming the student’s name and gender identity, disclosure of the student’s gender identity to teachers, and other supports as necessary.

The District or school staff may initiate discussions with transgender and gender expansive students regarding the District's provision of support to the student.

c. Gender Support Plan

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are generally aware of their children’s gender identity and should be included in discussions regarding a school’s provision of support around issues of gender. However, before moving forward with a Gender Support Plan, the Gender Support Team shall work closely with the student to assess the degree to which the student’s family is accepting in order to avoid inadvertently putting the student at risk of greater harm. If the District Superintendent or Superintendent designee determines that disclosure of a Gender

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Support Plan to the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) is unavoidable, the Gender Support Team shall create a plan for addressing the student's expressed needs for safety from such disclosure that prioritizes the emotional, health and educational success of the student.

In order to create a shared understanding about the ways in which the District will support transgender and gender expansive students, the District or school may create a Gender Support Plan (attached as Exhibit A). If the student has expressed a desire, a Gender Support Plan can be initiated by a student, parent/guardian, or staff member. Transgender and gender expansive students are not required to have a Gender Support Plan. If there are questions about whether or not a Gender Support Plan should be discussed, the School Coordinator shall be contacted as a resource to help explain options. It is important to maintain the student's confidentiality and only discuss options for support with those whom the student has granted permission.

Upon a request from a student or a student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the Gender Support Team and the School Coordinator shall meet within ten (10) school-days of the request to develop or revise a Gender Support Plan. In the case of exigent circumstances, the Gender Support Team and the School Coordinator shall meet sooner than ten (10) school-days. The parent/guardian or student may bring an additional support person to the meeting.

Building administrators in collaboration with the School Coordinator are responsible for ensuring staff identified to be on the student's gender support team are trained and understand their role in implementation of the plan.

The Gender Support Plan shall address the expressed needs and wishes of the student on issues including but not limited to the following: access to restrooms and other gender-segregated facilities, method for affirming the student's preferred name and gender identity, disclosure of the student's gender identity to teachers, confidentiality of gender transition in student records and information systems, staff training, and other supports as necessary. The Gender Support Team shall facilitate positive communication between the parties. Conflicts regarding Support Plans shall be resolved on a case-by-case basis, with the goal of ensuring each student's academic, social, and emotional success.

Within fourteen (14) days of finalizing a Gender Support Plan for an individual student, the District shall ensure that the principal and teachers requested by the student and/or parent/guardian at the school are informed of the details of the Plan, provided that such disclosure is approved within the Plan.

Gender Support Plans shall be maintained as a student temporary record and shall not be included in the student's permanent student file. The Plan shall be maintained in confidence and only accessible to the Gender Support Team, or other District staff and anyone else identified in the Plan.

2. Confidentiality

To ensure the safety and well-being of the student, District employees shall not disclose a student's gender identity, sex assigned at birth, transgender identity, or information that

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may reveal a student's gender identity (e.g. birth name) to anyone, including but not limited to other staff members, students or parents of other students, unless such disclosure has been authorized by the student or their parent(s)/guardian(s). If such a disclosure is necessary, it will be documented in writing and will be discussed with the student in advance.

The District shall work with the student to devise an appropriate plan regarding confidentiality of the student's gender identity, which shall be documented in the Gender Support Plan (attached as Appendix A). Such information shall be disclosed only to the extent necessary to support the student's social, emotional, and academic success. Unauthorized disclosure may violate privacy laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or the Illinois School Student Records Act (ISSRA).

In some cases, transgender students may feel more supported and safe if other students are aware that they are transgender. In such cases, District staff should work closely with the student, family, and other staff members on a plan to inform and educate the student's peers and shall document the plan. It may also be appropriate to engage external resources to assist with educational efforts.

3. Names, Pronouns, Gender Markers

A student has a right to request that the student be referred to by a name and pronouns that correspond to the student's gender identity by all school staff and fellow students.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) have a right to request that the District change the student's name and/or gender marker in the centralized electronic database. The parent(s)/guardian(s) must submit a request to change information to the Student Information Manager or the Gender Support Team in writing on the Student Information Change Request Form.

Within fourteen (14) days of submission of the Student Information Change Request, the District shall change the student's name and/or gender marker (if applicable) in the District's electronic database. This will result in the student's name and gender marker being changed in District records for all purposes, including but not limited to student rosters, student technology logins, email systems, student identification cards, yearbook, and awards. If the District changes the student's name or gender marker pursuant to a Student Information Change Request, the Superintendent or designee shall be the only person in the District to have access to the student's birth certificate, which is required by Illinois Missing Children Records Act. The District will coordinate with the District's schools to ensure that the schools' records are appropriately amended within the schools.

A student or their parent(s)/guardian(s) are not required to obtain a court-ordered name or provide medical or psychological documentation to change the student's name or gender marker with the District.

4. Gendered Facilities & School-Sponsored Programs

Transgender and gender expansive students shall have access to gendered facilities and school-sponsored programs that are consistent with the student's gender identity. This

includes, but is not limited to, access to multi-stalled gendered restrooms, locker rooms, and school programs, trips, and athletic programs.

a. Restrooms

Student shall have access to restrooms that correspond to their gender identity regardless of the student's sex assigned at birth. The District shall work with each non-binary student to determine which restroom facilities are most comfortable for the student. No student shall be required to use a single-stall restroom because the student is transgender or gender expansive. The discomfort of other students is not a reason to deny a transgender student access to a restroom. Regardless of gender identity, any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy should be provided access to a reasonable alternative, such as a single-stall restroom.

b. Locker Room Accessibility

Students shall have locker room facilities that correspond to their gender identity regardless of the student's sex assigned at birth in the same manner that all students are provided with such access (e.g. no student shall be required to use a private area within a gendered facility). The District shall work with each non-binary student to determine which locker room facilities are most comfortable for the student. Under no circumstances may students be required to use sex-segregated facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity.

Any student, including transgender students, who express a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, will be provided with a reasonable alternative changing area, such as the use of a private area (e.g., a nearby restroom stall with a door, an area separated by a curtain, a Physical Education instructor's office in the locker room, or a nearby health office restroom), or with a separate changing schedule (e.g., using the locker room that corresponds to their gender identity before or after other students). Any alternative arrangement will be done at the request of the student and provided in a way that allows the student's gender identity to be kept confidential. Under no circumstances may students be required to use an alternative arrangement.

c. Physical Education, Intramural Sports, Interscholastic Sports, and Health Education

All students shall be permitted to participate in physical education classes, intramural, and interscholastic sports in a manner that corresponds with their gender identity or in a manner that allows the student to feel the safest, included, and most comfortable. Physical education and health education teachers and staff will not divide students based on sex assigned at birth or gender identity during any activities or classes.

d. School Trips

All students shall be permitted to participate in all school trips in a manner that corresponds with their gender identity or in a manner that allows the student to feel the safest, included, and most comfortable. In planning school trips, staff is expected to

assess the student's need in collaboration with the student and/or the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and make reasonable efforts to provide an accommodation that is acceptable to the student. Accommodations will be discussed in advance of the trip on a case-by-case basis and will be documented in the student's Gender Support Plan, if the student has a plan. In making these decisions, the District's goals are maximizing the student's social integration and equal opportunity to participate in school activities and ensuring the student's safety and comfort and minimizing stigmatization of the student.

5. Dress

All students shall be permitted to wear clothing to school that is consistent with their gender identity, including at school-sponsored functions such as dances, after school activities, and graduation. The District's rules regarding clothing will be enforced consistently, regardless of a student's gender identity or expression.

A student whose gender expression is different from expectations based on the student's sex assigned at birth will not be considered disruptive of the educational process or as an interference with the maintenance of a positive teaching/learning climate, included but not limited to disciplined, removed, or restricted from lessons, projects, or activities.

6. Curriculum & Pedagogy

All teachers, administrators, staff, and support staff shall use a gender-affirming approach. A gender-affirming approach is a framework used to create an environment in which transgender and gender expansive youth are able to live as the gendered person they identify themselves to be, and achieve healthy development and social, emotional, and academic success. This approach includes affirming students' gender identities and being flexible during gender transition processes.

Teachers are encouraged to develop age-appropriate lessons for students about gender diversity and acceptance regardless of whether or not there is a transgender student in their class. Staff should create inclusive lessons so that all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. It is essential that an individual student's gender transition or personal gender history should never be the subject of a class lesson unless specifically directed in writing, such as in the student's Gender Support Plan.

School libraries should include medically accurate information on gender diversity as well as gender-affirming children's books, young adult fiction, non-fiction, and multi-media. [Welcoming Schools](#) and Gender Spectrum offer annotated bibliographies of books for [children](#) and for [teens](#) about gender diversity and bias-based bullying.

7. Gender-based Activities, Rules, Policies and Practices

Teachers and staff shall not use practices that divide students on the basis of gender. Examples of such gendered practices include but are not limited to lining students up by gender to exit class; dividing a class into teams of boys and girls; requiring boys to wear a certain color and girls to wear another.

If students are separated by gender in school activities or are subject to a gender-specific practice, rule, or policy, students shall be permitted to participate in such activities or conform to such practice, rule, or policy consistent with their gender identity. A clear strategy to support the student in gender-segregated activities should be documented in advance of the activity in the student's Gender Support Plan or other written documentation.

8. Staff Training and Compliance

All District staff shall be informed of the existence of this Procedure. The District will provide training on this Procedure, gender-affirming approaches to education, and on how to support transgender and gender expansive students at reasonable intervals, to be determined by the District. The District's schools or individual staff members may request additional training regarding their support of transgender and gender expansive students.

District employees who refuse to abide by this Procedure may be subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including termination, as set forth in the relevant employee discipline policy. This includes a staff member's persistent refusal to respect a student's gender identity, for example by consistently referring to the student by name or pronoun that does not correspond with the student's gender identity.

9. Discrimination/Harassment/Bullying/Mistreatment

It is the policy of the District to maintain a safe and supportive learning and educational environment that is free from harassment, intimidation, violence and/or bullying and free from discrimination on account of actual or perceived gender, gender identity, and gender expression.

The school must be vigilant for any mistreatment, bullying, or harassment based on gender identity or expression for all students, including transgender and gender expansive students. Schools must not only respond promptly to allegations of mistreatment, bullying, and harassment, they must also work to prevent such issues.

10. Appendix

The District shall make accessible the following on its website:

- Contact information for the District's Gender Support Team
- A sample [Gender Support Plan](#) (Appendix A)
- [Student Information Change Request Form](#) (Appendix B)
- [Affidavit of Parentage Form](#) (Appendix C)

Gender Support Plan - This document will be used to create a shared understanding about the ways in which the student's authentic gender will be accounted for and supported at school. This document will include details on the school personnel responsible for supporting and enforcing the plan, the student's safety, use of facilities, the student's extracurricular activities, and additional considerations.

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Student Information Change Request Form - This form shall be used to request any changes pertaining to student information within District 65's Student Information System, 3rd Party Systems, and State Reporting.

Affidavit of Parentage Form (optional) - This form shall be used in the event a parent/guardian requests to make the original birth certificate/document private for a student in District 65's Student Information System. This form must be notarized and will be used as proof of birth in the place of the original birth certificate/document. This form will also be used to identify the legal or custodial guardian and include the student's new information that was submitted in the "Student Information Change Request Form."