EASTCONN
Where Learning Comes to Life

STUDENTS
Series 5000
Policy #5017.2.1

Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth

Purpose

Federal and state law and EASTCONN's policy require that all programs, activities, and employment practices be free from discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. This policy is designed in keeping with these mandates to create a safe learning environment for all students and to ensure that every student has equal access to all school programs and activities.

This policy sets out guidelines for EASTCONN staff to address the needs of transgender and gender non-conforming students and clarifies how state law should be implemented in situations where questions may arise about how to protect the legal rights or safety of such students. This policy does not anticipate every situation that might occur with respect to transgender or gender non-conforming students and the needs of each transgender or gender non-conforming student must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, the goal is to ensure the safety, comfort, and healthy development of the transgender or gender non-conforming student while maximizing the student's social integration and minimizing stigmatization of the student.

Definitions

The definitions provided here are not intended to label students but rather to assist in understanding this policy and the legal obligations of EASTCONN staff. It is recognized that students might or might not use these terms to describe themselves.

"**Gender identity**" is a person's deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity.

"**Transgender**" describes people whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned sex at birth.

"**Gender expression**" refers to the manner a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, or mannerisms.

"**Gender non-conforming**" describes people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as

androgynous. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify both genders.

"**Transition**" is the process in which a person changes their gender expression to better reflect their gender identity. In order to feel comfortable and to express their gender identity to other people, transgender people may take a variety of steps such as using a nickname or legally changing their name; choosing clothes and hairstyles to reflect their gender identity; and generally living and presenting themselves to others, consistently with their gender identity. Some, but not all, transgender people take hormones or undergo surgical procedures to change their bodies to better reflect their gender identity.

"**Bullying**" means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in EASTCONN or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in EASTCONN that (1) causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (2) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (3) creates a hostile environment at school for such student, (4) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or (5) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral, or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

"**Harassment**" means written, verbal or physical conduct that adversely affects the ability of one or more students to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities because the conduct is so severe, persistent or pervasive. This includes conduct that is based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, sexual identity or expression, or religion. This also includes conduct that targets a student because of a characteristic of a friend, family member or other person or group with whom a student associates.

Privacy

All persons, including students, have a right to privacy. This includes the right to keep private one's transgender status or gender non-conforming presentation at school. Information about a student's transgender status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth also may constitute confidential medical information. School personnel should not disclose information that may reveal a student's transgender status or gender non-conforming presentation to others, including parents and other school personnel, unless legally required to do so or unless the student has authorized such disclosure. Transgender and gender non-conforming students have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much to share private information.

When contacting the parent or guardian of a transgender or gender non-conforming student, school personnel should use the student's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student's gender assigned at birth unless the student, parent, or guardian has specified otherwise.

Official Records

EASTCONN is required to maintain a mandatory permanent student record ("official record") that includes a student's legal name and legal gender. However, EASTCONN is not required to use a student's legal name and gender on other school records or documents. EASTCONN will change a student's official record to reflect a change in legal name or legal gender upon receipt of documentation that such change has been made pursuant to a court order. In situations where school staff or administrators are required by law to use or to report a transgender student's legal name or gender, such as for purposes of standardized testing, school staff and administrators shall adopt practices to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of such confidential information.

Note: A review of Connecticut statutes and regulations and other legal resources has not provided a legal basis requiring a court order prior to changing a student's official record to reflect a change in legal name or legal gender. It is a common practice to require documentation to change a student's legal name or gender pursuant to a court order or through amendment of state or federally-issued identification. However, under FERPA*, a school must consider the request of a minor student's education records that is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's privacy rights. Consider, therefore, the following language as an alternative to the above. *(Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)

EASTCONN recognizes, under FERPA, that a student has the right to request the school to change his/her name and gender on such student's school records if the student or parent/guardian, if such a student is under 18 years of age, believe the records are incorrect, misleading, or violate a student's privacy.

Names/Pronouns

A student has the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to the student's gender identity. A court-ordered name or gender change is not required, and the student need not change his or her official records.

The intentional or persistent refusal to respect a student's gender identity (for example, intentionally referring to the student by a name or pronoun that does not correspond to the student's gender identity) is a violation of this policy.

Gender-Segregated Activities

To the extent possible, schools should reduce or eliminate the practice of segregating students by gender. In situations where students are segregated by gender, such as for selected health education classes, students should be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity.

EASTCONN shall modify its student information system, as necessary, to prevent disclosure of confidential information and ensure that school personnel use a student's preferred name and pronouns consistent with the student's gender identity.

Restroom Accessibility

Students shall have access to the restroom that corresponds to their gender identity consistently asserted at school. Any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided access to a single user restroom. However, no student shall be required to use such a restroom because they are transgender or gender non-conforming.

Locker Room Accessibility

The use of locker rooms by transgender students shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the goals of maximizing the student's social integration and equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes and sports, ensuring the student's safety and comfort, and minimizing stigmatization of the student. In most cases, transgender students should have access to the locker room that corresponds to their gender identity consistently asserted at school, like all other students. Any student, transgender or not, who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should 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 P.E. 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 should be provided in a way that protects the student's ability to keep his or her transgender status confidential. In no case shall a transgender student be required to use a locker room that conflicts with the student's gender identity.

Physical Education Classes & Intramural Sports

Transgender and gender non-conforming students shall be permitted to participate in physical education classes and intramural sports in a manner consistent with their gender identity.

Interscholastic Competitive Sports Teams

Transgender and gender non-conforming students shall be permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics in a manner consistent with their gender identity and in compliance with the applicable regulations of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Association (CIAC).

Dress Codes

Transgender and gender non-conforming students have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. In general, EASTCONN schools may not adopt dress codes that restrict students' clothing or appearance on the basis of gender.

Discrimination/Harassment

It is the responsibility of each school and EASTCONN to ensure that transgender and gender non-conforming students have a safe school environment. This includes ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment, or violence is given immediate attention, including investigating the incident, taking appropriate corrective action, and providing students and staff with appropriate resources.

Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a person's actual or perceived transgender status or gender nonconformity are to be handled in the same manner as other discrimination or harassment complaints.

Transferring a Student to Another School (Opportunity Transfers)

In general, schools should aim to keep transgender and gender non-conforming students at the original school site. Opportunity transfers should not be a school's first response to harassment and should be considered only when necessary for the protection or personal welfare of the transferred student, or when requested by the student or the student's parent/guardian. The student or the student's parent or guardian must consent to any such transfer.

Professional Development

The EASTCONN Board directs the Executive Director of EASTCONN to provide for the training of EASTCONN staff in transgender sensitivity, in what it means to treat all people respectfully and equally. Developmentally age-appropriate training shall also be provided for students.

(cf. 5017.1.1 - Nondiscrimination)

(cf. 5023.1.1- Conduct and Discipline)

(cf. 5023.6.1 - Out-of-School Misconduct)

(cf. 5003.2.1 - Hazing)

(cf. 4016.1.1- Nondiscrimination)

(cf. 5030.1.2 - Sexual Harassment)

(cf. 5030.1.3 - Peer Sexual Harassment)

(cf. 5017.4.1 – Racial Harassment)

(cf. 5017.3.1 - Student Grievance Procedure)

(cf. 6017.34.1 - Equal Educational Opportunity)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-15c Discrimination in public school prohibited. (Amended by P.A. 97-247 to include "sexual orientation" and PA 11-55 to include "gender identity or expression")

46a-60 Discriminatory employment practices prohibited Federal Law.

10-209 Records not to be public.

46a-60 Discriminatory employment practices prohibited.

Section 504 and the Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 20 U.S.C. 706(7)(b).

Public Act 07-62 An Act Concerning the Deprivation of Rights on Account of Sexual Orientation.

Public Act 11-55 An Act Concerning Discrimination.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 34 CFR Section 106.

Meritor Savings Bank. FSB v. Vinson, 477 U.S. 57 (1986).

Faragher v. City of Boca Raton, No. 97-282 (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998).

Burlington Industries, Inc. v. Ellerth, No. 97-569, (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26,1998).

Gebbser v. Lago Vista Indiana School Agency, No. 99-1866, (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26,1998).

Davis v. Monroe County Board of Directors, No. 97-843 (U.S. Supreme Court, May 24, 1999).

Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. 1232g

Adopted: November 26, 2019
Revised:
Replaces: 5145.53